

LMS Meeting Minutes for Mar. 19, 2010

Members Present: Karen McPhaul, Tracy Mancini, Brent McCardle, Peter Wooldridge, Becky Rohers, Megan Nicholson, Janice Stuart, Dave Sorenson, Susan Horton, and Steve Leadon

Observers Present: Wayne Durkee

The meeting started with a report on the NC3ADL (NC Community College Association of Distance Learning) conference that several members of the committee attended. Among the highlights: In the keynote address, Dr. Saundra Williams (Sr VP for Technology at the NCCCS) announced that the system office is going to issue an RFP to vendors to bid on a contract for a system-wide LMS. In an informal conversation, another NCCCS VP relayed that the system office also plans to extend the contract with Blackboard for at least another year (until June 30, 2012). Cape Fear Community College is been piloting Moodle with 21 courses. Apparently, they are not happy with where Moodle is right now, so plan to upgrade to Blackboard 9.0. There was a demo of Blackboard 9.1 at the conference. Those reporting back indicated that they were impressed with some of the new features, including the ease of imbedding content and “drag and drop”.

The results of the survey of Blackboard users were discussed. There were 132 respondents out of the 360 users sent the survey (37%). The features most often used by the respondents were adding content, such as a syllabus, the announcements and the Grade Center. Features “never used” by a majority of respondents included Safe Assign and publisher-provided content. Overall, 90% of the respondents either loved or liked Blackboard. However, 84% of the respondents have never used any other LMS.

There was a discussion of which features the survey respondents would like to have incorporated into a LMS. Some of these features, e.g., blogs, a better grade book, and audiovisual embedding, were parts of systems currently under consideration. However, some of the other desired features were not available on any of the systems being examined.

The LMS team members were surveyed with regards to what directions we might recommend in our report to Dr. Ingram. The consensus was that we should pilot Sakai, but keep in mind that the NC Community College System may choose a different LMS based on the results of their RFP. There was a discussion as to what level of a pilot program should be considered. This discussion included the pros and cons of installing a freely available version of Sakai (no support, it would have to be configured in-house and the training would have to be done in-house) versus paying for a vendor to configure and host Sakai and do limited training. In addition, there was a discussion about the time frame for making a decision about the LMS since the version of Blackboard were are using may not be fully supported in the near future.

Before recommending a full-scale pilot, the committee agreed to undertake a more in-depth exploration of Sakai in a manner similar to what was done with Moodle. It was also recommended that we examine the most recent update of Blackboard (ver. 9.1) when it becomes available and get a price quote from Blackboard so that a comparison can be made between the vendors for the three LMS under review.

Karen will draft a recommendation report which explains the team's consensus to remain on Bb while further investigating Sakai and Bb 9.1. This draft will be circulated amongst the committee members for input and comments. The draft will include estimates for the cost of training and for migrating courses from Blackboard to another LMS.

The meeting scheduled for March 26 is canceled and the next meeting will be scheduled for April.