

## TRANSITIONS IN CLASSROOM TECHNOLOGY: HOW TO USE MOODLE EFFECTIVELY

David S. Ackerman, Department of Marketing, California State University Northridge,  
18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330-8377; david.s.ackerman@csun.edu

Christina Chung, Ramapo College of New Jersey, 505 Ramapo Valley Road,  
Mahwah, NJ 07430; cchung1@ramapo.edu

Brian A. Vander Schee, Aurora University, 347 S. Gladstone Avenue,  
Aurora, IL 60506; bvanders@aurora.edu

### ABSTRACT

There are two issues we can discuss in this special issue on CMS (course management system). One can be posed by the question, "Do I need to adopt CMS for my class"? Marketing instructors may already be quite effective teachers without the new instructional technology. They may question what benefits they and their students will reap by using a new technology. There are also research findings that indicate learning technology may not be the most important factor in impacting learning outcomes (Young et al., 2003). Instructors may say to themselves, "It sounds like a great idea! Maybe I'll do it next year." Depending on a variety of internal and external factors, procrastination is not uncommon in academia (Ackerman & Gross 2007). Getting started on adoption of CMS is a key to success. However, in a survey taken in both 1998 and 2000, Lincoln (2001) found that overall there was an increase in technology usage in instruction over time.

The second issue raises the question of, "Do we need to switch to Moodle?" Blackboard and WebCT have been used as the leading CMS. Are instructors who are already familiar with an existing CMS such as Blackboard or WebCT willing to invest time and effort to learn Moodle? Despite familiarity with Blackboard or WebCT, Moodle usage has grown since its introduction in 2003 to approximately 3,000,000 courses in 209 countries as of October 2009. Moodle is an open source learning management system (LMS). This means Moodle is available free of charge to anybody under the terms of the General Public License – there is no licensing fee.

This special session will look at trends in CMS transitions and then open the floor to a discussion by participants. It will specifically examine these experiences within the context of Moodle in order to discuss how to use Moodle effectively in organizing, managing, communicating, and assessing.

### IS MOODLE EASY TO LEARN?

Moodle stands for *Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment*. Moodle has great potential for supporting face-to-face classroom and blended course formats as well as online courses. Moodle provides various interactive functions which make classes more creative and dynamic. However, there is a need to expend a lot of time and effort in learning Moodle, especially for those who never learned CMS.

### HOW TO USE MOODLE EFFECTIVELY

Moodle is a template-based system with a flat view that requires each individual teacher to customize his or her own class on Moodle. It is quite time-consuming to learn how to utilize various features that Moodle provides. It is sometimes frustrating for instructors, who might ask the question, "Where should I start?" Even though IT staff may help instructors, there are many functions one must learn in order to understand how to utilize Moodle's interactive system, even after using it in an actual class. Thus, the purpose of this special session is to exchange Moodle experiences among instructors who use Moodle. The following items will be discussed (Table 1).

### CONCLUSION

Despite its increasingly widespread use, some have suggested that student motivation is a key factor in the success of Moodle in the classroom (Beatty & Ulascewicz, 2006). To aid in this, Moodle provides various features for instructors that facilitate interaction and create a dynamic learning environment for either face-to-face instruction or online classes. Among other attributes, it is user friendly and well-organized, and its collaborative tools are easy to communicate with and use online, all of which are very important.

**TABLE 1  
DISCUSSION ITEM**

		Discussion
Organizing	Screen format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Which format is the best?</li> <li>LAM course, SCORM, social, topic, weekly format</li> </ul>
	Main screen layout and design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How to organize a “flat view” format</li> <li>- the importance of simplicity on the main screen</li> <li>- usage of color and pictures</li> <li>- posting files as course resources</li> <li>- hide/show resources or assignments</li> </ul>
Communicating	Message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How to manage “Message setting”</li> </ul>
	eMail list	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How to organize eMail list.</li> </ul>
	Quickmail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How to use Quickmail for group projects.</li> </ul>
	Chat room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How to use chat room</li> <li>- class based or team based</li> </ul>
	Discussion forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How to organize the discussion forum</li> <li>- class based or team based</li> </ul>
Course managing	Mini-quiz before the class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How to facilitate reading textbook/ materials</li> <li>** set no-time-limit with a deadline</li> </ul>
	Min-quiz In class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How to encourage students’ study step-by-step</li> <li>** time limit and password</li> </ul>
	Case discussion forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How to facilitate reading materials</li> <li>■ How to encourage interaction among students</li> </ul>
	Assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How to manage the assignment dropbox</li> <li>** individual or group projects</li> <li>** off-line activity</li> <li>** advanced uploading of files</li> </ul>
Assessing	Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How to design an exam.</li> <li>■ How to set an exam.</li> </ul>
	Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How to send feedback on class discussions.</li> <li>■ How to send feedback on individual assignments.</li> </ul>
Grading	Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How to grade “class discussion.”</li> </ul>
	Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Multiple choice grading.</li> </ul>
	Grade book	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How to manage grade book</li> <li>** weighted grades, extra credit, drop lowest grade</li> </ul>
Etc.	Switch roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How to set “viewing as a student.”</li> </ul>
	Multi-media functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How to use multi-media</li> </ul>

**References Available on Request**