

# Success Stories:

## Profiles of Pearson Technology Users

# MySpeechLab

**An interview with**  
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### Course Information

I teach Fundamentals of Speech Communication (three credit hours). This is an introductory course in oral communication which concentrates on improving speaking and listening both for individual and group activities. It includes interpersonal, intercultural, small-group, and public speaking. This class is a statewide-requirement for any student that graduates with an Associate of Arts or technical degree. I teach this course in three formats: hybrid, lab, and online. I no longer teach strictly traditional courses; all courses have an online component. We are using a custom version of Pearson's text *Public Speaking Handbook*, by Beebe and Beebe, and a customized version of MySpeechLab, engineered to work with our learning management system, ANGEL. The Beebe book presents well with online components and we liked that Pearson put the purchasing options and decision-making in the students' hands at a reasonable cost. The text's spiral notebook format offered our students a smaller, easy-to-use book that was more portable and affordable, as they were requesting.

### Assessment

Student performance is assessed by a number of factors: participation (homework and attendance), speeches (giving speeches, presentations, and a commemorative written speech), reflective discussion forums, and two tests. MySpeechLab assignments count for about 30% of the final grade.

### Implementation

MySpeechLab is a sandbox where instructors can pick and choose the tools and features they want to incorporate into the course. I use a tremendous amount of the videos—the classic videos as well as the student videos—for evaluations and for discussion forums. I also use the Watch and Explore sections to get students to look at different questions and explore and answer them. MediaShare is 100% required for my online students. Prior to this, our online teachers were having speeches delivered by students in person or via snail mail, which was inconvenient and an inefficient use of time and energy! Students in my online courses must submit three speeches via MediaShare and all speeches are visible to students online. I have not yet explored peer-to-peer feedback on MySpeechLab, but that will definitely be a component of my use in the future.

### Benefits

As an instructor, the most important question I ask myself is, "Are my students learning?" And I have to say, I see my students learning so much better using online components. My students are giving me much better first speeches and they are better understanding speech concepts. Teaching a hybrid course, I cannot conceivably go over all the information that students need in class, so I tell them from the beginning that they must teach themselves. When students are absolutely expected to be independent learners, they actually become independent learners.

### Conclusion

I will definitely continue to use MySpeechLab and its many wonderful tools. As the instructor, my challenge is to get to the point that I am savvy enough to teach my students how to use the tools on MySpeechLab as well. My students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and many are very resistant to technology. Some have never touched a computer. If we are into the fifth week of class and some of my students still haven't logged in to MySpeechLab, I will go online and will re-open things for them. I am compassionate but firm about the necessity of using the technology. My objective is to get them to use online components so that they will keep using them in school. Looking at the trends in the country, community college is where the vast majority of students are going for their first two years. MySpeechLab allows me to nurture my students into feeling comfortable with the kinds of tools they're going to have to use at a four-year college. I tell my students, "This is an absolute: by the time you've finished my class, not only will you have accomplished your communication goals, but you will also be an online learner."