BACKGROUND

Framingham State University (FSU) selected Blackboard as its course management solution to compliment and supplement its web-based course offerings in 2000. Since that time, all online, hybrid, and web-enhanced courses have been hosted by Blackboard on a dedicated server, accessible from any internet ready computer.

In January 2005, FSC enhanced the system with the purchase of Blackboard's Academic Suite. The suite is comprised of the three separate but integrated applications including the Learning Management System, Content System, and Community System. Together, these products provide FSC with an internet accessible educational environment that promotes teaching and learning, file-sharing, and community building. These additional resources are also used to support the college's e-Portfolio initiative, manage e-Reserves, and host meeting and committee sites.

Over the past few years, the adoption of Learning Management Systems (LMS) has grown and more commercial products and open source solutions have appeared on the market. Desire2Learn, Epsilen, Canvas, Moodle, and Sakai are a few examples of the LMS products on the forefront competing with Blackboard. Our three year agreement with Blackboard will end in 2012. It is recommended that before we reach the end of the contract that the university explore these and other LMS options in comparison with Blackboard’s new NG (Next Generation) product.

PROJECT GOAL

The goal of the LMS Review project\(^1\) is to select a web-based Learning Management System solution which will support faculty in their teaching and enrich the student educational experience at FSU for the next five to ten years. The LMS solution selected will also allow FSU to remain competitive in the higher education marketplace – for all of our course delivery options – online, on-ground and hybrid.

\(^1\) Appendix A outlines a proposed project outline.
PROJECT SCOPE

A LMS Review Team (LRT), consisting of faculty, students and staff from all areas of the college is needed to participate in the review process. Membership in the LRT includes but is not limited to representation from Academic Affairs, Center for Excellence in Leadership, Teaching, Scholarship and Service (CELTSS), the University Technology Committee (CTC), Information Technology Services (ITS), Education Technology Office (ETO), the Division of Graduate and Continuing Education (DGCE), the Student Government Association (SGA), the Continuing Education student body, the Stalker Institute and the McAuliffe Center. A project Executive Steering Committee will also be formed from members of the President’s Council to oversee the project and make the final LMS selection.

The LRT is charged with making a recommendation for a LMS solution which is scalable, meets the needs of the user community, and integrates with the Banner Information System. As part of the process, the LRT will also define the needs assessment criteria, identify key commercial LMS vendors and/or open source options, and actively participate in the hands-on review process. In addition, the LRT will utilize information posted on the Web and leverage consortium relationships with Mass Colleges Online (MCO), state and community college CIOs and other related organizations to initiate the plan and make their recommendations. Possible outcomes of the project include:

- The University upgrades Blackboard to the most stable current release
- A portion of the current learning environment is migrated to new tools and systems
- The University migrates to a completely new platform separate from Blackboard.

Following Executive Steering Committee approval, the LRT will initiate the project outline listed below and documented as Appendix A with a goal of completing the review process by April 2011.

PROJECT SUCCESS CRITERIA

The success of this project will be determined by the user community. Our goal is to implement a smooth transition from one platform or, if the decision is to remain with Blackboard, to the most current stable release. Other success criteria factors may include:

- LMS users experience a smooth transition from one system or platform to the next system or platform
- Platform is stable and performs as advertised
- No additional resources are needed to support the system
- Integration with Banner and other college services is successful
- Faculty adoption of the system is equal to or is better than the current LMS installation

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2 The suggestion to utilize consortium relationships is made in place of hiring a third party consultant to lead the discovery and implementation process.
PROJECT TIMELINE
August/September 2010
PROJECT PREP WORK

October 2010
NEEDS ANALYSIS

November – January 2011
EVALUATION PHASE

February – April 2011
FINAL REVIEW PROCESS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

June/July 2011
IMPLEMENTATION UPGRADE/PLAN

EVALUATION CRITERIA
The LRT will define the evaluation criteria with input from the user community and the results of the needs assessment survey. It is recommended that faculty, students and staff from both the undergraduate and graduate levels be surveyed to identify how widely the LMS is used on campus and which features of the system are valued most highly. Technical staff will also be asked to measure what is required to administer and support the system. In addition, the LRT will reference input from other institutions which have conducted similar LMS solution reviews and additional published information.

