WebCT Upgrades to myCourses

MSU is currently in the midst of upgrading WebCT to Blackboard Vista. With the merger of WebCT and Blackboard (now known as Blackboard Learning Systems), MSU will be able to consolidate its two present course management systems (WebCT and Blackboard) into one. Once this upgrade is complete the former WebCT system will be known as myCourses.

The Center for Teaching and Learning and Information Technology Services are working together to prepare faculty and the campus for the upgrade. The migration of External WebCT is targeted for March 2008, with the Academic WebCT migration in May 2008. After the migration, WebCT CE 4.1 will be taken out of production, which means all courses housed in any instance of the current WebCT (External, Academic, and Development) will no longer be publicly available.

Instructors are responsible for the migration of their entire course content into myCourses and need to plan for the migration process into the new system. During November and December of 2007, The Center for Teaching and Learning will offer seminars and open lab time to assist faculty with the course migration process. Seminars and open lab times will be announced on The Center for Teaching and Learning’s Web site at ctl.msstate.edu and through campus mail. Please watch your mailboxes for more information. These seminars and open lab times will continue through the spring term to assist with the Academic WebCT migration into myCourses.

Academic WebCT will be upgraded in May 2008. In preparation of this upgrade, all Spring 2008 courses will NOT be loaded into WebCT automatically. If you are planning to use WebCT for Spring 2008, it is your responsibility to flag the course in myBanner. Please watch for more information.
From the Director’s Desk

The Center for Teaching and Learning has gotten off to a busy start for the Fall 2007 Semester. Several new teaching tools are available for faculty on a campus-wide basis; eInstruction and Turnitin.com. eInstruction is the audience response system recognized as the standard by the university and the Center has been providing workshops and individual support for faculty implementing eInstruction into their class(es). Over 70 faculty have obtained an eInstruction teacher kit and are planning to implement the clickers into their instruction during the fall and spring semesters. The bookstore has sold over 2500 clickers to students.

Another instructional tool that is now available to faculty campus-wide is Turnitin.com, a Web-based anti-plagiarism tool that faculty can use to check student work for originality. The Honor Code Office is providing the funding for Turnitin.com while the Center is providing faculty support and Information Technology Services is helping with the technical and logistical needs of the system. See the article on page eight for more information on Turnitin.com.

The Center has also expanded the number and topics of the popular Teaching and Learning Seminars. Some of the new topics for this fall include classroom management and the state of the art in cheating. Popular topics such as teaching effectively with PowerPoint are being offered again. The Center is also utilizing the expertise and wisdom of a number of Grisham Master Teachers in conducting these seminars. Grisham Master Teachers such as Melissa Moore, Michael Newman, and Allison Pearson have graciously volunteered to teach seminars this fall. MSU is fortunate to have so many Grisham Master Teachers in the faculty that are willing to help further teaching and learning across campus.

Other areas that the Center is involved with are learning communities and first year experience programs. The Center is assisting with current learning communities such as the French House, Griffis Learning Community, and Day One while retooling the process of how they are developed. In addition the Center is busy working with the Provost’s Office in the development and implementation of the expanded first year experience programs. Be on the look out for additional information on both learning communities and first year experience programs.

An increasing number of faculty are taking advantage of the CTL service of having someone from the Center observe their teaching. I have been fortunate to have observed a number of faculty teach last spring and this fall. I have been very impressed with the teaching abilities of these faculty and their commitment to continue to improve as teachers. The Center is working to expand the number of faculty who can serve as peer observers of teaching. If you are interested in being observed please email me at raven@ctl.msstate.edu or call 325-9604.

Please let me know if you have suggestions, ideas, and/or comments of how the Center can help you.
Seminars

The Center for Teaching and Learning is offering one hour teaching and learning workshops this fall. The remaining fall seminars are listed below:

- October 25, 2007  Effective Classroom Management
- November 7, 2007  Developing a Course Syllabus
- November 15, 2007  State of the Art in Cheating

Each workshop is offered from 12:30 – 1:30. For more information or to register for a seminar, please visit ctl.msstate.edu.

Fall 2007 Brown Bag

The Center for Teaching and Learning offers three Brown Bag sessions each semester. The Brown Bag sessions cover relevant topics related to teaching and learning at MSU. Each session consists of a distinguished panel highly knowledgeable about the topic. Attendees are served a light lunch during the event. The remaining Fall 2007 Brown Bag session date and topic is:

November 16, 2007  MSU Honor Code

Brown Bag sessions are held in the Library Auditorium. The sessions run from noon to 1:00, with networking and lunch beginning at 11:30.

