

Academy of Art University

Leading U.S. design school uses Adobe® Acrobat® Connect™ Professional for online courses, giving students worldwide easy access to renowned degree and certificate programs

Academy of Art University

www.academyart.edu



Industry

Higher Education

Challenges

- Improve quality of and student access to online courses
- Reduce costs and enhance effectiveness of recruiting

Solution

- eLearning
 - Web conferencing
- The Academy of Art University uses Adobe Acrobat Connect Professional to enable students worldwide to participate in rich, interactive online courses.

Results

- Mirrored on-campus university offerings in a virtual environment
- Averaged 30% enrollment rate from online recruiting, compared to 7% rate from traditional recruitment
- Expanded online courses from two to more than 500 classes, generating new revenue
- Saved tens of thousands of dollars yearly by reducing recruiting costs

Systems At A Glance

- Adobe Acrobat Connect Professional
- Adobe Dreamweaver®
- Adobe Fireworks® 3
- Adobe Flash® Professional
- Taught in curriculum: Adobe Creative Suite™ 3 Design Premium, Web Premium, and Production Premium

Quality courses on-campus and online

With the cost of higher education on the rise, and student recruitment efforts becoming increasingly competitive, colleges and universities are seeking to build 21st century learning models that reach beyond the boundaries of traditional campuses. Toward that end, the Academy of Art University is using Adobe technology to extend the physical boundaries of its San Francisco campus—and enroll record numbers of students into virtual, accredited, degree and certificate programs.

The Academy of Art University prepares aspiring artists and designers for professional careers by delivering undergraduate and professional degree and certificate programs. The school follows a disciplined approach to studies that encourages students to develop individual styles that blend talents, technical skills, and creativity with professional knowledge. The university's online programs are fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). With approximately 11,000 students from over 40 countries, about half of them taking one or more classes online, the university is the largest private school of art and design in the United States.

Jason Shaeffer, director of online graduate studies and synchronous services, has been involved in distance learning for the past decade. “Acrobat Connect Professional enables us to take web-based higher education to the level we always envisioned—by leveraging Adobe technology to easily reach students and prospective students worldwide,” he says.

Multiple benefits from one solution

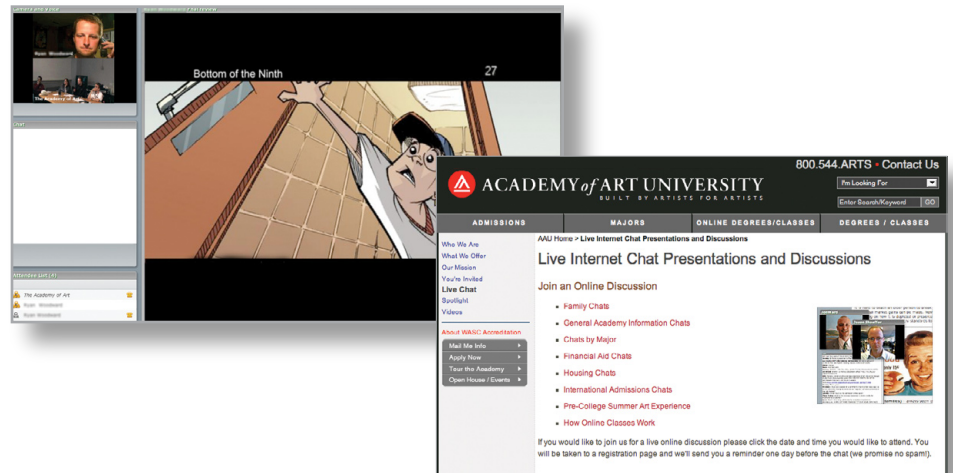
The school uses Acrobat Connect Professional software to deliver high-quality undergraduate and graduate degree programs online, as well as certificate programs, in 11 different majors to thousands of online students worldwide. The school also uses Acrobat Connect Professional and other Adobe solutions for a variety of engaging educational activities, including live town hall-style meetings, admissions interviews, showcasing student portfolios, mentoring, and engaging current and prospective students in live question and answer sessions with administrators, staff, and faculty.

When the school evaluated software for its virtual campus, it sought a solution to enable faculty and administrators to easily engage students in two-way, rich media experiences without requiring additional downloads or proprietary plug-ins. The solution needed to be cost-effective (to keep tuition and operating costs low), cross-platform compatible, easy for students and faculty to use, and scalable to meet the demands of students from around the globe. Equally important, it had to provide a sense of branding and community to better engage off-campus students in campus life.

Cost-effective student recruitment

According to Shaeffer, the online education program successfully mirrors the entire spectrum of a college campus experience, providing the same curriculum online as on-campus in subjects ranging from fashion design to sculpture. Instructors, many of whom are not technically savvy, find Acrobat Connect Professional software easy to use independent of platform.

Academy of Art University uses Acrobat Connect Professional to deliver high-quality undergraduate and graduate degree programs to thousands of online students worldwide. Students meet online to present course work and ask department directors questions about their programs. The university also uses the Adobe solution to enhance its online student recruitment efforts.



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Jason Shaeffer,
Director of online studies,
Academy of Art University

Since adopting Acrobat Connect Professional as its de facto distance education platform, the university has expanded the program from 2 classes to more than 500 classes in 4 years. Another important benefit is the impact on student recruitment. Statistically, the conversion rate of prospects to enrollments runs about 7% at the university. However, the rate jumps to nearly 30% when it comes to online recruiting efforts using Acrobat Connect Professional.

Rather than incur expenses to send people all over the world to hold outreach sessions, Shaeffer uses the Adobe solution to hold live chat sessions with prospects from the comfort of his office, along with support staff who field questions, disclose financial aid issues, and discuss housing options. “We can have 300 people registered in a typical recruiting chat,” says Shaeffer. “After the recruiting event, we could end up with thousands of views of the posted event recordings and 290 valid leads.”

According to Shaeffer, the built-in Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) capability in Acrobat Connect Professional is the most cost-effective web conferencing solution on the market. And that is just one element of the savings. Overall, he estimates the savings from online recruiting alone are significant.

“Typically, we would have to fly four to six people to Chicago, put them up in a hotel for a few days, rent out meeting space, and then hope that prospects show up,” he explains. “The costs could easily total well over \$10,000 per recruiting session. Compare this to our low-cost, high-quality online sessions, and the advantages to the university are evident.”

Team instructional design

Every university online class is built by a three-person team—a web designer, a content editor/instructional designer, and a subject-matter expert. Approximately 150,000 pages of content comprise the virtual university. Course content is produced using Adobe Dreamweaver, Adobe Photoshop CS3, Adobe Fireworks, and Adobe Flash Professional software. A 25-person video team has produced more than 10,000 pieces of video content to supplement the online classes. The content is then uploaded to the university’s proprietary learning management system.

Adobe Acrobat Connect Professional software is available to all program advisors and directors, who use it to mentor students, hold regularly scheduled meetings, conduct portfolio reviews, and field ad-hoc questions and answers. Faculty members have standing meeting rooms where students can share online journals and post visuals for comment and review, and where students can access recorded critiques of fellow students’ work if they were unable to attend live sessions.

To produce qualified working professionals, the university curriculum includes only best-of-breed content, with a strong focus on Adobe products. “Thanks to Adobe Acrobat Connect Professional software and the ubiquity of the free Adobe Flash Player and Adobe Reader®, our students feel like they are part of the school campus community even if they live 6,000 miles away,” says Shaeffer.



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