I think distance delivery should be seen by every instructor as an opportunity not an obstacle. For me it’s been a real enjoyable addition to my teaching load. Anytime you’ve got a group of people who want to get together and discuss an interesting topic you’ve got the opportunity to form a learning community and it’s no different in the distance arena than it is for in class learning. I’ve been fortunate with the wild land fire ecology class to bring together a group of highly motivated students from all over the country and from as far away as the Azores, Portugal, Grenada, some other interesting small islands. We’ve had great discussions online with blackboard. I think interaction is the key with all learning environments and for distance delivery blackboard gives us a number of options and the online discussion forms are really helpful. We pose a different discussion topic each week and students are required to post an original comment and they are also required to interact with the other students in the class. That’s been really good, they have a minimum that they are supposed to meet but many times the discussions continue on more than just the one week, students continue interacting over the course of the term and I (sound cuts out here). Because of the discussions we’ve had through the weeks by the end of the term relationships formed in my class have been just as strong if not stronger then the relationships in my site based classes. Students seem to get to know each other quite well and I feel I get to know them quite well through their written comments and through our telephone and email interactions. Another form of interaction is online testing. Testing is often seen as just an evaluation and a judgment of student performance but I like to use the blackboard ungraded quizzes as a way for students to test their own learning and to see how well they are prepared for the proctored final exam. They use these ungraded quizzes very diligently and many times the answers that they end up writing on the graded quizzes and tests you can see that they absorbed those from the ungraded quizzes where I give them feedback on there.