Registration is encouraged. For more information or to register, please visit ctl.msstate.edu or contact The Center for Teaching and Learning at 325-1403 or help@ctl.msstate.edu.

A podcast of each session is also available at podcast.its.msstate.edu.
Boot Camp 2007

Thirteen MSU faculty members spent three days in May learning how to “Get an Edge on Teaching” at the 2007 Boot Camp sponsored by the Center for Teaching and Learning. Boot Camp provided the group an opportunity to learn how to enhance their instruction by integrating instructional technology into their teaching. Sessions throughout the week covered a variety of topics such as WebCT, Photoshop, PowerPoint, as well as plagiarism and EndNote. The Center for Teaching and Learning coordinated and provided matching support for the 2007 Technology Boot Camp. The sessions were developed and taught by the Center for Teaching and Learning, ITS, and the Library.

At the end of Boot Camp each participant received a new Gateway Laptop. The laptops also contained all of the software that was taught throughout the week. Funds for the laptops and software were provided by The Center for Teaching and Learning and the Dean’s offices of the respective participants. The Library provided a license for EndNote and ITS provided a license for Respondus to the faculty.

Podcasting Pilot Continued

The MSU podcasting pilot has been continued for the Fall 2007 semester which includes 15 instructors and 22 classes. The instructors who have used the system report that it adds educational value to the course. During the Fall 2007 pilot, new upgrades are in place which includes the ability for the instructors to view access logs that indicate the number of times the podcast and episodes have been downloaded. Also available is a delete button and auto purge information. Plans are in place to put prodcasing into production for the Spring 2008 semester.

For more information about the Fall 2007 pilot, contact The Center for Teaching and Learning at 325-1403 or help@ctl.msstate.edu.
Day One Leadership Learning Community

The Center for Teaching and Learning has been actively involved with the development and implementation of the Day One Leadership Learning Community. Day One, the brainchild of President Robert H. “Doc” Foglesong, is part of the leadership continuum of programs being offered at MSU. Day One, comprised of 230 students, is a vibrant and ambitious first-year experience program that blends learning communities and service learning with leadership development. Day One is fortunate to be led by a team consisting of some of the best and brightest faculty at MSU. Day One is directed by Grisham Master Teacher, Tom Carskadon, along with a team including Grisham Master Teachers Melissa Moore and Allison Pearson and service learning expert April Heiselt. The Center, in conjunction with ITS, helped with planning, developing, implementing, and supporting the instructional technology systems used in the Day One program. Blogs, digital reflections, “clickers”, Web-based logging for service learning, and automated attendance are some of the instructional technologies utilized by Day One. For more information regarding Day One visit dayone.msstate.edu. Contact Dr. Cade Smith, Assistant Dean and Director of the Appalachian Leadership Honors Program at cade@saffairs.msstate.edu for information about additional leadership programs.

Smaller Technology Classroom Lecterns Offered

Two types of Technology Classroom lecterns are available for departments. The traditional lectern that currently resides in the Technology Classroom is a 2+ lectern. This classification system originated from a study commissioned by ITAC in 2002, Ad Hoc Committee on Classroom Technology Summary. The new lectern is more affordable for departments that do not need all the components of the original lectern. The smaller size also carries a smaller price. Some of the equipment omitted from the smaller lectern are a VCR, display, document camera, and dedicated DVD player. These are classified this as a 2- lectern. The Communication Department has added five of these 2- lecterns to Technology Classrooms in McComas Hall. Training and documentation for both lecterns is available from The Center for Teaching and Learning. Departments should contact ITS for information on pricing and installation.
Along with textbooks and notebooks, student’s backpacks may also contain a clicker this semester. MSU adopted the eInstruction audience response system in the Spring 2007 semester. The standardization of one system provides full support for faculty, while students only need to purchase one clicker to use in multiple classes. Over 38 instructors are currently using the eInstruction audience response system. Over 2500 clickers that have been sold to students are being used in classrooms this semester.

eInstruction allows instructors to create and submit questions to the class, which then students use their clickers to answer. The questions can be simplistic multiple choice, true/false, numeric, or can be more difficult and require extended thought by the students. Dr. Rodney Pearson, a Professor in Management and Information Systems in the College of Business and Industry said, “Getting an answer from every student is the best feedback I ever received.” This aids in enhancing instructor and student interaction.

According to Dr. Pearson, “It certainly keeps students involved and every student has to answer the question.” Because the clicker has an LCD screen, students receive confirmation from the system when their answers are sent and received, even if they sit in the back of the room. “Students are getting feedback. They know if they are answering questions correctly,” said Dr. Pearson.

