

## Century College

### Faculty add WOW Factor to Online Courses with SoftChalk



Century College is the largest community college in Minnesota, serving over 15,000 students in more than 40 career programs. It is also the state's largest provider of technical training, serving another 10,000 students. Located north of the twin cities in White Bear Lake, about 13% of Century's courses are offered fully online or in a blended online and classroom learning format.

When the college first offered online courses nearly a decade ago, lessons were primarily text based. Faculty loaded Microsoft Word and PDF documents into Desire-2Learn, the Learning Management System used by Century. Like many early e-learning initiatives, the system proved less than engaging to students.

#### SoftChalk Introduces Rich Interactive Experience

The college took a big step forward in 2009 when faculty in the Reading program wrote a grant that enabled them to purchase six licenses from SoftChalk, the maker of content authoring software. Licenses were used in the Reading Lab and by Reading faculty.

The difference was remarkable. With SoftChalk, faculty found they could easily create multimedia courses with features they never dreamed of. In minutes they could mash up their own materials with rich media (video, audio, images), and create interactive exercises, quizzes and text. It was easy to add supplemental material and drag and resize images—and SoftChalk ensured that lessons met accessibility standards.

Faculty from the Reading program presented SoftChalk to other programs on campus. By 2011 faculty members in more than a dozen programs and departments across campus, from nursing and dental hygiene to biology, chemistry and interior design, were using SoftChalk.

**Learning Greek and Latin Word Parts**

Contents Page: 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 score print all

### Overview

Please watch the overview presentation and then answer the questions below.

Change slides by using the arrows or drop-down menu. You may stop and start the narration for each slide by pressing the Play button.

**Point #1: Most of the more difficult words - including those that are very common in college readings - are based on Greek and Latin word parts.**

In many countries, poverty and hunger are chronic problems. The disparities in income between the most affluent and those from the poorest groups has been growing. An innovative method of helping low-income families is to provide them with interest-free microloans so that they may start a business. Initially, bankers were doubtful that the loans would be repaid, but the repayment rate exceeded 95%, a figure that surpasses that of middle-class and wealthy borrowers.

**Questions On The Overview**

**Question #1**  
Value: 1  
Greek and Latin word parts are useful in learning the technical vocabulary in the sciences, but not in subjects like history, art, or psychology.  
☐ True  
☐ False  
Check Answer

**Question #2**  
Value: 1  
Sometimes it is necessary to learn both the Greek and the Latin word part for a particular idea. In which career field is this especially true?  
☐ a. business and economics  
☐ b. psychology and counseling

**More Resources**  
This lesson is available in two alternate formats:  
• **Microsoft Word** (This version has all images described for screen reading software used by visually impaired students. This is also a possible way to submit answers.)  
• **pdf document** (A pdf is good if you would like to print out a hard copy of the lesson)  
**Instructors**  
The alternate forms of the lesson for students are shared under a Creative Commons license, so you may copy or adapt them at no cost provided the terms of use are respected. If you would like to present this lesson in class, here is the Powerpoint file (2007 version).  
• **Powerpoint presentation**  
**Practice Reading**  
Here is the practice reading at the end of the lesson in three formats:  
• **Marriage Across Cultures (Microsoft Word)**  
• **Marriage Across Cultures (pdf version)**  
• **Marriage Across Cultures (mp3 recording)**

Authored by Alexandra Crittenden of Century College

"Faculty see it as a canvas to create the lesson they want, and its ease of use has made it popular not just with younger faculty, but also with older faculty who may not be as technologically savvy," says instructional designer Stephen Kelly. "Rather than text-based lessons, they could easily add multimedia, color, links and make their courses truly interactive. Interactivity is what gave it the wow factor with students, who found the interface intuitive."

## Maximizing LMS Value and Improving Learning Outcomes

Student focus groups revealed that students overwhelmingly liked the SoftChalk interface, content presentation, ease of use and interactivity. While a formal study has not been done, Kelly says there is already anecdotal evidence that SoftChalk improves student outcomes.

"Any time you can give a user something to click on and manipulate, you're going beyond passive learning and winning the attention battle online," he says. "Exploration allows for a 'choose your own adventure' experience; too many learning modules out there don't provide avenues for exploration. A student that can pursue their interests on impulse will ultimately discover valuable content on their own."

Kelly also notes that SoftChalk-created lessons provide a quality of content that is not available in learning management systems, adding value to its Desire2Learn LMS.

In February 2012, Century rolled out a campus-wide SoftChalk implementation and established SoftChalk training sessions. "We expect the number of users to grow quickly now that we have made it accessible across campus," Kelly says.

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Stephen Kelly  
Instructional Designer

The screenshot shows a SoftChalk lesson interface. At the top, a purple header bar contains the title "Learning Greek and Latin Word Parts" and navigation links for "Contents", "Page: 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7", "score", and "print all". The main content area is titled "Skills Practice #2" and "Reading Unfamiliar Words With Understanding". It includes a "Directions" section and a "Chemistry" section with a text passage about polymerization and a chemical structure diagram. Below the diagram is a question: "Click on the word that means 'many parts.'" with a "Stop" button. At the bottom of the main area are "Score 0/5" and "Re-start" buttons. On the right side, there is a "More Resources" sidebar with links to "Microsoft Word", "pdf document", and "Powerpoint presentation". At the bottom of the sidebar, there is a "Practice Reading" section with links to "Marriage Across Cultures" in different formats. The footer of the lesson includes a date "Date last modified: February 3, 2011", a creator credit "This lesson was created by Alexandra Crittenden. Email: Alex.Crittenden@century.edu", and a Creative Commons license logo.

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