

## Guest Column for May 2009 from Terra Community College

Technology has changed our everyday lives. In this day of digital cameras, cell phones and computers, how is technology being used in teaching and learning in higher education?

Terra Community College students have ever-increasing new ways to communicate with their teacher and their fellow classmates, and it's not just the proliferation of cell phones and Internet accessibility leading the way. New products and programs are constantly creeping into classrooms. Developments in technology including more powerful computers, high speed networks and modems, easier-to-use applications, and richer content offered via the Internet are dramatically redefining nearly every aspect of where, when and how learning takes place.



*Dr. Nancy Sattler, Dean of Arts and Sciences and Business Division*

Terra students have changed radically in the last few years. Computer games, email, the Internet, cell phones and instant messaging are integral parts of their lives. Today's average college grads have spent less than 5,000 hours of their lives reading, over 10,000 hours playing video games and twice that amount of time watching TV. Because of the technological environment and the sheer volume of their interaction with technology, today's students think and process information fundamentally differently from their predecessors. Terra continues to explore new ways to use technology as a tool for the delivery of instruction.

The growth and popularity of the Internet and the World Wide Web, as well as the use of computer-aided instruction, have created a tremendous increase in the opportunities afforded to students attempting to further their post-secondary education. Nationally over 3.9 million students were taking at least one online course during the fall 2007 term; a 12 percent increase over the number reported the previous year. Over 20 percent of all U.S. higher education students were taking at least one online course. Two-year colleges have consistently been overrepresented among the online student population with over one-half of all online students currently enrolled in two-year colleges.

In October of 2008, Terra received a five-year federal grant to expand student access to learning experiences through the development of a comprehensive distance learning program. As a result of the grant, Terra has increased online offerings to include such new courses as Environmental Science, Introduction to Criminal Justice, History and Literature of Music, Interpersonal Communications and OSHA Standards: Wind Energy.

Terra continues to offer many other classes as either hybrid courses, where a class meets part time in the traditional classroom and part time online, or totally online courses. Terra will soon be hiring a distance learning advisor who will work with students to determine if distance classes are right for them. Terra continues to stay on the cutting edge creating learning experiences enhanced by technology.

If you would like to view a complete listing of Terra's distance courses, check out Terra's distance learning offerings for the summer semester available online at [www.terra.edu](http://www.terra.edu). Offerings for next fall are also available.