The Center for Teaching and Learning is offering additional workshops this fall for those who are interested in using the eInstruction system in the spring semester. eInstruction is very user-friendly, but “like any system there is a learning curve,” said Dr. Pearson. Faculty must be familiar with how to operate the clicker before using it in the classroom. Teacher kits are available to faculty after attending a training session. The teacher kit is comprised of a receiver, software CD, and one teacher clicker.

An eInstruction Users Group is forming which will give MSU eInstruction faculty users a chance to meet and collaborate. Visit the CTL Web site at ctl.msstate.edu, call 325-1403, or email help@ctl.msstate.edu for more information.

Upcoming training dates include:
November 5, 2007 - Introduction to eInstruction CPS for PowerPoint
November 12, 2007 - Introduction to eInstruction
Grisham Master Teacher Series

Dr. Keith Koenig, Professor of Aerospace Engineering at Mississippi State University, delivered the Grisham Master Teacher Series Lecture this past March, hosted by The Center for Teaching and Learning. Funded by the author John Grisham, the Grisham Master Teacher awards began in 1993 and recognizes excellence in teaching.

The 2006 award recipient, Keith Koenig, gave the second annual Grisham Master Teacher Series Lecture, entitled “Pedagogical Puns: Lower Forms of Humor for Higher Education.” Dr. Koenig’s presentation provided suggestions for making class fun and enjoyable. He illustrated how he uses PowerPoint slides to keep his student’s attention and help them think “outside the box.” A podcast of Dr. Koenig’s presentation is available online at the Mississippi State University’s podcast Web site at podcast.its.msstate.edu under the CTL listings.

From the Bookshelf….

This semester’s book focus is on Peter Filene’s *The Joy of Teaching*. Published by the University of North Carolina Press in 2005, Filene’s work has quickly become a classic text for the new (and not so new) college teacher, with some universities providing a copy to all new faculty!

Filene is professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he has earned six teaching awards. What sets Filene’s work apart is the practical, applied advice he provides in this book. Less a theoretical examination of higher education instructional practices, Filene’s work reads like an informal discussion over a cup of coffee. Filene offers suggestions for most of the common classroom tasks: developing a syllabus, providing a lecture, encouraging classroom discussions, fostering student engagement, and using assessment and grading techniques. Filene also honestly addresses the perceived dichotomy between teaching and research in an excellent chapter entitled “Teaching and Not Perishing.”

Filene offers a number of suggestions for the successful teacher. First, enter into a relationship with your students, which by definition must be an interactive process. As you develop your course, focus on both the content and the outcomes of this relationship. Don’t hesitate to solicit various forms of feedback from your students throughout the semester. And finally, remember that there is not such thing as the “perfect” course---whether it’s the first or twentieth time you teach, you’ll find that the teaching relationship continues to evolve.

*The Joy of Teaching* is available at the MSU Libraries under the call number LB 2331 .F493 2005.

To recommend a future bookshelf title, contact Deborah Lee at dlee@ctl.msstate.edu.
Plagiarism Prevention and Detection: Turnitin.com

Mississippi State University has purchased a site license for the plagiarism detection software, Turnitin.com. The Turnitin software is the industry leader in plagiarism detection and allows faculty to check students’ written assignments for improper citation or potential plagiarism. The system compares the student’s writing against a database of published journal articles, an archived version of the Internet, and against a database of student submitted papers. This site license was purchased through the Honor Code Office in support of the Honor Code implemented this semester (Academic Operating Policy 12.07).

There are a few pedagogical points to keep in mind when using Turnitin. First, let your students know you plan to use the service. Discuss the purpose of the service and how you will use it. Turnitin recommends you use the service equally for all students but faculty do have the ability to run selected papers through the system. To avoid any confusion, clearly define for your students what your expectations are for written assignments. Are they allowed to work together? Is there a particular citation style you prefer them to use? (Note that many students are not familiar with citation styles and may need guidance from you on how to correctly cite their sources.) Turnitin produces an originality report for written work. It does NOT determine whether a student has plagiarized a work or not. Papers with high scores could represent legitimate research and papers with low scores could still be plagiarized (or is not the student’s own work.) Only you, as the instructor, can determine whether or not the written assignment has been plagiarized.

The Center for Teaching and Learning supports faculty instruction for Turnitin. A number of workshops are offered each semester. In addition, departments may request specialized training. Quickstart guides and manuals are available on the CTL Web site, under the Publications Tab. For additional questions about Turnitin.com, please contact the CTL at 325-1403.