IN OUR FAST-PACED, DIGITAL WORLD, educators have realized that using technology in the classroom benefits both teachers and students. E-learning, classes taught online or a blend of online teaching and traditional classroom instruction is embraced by all six HES units.

“Technology is becoming a natural part of the teaching and learning experience,” says Jenna Kammer, instructional designer for e-learning in HES. “Most courses have some sort of online component, whether it’s storing grades online in Blackboard or teaching a course that’s 100 percent online to students located around the world.” Some residential courses are blended, offering a percentage of the class online. “Our focus in HES is to improve the quality of the learning in courses,” Kammer explains. “Often technological tools play a part in that.”

Faculty design, develop and implement courses or assignments that include course management systems, lecture capture, audience response, collaborative editing, web conferencing, or multimedia. Blackboard, ePortfolios, iTV and Collaborate are just a handful of the electronic applications used. Some units offer online courses, such as Nutritional Sciences and Textile and Apparel Management, while others offer online degrees and certificates. The School of Social Work offers an off-campus master’s degree, Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS) an MA or certificate with a focus on gerontology or youth development. Architectural Studies offers an MA, MS and PhD in architectural design and Personal Financial Planning students work to earn an applied MS or certificate of financial planning through the Great Plains Interactive Distance Education Alliance (GP IDEA).

Keeping both educators and students up to speed with the latest technology is a challenge. “In comparison to the old chalkboard and overhead projector days, e-learning brings with it the occasional malfunction,” says HDFS teaching assistant professor Cynthia Reeser. “Procedures for assignment submission, grading and returning assignments to students have all had to be revamped. We don’t always get it right the first time. Educators contemplating e-learning should face the fear of possible technical difficulties and just move forward - its an exciting time to be a teacher.”

Not only do results of e-learning include improved critical thinking, better attendance and student engagement, but Reeser says, “E-learning demands that educators keep growing. I love the intellectual stimulation this provides me.”