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**Contact: William Johnson**  
**610-758-3172**  
[wjj0@lehigh.edu](mailto:wjj0@lehigh.edu)

**LEHIGH 'CLIPPER PROJECT' TO OFFER ONLINE**  
**FRESHMAN COURSES TO HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS**

Funded by a \$670,000 grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Lehigh University announced Tuesday (12/21) plans to develop and offer Web-based freshman courses to high school students and to assess the effect of the courses on students and faculty.

Lehigh's "Clipper Project" will enable residential college students to accelerate entry into advanced study, and thus reduce costs. The project also will provide sorely needed research into the costs and effectiveness of virtual learning.

Beginning in the spring and summer 2001 semesters, students who apply and are accepted for early admission to Lehigh will be eligible to participate in the project. Freshman math and economics will be offered during this initial period, and English, engineering and chemistry courses will be phased in the following spring and summer.

Gregory C. Farrington, Lehigh president and a leader in promoting experimentation with new technologies in education, said the Clipper Project will focus attention on the previously neglected areas of residential college and pre-college learning, even as distance education among other populations proliferates.

"Everyone in higher education wonders if technology can truly add value to the residential college experience," said Farrington. "Finally, we have a project that will provide answers to this question, as well as to questions about what works and what doesn't in online education."

The high school students enrolled in the Clipper Project will not pay tuition for the Web-based courses. By beginning their college education before arriving on campus, they will be better able to consider options like double majors, earlier entry into graduate study or even graduating in less than four years.

Faculty from Lehigh's engineering, business and arts and sciences colleges are involved in the project. Lehigh's college of education faculty will lead the design of the courses, and will conduct the research associated with them.

The research design includes three student groups—the typical, on-campus, face-to-face classroom course; Web-based courses for high school seniors only; and Web-based courses for a combination of high school seniors and Lehigh freshman living on campus. Each class will be capped at 20 students.

Lehigh Professor Stephen C. Bronack, principal investigator for the project, said the three groups will provide valuable comparisons.

“One potentially interesting model for effective instruction in the coming century will be high school seniors and current college students taking courses together via the Web,” Bronack said. “So we want to assess Web-based instruction for on-campus students as well. Moreover, we would like to know if having high school students interact with current students might affect non-academic outcomes, like how well freshmen adjust to college.”

Bronack said the study also will show how effectively faculty from various disciplines transform “traditional” courses into Web-based courses, and will provide information about costs and other considerations in implementing such courses.

The Clipper Project courses will follow the usual semester or summer schedule. Students will read an assigned textbook, attend lectures online, and participate in a variety of ways, including discussion groups, chat rooms, e-mail and through other media. Lehigh will provide each student with the necessary software, plug-ins and technical support for each course. Homework and projects will be assigned, picked up and graded in individual student “digital dropboxes” accessible on the Clipper Project web site. Mid-term and final exams will be proctored.

Lehigh surveyed its incoming freshman class this year and found that more than half of the respondents would have taken a Web-based course in senior year of high school and nearly 4 out of 10 said they would have taken a course over the summer. Current freshmen also were surveyed and it was confirmed that adequate computing technology exists in Lehigh’s dorms for freshmen to participate in the project.

The Clipper Project got its name from Farrington’s inaugural speech in April in which he used the story of the Pan Am Clipper in 1930 winging its way from London to New York, passing over the Queen Mary luxury liner. Just as air transportation then signaled the end of the age of steamships and transformed the way people lived, so too is new technology today transforming education, Lehigh’s president said.

“Learning, not teaching, is the business at hand,” said Farrington. “The classroom as we know it today is our Queen Mary, and technology will be our catalyst—our Clipper, if you will.”