

The Wireless Project

A Nomination for the Innovation of the Year Program, 2004

A Description of the Innovation [The Team](#) [Summary](#)

Glendale Community College has been a leader in providing computer network services to students and employees throughout the Information Age, with innovations such as the High Tech Centers and the Instructional Palette gaining national recognition. In fact, *Yahoo! Internet Life* ranked GCC among the “most wired” colleges in the country a couple of years ago.

Ironically, shaking off those famous wires is the next major breakthrough in expanding the benefits of technology within the campus community.

Connecting to services such as the World Wide Web or course materials on the Academic Network used to mean working at a desk, where computer equipment could be attached to network cables plugged into a wall. Imagine, instead, finding a shady spot in the green grass of the beautiful Glendale campus to settle down and look up articles in the college library database, deliver an assignment directly to an instructor, or make use of the on-line Enrollment Services. That is what GCC students are already doing with their own book-sized laptop and notebook computers, as these devices become increasingly common and more affordable. The Wireless Project allows them to take full advantage of this technology, extending the power of the campus network from the indoor computer labs to their own free hands.

The Information Services departments at GCC pioneered wireless networking for instructional purposes with the successful implementation of cordless, traveling laptop computer labs in the Physical Sciences building, where the freedom from more cables has been a necessity. In the Fall 2003 semester, the “zones” of wireless access were expanded to include areas surrounding nine buildings in the central corridor of the campus, including the Student Union. With this new development, any registered student or employee with compatible equipment can log on to the wireless network -- using their existing Instructional Palette accounts -- to share in campus Internet access and the files on the Academic Network.

The Wireless Project has a positive impact on the education of students according to the following criteria, relating to the Values, Mission, Vision, and Goals of Maricopa Community Colleges as follows:

- **Quality** (*Value Education*): Wireless access has already brought the value of computer labs to students in classes outside of the typical computer lab environment. The new implementation of the Wireless Project extends this value to even more students using many more on-line learning applications and student services.
- **Efficiency** (*Value Responsibility*): The Wireless Project ushers in a highly efficient era of campus networking, with fewer space and infrastructure concerns restricting the environments in which students and employees can use on-line campus resources. Previously, these environments were limited to the seating and placement of the computer labs.
- **Effectiveness** (*Value Responsibility*): The Wireless Projects adds value to the institution in a way that compares to the installation of the High Tech Centers; yet the wireless network

largely involves allowing students to tap into the network using their *own* laptop and notebook computers. This development will also align with the strategic planning of the future Glendale campus, where it includes the speculated setup of multiple Internet cafés to enhance student life and study opportunities.

- **Learning** (*Value Students*): The early stages of the Wireless Project have already impacted numbers of students in Applied Sciences labs, while the newly expanded wireless access is still in the process of catching on. The web site at <http://www.gc.maricopa.edu/wireless> explains how the system works, who can access it, and the standard equipment needed for it.
- **Creativity** (*Value Excellence*): This project includes equipment that is part of the modern computer marketplace, such as the wireless network card that must be purchased and plugged into a laptop to access the network. For the success of the Wireless Project, Information Services personnel devised a way to make such equipment work out of scope in an original manner. Technology from different vendors is made to work together in order to control the costs of this resource, and to provide a relatively secure access that takes no special setup on the student's wireless device.
- **Timeliness** (*Value Excellence*): The Wireless labs at GCC have been a proven success since spring of 2001. The expansion of the wireless network to include students' own equipment on campus within the last few months comes just as the compatible equipment is becoming more common, available and affordable to college students who appreciate the cutting edge of technology.
- **Collaboration** (*Value Excellence*): The success of the Wireless Project is the result of collaboration and cooperation between faculty, Information Services personnel, and the students who have helped create the demand for this exciting new service. The continuous improvement of this resource will continue to depend on constant communication between these areas of the campus community.
- **Replication** (*Value Excellence*): The methods used to make the Wireless Project a reality can be shared with any campus interested in replicating the system.