

# CSU makes virtual language labs available at 7 campuses

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SANTA ANA, Calif. (AP) -- California State University will provide a virtual interactive language laboratory at seven of its campuses, allowing students to access class from nearly anywhere, officials said Tuesday.

The new labs will allow students to use their home computers or laptops to log into language databases and download learning materials as well as communicate online with professors using Internet voice technologies.

"The system uses the latest technology to allow faculty to reach a wider range of students," said Gary Hammerstrom, CSU assistant vice chancellor.

Foreign language classes typically require students to attend language labs at least once a week to practice pronunciation and grammar to receive credit.

The new labs, which initially will offer French and Japanese, will be installed this semester and made available in January to students on a volunteer basis. The classes will be available to all students next fall, said CSU spokesman Ken Swisher.

In a first-of-a-kind initiative at CSU, the virtual lab was developed jointly by the university and Teleste Educational Ltd. of Miami, which developed the networking capabilities. The only cost to CSU was developing the curriculum and updating the campus computer labs.

If a two-year trial run proves successful, additional languages and campuses will be added, officials said.

"Many of our students work or have other obligations that make it difficult for them to get to campus. If they can do more of their coursework online or through other available technology, it makes it easier," Swisher said.

The announcement comes as the nation's largest university system, which has 360,000 students currently enrolled at its 23 campuses, has seen a drop in the number of students taking foreign language classes, Swisher said. The exception is Spanish classes where enrollment has increased.

Less than 1 percent of CSU students are foreign language majors, he said.

"We may not have enough students at one campus to offer a program. But if you combine students at two, three or four campuses, you have enough to offer it," Swisher said.

The following CSU campuses will offer Japanese through the new labs: Chico, Monterey Bay, Long Beach and San Diego. The campuses at Sacramento, Dominguez Hills and Los Angeles will offer French.