

# SMARTHINKING



## **SMARTHINKING Gets Deep in the Heart of Texas** **UT TeleCampus, *SMARTHINKING Heighten the Distance Learning Experience***

### **The Client**

Texas is a metaphor for big, and it applies to the state's academic network. The University of Texas System comprises 15 academic and medical research facilities, and reaches almost 179,000 students in traditional classrooms.

With a rapidly expanding population, Texas must reach and teach a larger pool of potential graduates. Determined to provide the highest quality online offerings in the state, the UT System opened the virtual classrooms of the UT TeleCampus (UTTC) in the fall of 1999. With a "service first" model supporting faculty and students teaching and learning at a distance, the UT TeleCampus has won nine national and six regional awards.

### **The Challenge**

Providing coursework at a distance is only the first step. UTTC is committed to going beyond the basics of distance learning to create an effective and responsive model that assures students they will have at least as many of the support services that are provided to on-campus students.

"The UT TeleCampus is unique in that we made faculty support and student services core to what we do," said Jennifer Rees, Marketing and Communications Coordinator for UTTC. "Courses and services are specifically designed for an interactive experience. Support services go way beyond simple emails or toll-free assistance."

That's why, when they decided to bring online tutoring into the spectrum of services, the UTTC shopped for the best program in the market. They wanted a state-of-the-art academic experience for online learners. "Our goal was to provide as many services as the student would find on campus," said Susan Smith, Student Services Coordinator for UTTC. "The question we had to ask for each service is whether to provide the service ourselves or outsource it to someone else."

### **The Solution**

When Smith and her colleagues saw SMARTHINKING, they had their answer. SMARTHINKING achieved what UTTC wanted--to mirror the experience of being in a campus learning center, but accessible via the Internet, anytime from anywhere.

"Tutorial services have to be far-reaching, easily accessible, and comprehensive enough to serve a broad variety of student and faculty needs," said Dr. Darcy Hardy, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and UT TeleCampus Director. "The full spectrum of support available from SMARTHINKING made them a viable partner for us in providing our students with comparable tutorial support as students would find on a traditional campus."

SMARTHINKING worked jointly with the UT TeleCampus through a number of teleconferences and on-site training sessions to secure the support of faculty, which was vital to the e-tutoring effort. Without their collective acceptance, the program would not have been as effective.

"The students who have used SMARTHINKING's Online Writing Lab appreciate getting two responses to their drafts," said Dawn Rodrigues, professor of English Literature, UT Brownsville. "In general, the tutors' advice complements (and reinforces) my suggestions. They like getting another opinion and also receiving additional help."

Nancy Torres, a TeleCampus student from UT-EI Paso, said using SMARTHINKING was easy. "You just send in your paper and tell them what you want to focus on. Then the tutor replies quickly with quality feedback," she said. "They offered great advice and my drafts kept getting better and better."

SMARTHINKING fit their needs so well because the tutors don't give answers, they teach. In addition to the writing services, SMARTHINKING also offers both real-time and asynchronous assistance in mathematics, statistics, accounting, economics, chemistry and Spanish.

"SMARTHINKING makes the students think through the process to the answer, and that's key," said Rees.

"The entire UTTC system benefits from the economies of scale that come with having us establish these programs," said Smith. "An individual campus might not be able to offer the 24-hour, seven-day online support that UT TeleCampus and SMARTHINKING can, but as a united consortium, the UT System had greater buying power."

**To find out more about SMARTHINKING's work with the University of Texas TeleCampus or SMARTHINKING's hundreds of other school clients, visit [www.smarthinking.com](http://www.smarthinking.com) - or call (888) 430-7429 x-224.**