

## Getting Started with 3 Web conferencing Solutions at USF

USF has three web conferencing solutions which can be used as “alternatives” to face-to-face teaching. It is acknowledged that the rich interactive social experience of classroom teaching cannot be completely supplanted by web-conferenced teaching, but it does achieve one overarching goal: It connects the instructor and the students in real-time for direct teaching purposes (i.e., lecture, demonstration, direction and collaboration).

The other components of education: homework, lab, assessments, etc., can be facilitated through Canvas, very easily in many cases.

But for now, let us proceed with quick-start orientations for the three web-conferencing solutions available and supported by USF: Adobe-Connect; Canvas Conferencing (BigBlueButton), and Zoom—the free version. All three of these platforms offer the ability to:

- Lecture
- Demonstrate or present information (PowerPoints or PDFs).
- Share screens (e.g., websites that students should peruse).
- Handle Q & A.
- Controls over the virtual classroom environment (e.g., allowing students who raise their hand an opportunity to speak).
- Accept phone communication instead of computer audio (less so with Adobe Connect).
- And please note:
  - Two of the three platforms allow you to share a video with full sound (BigBlueButton and Zoom).
  - Two of the three platforms allow you to share actual files of any type, including project files (e.g., SPSS files)—Adobe Connect and Zoom.

## Adobe Connect

All USF instructors, both full-time and adjunct, may have access to Adobe Connect free of charge to use as meeting hosts. If you do not already have a username and password, you will need to contact DAT (815 740-5080) or email [dat@stfrancis.edu](mailto:dat@stfrancis.edu) to acquire access, a process that takes only minutes to complete.

Once you have access, here are the steps to get started with a meeting with your students. These steps correlate with what is shown on the [video](#).

<i>Step</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Description of step</i>
1	0:21	Go to our Adobe Connect page at <a href="https://usfconnect8.stfrancis.edu">https://usfconnect8.stfrancis.edu</a>
2		Log in with your username and password.
3	0:28	You will be directed to the Landing Page. Take a few moments to get oriented visually to the interface.
4	:50	Start a new meeting (the blue “Create” button)

## Getting Started with 3 Web conferencing Solutions at USF

5	:54	Fill out the form that creates the meeting, including Title, a unique URL and settings that allow anyone to access the meeting with the URL. Click "Next" to continue and then click "Finish" to get back to the meetings information page that you just edited.
6	1:37	<b>Copy the URL to the meeting and relay that information to your students.</b> Be CLEAR and SPECIFIC in your communication, through the Canvas Inbox, Outlook email, placement of the link on a Canvas course page or module, or combination of the aforementioned.
7	1:50	Before your first class session with Adobe Connect, go to the meeting by clicking on the link, or pasting the link in your browser (Google Chrome or Firefox) and going to the page.
7.1		<i>You may be prompted to enter your username and password as a registered user (not as a guest).</i>
8		For first time users, you will be prompted to download and install the Adobe Connect app, a necessary tool.
9	2:35	After you install the app, you can launch your Adobe Connect meeting.
19		Observe as an Adobe Connect meeting opens in a new window created by the Adobe Connect app (which you can locate on your computer's task bar).
20	3:16	Notice you have layouts on the right in a vertical column. Navigate between these layouts to obtain the best view. <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The "Sharing" layout supports screen sharing, PowerPoint or PDF documents, or a whiteboard.</li><li>2. The Discussion layout supports one or more webcams.</li><li>3. The Collaboration layout supports a whiteboard, and file sharing.</li></ol>
21	3:27	Set up your audio, very simply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Go to the Meetings menu and select Preferences.</li><li>• Under Preferences, choose Microphone and DE-select (uncheck) enhanced audio.</li><li>• Click the microphone icon (white, at the top of the meeting) to generate sound from your voice.</li><li>• From the down arrow next to the mic icon, note that you can adjust your microphone volume so that it is just right.</li></ul>
22	4:22	Start up your webcam; <b>a visual presence is important to establish a social connection!</b> Click "start sharing" to transmit your image.
23	4:54	Note that each rectangle of the meeting (or "pod") has its own flyout menu in the upper right hand corner that shows actions which govern that pod's behavior. For example, in the attendee's pod you can "mute

## Getting Started with 3 Web conferencing Solutions at USF

		all” (a very important troubleshoot to reduce feedback), or you can allow individual attendees access to their microphone (and webcam).
23.1		DO ask your participants to MUTE THEIR MICROPHONE when they are not using it. This will assuredly stop unwelcome feedback or noises. You click the mic icon to toggle on the mute feature, or to toggle it off.
24	5:50	The “share” pod enables you to share your screen. When you do so you will see a small box which collapses into a drawer. This box shows the set of controls that allow you to see the attendees, monitor chat, or stop sharing your screen. Become familiar with this box. Know that if you accidentally minimize it, you can restore it by clicking the Adobe Connect icon on your taskbar.
25	7:04	End the meeting from the Meeting Menu, or just click out of the meeting to leave it.

## BigBlueButton

“BigBlueButton” is the brand name of the web-conferencing solution that is automatically available in Canvas under “Conferences” in the menu of a course. The written steps that follow correlate with the times that they are shown on the [video](#).

