

Web-based Education Cuts Training Time, Saves Money

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by Jane Jeffries, associate editor

Where does continuing education fit between a full-time job and the rest of your life? Increasingly, the answer is online. In many fields, Web-based education is rapidly becoming a popular alternative to traditional, instructor-led education. The Cleveland Clinic offers continuing medical education programs for credit online, and the Illinois Board of Education provides hundreds of courses for degree and certificate programs via a virtual campus.

Retain More in Less Time

Recent research supports the value of online education. A study at California State University at Northridge showed that online students tested 20 percent better than their peers in a traditional learning environment.¹ Interactive, computer-based learning has a 75 percent retention rate, according to a 1998 Department of Defense study. Instructor-led learning has a 50 to 75 percent retention rate, while text alone and video alone have 30 and 25 percent retention rates, respectively. Reduced time and expense are further incentives for online learning. Online students typically pay 30 to 60 percent less tuition than traditional students do and enjoy a 50 percent savings in training time.²

While recognizing the desire for continued education, AHIMA also understands the common barriers to it. Most professionals can't take time off to go to school, nor are their schedules flexible enough to permit them to attend seminars. And what if there's not a nearby facility? Commuting may not be an option. Online education for professional development is a natural complement to the ever-evolving HIM arena.

AHIMA's Interactive Learning Campus brings all the important features of a real campus, including virtual class buildings and student and resource centers, right to HIM professionals and their computers, wherever they are.

"AHIMA's campus is a virtual training facility accessible through the Internet," explains Kara Lemke, RHIA, director of continuing education and training. "It's got everything HIM professionals need to update their skills and stay current on topics most affecting the industry—including the freedom to take courses when and where they want."

Continuing Education at Your Own Pace

The Campus, designed in response to members' need for up-to-date information and detailed, cost-effective training, opened in October 1999 at AHIMA's National Convention. Courses and tutorials are available 24 hours a day and students can study at their own pace. AHIMA members earn four hours of continuing education per course, though the courses are also available to non-members. The curriculum is taught by industry experts. Plus, students can post questions for instructors or enter chat rooms to exchange ideas with other students.

The Interactive Campus' first program is **HIM: Beyond the Basics: Healthcare Informatics and Health Information Systems Training**. Classes currently available are:

H011: HIS Development Life Cycle: Discusses the four phases of the HIS development life cycle, including planning, selection, implementation, and maintenance.

H012: Information Technology and Security: Introduces the hardware, software, and network concepts used in today's information systems and security technologies. Enhances the student's ability to contribute meaningfully in the selection, implementation, operation and administration of computer-based HIM tools.

H014: Advanced Information Technology/ Information Management Applications: Building the CPR: Develops student confidence, competence, and appreciation for emerging technologies that contribute to the design and implementation

of CPR systems.

HIM professionals can register online and pay with a credit card or by mailing a check or purchase order to AHIMA. Each class is \$79 for members and \$99 for nonmembers. An up-to-date browser with the ability to accept cookies and access to the Internet with a 28.8 bps modem or faster are the only school supplies needed. The campus library provides course-related references and bibliography, articles that can be printed or downloaded, and links to the FORE Library and other AHIMA products.

One of the Campus' upcoming courses is a seven-part program on HIPAA issues in the workplace. AHIMA's Coding Assessment and Training Solutions program will also be offered through the Campus. Available to healthcare organizations, the program will cover basic, intermediate, and advanced coding in 19 specialty areas and three paths (inpatient, ambulatory, and physician) for 180 hours of training.

Demonstrations of current courses are available at www.universalcampus.com/ahimacampus.

Notes

1. "Online Students Fare Better." CNET News, available at news.cnet.com.
2. Hall, Brandon. *Web-Based Training Cookbook*. New York: Wiley Computer Publishing, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997.

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