

Mobile Learning Program Satisfaction Results University of West Florida

Under this contract, The University of West Florida (UWF) is creating an end-to-end mobile learning system for military personnel to participate in education courses where ever they may be. The Statement of Work identifies continued development on mobile learning degree programs for military personnel pursuing education opportunities while ashore, at sea, or deployed. UWF will work in partnership with the Services and other educational institutions to develop a continuum of education between lower divisions to upper division to graduate education using mobile learning technologies.

Active duty military students participating in these courses had the option of completing one of three for-credit certificate programs that had been redesigned to meet the needs of mobile learning technologies. Certificate programs included:

- Arabic Language and Culture (lower division)
- Technology Systems Support (upper division)
- Human Performance Technology (graduate)

Students participating in this program were deployed all over the world on-board ships, on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, in Japan, on submarines and ships, and those in the U.S. that deploy frequently.






Figure 1: Students onboard Ship in Courses



Figure 2: Student in Iraq in courses

Goal 1: To provide an end-to-end solution for delivering education to deployed military personnel.

A protocol was developed to support the end-to-end solution that includes Student Support, Course Support and Shipping and Tracking:

	<h3>Student Support</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mobile Learning Advisor• Web Portal• Customer Relations Management System
	<h3>Course Support</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Phone, email instructor• Course guides• Parallel online learning materials
	<h3>Shipping & Tracking</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shipping PDAs• ESO or other learning specialist role• SD card, course materials, and device return process

Student Support

- A student services support model that includes a dedicated Mobile Learning Advisor to be the single point of access for the student's student services needs. A CRM was used to track

ongoing dialog with the students, monitoring was done routinely to support student needs and to interface with instructor with needed.

- A web portal was also developed to respond to student information about the program as well as FAQ support through the CRM (Ask UWF) for more detailed information anytime needed.
- A monthly start date was initiated to support unusual deployment schedules.

Course Support

- Development of tool, eLON to support the development of reusable learning objects to be exported into a Learning Management System as well as to mobile learning device. Year 1, PDA's were used.
- A CRM module was created for the course instructors to track and monitor student progress. Since students started and completed at different times, this became quite a tracking process for instructors.

Shipping and Tracking

- Shipping and tracking the devices and ongoing SD cards for the Year 1 PDA program required extensive coordination as materials had to be shipped to Education Services Officers at some locations and at others it was shipped directly to service members. In all locations, examinations were shipped to designated proctors.
- Course content was stored on an SD device and course quiz data and some project data was also stored on the device. Students were required to ship the SD back to the institution upon course completion if no Internet access was available.

Goal 2: To provide for-credit off-duty education to service members where ever they may be using mobile learning devices.

Usability

- The PDA devices used in Year 1 projects were well received and had few difficulties. Occasionally the device suffered short battery life which caused some students with issues. Overall, students participating on the PDA indicated that they liked working on a portable device and would take more courses using this model. It should be noted that the majority of students participating in the PDA certificate programs were graduate-level students and were more self-directed as a result. There were a few students that did not like the size of the device for reading; however, there was an option to increase font size and graphics as needed. Overall, students liked this flexible model.
- The Year 2 project has been well received using a 1.5 pound ultra-portable device. Students are able to access the Internet with this device as well as having the capability to use web conferencing. Students like the device for portability and some online work; however, given this project was focused on Arabic Language and Culture, there were some issues with size of the Arabic character set and the already extremely difficult language.

Retention

- Year 1 program – 100% retention, course completion and desire to take additional courses.
- Year 2 program – 85% retention (course completions). In this audience of military personnel, we have more students on frequent deployment schedules and the courses are lower-division course

work, meaning students less experienced with college coursework with difficult course content and little supervision to ensure completion.

Student comments on the mobile learning programs include:

- "...Just wanted to let you know that I received the course packet early. It was a good thing because a major bridge was damaged due to an insurgent attack that caused delay in our mail deliveries...among other things."
- "...my family emigrated to the U.S. from Argentina, and I grew up speaking Spanish and English at my home in Austin, TX. I graduated from Georgetown University with a BSFS in European and Latin American studies, and lived in France, South America, and DC while studying Turkish, German, and French. I joined the Navy because I crave adventure and travel, and prior to deploying to Iraq as a Riverine Officer, my squadron sent me to an Arabic familiarization course which I found fascinating. I have enrolled in this UWF course because I want to remain plugged into Arabic."
- "I just got back from Iraq in September where I decided that I needed to know more about the complex culture we have entered into. It seems necessary to speak the language before you try to solve any other problems. While I was deployed I spent a lot of time working with our interpreter learning some very rudimentary Arabic. What little I learned went a long way when working with local Iraqis. I hope learning more will go even farther."

Mobile Learning Program Course Satisfaction:

(Likert Scale: 5=Strongly Agree; 4=Agree; 3=Neutral; 2=Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree)

