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## West Texas lessons going live

### Classes broadcast between two camp uses!

By David Pittman

**West Texas A&M University** students Robert Hill, from left, Nathan Barrett and Even McKinney participate in the teleconference economics class on the Amarillo campus.

**West Texas A&M** University economics professor **Duane Rosa** lectures - like so many of his peers - behind a podium and in front of a dry-erase board.

But now students **18** miles away, can follow his every word, on the **10th** floor of Amarillo's Chase Tower.

A new video telecommunications system at **WT** allows professors to teach classes from Canyon, while being heard and seen, in Amarillo classrooms and vice versa.

**WT** has used the technology this semester as a way to expand the reach of its Amarillo Center, which offers a few mostly business-related and graduate classes taught in the Chase Tower.

**This is the second semester of the Amarillo classes.**

"It's convenient to the people who are here because we are able to offer more classes," said Ken Langston, lead technician for what **WT** calls its "**smart classrooms.**"

Of the 52 classes **WT** offers at its Amarillo Center, **15** have video-conferencing capabilities, said Amarillo Center Director Julie Imke.

**Students and even professors can jump back and forth from either location for the class.**

"What I've told students is, you can choose to be in either Amarillo or Canyon," said Rosa, who typically has about **10** students in Amarillo for his class. "I haven't gotten any negative comments back from students."

Although he lives in Amarillo, Rosa teaches most of his **2** economics classes that use the technology from Canyon.

Technology has advanced since Rosa started teaching at **WT 25** years ago. Teaching involves more than just a chalkboard.

Equipment in each classroom costs roughly **\$90,000**, Langston said.

A microphone-equipped necklace allows teachers to roam the classroom and still be heard. Students can press a microphone on their desks to be heard in both classes.

**Two cameras can show students talking so they are seen in both Amarillo and Canyon classrooms.**

Professors also can use their tech-heavy podium to show notes, videos, Web sites, and draw and write on computer screens. About one-third of **WT** professors now record their lectures and post them on their class Web site.

**"We try to make the technology as transparent as possible,"** said Langston, who said the school has simplified and eliminated unnecessary buttons and controls. **"We don't want to distract them from what they do best, which is teaching."**

**WT** has **2** classrooms equipped with the technology, one each in Amarillo and Canyon. Workers at either site also perform checks, before each class, to ensure the conferencing technology is working.

School administrators hope to expand video to other, larger Canyon classrooms and expand Amarillo offerings.

**"I think this is something we will see more of," Rosa said.**