VoiceThread

1. Description of technology, including functionality and features (for students and faculty)

VoiceThread is a web-based tool for creating and sharing <u>narrated</u> slide decks similar to PowerPoint.

- Faculty and students can upload images, existing PowerPoint files, or a variety of other file types (PDF, some video types, etc.) and then narrate these using their computer headset.
- While there are a number of similar "web-based slide deck tools on the market today, VoiceThread is the only one that integrates an extra layer of interactivity by allowing others to comment on any screen of the original VoiceThread. In an online and environment, this feature can lessen the isolation or disconnectedness of an asynchronous learning situation.
- Use cases tested within this pilot included Week One Introductions, course content delivery, alternative platforms to the standard course paper or project, and collaboration on group projects.

2. Objectives of the pilot

A. Determine whether the basic slide deck creation, and narration by creators/commenters is fully functional, glitch-free, and easy to manage by creators/authors and commenters/collaborators
B. Determine whether faculty and students appreciate/prefer this tool as an option within courses
C. Determine whether VoiceThread is scalable at the institution level based upon support currently provided by the vendor.

3. Where was it piloted and for how long

VoiceThread	JULY 2014	SEPT 2014	NOV 2014	JAN 2015	MAR 2015	MAY 2015
Chamberlain	3 Instructors 3 Courses	8 Instructors 8 Courses	1 Instructor 1 Course	Opted Out		
Carrington			Sandbox	5 Instructors 5 Courses	8 Instructors 8 Courses	Opted Out
DeVry	Sandbox	2 Instructors 2 Courses	11 Instructors 21 Courses	14 Instructors 28 Courses	34 Instructors 57 Courses	21 Instructors 40 Courses

4. Results / metrics of the pilot, any other facts regarding usage of the tool that can be provided.

A. Determine whether the basic slide deck creation, and narration by creators/commenters is fully functional, glitch-free, and easy to manage by creators/authors and commenters/collaborators

Feedback from faculty was widely skewed regarding ease of use. Faculty who previously possessed some basic knowledge of file types (i.e., the difference between a JPG image and an MP3 audio file and an MP4 video file) experienced little difficulty in using the tool. This group even commented that the step-by-step directions were too extensive and detail-oriented.

- Faculty with little experience with different files types commonly used in multimedia creation struggled with the VoiceThread interface and commented that it was not intuitive enough.
- Most of the same group followed the step-by-step directions up to a certain point, but then failed to follow the final steps about how to effectively share their creation.
- Student experience closely paralleled the instructor's understanding of file types used in multimedia creation and ability to troubleshoot.

B. Determine whether faculty and students appreciate/prefer this tool as an option within courses

Midway through the pilot, it was evident that many instructors were content to utilize VoiceThread at the lowest level of integration (replacing the text paragraph in their Week One Introduction to their students).

- Because this is a Required but Not Graded item, several were disappointed that more students did not opt in to follow their lead and create their student Week One Introduction.
- Faculty frequently complained that students will not do anything that is not both required and graded.

A small number of faculty opted to eventually use VoiceThread at higher levels of integration, as in course content delivery, alternative platforms to the standard course paper or project, collaboration on group projects, and even faculty collaboration on course revisions. Within this group, feedback was again widely skewed.

- One "very seasoned" instructor repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction over how few students viewed/commented upon his "Keys to Success in This Course".
- Another instructor fully utilized the tool to create an elaborate and lengthy presentation about one confusing topic in his course, which he then exported to his private YouTube channel to archive and reuse; he reported his delight that VoiceThread makes it much easier to edit or re-record individual sections of larger presentations, rather than having to re-record the entire presentation with every edit.
- Numerous faculty struggled with the fact that they did not have permissions/access to the parts of eCollege/LearningStudio such as the Syllabus or Assignments page, so that they could make it clear to students that VoiceThread was an alternative to the standard paper or project.

C. Determine whether VoiceThread is scalable at the institution level based upon support currently provided by the vendor.

Based upon faculty survey data, VoiceThread's interface proved to be time and effort intensive for the typical user. However, a new version of the tool became available (but not to our piloting faculty) in February, and this tool is much more intuitive and clean. Piloting faculty would immediately see the difference, as all VoiceThread users will be forced to the new interface by August 1.

Faculty and students who have the most basic understanding of file types should be able to use the new interface with ease.

Other issues to consider:

VoiceThread does not work on Internet Explorer, which they deem to be an unstable browser. A fair percentage of DeVry students and faculty use IE, and require HelpDesk support to download and install Firefox or Chrome.

HelpDesk staff would require training on VoiceThread to be able to support faculty and students if VoiceThread is widely adopted.