



Gardening for the Globe

Longwood Gardens scales elearning to engage a worldwide audience with D2L solutions

The great gardens of the world are a treasure for everyone to share. Longwood Gardens set out to attract new audiences and inspire people of all ages to engage with its unique botanical knowledge and history by building online learning resources that empower learners worldwide.

Company

Founded by Pierre S. du Pont in 1906, Longwood Gardens is one of the premier botanical gardens in the United States, attracting more than 1.5 million visitors each year. Longwood also has a strong education focus, and aims to help people around the world learn more about plants and horticulture.

At a Glance

Client: Longwood Gardens

Employees: 400

Learners: 36,500

Industry: Non-Profit— Botanical and Zoological Garden

Challenge:

- Scale up education programs to reach out to the wider global community
- Help learners engage instantly by delivering a compelling online experience
- Look beyond traditional audiences and create open courses that all learners can engage with

Solution:

- D2L Learning Platform
- D2L Capture
- D2L Learning & Creative Services

Result:

- Webcasting seminars and symposiums open Longwood up to new learners worldwide
- Flexible online tools help learners engage with courses in their own time and place
- Over 5500 learners registered for one of Longwood's new open elearning courses in 12 weeks

“It was important to us to build a partnership with an elearning company that could help us implement our online programs and find solutions to our learning objectives, D2L had both the technology and the educational expertise we needed.”

Susan Caldwell, Instructional Designer & Learning Techniques Manager, Longwood Gardens

Challenge

From its earliest days, Longwood Gardens has put community engagement at the heart of its mission and vision. Its founder, Pierre S. du Pont, fostered a vision of promoting a passion for plants, and Longwood is committed to continuing his living legacy today.

Sarah Cathcart, vice president of education at the Gardens, explains: “If we want to preserve the world’s great gardens, it’s vital for us to inspire a new generation to appreciate horticulture and garden design. That means reaching out to a much broader community— not just people who visit Longwood itself, but new learners across North America and around the world.”

Expanding reach to a global audience

Longwood Gardens realized that an online learning platform would fit well with its strategic plan to share its intellectual capital with the wider world.

“Anyone, anywhere can benefit from experiencing the Gardens, so we wanted to open up our education programs and scale them to meet the needs of a truly global audience,” says Susan Caldwell, Longwood Gardens’ instructional designer and learning techniques manager. “When we did a survey to gauge people’s interest in online learning, the response was overwhelmingly positive.”

Creating an immediate, compelling experience

In a world where smartphones and social media provide instant access to information and entertainment, Longwood also knew that it needed to bring more immediacy to its learning programs. Caldwell comments: “We knew that technology could enable us to provide an instant view into our world at Longwood, and communicate our knowledge to a much larger audience than we have traditionally been able to reach. By providing a great online experience, we would help audiences understand the relevance of our work, and its importance to global horticulture.”



Solution

To deliver its online learning platform, Longwood Gardens decided to work with D2L.

Opening up to new learners

The Gardens is now using the D2L learning platform across all its educational programs. In particular, the team has used the solution to formulate a set of new open online courses that are available to any learner, anywhere in the world.

“Cumulatively, we’ve already had thousands of learners experience the D2L platform, and with the open courses initiative, we’re hoping to reach out to tens of thousands more,” says Matt Ross, director of continuing education.

A compelling online experience

Caldwell comments: “The D2L Creative Services team helped us design a new homepage for our elearning site that mirrors the experience of being on the Longwood Gardens website. It’s a seamless, intuitive transition, which gives our learners an extraordinary virtual guest experience.” Ross adds: “The D2L solutions help to extend the experience of our learners, giving them access to resources, quizzes, and self-study guides that they can use to supplement other types of learning and practical experience.”

Sharing knowledge with the world

Longwood is also using D2L Capture to support its education programs with video content.

“We use D2L Capture internally to train our volunteers, to capture our town-hall meetings for all of the staff, and to webcast to the wider world,” says Caldwell. “We host a number of educational seminars and symposiums throughout the year, and we stream them with D2L Capture so that anyone anywhere can participate.”

A fruitful collaboration

Cathcart puts the success of the project down to a deep-rooted collaboration between the Gardens and its technology partner: “One of the primary advantages of working with D2L is the relationship that we have fostered: it’s absolutely been built on trust. The D2L team’s support in building technology solutions enables us to be creative and retain the essence of Longwood learning in everything we do.”



Result

With the online learning platform in place, Longwood Gardens can reach out to new audiences anywhere in the world.

Ross says: “One of our objectives with using D2L for our open course platform is to reach a global audience. Additionally, we’re looking at measuring our success by the impact that our programs have on the global community.”

Data-driven learning experiences

As a mark of the success of this approach, one of its new open courses has attracted 5,500 new learners in just twelve weeks — significantly surpassing the team’s target.

Caldwell sees the popularity of the open courses as a first step in building even more engaging learning experiences in the future: “We’re really looking forward to the results of our open courses program — the platform is going to give us useful data about how learners are engaging with the material, which will provide direction for our future programming.”

Reaching out beyond traditional borders

Ross comments: “Wherever our learners live, in whatever part of the world, the D2L platform provides an opportunity to experience the beauty of the Gardens in their own home and in their own time.” He concludes: “At Longwood Gardens, we’re trailblazing a way for public gardens and other cultural institutions to reach beyond their borders and attract a global audience using the D2L platform.”