

### FAST FACTS

**Names:** Professor Jill Feinstein,  
Richland Community College  
Professor Wendy Gideon,  
Palomar College

**Institutions:** Richland Community  
College, Decatur, IL  
Palomar College, San Marcos, CA

**Challenge:** Quickly transition  
campus classes online due to  
COVID-19.

**Solution:** Carolina Distance  
Learning® customized lab kits for  
home use

**Results:** Instructors evaluate  
the different options available  
and add or replace specific labs  
based on curricula, so that their  
online class labs cover the same  
topics and techniques as their  
on-campus labs.

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## Carolina Distance Learning® Labs: Fast, Customized Transitions to Online Courses

Two professors explain how Carolina Distance Learning enabled them to quickly get online classes up and running with custom lab kits specifically designed for home use.

In early 2020, colleges throughout the country found themselves facing the unexpected challenge of how to quickly transition classes from on campus to online due to COVID-19. Professors were suddenly tasked with developing new online classes and labs. They needed a source for hands-on labs designed for home use and backed by responsive expert support.

Professor Jill Feinstein teaches life sciences at Richland Community College in Decatur, IL. She and her colleagues found themselves needing to develop several online courses for the summer term, including her Human Anatomy and Physiology 2 course. Feinstein volunteered to research distance learning resources for her division. She spoke with Carolina Distance Learning® and two other science education suppliers, and quickly discovered that working with Carolina offered many advantages. “I did the research for everyone in our division and then we all met with the dean,” Feinstein explains. “Based on my research and discussions, I strongly recommended we go with Carolina.” After hearing her findings, the dean and her colleagues agreed that Carolina was the best choice.

Professor Wendy Gideon found herself in a similar situation. Gideon teaches life sciences at Palomar College in San Marcos, CA. She needed to develop an online version of Biology 101 for the summer term. “I was the only instructor willing to look into options for summer,” she says, “and some even proposed building the labs ourselves, including all of the instructional manuals.” But Gideon already had her hands full trying to finish up her spring classes online. She began discussions with science



*Science learning continues, even during school closures due to COVID-19.*

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education suppliers. Like Feinstein, Gideon found that Carolina stood head-and-shoulders above the others.

### **Responsive and Timely**

Carolina Distance Learning® understood that the sudden demands being placed on professors meant they needed not only good support, but also timeliness and flexibility.

One of the first things Feinstein and Gideon noticed about Carolina was the prompt response to their inquiries. As Gideon describes, “I inquired with a couple other companies, but honestly, Carolina had the best customer service in terms of getting back to me in a timely manner.”

Carolina also worked with Gideon and Feinstein to meet their timing needs. Students needed their lab kits for the summer term. But the professors also needed time to investigate their options, confer with the dean and faculty in their divisions, and design customized kits with labs that fit their curricula. “The other companies I talked with wanted a nearly immediate decision and could not build a custom kit for me,” explains Feinstein, “but at that point I was still doing the research, and I hadn’t even met with my fellow faculty to let them know what I found.” Carolina adjusted to their needs so they could make fully informed decisions and design a customized lab kit for each of their courses.

### **Transparent and Cost-Effective**

As Feinstein and Gideon researched potential lab resources, they began by looking at available labs and their costs. They found Carolina’s transparency on lab



*Professors enjoy the benefit of Carolina’s expertise and support as they design their customized lab kits.*

contents and pricing very helpful in their decision making. “What I appreciated the most was that Carolina helped me understand the costs for building my own kit,” says Gideon. “I really appreciated that they had the cost of each lab on their website. The other companies didn’t, which made it confusing.”

The professors discovered that the cost of each lab is only one part of the overall cost of a kit. Shipping fees must also be taken into account. Feinstein was

pleased to find that Carolina made their kits very affordable by minimizing shipping costs and providing a voucher ordering option.

In that option, a kit is assigned a unique class code and voucher. The school bookstore sells the vouchers to students when they enroll in the class. Students then redeem the vouchers for kits at the Carolina website. Kits are shipped directly to students. This is an innovative way to avoid the logistics and costs of stocking and returning unused kits. If, for example, only 20 out of 30 vouchers are used, the school bookstore is simply refunded the cost of the unused vouchers—no shipping fees are incurred.

Faculty can also opt to have students purchase their kits directly from Carolina via a webpage created exclusively for their class. With this option, students use a credit card to make their purchases online and the kits, as in the voucher system, are shipped directly to students’ homes. While the voucher option allows students to use financial aid to make their purchases, this option only allows credit card payment.

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## Customization and Expertise

Having a lab kit that includes investigations tied to the course curriculum is an important part of a successful distance learning class. Educators can be a bit intimidated when they undertake their first lab kit design, so Carolina has experienced educators available to help them through the process. Gideon built two kits, each with nine different labs. “There was a good selection of labs to choose from, and the rep that I worked with made me feel really comfortable with designing the kits,” she reports.

Feinstein also recounts the excellent assistance she and her colleagues received from the Carolina Distance Learning® team. “We sent our syllabi to our Carolina rep and she put together a proposed list of labs for each specific course based on her experience with other instructors of similar courses,” describes Feinstein. “She also provided alternative labs for us to consider.” Each instructor was supplied with a pdf file for all proposed and alternative labs, which gave them the opportunity to fully assess each lab. That depth of information allowed the instructors to see the different options available and add or replace specific labs, so that their online class labs covered the same topics and techniques as their on-campus labs did.

## Preparation and Support

After finalizing their kit designs, Gideon and Feinstein and her colleagues promptly received each lab’s instructor guide along with instructor supplies. The lab guides contain an introduction; step-by-step student instructions; templates and suggestions for data tables, graphs, and lab reports; and suggested quiz questions.

Gideon was very pleased in not having to write the instructional guides herself or come up with the supply lists and figure out how to coordinate it all with her students. As she aptly puts it, “That would have been oodles of work for me to do from scratch!” She was equally pleased to receive instructor supplies for each lab, allowing her to experiment with them before the summer term began. “Here I was, already playing with these myself in my own kitchen, when the other companies wouldn’t get back to me for weeks.”

As first-time lab kit designers, Feinstein and Gideon are enjoying the benefits of Carolina’s expertise, insight, and flexibility. Now their students can enjoy those same benefits!

**“Based on my research and discussions, I strongly recommended we go with Carolina.”**

**—Professor Jill Feinstein, Richland Community College, Decatur, IL**

## [Explore Kit Options](#)

