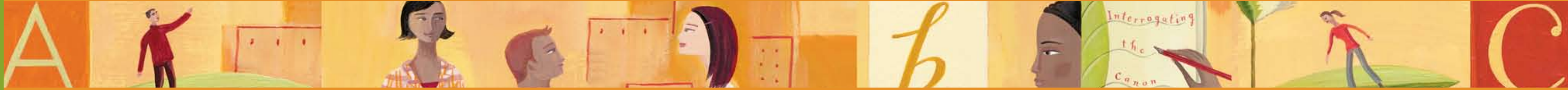


Faculty Showcase '06

Sponsored by Academic Technology at Simmons College



Technology at the Crossroads



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Goals

- Build an online community for the Technology at the Crossroads Program via the web in a password-protected environment
- Provide an arena for communication and collaboration among all program participants
- Establish a space for showcasing information and research findings

Project Overview

Technology at the Crossroads (T@C) is an urban ecology project, a technology project, and a project to raise awareness about careers in technology and science. Students use technology — geographic information systems and global positioning systems — to assist in investigations in urban ecology. As students do studies in urban ecology and learn to use GIS and GPS, they meet scientists and technologists and learn about the careers that use these technologies.

During the summer, the students participate in the Greater Boston Tree Inventory and gather tree census data in Boston's South End neighborhood. They use ArcPad on a hand-held PDA to record the census data and they use the GPS to locate trees with and without street addresses. Students learn to use the desktop GIS to analyze the data they have collected. During the school year, the student teams select an urban ecology project in their community to investigate, using GIS and GPS technology.



Throughout the school year, students develop a research project about the tree inventory or other questions that come up for them about urban ecology as they work on the Greater Boston Forest Inventory during the summer. As part of this research project, they use ArcPad, ArcGIS, GPS, and WebCT Vista to stay connected as a community. Included in their projects are civic calls to action in which students consider ways to bring about positive environmental changes in their community.

Applications Beyond

WebCT Vista makes it possible for our project to provide an online space for information-sharing and community development that meets the needs of both Simmons and non-Simmons participants. This is particularly important because it is not easy for project participants to get together in the same physical location. Sharing of ideas among community members is greatly facilitated via the Discussion Boards. Dissemination of information is also facilitated because the project leader can easily post materials for all to view and review. A guest specialist can present information in real time to the entire community via the Chat Rooms in a virtual classroom environment.

