

Reflections on the implementation of a course website maintained by multiple faculty members.

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Brief Description: (no more than 50 words).

Sustainability is a major issue when creating websites that students use with courses. How will content change over time, how can faculty inexperienced with web development add to and maintain content? This paper presentation will examine an implemented sustainable website that can be managed by everyone associated with the course.

Abstract:

Courses with large enrollments pose an obstacle to providing individualization of instruction. It is difficult to provide individual learning experiences for each student enrolled in a course when enrollment exceeds 100 students. Educators are on a cusp utilizing technology in a sound manner to meet the needs of the students, thus filling the void created by large class enrollments. However, new interventions, such as the use of the internet as an aide in the classroom, may be employed by some faculty with the know-how to implement technology while those with less experience, confidence, and training fall behind.

Introductory Biology for non-majors at SUNY Cortland presented an opportunity to reach out to the over 500 students who enroll each semester by using a series of web resources to help personalize the lab experience for all students. Web resources were produced that contained real images from the students labs. Actual data sets from experiments run in labs. Virtual practice tutorials and practice exams were used extensively. One problem that emerged was due to the website being created and managed by instructor out of the many faculty associated with the course.

A project was undertaken in order to assess the needs of students who used the site, as well as to explore the technology available to enable all course instructors to participate in the website development. A detailed front-end analysis was conducted that demonstrated the need for a resource like the one described and providing a resource containing a variety of activities to help to make the lab experiences more personal and more active.

This paper presentation will serve to describe the process of student needs and documenting the implementation and evaluation of the software technologies to support long term sustainability of the web resource. The presentation will include a demonstration of the actual web resource, software used to create the web resource, and a Q&A session that will address the following questions:

1. How did we understand students need?

2. What are the advantages of building a sustainable website instead of using a learning management system like Blackboard, WebCT, or ANGEL?
3. How effective was the website in meeting student need and how is this effectiveness measured?
4. What impact did the sustainability effort have on the non-web trained faculty?