

e-FLETC

Leveraging Technology to Meet Emergent Needs

By John Stamp

FLETC's Online Campus, or e-FLETC, creates the ability to provide rapid dissemination of training products to meet emergent officer safety issues.

In 2014, the threat of an Ebola epidemic gripped the country as medical and civilian personnel suspected of being infected with the hemorrhagic virus were traveling on commercial airlines from West Africa to the United States. Several infected patients in large cities such as Dallas and Boston had had contact with other people in their communities. One case in particular involved a 42-year old man from Monrovia, Liberia, who had traveled to Dallas, Texas, on a visa to visit family in September 2014. On September 25, he sought treatment for a possible Ebola infection at a local hospital, but hospital staff sent him home. In the following days the patient's symptoms intensified and emergency personnel ultimately transported him to a local hospital where he was diagnosed with the Ebola virus and later died.

Follow-up investigation required operations by the Dallas Police Department at the apartment complex where the patient had resided and a search for a homeless man who had had contact with him. This incident put first responders and emergency services in the direct path of this virulent and deadly disease.

At the same time the Ebola crisis was unfolding, FLETC was standing up its Online Campus. To test the Online Campus's ability to rapidly meet emerging training needs,

Division Chief Michael Reese and Branch Chief Joseph Augeri took on the challenge of developing a training/awareness program to prepare first responders who may come into contact with civilians suffering Ebola infection. They set a timeline of 24 hours (three working days) from inception to dissemination of a finished product. Within three days the Online Campus team created a training module complete with a history of the virus; interactive graphics; a status update; and identification, containment, and communications protocols. The FLETC Online Campus had passed its first test.

That example embodies a major goal of the Online Campus according to Augeri, that is, to respond timely to emergent threats and circumstances that demand making pertinent training rapidly available to the full law enforcement community. Ultimately, the Online Campus will provide training in four distinct modes:

- **On-demand training:** web-based training that FLETC stores within a virtual learning environment and delivers on the student's schedule;
- **Asynchronous instructor-led training:** an online class with pre-determined duration where trainees and facilitators seldom interact in real time. Students complete and submit assignments online and can collaborate in a forum setting; instructors interact with students and evaluate assignments online.
- **Instructor-led training, synchronous to the classroom:** allows the instructor to be geographically separate from the students,

who are gathered in one location; normally requires another instructor or facilitator on site with the students;

- **Instructor-led training, synchronous to the student:** allows the instructor to provide real time training while the instructor and students are at various locations. This mode provides one-on-one instructor-to-student interaction/feedback as well as remediation and testing capabilities.

FLETC's Online Campus currently has 85 distinct programs available through the Homeland Security Information Network, with plans to have 100 separate training programs and instructional videos available by the end of Fiscal Year 2015. Division Chief Reese point out that on average FLETC serves 65,000 students a year via the four FLETC locations, export training, and at international locations. FLETC anticipates that by 2020, e-FLETC will expand throughput by an additional 50,000 students a year.

In addition to providing DHS with a mechanism to quickly disseminate training in high priority areas and significantly expanding FLETC's reach, FLETC anticipates that the Online Campus will create cost savings in travel expenses and will enable FLETC to provide web-based training to students prior to attending in-residence training programs. Providing online instruction prior to attendance would enable FLETC to provide students with more time practicing methods and techniques in the lab environment.

As a hypothetical example, Reese noted that FLETC could adapt firearms training involving weapons nomenclature and theory to an online environment that students could complete prior to arrival at FLETC. That time that would have been spent in FLETC classrooms could then shift to the firearms range where students could hone field techniques with more time in live practice. Additionally, the Online Campus content is compatible with mobile devices. Therefore, officers in remote areas can complete training on their schedules via smartphones or tablets without an office and dedicated computer.

The FLETC Online Campus will also serve as a force multiplier for FLETC's partners. It enables partner organizations to develop and distribute agency specific training programs directly to their personnel. This can lead

to significant cost savings in that partner organizations can conduct online training via FLETC's system without investing in individual online training systems.

Finally, the Online Campus will offer the capability for professional information sharing via virtual forums. These forums will be places where law enforcement officers and agents can collaborate and share events, learning experiences, and refinements to various techniques, which will not only improve their own skills but also will enhance the collective knowledge and skills of the law enforcement community.

To ensure its instructors are well versed in the job tasks specific to online instruction, FLETC is developing an Online Instructor Training Program. As part of that process, FLETC recently conducted a Curriculum Development Conference, bringing together subject matter experts from FLETC and its partner organizations to identify instructional skills needed in the online environment. During this conference, participants determined that FLETC will deliver and administer the Online Instructor Training Program using instructor-led training that is asynchronous to the virtual learning environment. They validated the concept that FLETC should deliver training in the same environment and using the same tools graduates will use then they administer and facilitate FLETC and partner organization online programs.

Policing in the 21st century demands flexibility, variability, and timely response to emergent threats. FLETC's Online Campus provides flexibility in training and an ability to rapidly disseminate training content to the wide law enforcement community at the state, local, federal, and international levels. Online training and hybrid systems incorporating both brick and mortar and computer-based training are the future of professional training. FLETC's Online Campus team is at the cutting edge in bringing FLETC training to a broader audience through all levels of government.