Collaborative Sites

Student Interaction and Knowledge Building with Drupal

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The Collaborative Sites Platform allows for the rapid development of custom online learning environments focused on student interaction and knowledge building. These sites support multiple types of interaction, including group authorship and consensus building, class glossaries, knowledge repositories, course portfolios, student journals, and literary analysis.

Needs/Key Features:

The Collaborative Sites platform was created in response to increasing demand from instructors for an online environment to facilitate rich student-to-student interaction and collaboration. It provides a mix of blog-like and wiki-like interaction within the same organized frame. It is highly media friendly, with support for easy sharing and organization of images, audio, video. Collaborative Sites are generally used alongside the campus Course Management System, and provide a robust alternative to 3rd-party tools (e.g., blogger, pbwiki).

Example Projects

Communication
- **Communication Arts 262 (large lecture + discussion section)**: Students analyze arguments and submit their own arguments for critique while sharing and organizing online resources. A variety of tasks provide students opportunities to share and discuss their work with small groups, their section, or with the entire class.

Health Sciences
- **Communicative Disorders 706 (online seminar)**: Students author team blogs on the management and assessment of voice disorders, and collaboratively assess challenging case studies.

Languages
- **Italian 102 (multi-section language course)**: FaceBook in Italian - students write short, personal updates, share Italian language YouTube videos, and leave comments.
- **Italian 203 (multi-section language course)**: This project combined elements of blogging, photo-blogging, and social-networking software to facilitate communication between students in Italian outside of class time.

Literature
- **East Asian Languages and Literature 371 (seminar)**: "The Garden" is a collaborative online reading notebook, built around a central metaphor of the course text - a garden. Students built, cultivated, and maintained the interactive space while exploring classic Chinese literature.

Social Sciences
- **History 205 (high enrollment online course)**: Students discuss online lectures, photographs, video podcasts and other instructor posted media.

Collaboration? *Want to work with us on Collaborative Sites? We'd like that too. Send me an email at doug@lss.wisc.edu or visit http://lss.wisc.edu/collaborative-sites for more information.*

Feedback on Italian 203, Fall 2007

Italian 203 is a multi-section language course, with each section enrolling up to 24 students.

In Fall 2007 we conducted a survey of students using an early version of the collaborative sites platform. The survey was designed to evaluate student perceptions of the Collaborative Site, with a focus on key learning objectives defined by the instructors.

There was an 86% response rate to the survey, with 98 of the 113 students enrolled completing the survey. In 3 sections 100% of the students responded to the survey.

Student narrative feedback on the site aligned directly with course objectives: the words "Learn" "Practice" "Italian" "Culture" "Writing" and "Vocabulary" all featured prominently in their responses. Also notable was the prominence of the words "Easy" "Able" and "Helps."

Students overwhelmingly reported that the project helped them improve their reading and writing skills, vocabulary, and cultural knowledge. A students overwhelmingly agreed that the project helped them improve their language skills and cultural knowledge. Most striking here is that 100% of respondents agreed that the project helped them improve their Italian writing skills.

Getting Started

The Collaborative Sites platform was built with Drupal, an open source content management system. The only custom code for the site relates to UW-Madison's authentication system.

If you'd like to run Collaborative Sites at your institution:
1. Check that you are able to meet Drupal's system requirements: http://drupal.org/requirements
2. Download the Collaborative Sites codebase and database from http://lss.wisc.edu/collaborative-sites - you'll find the download link near the bottom of the page. The codebase contains the Drupal core, as well as a collection of contributed modules used by Collaborative Sites. The codebase contains the Collaborative Sites configuration of Drupal and the contributed modules.
3. Consult the "Read Me" file at http://lss.wisc.edu/default/files/cs/readme.txt for more information on the installation process.

Kudos

The Collaborative Sites platform was developed at L&S Learning Support Services (http://lss.wisc.edu) at UW-Madison with key support from the DoIT Engage Awards (http://engage.doit.wisc.edu) and the School of Pharmacy.

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