

**VENTURA COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION CENTER**

DISTANCE LEARNING TASK FORCE

MARCH 06, 2009

1:30 – 3:30 P.M.

Meeting Notes

Attendance: Ann Bittl, Marc Boman, Teresa Bonham, Martin Chetlen, Scott Corbett, Dave Fuhrmann, Gwendolyn Huddleston, Victory Kitamura, Julie Lovejoy, Lisa Miller, Bill Pearce, Mike Rose, Ramiro Sanchez, Rick Shaw, Brenda Shubert, Heather Untalan, Marla Ward, Betsy Wagner

1. Introductions

2. Task Force Overview

The last meeting was in November of 2007. The Task Force group was formed in late 2006 to review the district distance learning software. At the time, two of the three campuses were using WebCT (MC and VC) and one was using Moodle (OC). A three year agreement was signed with Blackboard for all campuses which included one year of hosting. The hosting was later extended for a second year. The agreement ends in April 2010 and we are looking at our options.

3. Blackboard hosting moving in-house for Summer 2009

In-house hosting requires several staff positions that did not exist at the time of the contract signing with Blackboard. This included having a Systems Administrator, Programmers, and a Database Administrator. We are now adequately staffed to support the hosting. We have acquired the necessary hardware and software. Blackboard will export our current database for import into the system. The plan is to deploy the system in the next two weeks and begin testing. Then, over Memorial Day weekend, the transition to in-house hosting will take place. That weekend should have fairly low impact on students and faculty. It was suggested that a notice be posted at least one week ahead of time that Blackboard will be down that weekend and an email be sent to the on-line students. The grade book can be exported from Blackboard and then the faculty can enter the information into WebStar.

4. After-hours support for Blackboard Vista

In February there was a problem over the weekend and some students were off line for 20-30 hours. Dave has been charged by ATAC to investigate options for 24/7 help desk staffing. It would take at least four more staff positions and there is no current budget for it. Based on log in statistics, the heaviest on-line traffic is between 10:00 PM and midnight; morning is the lightest. The kinds of issues that students have were discussed. Generally the

beginning of a semester has more traffic, lessening as the semester progresses and students have gotten past the initial ~~to~~-log in and questions. It was suggested that a FAQ area be created for the students.

At the minimum, finding an outside monitoring system to make sure that on-line is up is one option. The problem with out-sourcing support services is that a problem may actually lie with the portal, other software, or internal situation particular to our district that the service would not be able to support. It was suggested that student workers be used for help. Student workers need to have a supervisor available. Dave will look into hiring part time help and ask HR about any issues involved with having on-line student workers. It was discussed setting up a course in Blackboard for a Help Desk role; course shell has a limit so not everyone can be added to the course. Using the Group Course in MyVCCCD was suggested. Dave will contact other services for cost information.

5. Current Blackboard contract status

The Blackboard contract start date began on the signing date instead of July 1 so it is not aligned with the academic year (contract signed April 2, 2007 and ends April 2, 2010). This is problematic for making any major change. If we decide not to stay with Blackboard, in April 2010 we would need to provide them with proof that we are no longer using the software. A January mid-year changeover was discussed. It was felt that the adjustment for the faculty would be more problematic than for the students. There may be more resistance due to all of the recent new changes i.e. the portal and the Outlook migration. A push for early training, giving the faculty enough time to plan for the change was suggested as a way to alleviate some of the resistance. It was mentioned that there will never be a good time to make changes, as the training would need to occur during a semester for the following semester, or during the summer when many instructors are not here.

6. Options for our next LMS platform (beyond current contract with Blackboard):

Dave reviewed the LMS Comparison chart. He will ask the vendors for financial statements and finalize the known costs for each in preparation for demos:

- **Blackboard Vista 8 contract extension**
- **Blackboard Learn Release 9**
- **ANGEL Learning**
- **Desire2Learn**
- **Sakai**
- **Moodle**
- **Other options?**

E-College was suggested, but it was thought to be too expensive. Also mentioned was the Etudes consortium using Sakai. Using the portal was mentioned as another possibility. Mike clarified that the portal Course Studio feature was not meant for full online instruction, as there is no grade book or other necessary features. Dave will follow up with Etudes.

- **Outsourced versus in-house hosting**
- **Help Desk and 24x7 Support Requirements**
- **Demo criteria**

The committee was requested to put together questions for the vendors; we need to be sure that we don't lose important features.

- **Demo schedule**

The demos will start on March 13 with two vendors scheduled, one from 9:00 – 10:30a.m., the second from 11:00a.m. – 12:30p.m. The final three vendors will be scheduled for March 20.

Rick will find an available room at VC.

7. Next Meeting (See Demo Schedule)