Haute Software: Juggling Open-Source and Vendor Software

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Virginia Tech; Blacksburg, VA

- Land grant research institution
- 8 colleges, 78 masters and 62 doctoral degree programs, DVM
- 25,000 students, 6000 graduate students (total)
- 1500+ faculty
LT Infrastructure

Learning Technologies

- Digital Imaging
- Test Scoring Services
- Graduate Education Development Institute

Educational Technologies

- Computer Assisted Teaching Stations
- Assistive Technologies
- VT Labs

Online Course Systems

- Systems Group
- Development Group

Manager

- Asst. Manager / QA Lead
- QA Analyst
- Training Coordinator

OCS Functions

- QA Team
- Helpdesk / Support
- Training

Faculty Development Institute
New Media Center
Learning Systems at VT

- '99: CourseInfo & WebCT
- '03: BB5 Upgrade
- '03: WebCT Termination
- '04: ePortfolio 1.0 Pilot
- '05: BB6 Upgrade Planned
- '05: ePortfolio 1.5 Live
- '05: BB6 Upgrade Actual
- '06: Scholar (SAKAI) Preview
- '06: ePortfolio 2.0 Pilot
- '07: Scholar (SAKAI) Live
- '07: Blackboard Termination?
Vendor System

- **Vendor learning system support**
  - Stability and reliability of online learning environment
  - Data integration (user and course data)
  - System-wide support: Help desk, help pages, documentation, user training
  - Relationship with vendor support manager
  - Ability to leverage your university’s technical teams
Why are We Interested in Open Source?

- Vendor license/hosting fees
- ____________________
- ____________________
- ____________________
- ____________________
- ____________________
- ____________________
Why are We Interested in Open Source?

- Vendor license/hosting fees
- Problems: vendor support and product migration
- Leverage University’s academic and IT resources
- Serve institutional goals
- Localization: Ability to modify and customize functionality and interface
- Interoperability and proprietary code limitations
- Usability: address diverse pedagogical and research needs
Management Implications

• ____________________
• ____________________
• ____________________
• ____________________
• ____________________
• ____________________
• ____________________
• ____________________
Management Implications

- Management of:
  - Ourselves
    - Everyone resists change, not just users
    - Never worked with open-source before
      - Requires higher-skilled staff
  - New Open Source Systems
    - Learning, testing, training, developing, documenting, migrating
  - Existing Vendor Systems
    - The big question “When is Blackboard going away?”
New Responsibilities: Part of Systems Engineering Process

**Concept Phase.** OCS' new role: Developing user-system interface requirement.

**Design Phase.** OCS' new role: Concept demonstration and validation by demonstrating proposed system interface to university community and making necessary changes based on received feedback.

**Development Phase.** OCS' new role: Full-scale engineering development. Iterative process of evaluation and programming.

**Operation Phase.** OCS' continued role. Production & Deployment. Operation & Maintenance.

**Disposal Phase.** OCS' continued role. System retirement.

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Figure 1: OCS' roles in the Systems Engineering Process. Chart adapted from Chapanis (1996)
Managing Ourselves

• JIRA: management & organization for tasks, bugs, feature requests
  – http://www.atlassian.com/software/jira/

• Confluence: dynamic documentation
  – http://www.atlassian.com/software/confluence/
JIRA Screenshot

Blitzweek titles, descriptions, learning objectives & schedule

Created: Nov 17, 2005 11:58 AM  Updated: Monday 09:54 AM  Due: Dec 05, 2005

Component/s: Training
Affects: None
Version/s: None
Fix Version/s: None

Description
As we discussed during the FDI meeting 11/17, please provide the following to Eddie Watson by the end of the day on 12/05. This is a hard deadline:

Blitzweek information:
- titles
- descriptions
- learning objectives
- schedule

Jeshua will also arrange a meeting with you to discuss what to include in Blitzweek.
Confluence Screenshot

### Blackboard Canned Answers

The following Inks will take you to a subsection:

- Course Administration
- Move or Copy Course Content
- User Access
- Enrollments
- Assessments and Gradebook Issues
- Content and Browser Issues

#### Course Administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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| A new tool is available which allows instructors to copy their courses. Please use the "Copy course materials" option in the VT Faculty Tools module. | 1) Login to Blackboard at [http://learn.vt.edu](http://learn.vt.edu).  
2) Click "Copy course materials" in the VT Faculty Tools module.  
3) Select the course to copy from in the first pull-down menu.  
4) Select the course to copy to in the second pull-down menu.  
5) Place a check in the box next to each type of course content area that you would like to copy.  
6) Click ‘Submit’.                                                                                                                                 |
| How to copy a course                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Merging Blackboard courses when there are multiple instructors | We regret that we can not combine the two courses, as UAP_1024_94806_200509 has multiple instructors associated with it and we must receive permission from each instructor before completing this request.  
If you need further assistance, please contact ocs@vt.edu.  
We have made a course merge tool available to all faculty members so that they can process the merges at their convenience. This allows you to have one Blackboard course that contains the enrollments from multiple sections. You will be able to see the merged course within 24 hours. Please note that the merge will not fully process until the students are enrolled. In the meantime, please be sure to make changes to the primary course only. |
Managing New Open Source Systems

– Know your institution’s strengths and resources
– Identify your faculty needs and preferences
– Line up upper level support
– Remember…without the vendor the buck stops at your desk
Managing New Open Source Systems

– QA is essential
  • SAKAI QA
    – http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/QA/Home
  • OSP QA
    – http://wiki.osportfolio.org/confluence/display/DEV21/Testing

– Usability
  • HCI dissertation
  • UI boot camp
Concerns with Open Source Software

- Migrating course data from legacy or existing LMS’s to open source LMS
- Open source is not free
- Transition - moving users away from existing system
  - User concerns
    - Ease of use
    - Stability and Reliability
  - Support concerns
    - Lack of Admin tools!!!
    - Documentation
Lessons Learned

• Supporting 10 people on a new system is more time consuming & resource dependent than supporting 25000+ users on a known reliable system

• Work closely with end users – they are using systems in ways that will surprise you

• There’s no perfect or easy solution for an enterprise level system (vendor or OS); it is critical to manage expectations

• We reap the benefits of our collaboration
Recommendations

- Know Thyself (and thy institution)
- Target early adopters & work with them throughout the process (grassroots approach)
- Focus on strengths
- Find a niche (low hanging fruit)
- Partner with similar institutions
- Partner with other depts within your institution (eg. CS)
Questions & Answers

- Contact Information
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http://www.edtech.vt.edu/ocs