

## **Student's view through Google Glass helps UWO test tech**

by Alex Hummel - Monday, April 07, 2014

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/32870/students-campus-journey-through-google-glass-gives-uwo-chance-to-test-tech/>

There are millions of dollars-worth of investment in powerful teaching, learning and student-services technology integrated into the 14,000-student University of Wisconsin Oshkosh campus.

What's turning heads these days, however, is the pewter-colored sliver of a doo-dad orbiting Kristina Frank's temples.

"It's bridging the gap between communication and technology," said Frank, as a miniature, glow of light illuminated the small "prism" over her right eye. "... I think wearable technology is truly the future."

For Frank, the future is now.

She is a radio-TV-film (RTF) major in her junior year at UW Oshkosh. She's a student intern with the campus's Information Technology Department. And--hard to miss--she's also one of the thousands of pioneering souls in America who have raised hands and (with an approximately \$1,500 purchase) volunteered to serve as "Google Glass Explorers."

Frank wears and uses Google Glass to test it out, documenting and blogging about student life and her academic experience at UW Oshkosh. She has also had the strong backing of the campus's IT department in using and experimenting with Google Glass in her technology-support job.

Part demo, part sociological and classroom-learning experiment, Frank's Google Glass experience is helping UW Oshkosh examine the impact of a technology sure to invade college and university campuses around the globe in the years to come.

"When Kodak cameras first came out, there were resorts and beaches that wouldn't let people use them because they thought there would be creepy people who would take pictures," said Frank, who, in the midst of pursuing her RTF degree, has embraced the role of "ambassador" for a new technology captivating people's curiosity.

"I feel like it's my job to help people understand, not just to 'break down barriers,' but to help people see where the barriers are."

### **Unique opportunity for IT**

Frank's Google Glass exploration presented plenty of opportunities for UW Oshkosh's Information Technology division, where she is a student employee. Division leaders and managers supported her purchase of the technology so that they could not only acclimate themselves to gear students are likely to embrace in the future but also to see how they might, one day, incorporate Google Glass into the tech-

support role on campus.

“I just viewed it as an opportunity,” said Laura Knaapen, UW Oshkosh director of Academic Computing. “We are aware that this type of technology will be more pervasive – as much as we’re dealing with cell phone and other technology that students are bringing to campus. We wanted a preview of the challenges students will face but also what benefits they will see.”

Knaapen credits Frank’s openness in testing Google Glass with giving the IT department a chance to see how staff wearing the technology could more readily interact with future campus clients. Frank said Google Glass’s use of Google Hangouts—a real-time, face-to-face (or, in this case, eye-to-eye) chat between users—could give IT staff a chance to troubleshoot computer issues with a client by overlaying a live support call from the consultant with a walk-through of the client’s “screen.” No keyboard necessary.

“Knowing Kristina and seeing how she’s using it at a work, that’s also been a great experience for us,” Knaapen said, also appreciative of the sociological experiment Frank is willingly subjecting herself to by wearing Google Glass around campus.

“She knows that people are going to react to her differently based,” Knaapen said.

Frank said she does get her share of “strange looks” on campus. People ask to try on the glasses. Others coyly ask if they can snap a “selfie.” “Some people even may wonder, ‘Is that an assistive device?’” And still others wonder if the gizmo is consistently recording them.

“That’s a common misconception,” Frank said. “It can’t.”

Frank said one of the biggest ironies of her Google Glass experience relates to the question of privacy. People wonder whether their words and actions are being perpetually captured. In fact, it is Google Glass’s wearer whose privacy is invaded in these early, experimental days, Frank said. The explorers willingly endure a steady stream of awkward glances and questions.

All part of the experience, Frank said. She welcomes it.

Knaapen said her division is hoping to acquire another pair of Google Glass in the future “so our developers can do some playing with it on the back-end.” Already, UW Oshkosh IT staff members’ ingenuity has earned Google’s attention. They found a network solution that allows Frank to more freely rove the UW Oshkosh campus while wearing Google Glass, remaining connected to the Internet.

“... (Frank) is an amazing individual, both as a student and a worker,” Knaapen said.

## **But what about the classroom?**

Google Glass’s application and implications in the classroom raise an entire new batch of questions. How will professors react? Does wearable, high-powered technology pose new challenges to classroom lectures and learning? Do the new gizmo and future iterations suggest there will need to be some more explicit “rules” and contracts between teachers and students?

“You have to be willing to adapt to new technology,” said Professor Troy Perkins, one of Frank’s RTF faculty instructors. “When I saw this I immediately was, ‘Wow, tell me all about it and your experience with it.’ And I’m sure it’s the same in IT or in any fields that involve computers. It’s not a matter of being offended by it. It’s a matter of ‘this is the next new thing.’ How does it work? What are the possibilities?”

Frank said Perkins has been very supportive of her bringing Google Glass into his classroom. He has applied his disarming sense of humor, too, to help make the technology at home in class; he suggests it may harken the forthcoming “robot apocalypse,” Frank said.

Perkins said while the wearable technology is something new in the classroom, natural questions about recording lectures, discussions and other content is not.

“It’s going to lead to more discussion about what is appropriate and legal and what needs to be clarified with your professor about what can be recorded,” he said. “It’s one thing to record it and take it back and review it for studying. Where you get into legal issues is where you put it up YouTube or distribute that footage... But laptops could be recording video now.”

Ultimately, Perkins, a talented filmmaker, said he sees more opportunity than challenge with Google Glass, particularly in film and media. Frank’s Google Glass exploration has brought the wearable technology’s potential into focus.

“You have to adapt to it,” Perkins said. “You can’t just shut it down. That’s not the way the world works. You find ways to make it useful.”

“This is a new way you’re recording life happening around you, and taking that video and being able to construct it into some sort of story into the future--it almost represents the evolution of digital recording and projection... Is this the next possibility? Now you’re taking content with something that’s attached to your head.”

Frank stressed that Google Glass is still, technically, a prototype. She likes the way it looks, but she acknowledges there will most likely be updates and tweaks to the design and fit. So far, she said she has no complaints. Neither her eyes nor her eagerness to share this new technology with her home campus are tiring.

“I was willing to give up my eyeballs for the opportunity to try these out,” she said.

Learn more:

- [Google Glass](#)