Vendor Selection Requirements
The vendors selected for review will meet the criteria identified by the LRT. Requirements to consider include:

- Alignment with user feature and functionality requirements
- Support of and integration with Web 2.0 technologies
- Scalability
- User training and support
- Documentation available
- Administrative costs, support and resources
- Integration with college systems: Library Proxy Server, Banner (and others)
- Integration with third party tools: Elluminate, e-Portfolio and assessment tools
- Implementation costs: resources, time, work required
- Vendor commitment and support
- Cost of ownership
- Hosting solutions offered
- Product direction (roadmap)
Vendor Short List
The LRT will determine the LMS vendors to include in the review process. Vendors to consider include but are not limited to the following.

Learning Platform
- Blackboard Academic Suite
  http://www.blackboard.com/products/Academic_Suite/index
- Desire2Learn Learning Environment
  http://www.desire2learn.com/learningenvironment/
- Epsilen
  http://www.epsilen.com/LandingSite/index.aspx
- Canvas (Instructure)
  http://www.instructure.com/
- Moodle CMS
  http://moodle.com/
- Sakai
  http://sakaiproject.org/

e-Portfolio Options
- Blackboard Outcomes System
  http://www.blackboard.com/products/academic_suite/outcomes_system
- Desire2Learn ePortfolio
  http://www.desire2learn.com/eportfolio/
- Nuventive iWebfolio
  http://www.nuventive.com/products_iwebfolio.html
- Open Source Portfolio (Sakai)
  http://www.theospio.org/
- TaskStream
  http://gse.gmu.edu/programs/sped/taskstream/
- Chalk and Wire
  http://www.chalkandwire.com/
- Epsilen
  http://www.epsilen.com/LandingSite/index.aspx
LMS REVIEW – GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following assumptions and guiding principles form the foundation by which the LMS Review project technology and planning decisions are made. It is based on a similar document posted to the Duke University e-Learning Roadmap Website and was modified to meet the needs of the Framingham State LMS Review Project Team. The document does not attempt to specify technical or functional requirements but suggests guidelines that can be applied to an institutionally supported LMS solution.

Assumptions

1. A set of core baseline requirements will form the decision process. The solution must
   - **meet** institutional goals and directives,
   - **support and/or advance** the student and faculty teaching and learning experience, on-campus or online,
   - **scale**, so that it supports all constituencies at the college, from students enrolled in the day program, Graduate and Certificate programs, international program or continuing education students or faculty and staff committee and research needs
   - **be reliable**, with a good record of stability and minimal service interruptions in context with our current and proposed future use of the system
   - **adhere to security and privacy policies**
   - **meet industry standards** so that it integrates with existing systems or future unanticipated needs

2. There is no agenda to move to open source versus a proprietary system. The determination to move to a new platform will be based on the following contingencies:
   - **Impact** – Significant, Minimal, None
   - **Support** (Particularly among Faculty) – Acceptance, Unknown, Rejection
   - **Resources** – Available, Possible, Not Possible
   - **Funding** – Available, Possible, Not Possible
   - **Feasibility** – Very Feasible, Feasible, Not So Feasible

3. It is understood that user needs and desires, as well as teaching and learning methodologies change over time, and that the e-Learning solution will need to adapt frequently to meet these evolving needs.

Principles

1. Favor a best of breed approach that allows interoperability which will permit:
   - **ability to swap out components as needed**
   - **options to use specialized tools without require a major overhaul of the system or expensive consulting services**
   - **use of open standards and APIs, which will make it easier to integrate with different services and resources**

2. Consider solutions which have evolved as net-scale “cloud” services (if they meet the contingencies outlined above)

3. Analyze how to use our limited resources to achieve our overarching project goals

4. Provide effective identity and group management

5. Favor tools that have a broad user and developer community

6. Integrate strategies that accommodate change and adapt to the evolving e-Learning environment

7. Accommodate and encourage multiple modes of access
APPENDIX A: PROJECT TIMELINE

August/September 2010
PROJECT PREP WORK
- Develop overarching guiding principles
- Develop project timeline
- Identify Deliverables
- Set Milestones
- Build Project Team
- Define Project Communication Channel(s)
- Develop Assessment Instruments to collect faculty, student and staff feedback
  - Develop assessment timeline
- Develop Cost Analysis Template
- Develop List of Potential Providers/Solutions
- Announce to College Community

October 2010
NEEDS ANALYSIS
- Conduct Needs Assessment (Discovery)
- Conduct Preliminary Benchmarking
- Conduct Requirement Gathering
- Develop matrix (rubric) for evaluation criteria

