

Testimonials from teachers and trainers

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Our school has a five-semester program which leads to an associate degree in automotive technology. We have five instructors, about 60 students in first year, and attrition brings the student number in the second year to about 40. I teach one of two second year sections. We have a strong Green Technologies component. Our students get nearly state of the art training in bio fuels, electric drives and battery technology.

I have used Argo as both a presentation tool, working through modules with the whole class, as a classroom lab task when we are in our computer lab (I assist with individuals); and as a homework component. We previously had no "virtual" resources which meant that all of our training aids, test equipment and vehicles were REAL. We did what we could with limited resources in terms of both test equipment and vehicles.

Thus for a class of 22 I had 3 DVOM, 1 labscope and a handful of vehicles of various years, makes and condition. Our video library consists of 80's era video tapes. With Argo every student has uniform access to the virtual meters, components, systems.

I set up three courses each semester, and sort the modules into each course according to level of difficulty. Initially we start with concepts, move to the use of meters and test procedures (we give them a few simulations to keep them excited) and then we move on to object modules and simulations. The A/C material we cover separately during our summer A/C course. I print out their progress reports every week or so, console those that need it, congratulate those that deserve it, and so on. Let them know that completion of the task is more important than the amount of green vs. red they earn. Also you can assign private assignments but I do not recommend letting them have unstructured access to the modules.

The student response has been really good overall. When they get hung up and frustrated, it is important to walk them through the problem so they realize what they missed. Sometimes they fuss, but it is important to emphasize that real cars are every bit as cantankerous as the Argo simulations, if not more so. Homework participation has been very good.

The Argo "point of view" and its instructional method matches mine. We both believe in teaching the same concepts. Argo has accelerated the speed with which students can learn concepts, systems and test procedures. The overall goal - to think logically

- is now achieved sooner and by a higher percentage of the class. Argo has made my job more rewarding, certainly more fun!

I would say "Go for it" to other teachers, but you must immerse yourself in it before you present it to the students. If the students see that you are not comfortable with it, they will use that to object to learning with it.

ABOUT RICH CREGAR

Rich was a Hi-Line European Tech, Service Manager, Instructor for Mercedes-Benz and has been teaching for fifteen years, full time for ten. He is a GlaxoSmithKline Faculty Fellow at the Institute for Emerging Issues of N.C. State University. His main aim is for his students to be proficient techs who understand current technology and can diagnose as well as repair both mechanical, electrical and electronic problems.