



SHARED LEARNING VIA ELECTRONIC CONFERENCING AND EMAIL

Brigitte Burgess

University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602

Linda McGoldrick, Carson-Newman College Jefferson City, TN 37760

The objective of this semester-long teaching experiment was to improve students' professional communication skills in the use of electronic mediums for sending and retrieving accurate professional information.

Students at a Midwestern university had recently completed retail mathematics and were placed in the role of mentors to students at a southern university who were currently enrolled in retail mathematics. Mentors were to assist their partners with assignments and communicate with them regarding the profession. Students at each university were given a one-hour tutorial on computer conferencing, email, and electronic etiquette.

In addition to communication between students and professors, two department store buyers also participated throughout the semester. Having the opportunity to communicate with industry professionals gave all students the opportunity to network and ask retail buying and computer questions to practitioners.

Professors at each university determined their own method of assessing and monitoring the communication process. Outcomes of this experience were very positive. Mentors rated the experience as being valuable and recommended its continued use. Professors at both universities were pleased with the responsibility and initiative taken by the students. Students also responded positively to having industry professionals participate in the experiment and suggested that more be added in the future.