Faculty Votes in ANGEL as LMS

Learning Management System

ANGEL (A New Global Environment for Learning) is watching over JCCC's learning management system.

In a 55-to-3 vote, JCCC faculty voted to replace the previous Blackboard LMS with ANGEL LMS, educational software evolved from research at Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis, to manage online classes.

According to Jonathan Bacon, academic director, Educational Technology Center, the ETC also favored the move.

"We hear great things about tech support with ANGEL, which we've not had with Blackboard," Bacon said.

Dr. Csilla Duneczky, interim assistant dean, Science, and chair of the LMS Search Steering Committee, says ANGEL and Blackboard will run simultaneously through the spring of 2010, at which point Blackboard will be discontinued.

Bacon proposes a pilot period for ANGEL with a limited number of faculty and a limited number of courses. He foresees a rollout of the first ANGEL classes for spring 2009 classes.

"We need to move forward in a measured way," Bacon said. "We need to train the ETC staff, build basic elements into all courses, establish default settings and templates for the system, develop training materials and train faculty before we can pilot courses."

ETC senior analysts, who have spent a couple hundred man-hours testing ANGEL, say

ANGEL is more intuitive and reliable than Blackboard and less rigid in organization, meaning materials can be more easily shared between courses. It interfaces with Banner, Second Life and SharePoint. The system has tools like wikis, blogs, journals, access to social bookmarking and instant messaging.

Duneczky sees the social tools as an advantage for students, as well as its "e-portfolio" feature where students can compile electronic documents from multiple classes for future employers. Dr. Jim McWard, English professor, who has tested ANGEL, touts the way college standards and objectives can be built into a course as a form of assessment in the new LMS.

"JCCC can use ANGEL to look at not only whether a class meets its objectives, but also the broader perspective of whether students are learning to communicate and problem-solve," Duneczky said.

"ANGEL is more intuitive," said Tracy Newman, senior analyst, ETC. "ANGEL was written by instructors. Blackboard was cobbled together by programmers. In ANGEL, you simply drag and drop files into a course instead of uploading it."

"Ultimately, ANGEL will be much easier for students and faculty to use," Duneczky said.

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