<i>Step</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Description of step</i>
1	0:16	Click “Conference” in the Canvas course menu
2	0:19	Type in a name for the conference (e.g., Your name Virtual Office Hours, or Class #)
3	0:46	Know that all students in your course will receive an email invitation to join the conference, (but you should let them know ahead of time through specific communications that the session is coming up).
4		Note also that recordings of BigBlueButton meetings are retained for 2 weeks and then they disappear forever.
5	1:00	When the time comes, click “Start” and the BigBlueButton meeting opens on its own. There are no apps to download.
6	1:13	Test your audio. You will be prompted to “allow” your audio to proceed.
7	1:27	The interface is simple but it’s “noisy” with a lot of text and extraneous information. Notice that the sharing rectangle has automatic slides and that you “draw” on it with whiteboard tools.
8	2:03	Turn on your web camera. <b>Your visual presence is important for social interaction!</b> You will be prompted to allow the use of your webcam.

## Getting Started with 3 Web conferencing Solutions at USF

9	2:22	You can make the webcam full-screen if you wish. Just as you can do with other sections.
10	2:45	Note that you can share your screen.
11	3:02	Stop sharing when you're done.
11.1		If your conference window has been minimized, you can select the browser icon on your taskbar and restore the display.
11.2		NOT SHOWN: You have the ability to switch to note-taking where the chat window is located.
12	3:48	End the meeting when you're finished.

## Zoom

While USF has not yet formally adopted Zoom as its web conferencing solution, it's use is mentioned here because the free version is so widespread, and its popularity seems to be growing. Zoom offers a free account that limits meetings to lengths of 40 minutes, so its usefulness must be reflected against that fact. Zoom does possess all of the capabilities of Adobe Connect, plus the ability to present sound from your computer and share files. The written steps that follow correlate with the times the steps are shown in the [video](#).

<i>Step</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Description of step</i>
1	:02	You must establish an account with Zoom on your own. Go to "zoom.us" in your browser (Google or Firefox).
2	:11	Fill out your first and last name, and provide your email address.
3	:23	Zoom sends you an email to confirm your new account. Click to activate the account
4	1:05	Become familiar with your Zoom landing page. All the information is clearly presented. Take a few moments to look around.
5	1:10	Note that you have your own personal meeting link. It is suggested that you use this for virtual office hours, and that you create a unique meeting for your class
5.1		<i>Notice, too, that your personal meeting has a 9-digit ID. Students who use Zoom on their mobile phone or tablet will need this ID to join. They will get the ID when you send the invitation to join your meeting (covered later)</i>
6	1:31	Schedule a new meeting. Complete the form. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give it a unique title (e.g., ENGL 101)</li><li>• Set the date and time.</li></ul>

## Getting Started with 3 Web conferencing Solutions at USF

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make sure you set the time zone (Central)</li><li>• Optional but suggested: Make it a recurring meeting. Each meeting will have the same URL.</li><li>• Do not require a meeting password.</li><li>• <b>Do</b> select the option for students to use “both” computer audio or their telephone.</li><li>• <b>Save the information</b></li></ul>
7	3:11	Send the URL to the meeting to your students. Note that you can display and copy the meeting invitation which you can paste into a Canvas Inbox or Outlook email to your students. You can also paste the URL link into a page or module in Canvas. Whatever way you choose, be CLEAR and SPECIFIC in your communication to your students.
8	4:00	At the appointed time, start your meeting. For the first time, you will be prompted to download and install the Zoom app. This is necessary and happens quickly. Continue to launch your meeting.
9	4:26	Test your speaker and microphone as prompted.
10	4:43	Start your video. <b>Your webcam presence is important to create a socializing experience with your students.</b>
11	4:53	You can mute your microphone anytime you wish to do so. Explore the toolset. When you click “manage participants” note you have the ability to “mute all” an important consideration for controlling feedback, plus other options. Note you can open a chat window. These components can be moved around.
12	5:15	Note you have a “share screen” option. This also includes the ability to present a whiteboard if you wish to “chalk and talk.”
13	5:52	There are controls that float at the top when you share your screen. Note the ability to “share computer sound.” This gives you the ability to present audio from a YouTube clip or other sound when sharing a screen.
14	6:22	The Whiteboard feature is presented.
15	6:44	You have the ability to record the meeting to your computer. When the meeting ends, the video is “processed” and will be saved at a location you select as an mp4 video, which can be uploaded to YouTube, a Canvas page, or to other locations.
16	7:09	End the meeting (the recording will be saved).

## Getting Started with 3 Web conferencing Solutions at USF

### Summary

These are mostly technical instructions, not a how-to manual for teaching synchronously, an experience that is unique to each instructor! There are enumerable guidelines for teaching-at-a-distance, including Quality Matters; however, your preparation and organization of the class is largely up to you, as is your style of teaching. The first experience of teaching students at a distance will no doubt be discomfiting; your students are not there in-person! But their virtual presence will be established and enhanced with video and audio communication. It is possible and even encouraged to generate discussions with your students which you can direct technologically with the web platform of your choice. If advice were to be given it is simply this: Be who you are. Strive to make eye contact with the camera as you would the eyes of your students, and expect to grow more confident as you proceed.

The Academic Technology Team  
Glen Gummess, E.D., author