November – January 2011
EVALUATION PHASE
- Finalize vendor demo scripts
- Develop RFI - LONG LIST
- Select vendor/solution finalist (review short list)
- Schedule vendor demos - OFF-SITE
- Schedule Sandbox review
- Evaluate LMS options (RFIs, demos, sandbox testing)
- Report results

February – April 2011
Final Review Process and Recommendations
  - Develop RFR
  - Schedule vendor demos - ON-SITE
  - Make final recommendations

June/July 2011
Implementation Upgrade/Plan
  - Migration to Hybrid or Conversion to Something New? - Plan
  - Implementation

END June 2012
APPENDIX B: LMS REVIEW PROJECT RESOURCES

Project Team Membership and Charge

- Membership and charge (Montana State University)
  http://www.montana.edu/opa/coms/eval.html
- Membership and charge (St. Petersburg College)
  http://it.spcollege.edu/lms/index.htm
- Membership and charge (Humboldt State University)
  http://www.humboldt.edu/~cdc/lms/index.html
- Membership and charge (Louisiana State University)
  http://appl027.lsu.edu/itsweb/cmsweb.nsf/index

Project Timelines

- Timeline (St. Petersburg College)
  http://it.spcollege.edu/lms/LMSTimeline.pdf
- Timeline (Louisiana State University)
- Duke eLearning Roadmap
  http://sites.duke.edu/elearning/

Evaluation Criteria

- EduTools
  http://edutools.info/static.jsp?pj=4&page=HOME
- Vendor Questions (St. Petersburg College)
  http://it.spcollege.edu/lms/documents/Vendor%20Questions.doc
- Rubric for Evaluation (St. Petersburg College)
  http://it.spcollege.edu/lms/documents/Rubric%20For%20Evaluating%20Products.doc
- Pass/Fail Rubric (Humboldt State University)
  http://www.humboldt.edu/~cdc/lms/docs/pass_fail_matrix.pdf
- Evaluation criteria from user’s perspective (Louisiana State University)
- Evaluation criteria from support/training staff perspective (Louisiana State University)
- Critical Features List (University of Florida)
  http://at.ufl.edu/~cmsag/cms_features.html

Request for Information

- RFI (Louisiana State University)

- RFR (MCLA)
  http://framingham.blackboard.com/bbcswb Dav/xid-295771_1

Recommendations

- Final Report (Humboldt State University)

- Strata Information Group
  http://www.sigcorp.com/

- TLT Group
  http://www.tltgroup.org/
  ehrmann@tltgroup.org

- WTC
  http://www.wtc-inc.net/

Consultants

- BearingPoint – Management & Technology Consultants
  http://www.bearingpoint.com/portal/site/bearingpoint

- Common Need, Inc.
  http://www.commonneed.com/

- TLT Group (ehrmann@tltgroup.org)
  TLT Group is a not-for-profit that provides consulting as well as other resources and services for the
  institutions we support (about 150 at the moment, including the U Mass system and MIT). We could help
  with one element of your study: what are the educational strengths of your current LMS as it is used by
  your faculty and students, and what are the key teaching/learning activities that are difficult when using
  the current system.

- MiCTA (Dan Tyger at Anticoch University - Daniel.Tyger@antioch.edu)

- Delta Initiative
  Jim Ritchey President
  Delta Initiative, LLC
847.548.5056 Phone
847.406.8022 Mobile

- Stuart Sim
  stuart@commonneed.com

- Delta Initiative
  http://www.deltainitiative.com/
  Jim Ritchey President
  847-548-5056

- Global Synergies (Greg Devine)
  http://www.globalsynergies.com
  (508) 734-5030
gdevine@globalsynergies.com

- HBO Systems
  http://www.hbosystems.com/
  Phil Hill (phil.hill@hbosystems.com)
  919-270-9337

- JoAnn Gonzalez-Major
  Reading Area Community College
  jgonzalezmajor@racc.edu

- Kaludis Consulting
  http://www.kaludisconsulting.com/

- Lisa O’Connor
  WPI
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- Michaels and Associates
  http://www.docntrain.com/home.php
  Patti Quinn, Director of Media Design
  765-221-1188
  pquinn@docntrain.com

- MiCTA – Technology Solutions for Nonprofit Organizations
  http://www.micta.org/
  Dan Tyger at Antioch University
  Daniel.Tyger@antioch.edu

- Moran Technology Consulting
  http://www.morantechnology.com/
- RMG Consultants
  http://www.rmgconsultants.com/

- rSmart (Open Source)
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