How Far Have We Come in Exploring Moodle as an Alternative LMS to Vista?

Moodle Pilot Team
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  - Leigh Jay Hicks
  - Dr. Alan Schueler
- College of Education
  - Bethany Smith
- College of Natural Resources
- Distance Education & Learning Technology Applications (DELTA)
  - Dr. Donna Petherbridge (chair)
  - Lou Harrison
  - Jeff Webster
  - Bill Hicks
  - Greg Kraus
  - Stacy Gant
  - Dr. Marty Dulberg

Quick Audience Analysis
I have used:
- WolfWare
- Vista
- Moodle
  - As an instructor
  - As a student
  - In a support role
  - Looked at it
  - None of these

Presentation Outline
- Today’s Agenda
  1. What is Moodle and what does it look like?
  2. Background
  3. The Moodle Pilot Team’s Recommendations
  4. Moving Forward
What is Moodle?

- An open source learning management system (LMS).
- LMSs are for the management, creation and delivery of online course components (forums, quizzes, assignments).
- Example

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Background: Fall 2007 Forum

Guiding Principles for LMS Strategy outlined (Dr. Tom Miller, VP, DELTA)
1. Stability & reliability
2. Future growth & flexibility
3. Quality & usability
4. Control our destiny
5. Participate with peers as a community of developers and stakeholders
6. Potential collaboration with other institutions

Background

- UNC System – PACE recommended open source LMSs be considered when feasible
- Other UNC schools investigating/considering open source
- Campus forum attendees encouraged an open source pilot of Moodle.
- Moodle Pilot Team formed in spring 2008 after fall 2007 campus forums

Background

- Good time for re-evaluation at NC State
  WolfWare – 12+ years
  Concerns with Blackboard support
  Pending “end of life” for Vista
Quick Tool Comparison

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<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Vista</th>
<th>WolfWare</th>
<th>Moodle</th>
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Background

- Technical perspective - Moodle
  - Based on a LAMP architecture
  - Linux
  - Apache
  - MySQL
  - PHP
  - Robust and readily modifiable
  - WolfWare has “similar” architecture

- Usability
  - Accessibility/usability workgroup preliminary evaluations and feedback from general user community on accessibility positive

- Training
  - Users will need to be retrained
  - Documentation is open source & community created

- User Support
  - Reliance on a community of users, developers, trainers at multiple institutions

- Migration
  - Will have to migrate content & activities, minimum three semesters
  - With Vista an “end of life” product, we have to migrate to something

- Student & faculty feedback
  - Generally positive
  - Caution: small pilot numbers/non-random samples

2008
- Unique Instructor Respondents (2 different surveys): 32/40+
- Unique Students Respondents (5 different surveys): 428/2500+
Background – Faculty Feedback

• Pilot faculty generally indicated that they liked Moodle better than Blackboard Vista
• Fall pilot faculty were asked specifically if we should make the switch to Moodle; 68% of the respondents were in favor of adopting Moodle, with various considerations
• A number of improvements were suggested for Moodle (for example, gradebook functionality, forum features, wiki, organization of course entry page)

Background – Student Feedback

• Around 50% of students indicated Moodle was Better or Much Better when compared to their experiences with Blackboard Vista, while 30% of students indicated that the systems were about the same (both general surveys)
• Around 50% of the students indicated it doesn’t matter what the LMS is at NC State as long as it is stable and reliable, with an additional 28% indicating we should switch to Moodle

Background – Student Feedback

• Ease of use and cross-browser functionality are features that students generally like about Moodle
• “Moodle to me was a lot like Blackboard, as long as the teachers posted the assignments then everything is alright.”

Facts to Consider

• We have to migrate from Vista to something else. Vista is an end-of-life product. As a campus, we will be forced to move to something else, either Blackboard's new offering (NG), Moodle, or some other LMS. Any LMS we choose to move to will require faculty and students to adapt to major changes to the user interface. Even Blackboard NG will be remarkably different to use.

Facts to Consider

• WolfWare, as we know it now, will stop working. WolfWare is highly dependent on Sun’s Solaris 8 operating system and the Sybase database. Solaris 8 is incompatible with any new servers we might buy and NC State is migrating away from Sybase. WolfWare would require a major rewrite to address these issues. We do have plans in place to maintain current WolfWare functionality as an interim solution, but that will only continue to work for a few more years.

Facts to Consider

• LMS Technology Evolves. Though the LMS landscape has continuously changed over the past 10 years, we have enjoyed relative stability with our own WolfWare. As part of the normal evaluation of available tools and campus needs we have implemented two commercial LMS’s during this time, WebCT CE starting in 1999 and a migration to WebCT Vista in 2004-2005. The current LMS’s examination, including the Moodle pilot, follows this cycle.
Presentation Outline

- Today’s Agenda
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Recommendations

1. Follow an open source philosophy for the NC State LMS. Moodle contains the LMS tools campus uses, has the ability to add additional tools to meet our needs, and is the open source LMS that best fits our campus LAMP infrastructure and developer expertise base.

Recommendations

- Start planning migration to an NC State branded LMS: WolfWare powered by Moodle
  - Phased, dynamic, informed by LMS committees, flexible
- Keep current version of WolfWare going “as is” while we investigate integrations, and rebrand to WolfWare Classic to differentiate.
- Keep Vista going “as is” through remainder of support agreement (June 2011).

Recommendations

2. Use third party tools (open source & commercial) and tools we develop to augment existing function (examples now include Elluminate & Respondus).
3. Continue to keep an eye on the emerging LMS landscape; revisit decisions collaboratively.

Quick Tool Comparison, Revised

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
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<th>Moodle</th>
<th>WolfWare (powered by Moodle)</th>
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DELTA Advisory Committee - Endorsement

We intend to move towards an integrated NC State branded LMS (to be named WolfWare) based on an Open Source code base. We will follow an Open Source philosophy with provision for the integration of proprietary products. The Open Source product which best fits our campus LAMP experience and expertise is Moodle. An example proprietary product to be integrated is the synchronous meeting product Elluminate.
Recommendations

- Endorsed by the DELTA Advisory Committee 4.17.09
- Vote: 16 – 1 to endorse previous statement.

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How do we move forward?

• Discuss recommendations as a campus community, identify any problems or "show stoppers."
• Share information (report, recommendations) to a wide campus audience.
• Incorporate feedback from the DELTA advisory committee.

How do we move forward?

• Solicit additional feedback through multiple channels (email Marty directly; post comments/questions to listserv).
• Get feedback by June 1, 2009.
• Make an announcement by July 1, 2009.

How do we move forward?

• Solidify the new LMS Committee structure and kick-off all committees with a clear charge from Steering.
• Draft a migration strategy Summer 2009.

Questions? Comments? Thoughts?

Further comments? Email marty_dulberg@ncsu.edu
More Information

  - Assessment summaries/information
  - Today's PowerPoint
  - LMS Committee Structure document
  - UNC Systems Schools LMS usage plans document

- If you forget the URL, go to the NC State home page at [http://www.ncsu.edu](http://www.ncsu.edu) and type in the search field “LMS Strategy” and it will take you there.