Use of Portals in the Academic World

Suhong Li, Bryant University, sli@bryant.edu
Wallace Wood, Bryant University, wwood@bryant.edu

We received 57 responses from this survey, with 41 from the first mailing and 16 from the second mailing. The results show that portals have received wide-spread attention in the academic world. Among those colleges who adopted the portals, over half of them have both vertical and horizontal portals and selected Blackboard and JA-SIG uPortal software. The results also show that these portals mainly serve the needs of internal users by displaying campus wide information. The content of the portals in most schools is the joint responsibility of the IS/IT department, Academic Office and Student Affairs. Integration and single logon are rated as the biggest challenges of implementing the portals. The results indicate that about one third of the schools have formally evaluated their portals.

Detailed Analysis of the Results

Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Which of the following best describes you?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of Faculty</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of administration</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of IS/IT department</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>89.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Does your school have the following information systems?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intranet</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extranet</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. What is the type of your school?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. What is the highest degree offered at your school?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four year</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>four year plus masters</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doctoral degree</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Does your college/university have a portal in use?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan to implement</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>94.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Plan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Who are the key constituents served by your portal?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituents</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faulty</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>87.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. What are the types of portals at your university/college?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Portals</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vertical portal only</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal portal only</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both vertical and horizontal portal</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. How long has your college had a portal?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1 year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 year</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 year</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 year</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 4 year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Which software do you use for the portal?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Software</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blackboard</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JA-SIG uPortal</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-Grown</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCT Luminis</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Associates</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iplanet</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PeopleSoft Higher Education Portal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNAV</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oracle</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Campus Cruiser 3 7.7%  
Campus Pipeline 3 7.7%  
Other software used by one college: Vignette, Jenzabar, Microsoft  
SharePoint Portal Service, NOvell - Extend Director, Prometheus, and  
ColdFusion/Microsoft SQL.

6. Which department is responsible for the content of your portal?
   (Note: one university/college may belong to several categories)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic office</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT/IS department</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>87.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Affairs</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Affairs</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Relations</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (include Marketing &amp; Comms, Library, Admissions office, HR, and Public Affairs)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Have you evaluated your portal and what is your overall satisfactory level of the portal at your university/college?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you evaluated your portal?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No: 69.2% (27)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes: 30.8% (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall evaluation of portal use from students</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>33.3% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>25.0% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK</td>
<td>33.3% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>8.3% (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall evaluation of portal use from faculty</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>11.1% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>22.2% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ok</td>
<td>44.4% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>22.2% (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall satisfaction level of the portal from the respondents</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very much satisfied</td>
<td>17.9% (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considerably satisfied</td>
<td>25.6% (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately satisfied</td>
<td>48.7% (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little satisfied</td>
<td>5.1% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not satisfied</td>
<td>2.6% (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Top 10 implemented features at the surveyed schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus news and announcements, e.g., road closings, service interruptions, weather alerts</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>82.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online course catalog</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control what information is displayed in the portal screen and where it appears</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link to email and email Alerts</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus event calendar</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus directory</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades: Record of unofficial transcript, midterm and final grades</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local weather</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National news</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet search engine links</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal links ad bookmarks</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Top 10 feature (Plan to implement in 1-2 year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workspace/file storage and sharing</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Blackboard, WebCT or other course management packages</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage personal portfolio</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal calendar</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulletin Board for campus wide discussion</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A single login</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change the look and feel of the portal screen</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Information: Status of books ordered via Consort/Ohio Link, new books available, late fees</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online registration for classes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles on electronic reserve for classes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student activity council events</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online surveys and polls</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Please comment on any other features your school is implementing but are not in the above list.

- SSO to external resources: library and Gartner Alumni apps: find-a-friend; biznetwork e-Mall with affiliate programs and advertising
- Meal plan
- Edit public faculty profile page
- View vacation/sick leave
- Course appointments with hyperlinks to course/lesson web pages integrated into MS Outlook Personal Calendar which is shown within the Portal
- For Sale bulletin board
- Local TV listings
- Maps, both campus and MapQuest
- Classified ads
- Visitor can add own links
- Online auctions/storefront for University merchandise
- Mail Transaction Workflow (notify users if packages are sent or arrived in mail room
- Audio/Video feedroom
- Email-for-life for alumni (forwarding)
- Staff/Faculty self-service access to PeopleSoft HRMS.
- Campus web cams

11. What are some of the challenges of deploying and maintaining the portal?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integration of the portal with other applications, including administrative systems (such as Banner) and teaching and learning systems (such as Blackboard and WebCT)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of a single logon</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of cooperation, collaboration, and buy-in</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security issues</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Others, please put your comment below:

- Eliminating vertical portals and dealing with/including the alternative of Microsoft thick clients (like Outlook) as portals for staff/faculty.
- Technical: implementation complexity and performance tuning
- Identity & Access Management (IAM)
- Time to develop. Coordinating programmer's time with the availability of a resource or the preferred point of release.
- No killer-app for staff
- We need a high-level champion for the portal.
- Vendors do not offer mature products with full functionality that adhere to standards
- Dealing with vendors to integrate our portal framework with their products.
- Maintaining standards for add-ons and other web services to insure compliance
with the portal framework.

- Time/money for staff to do development
- Resources available to develop the services that departments are now asking/demanding/desiring to be in the portal.
- Performance versus security requirements