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GSW keeps pace with Information Technology's bright future

During the past decade, rapid changes in information technologies have overwhelmed many colleges and universities, particularly small institutions with limited resources. At Georgia Southwestern, we continue to be ahead of the pack with innovative and creative applications all across the campus. Three factors have had an important influence on the progressive approach to the use of information technologies at GSW.

Perhaps the most important of these factors is the emphasis on information technologies in strategic planning for the future of the campus. Planning for the acquisition and implementation of information technologies has been central to the University strategic priorities for a number of years. In the last two years, improvements have been guided by a strategic plan specifically focused on emerging information technology needs of the campus community. Recent efforts have gone beyond the basics of implementing new technologies by addressing current concerns for the security of institutional databases and the integrity of the campus network.

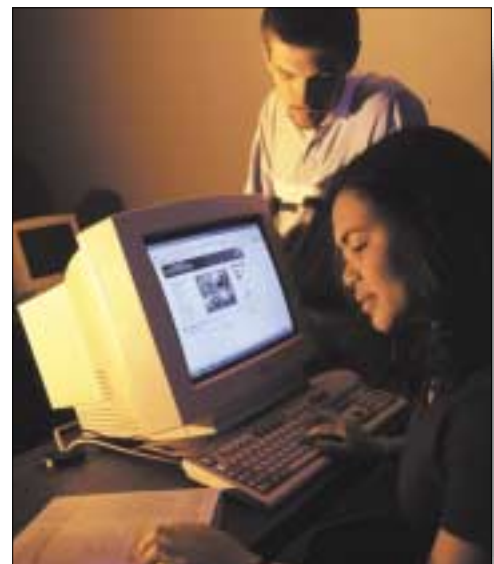
While the emphasis on planning has been important, the critical difference remains the willingness of faculty and staff to invest the time and energy necessary to become proficient in the use of new technologies. With the support of an active professional development program, faculty and staff have adopted and, in some cases, adapted new technologies with enthusiasm and commitment. Equally important, faculty and staff have been innovative in their use of information technologies. As a result, classroom instruction at GSW has changed dramatically. Use of the campus network to deliver instruction and to provide instructional support materials continues to grow through online courses as well as through traditional on-campus courses. At the same time, information flow among administrative offices across the campus has been greatly enhanced. Similarly, students, faculty, and staff have greater access to the information resources of the University. To increase connectivity options we have created wireless networks at various locations on campus that are linked to the wired campus network. The campus information network in conjunction with the University's Web page (www.gsw.edu) has become an important tool in the recruitment of students and in sharing the accomplishments of faculty and students with the media. A new Web site (www.gsw.edu/future) is available to help prospective students find all the necessary information about GSW.

In addition to a commitment to become proficient with new technologies, our faculty members remain creative in

broadening the curriculum with the integration of new information, now more readily available through the Internet. While textbooks continue to be the primary reference in most courses, students, and faculty members augment the textbook with access to Internet-based resources. With direct Internet connection in all classrooms, these resources are often presented as part of regular classroom instruction—not just in computer and information sciences courses, but in courses in English, biology, nursing, and education as well.

Consistent with our mission, GSW is also leveraging our expertise to support economic development related to information technology in Southwest Georgia. For example, the Southwest Georgia Technology Council was initiated at Georgia Southwestern during the past year. The primary goal of the Council is to create a community of professionals and to support the development of technology-related businesses. In addition, faculty and students in the School of Computer and Information Sciences, working as project-focused teams, have offered their services to address the information processing needs of small businesses in the region. The experience gained through these projects was important in the decision made by NCR to join GSW in a software redevelopment partnership and to donate \$1.2 million in computer hardware and software to the University.

The world of information technology continues to change at an increasingly rapid pace. In the years ahead, information technologies will continue to change instruction and administration processes at GSW. With a commitment to planning, combined with dedicated, and innovative faculty and staff, Georgia Southwestern is positioned to serve in a leadership role, supporting the growth and development of new information technology businesses in the region.



Wired Students—Maria Cabrera and Chris Barr surf GSW's Web site.