UC Berkeley extends reach to iPod generation

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Podcasts of selected UC Berkeley course lectures are now available through Apple's iTunes Music Store.

Further extending its curricular reach to the iPod generation, the University of California, Berkeley, today announced "Berkeley on iTunes U," a free service that makes video and audio recordings of a

growing number of course lectures available both on and off campus through Apple Computer's iTunes Music Store.

"Berkeley on iTunes U" is now available by visiting itunes.berkeley.edu, and is open to the public as well as to all UC Berkeley students. The agreement brings the campus's multimedia assets under one UC Berkeley-branded media gateway.

"This reinforces the digital bridge to our students, alumni and the world, and allows us to explore new distribution channels," said Obadiah Greenberg, product manager for webcast.berkeley.edu, UC Berkeley's local site that delivers course and event content as podcasts and streaming video. "It also allows UC Berkeley to broaden what we make available, including video podcasts and other digital material."

In the past year, a half-dozen universities around the country have entered similar agreements with Apple. What is unique about UC Berkeley is that the courses are fully available to the public, without password protection restricting the materials to students and alumni.

"As a public university, UC Berkeley has a tradition of openness," Greenberg said. "It really speaks to our motto - 'Fiat Lux,' Let there be light."

"Coursecasting" is the latest trend in educational technology. It allows students and the general public to download audio and video recordings of class lectures to their computers, iPods and other MP3 players. In this way, students can catch up on missed classes, whether they're doing laundry, climbing the Stairmaster or stuck in traffic.

"I can pull out my iPod at any time, whether I'm in the car, or on the plane, or on the treadmill, and go over the material that I didn't quite understand or just listen to the parts that interested me. Plus, I like to

listen to the professor's laugh," said UC Berkeley freshman Danielle Ownbey.

"Berkeley on iTunes U" advances UC Berkeley's history of sharing knowledge through technology. For more than a decade, the campus has made its academic content available to a limited audience. In 2001, its Educational Technology Services (ETS) division began webcasting lectures and special events to students and the public. Last year, ETS began podcasting course lectures. Since then, more faculty members have been signing on to the program.

This semester, webcast.berkeley has offered 30 courses as podcasts, including "Foundations of American Cyberculture," "Introduction to Chemistry," "Wildlife Ecology" and "Introductory Physics."

Once you subscribe to a course through "Berkeley on iTunes U," the latest course material is automatically delivered to your "podcatcher." Users can also browse and download individual files. On the classroom end, UC Berkeley's podcasting system is automated and remotely controlled.

"All the instructor has to do is show up and turn on the microphone," Greenberg said.

Indeed, the global nature of podcasting has taken teaching to a whole new level, and audience.

"At each lecture, I feel that I am presenting European history not just to my students but to the world," said UC Berkeley history professor Thomas Laqueur, who has received positive feedback from subscribers in Sweden, India and China, among other countries.

Source: UC Berkeley