

TechTalk *The Tech Revolution at Baruch*

BY ARI KAPLAN

The technology revolution has hit Baruch, and the school has embraced it wholeheartedly. With its use of computer kiosks, online courses and tutorials, and advanced cell phone initiatives, Baruch College is a leader among its peers.

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INTERNET ACCESS KIOSKS

I was walking through the Vertical Campus the other day and saw the two dozen Internet access stations, where students can check e-mail or assignments on the run. "The number should soon increase to 50," says Baruch's Arthur Downing, assistant vice president for technology and chief librarian.

ONLINE COURSE LECTURES

At the core of the Baruch College Computing and Technology Center (BCTC) team's goals in modifying the digital architecture at Baruch are student satisfaction and enjoyment. To that end, the Instructional Technology Division is using kiosks and similar tools to offer courses in such fields as accounting, economics, and finance in streaming video format through Blackboard Inc., which operates the College's course management system.

DIGITAL MEDIA LIBRARY

In addition to Blackboard, the College now has an online digital media library that enables students to view campus events such as readings by prominent authors, lectures by leaders in business and government, artistic performances, club events, and previous Commencement Exercises. Users can search the library's

contents, and new items are continually added. In addition to serving as an archive, "the library helps students feel connected to the experiences of campus life," Downing explains.

ONLINE TUTORIALS

For even more academic support, the College now offers Web-based tutorials. Students can learn about mutual funds and how to read a financial statement as well as safety in the natural science lab (there's even a virtual lab!). All these videos can be viewed at students' own pace and on their schedules.

WEBGRADE

After studying for their classes using the advanced resources, students can find their grades online or via e-mail. Eliminating the stress over grade postings or transcripts lost in the mail, this system streamlines academic notifications.

AIRBARUCH

For those moments when students are running between classes, BCTC is harnessing the power of cellular technology to bring campus events and news to mobile phones. The school initiated a 150-person pilot of the AirBaruch program in March 2005, allowing access to the Baruch calendar,

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staff directory, and real-time displays of laptop loan and group study room availability. Other features include listings of new Blackboard courses, college announcements, and private mobile-to-mobile com-



Photo by Jerry Speier

A student stops to check on her course assignment at one of the newly installed Internet access stations in the Newman Vertical Campus.

munications. Students may soon even be able to use AirBaruch for answering multiple-choice questions in large lecture classes.

During the AirBaruch pilot, officials were excited at the widespread evidence of community building—students who did not know one another added new contacts to their buddy lists and many exchanged photos through their cell phones.

The College's innovations are prompting other institutions to link to its online tutorials or ask permission to adapt them for local use, which Baruch grants to other academic institutions free of charge for noncommercial purposes as long as Baruch is credited. For example, Bowling Green University is about to release its version of *Baruch's Guide to Use of Copyrighted Multimedia in Your Courses*. In addition, Educause, a prominent nonprofit committed to promoting technology in higher education, has included this copyright material in its resource center, and Merlot, a national resource for instructional multimedia, has given its highest rating to Baruch's financial statements tutorial.

¡Viva la revolucion!

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