Course Management Systems (CMS) Analysis

Executive Summary

Because of substantial projected increased costs for fiscal year 2013-2014 in the current program to deliver LAMC online, hybrid, and web-enhanced classes, and problems encountered with that program ("moodle"), the DE Committee decided to analyze, compare and contrast "moodle" with the "etudes" system to determine which system best serves both LAMC faculty and students with the delivery of online, hybrid, and web-enhanced course content. The use of course systems has dramatically increased from 16 classes with with 400 students using it in 2003, to 10 years later, 160 classes and 6400 students.

Costs
The initial attraction to "moodle" was the the LACCD district provided it for free. But as use increased, so did price, and the costs increased to $9000 in 2010, $15,000 in 2012, and 2013-14 ($35,000). At the same time, etudes has maintained its price increase to a reasonable 3% per year. Etudes is a non-profit corporation, whose mission is the benefit of its members, and which focuses on the needs of the California Community Colleges, with a decade of proven record. Etudes costs for Fiscal year 2013-2014 is $16,500 ( $28,500 less a 50% discount for participating in the "etudes pilot project" ), and then $28,500 for 2014-2015. Costs with any system increase with increased number of faculty and student using the systems. The costs of the system are essential to the education of students at Mission, and should and will be included in current and future "baseline budget", and not as a discretionary "over baseline" cost.

Comparison of systems
Both moodle and etudes provide numerous features to both students and faculty. Etudes common placement and fill in the blank approach makes it simple to check for online compliance and reinforces best online practices. Moodle sites can be harder to evaluate and depend more on instructor technical ability and the student's web proficiency. Moodle expects instructors knowledgeable in technology and instructional design to construct online classrooms. The Moodle classroom functions require students to be more web proficient as well. The Etudes foundation provides a better online learning experience guided by an online community of instructors. New instructors and students will readily see the difference just by logging into Etudes.

Support issues with Moodle
When moodle, in an attempt to stay competitive, "rolled out" its new moodle 2.0 program, it required much more attention, support, and implementation, resources, and server capacity. At first, moodle 2.0 was "buggy" and very slow. Remote Learner (the current hosting company for our moodle 2.0 implementation) changed its servers several time in response to the "slowness" issues, but moodle still remains very slow. Also, LACCD IT personnel and Remote Learner attempted over two semesters, with many problems, to synchronize the student information system student data base and moodle 2.0. For at least one semester, manual uploads were used to act as a "work around" and DE coordinators were required to do the “manual uploads” on a daily basis while encountering many problems and issues. Synchronization was accomplished at the last minute by LACCD IT, literally a week before the ACCJC visit to LAMC and Pierce which uses moodle. The current moodle synchronization, still does not remove students who drop the class leaving moodle faculty with the monumental task of removing students in their respective moodle classes. Etudes synchronization avoids this
problem with etudes programming staff personally handling uploads every night, which includes uploading all new students, and removing students who have dropped or been excluded by faculty in the LACCD student information system. Another “sticky issue” concerns removing students from the CMS and then re-instating students to the CMS. Although this does not occur regularly, it is an important feature, since reinstated students need to have all of their previously submitted work, re-uploaded to the CMS. Moodle 2.2 no longer supports this feature with a “one click” return of grades and work of the reinstated work. A complex set of programming language is required to reinstate students into the moodle class which is beyond most faculty. Etudes, on the other hand, provides this feature. Such customization is a “hallmark” of etudes programming, and does not leave the faculty in the “lurch” when the CMS upgrades to a newer version.

Further, the LACCD IT person, responsible for moodle issues has been reassigned to work on the implementation of the District student information system creating a "lack of necessary support", and dramatically increasing the costs of moodle for Fiscal Years 2013-2014 as each college will be required to pay an additional and costly expense to the hosting company (Remote Learner) for support of moodle on their campus. Etudes provides both faculty and student support 24/7 as part of the yearly costs for their system.

Conversion
Etudes has developed a "simple - one click" conversion tool along with video and text instructions for moodle faculty converting their moodle shells to etudes. This will greatly assist with converting and transitioning our moodle faculty over to etudes for Fall 2013. Etudes programming staff took the time, energy and efforts to produce this tool, and only reflects their "level of support" we can anticipate in the future, compared to the lack of support we have faced with converting from moodle 1.9 to moodle 2.0 over the last year.

Training
By the end of May, the Etudes Pilot Project will have trained over 70 of our faculty, including all of our faculty teaching online with both moodle and ECollege. The certification process created by Etudes is a model "best practice" and is a "deal breaker" since Etudes training staff, and the Director, herself, provided "on campus", "hands on" training for "free" during January, and our faculty fully embraced the pilot project by participating in the training.

Conclusion
The DE Committee is in the process of completing both faculty and student surveys of the two systems to include within its analysis. It will then submit its final recommendation to EPC for their review and approval by the end of April.

The current report is located at :  [http://lamission.edu/de/CMSA.pdf](http://lamission.edu/de/CMSA.pdf)

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