LSU Moves to Moodle for its Single Learning Management System

LSU TO MIGRATE TO MOODLE LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

LSU's Flagship Information Technology Strategy, or FITS, Task Force for Teaching and Learning submitted its recommendation for a single learning management software to the chief information officer for action. The Task Force recommends that Moodle, an open-source learning management resource, replace the University's two learning management tools, Semester Book and Blackboard. This recommendation follows a nearly year-long process which involved input from the entire campus community.

Joseph Hutchinson, executive director of the Centers for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, spearheaded the campus-wide learning management system review process. "LSU had two course management tools, Blackboard and its internally developed application called Semester Book. The FITS called for a single resource that would best meet the needs of the entire campus community," explained Hutchinson, "Having a two LMS environment was burdensome from both a user and support perspective."

Brian D. Voss, LSU chief information officer regards the process as a tremendous success. "Dr. Hutchinson led an excellent, thorough review process which included a needs assessment, campus survey, proposal reviews, hands-on product assessments and presentations from vendors. I want to thank him and the committee for their hard work and especially the faculty and students for their participation," stated Voss, "It was really important that this decision be guided by the community of scholars as it is not primarily an IT issue, but a pedagogical one."

Executive vice chancellor and provost Astrid Merget envisions substantive increases in faculty use of information technology to enable their teaching as a result of this change to a single, open source learning management system, "LSU is now positioned to more effectively leverage our investment in learning management systems and also provide the support faculty need to make use of that technology. This strategic focus on a single solution will allow our campus community to more pervasively use information technology to improve teaching and learning, beyond what we could have accomplished previously."

Currently one half of the faculty on campus uses a learning management system, and twenty percent of those faculty use Semester Book and Blackboard simultaneously. The single solution is intended to provide a more comprehensive learning management solution that is able to satisfy the somewhat disparate functionalities of Blackboard and Semester Book. Bill Wischusen, associate professor of biological sciences uses both Semester Book and Blackboard to manage his large introductory sections, "I look forward to having a single solution that meets both my needs and the needs of my students from a large course management standpoint and a learning facilitation one."

While half of the faculty on campus currently may utilize a course management system, all of the LSU student population has had to use both systems. Nancy Dardis, an LSU senior in kinesiology, welcomes the change to a single learning management system, "I have three classes that use Semester Book and two that use Blackboard. It is aggravating to have to navigate between the two."

ITS and CELT are working to have Moodle operational in time for faculty to test run it in the Spring 2008 semester. Moodle will be fully deployed by Fall 2008. Faculty will be able to migrate their course content from Blackboard and/or Semester Book during the Spring semester. Training sessions will be held beginning in January.

The final report of the FITS subcommittee and information on the selection process for Moodle may be found online at www.lsu.edu/cms. Information about LSU's use of Moodle may be found on the LSU online knowledgebase, GROK, http://grok.lsu.edu/.

About Moodle

Moodle is a course management system – a free, Open Source software package designed using sound pedagogical principles, to help educators create effect online learning communities. For additional information go online www.moodle.org.

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