

**FAST FACTS**

**Name:** Dr. Clifford Blizard

**Role:** Science Course Lead

**Institution:** Ashford University

**Challenge:** Providing hands-on distance learning labs that are easy for students to complete on their own, develop science literacy, and meet course objectives

**Solution:** Customized distance learning lab kits from Carolina Distance Learning®

**Results:** More than 2,000 students per year will benefit from custom-designed labs that engage their imagination, strengthen their science literacy and critical-thinking skills, and fulfill course criteria.

**CONTACT:**

Carolina Distance Learning®

[www.carolina.com/  
distancelearning](http://www.carolina.com/distancelearning)

[distancelearning@carolina.com](mailto:distancelearning@carolina.com)

866.332.4478

## *Carolina Distance Learning® Lab Kits: Customized to Meet the Needs of Each School, Course, and Student*



*Helping students overcome the barriers of location and schedule*

Each year, Ashford University serves more than 40,000 students across the globe. Ashford's driving focus is to provide affordable, specialized, personal, innovative, and rewarding education opportunities through a variety of online offerings. They achieve this goal every day by offering associate's, bachelor's, and master's degree programs in areas such as business, education, health care, and information technology.

Based in the US, Ashford serves students from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the US Virgin Islands, and numerous US Department of Defense overseas sites. That's a huge leap from the school's beginning in 1918 as a small junior college for women, and Ashford is determined to continue that tradition of success.

Dr. Clifford Blizard assumed the role of Science Course Lead for the Division of General Education at Ashford. His new role included a review of the labs that were part of the university's SCI-207 course, Our Dependence upon the Environment. The course is an environmental studies class that is taken by many of Ashford's non-science-major undergraduates to fulfill their general education science requirement.

Dr. Blizard found that the labs did not always meet course objectives and were often lacking in scientific rigor. Some relied on computer-simulated experiments with no hands-on work. As a scientist, Dr. Blizard knows the power of good hands-on labs

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to engage science learners, so he began searching for a way to redesign the labs to provide students with a more authentic science research experience.

## Customized Plan and Labs

Dr. Blizard has been familiar with Carolina Biological Supply Company since his own school days, so when Carolina suggested bringing him to their headquarters to kick off the project with their distance learning team, he was excited to be visiting “the mother ship” of science education. His first trip was a brainstorming session with the Carolina distance learning specialists. They worked together to design an overall lab program that met course objectives and incorporated specific components that Dr. Blizard envisioned for the experiments. “The Carolina distance learning team is great to work with,” says Dr. Blizard, “very knowledgeable and innovative.”

Carolina brought Dr. Blizard to their offices a second time to review the draft lab kit they had built for the course and to make any needed modifications. Dr. Blizard found that the five labs selected by the distance learning team were a “great combination” that would engage students and “keep their momentum building” throughout the course.

## Science Literacy and Critical Thinking

One aspect Dr. Blizard wanted to include in each lab and throughout the sequence of labs was building the students’ science literacy and critical-thinking skills. He worked with the team to add a hypothesis development task to each lab and the preparation of a summary report



*Providing students with labs that promote science literacy and critical-thinking skills*

of the methods and findings of each lab. At the end of the course, students would use the five summary reports to prepare a full-length scientific paper complete with the steps of the scientific method and conclusions based on critical thinking. To accommodate these important steps, Dr. Blizard and the team pinpointed a few ways to reduce the time required to complete the labs, thus ensuring the course’s lab time allotment was respected.

## Going the Extra Mile . . . Literally

Dr. Blizard was in for another pleasant surprise when he arrived at Carolina during his second visit. The distance learning team, inspired by previous discussions with Dr. Blizard, had conducted research on kit shipping requirements or restrictions that might be encountered by students located outside the US. The team provided Dr. Blizard with information on specific shipping requirements or kit modifications that would be needed to get the kits to Ashford students at most common overseas locations. “It was such a relief to have that information without having to dig it all up myself,” reports Dr. Clifford. “It provided me with another level of confidence that our students are going to get what they need when they need it.”

Carolina is proud to partner with Dr. Blizard and Ashford University to ensure their students have everything they need to complete their online science course with enthusiasm and success, and to help remove the barriers of location and schedule faced by many students today.

**“Working with the Carolina distance learning specialists is like working with a close-knit team. They helped me custom-design the labs I wanted while also taking the initiative to find the information I needed to ensure the kits reach students across the globe.”**

—Dr. Clifford Blizard, Science Course Lead, Ashford University