LMS Update Forums
9.27.07, 10.5.07
LMS Status Report

• Today’s Agenda
  1. Known factors contributing to spring 2007 Vista problems;
  2. What we have done and are doing to address;
  3. What to expect for fall 2007; and
  4. Strategic direction for LMSs at NC State.
Background and Overview

• Early Days
  1997 - Wolfware released
  1999 - WebCT Campus Edition Pilot
  2003 - WebCT Vista selected
Background and Overview

• Transition to Next Generation
  2004 - WebCT Vista Pilot
  2005 - General release of WebCT Vista, migration from WebCT Campus Edition
Background and Overview

• Changes

  Fall 2005 - WebCT bought by Blackboard
  Spring 2006 - Support degradation
  Fall 2006 - Three UNC schools hosted
Background and Overview

• Recent Issues
  Early Spring 2007 - Performance concerns
  March 2007 - High level discussions with Blackboard
  April/May 2007 – Serious performance problems
  Summer 2007 - Software and hardware upgrades; UNC partners to Bb hosting
  Fall 2007 - Continued challenges
Hardware, Software and Support Issues: Contributing Factors

• Hardware Issues
  Increased usage
  Original hardware specifications from WebCT proved inadequate
  Database garbage collection not functioning
Hardware, Software and Support Issues: Contributing Factors

- Software Issues = Poor Performance
  Slow response, especially during peak use
  Chat stopped working
  Tools such as grade book, quizzing, student tracking slow
  Approximately 350 hours of severe performance degradation
  Approximately 35 hours un-planned downtime
Hardware, Software and Support Issues: Contributing Factors

- Support Issues
  15 support calls to Blackboard with average call duration over 37 days
  August 2007 - 3rd party noted that Blackboard had a known software problem causing performance issues
Hardware, Software and Support Issues: Addressing The Problems

• Hardware Enhancements
  2/3/2007 - Doubled size of database server
  4/21/2007 - Added additional network infrastructure
  6/2/2007 - Increased disk capacity by more than 4x
  8/4/2007 - Added 5 additional application nodes (now at 9)
Hardware, Software and Support Issues: Addressing The Problems

- Software Enhancements
  7/21/2007 - Major software upgrade
  9/15/2007 - Newest version of Vista installed
Hardware, Software and Support Issues: Addressing The Problems

- Support Enhancements
  Blackboard staff 3/6-7/2007 onsite consultation
  Attended Blackboard conference Summer, 2007
  Many other schools experiencing same issues
  High staff turnover at Blackboard
  Met with Blackboard senior leadership
  Weekly check ins - Technical Support Manager
  Created 42 additional support calls, 16 still open
Hardware, Software and Support Issues: Addressing The Problems

• What To Expect This Semester
  Up to date software and hardware within Blackboard’s current specifications
  Load analysis indicates current hardware is sufficient for this semester (barring unknown software issues)
  Operations staff are closely monitoring performance
Strategic direction for LMSs @ NC State

• Good time for re-evaluation
  Wolfware - 10 years
  Campus Edition and Vista - 8 years (4 each)
Concerns with Blackboard
Strategic direction for LMSs @ NC State

1. Stability & reliability
2. Future growth & flexibility
3. Control our destiny
4. Potential future collaboration with UNC System
Strategic direction for LMSs @ NC State

• What are other Universities using?
  UNC Campuses – Blackboard products, but looking into open source
  LMS usage at our peer institutions
    12/16 using Blackboard products
    Others using Angel, Desire2Learn, SAKAI
    Many conducting Moodle pilots, considering open source products
Strategic direction for LMSs @ NC State

• What has DELTA been doing to explore other options?
  Participated in OKI
  Participated in Sakai conferences/community for previous 3 years
  Participating in UNC-TLT LMS Open Source pilot project
  Built and evaluated LMS comparison rubrics
Strategic direction for LMSs @ NC State

- What has DELTA been doing to explore other options? (continued)

  Considering a Moodle Pilot
  Investigated/created initial fit gap report comparing Vista and Moodle
  Staff have participated in Moodle training
  Have had discussions with companies who do migration and help desk support
Strategic direction for LMSs @ NC State

• Next Steps

Continue to support Vista
Summarize and evaluate feedback from today’s forum available at:
http://wikis.lib.ncsu.edu/index.php/LMS_Strategy
Create group to develop Moodle Pilot
Engage discussion through TLTR list and the URL above
Concerns and suggestions may also be shared directly with DELTA staff
Questions?