Florida Community College at Jacksonville (FCCJ) is one of the largest and most comprehensive community colleges in the United States. In addition to its numerous national and state rankings, it also boasts one of the largest distance learning programs in the nation. Beyond its own internal development of online programs, FCCJ is also at the forefront of a national effort to aggressively expand online education in post-secondary institutions. SoftChalk is an important component in the development and promotion of these programs, and is helping them to achieve and maintain their outstanding level of success in the growing field of online learning.

A unique aspect of FCCJ is their partnership with a major education publisher and their efforts to create curricula that will be available worldwide. Developing for such a wide-market presents unique requirements for course development. It is imperative that the programs easily integrate into any Learning Management System, and therefore SCORM compliance is essential. SoftChalk meets this need, while providing an excellent tool for the development of creative and engaging interactive course materials, as well.

FCCJ’s SIRIUS program has gained national attention because of its team orientation and goal of developing high-quality courses, along with a nationally recognized faculty development program. Course materials consist of a textbook, CD with multimedia, documentation, exercises, and a web-presence. SIRIUS designs and develops their online courses with a team of content experts, instructional designers and technologists from across the United States. SoftChalk is used to navigate the student through the material on the CD as well as the web content, and to add additional materials such as learning activities, quizzes, text annotations and sidebars. With an ambitious goal of producing twenty-eight courses over the next two and a half years, FCCJ has teamed with McGraw-Hill Education to market the programs nationally. SoftChalk’s SCORM gradebook integration is an essential component to marketing the courses to other institutions.

Another important factor that influenced FCCJ’s decision to choose SoftChalk was its custom services. Following FCCJ’s specifications, SoftChalk developed four Custom Style Sheets (CSS), each emphasizing a different discipline. Every course that FCCJ develops is created with the appropriate CSS which helps to brand the course in several ways: by discipline, as part of SIRIUS, and as a McGraw Hill/FCCJ collaboration. A consistent design also helps the student by providing an element of familiarity so that courses are more easily navigated. And of course, pre-established designs help to speed the process of producing courses because most of the design groundwork is already defined. Each of these factors are important in helping FCCJ meet the ambitious goals that they have set for the SIRIUS project.

With five campuses and five major educational centers, FCCJ serves more than 60,000 students each year in over 200 career training, university transfer, and college preparatory programs. It is also home to the Military Education Institute, one of only four community colleges in the nation to provide global, online degrees to Navy personnel. In addition, FCCJ has hosted the International Conference on College Teaching & Learning for the past 18 years.

SoftChalk LLC is a leading provider of e-learning software for educational institutions worldwide. Specializing in the development of tools that are intuitive and easy-to-use, SoftChalk products allow instructors to create powerful, sophisticated and professional-looking content for e-learning classrooms in K-12, higher education, and corporate training markets.
As faculty become familiar with SoftChalk’s wide array of features, the SIRIUS model has become more standardized and structured in the production process. Faculty use the program to develop course content, freeing instructional designers to implement the “pop” that adds to the lesson’s engaging, interactive appeal.

FCCJ also develops traditional online courses using a process called FutureClasses. FutureClasses online courses are built with SoftChalk, and also feature a team approach to development. While at this point the courses are designed to supplement companion textbooks, they still implement many of the same SoftChalk learning activities as the SIRIUS programs.

As online education continues to grow and evolve, FCCJ is positioned to lead the way with an aggressive approach to course development and international marketing efforts. SoftChalk is pleased that it is an integral part of such leading programs in the growing field of online education.

"I enjoy using SoftChalk because it is logical and comprehensive. The functions are simple to implement and cover a wide range of my needs as an online instructor and course designer. I particularly like being able to embed definitions and graphics in the course content and have that information easily available to students."

Janet Bryant
Faculty Member
Florida Community College at Jacksonville