

Information Technology Services

Response to ACPAC – Moodle-related Recommendations

Moodle-related Recommendations from ACPAC:

ACPAC approved Moodle-related recommendations from the Online Learning Subcommittee (OLC) during the 09/16/2009 and 10/14/2009 ACPAC meetings. These recommendations can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Moodle should be made available for non-instructional purposes (advising students, student organizations, etc.).
- 2) Moodle should be made available for instruction beyond ‘traditional’ courses (i.e. those that do not appear in the Banner course schedule)
- 3) Faculty should be permitted to continue the practice of granting individuals without IUP computer accounts access to Moodle on an on-demand basis
- 4) Moodle’s lack of an internal e-mail mechanism should be resolved

Background Considerations:

- The replacement of WebCT with Moodle for ‘traditional instructional use’ is the top priority and will continue to be so through the conclusion of the Fall 2010 semester. Less than 50 percent of IUP faculty that actively used WebCT since 2006 have initiated the process for converting course material. Therefore, requests that fall outside of this core content will be addressed as a secondary priority.
- Although Moodle possesses a number of advantages over WebCT, it also includes some disadvantages. Our charge is to fully implement the standard Moodle product and successfully shut down WebCT before looking at the best way to close lingering gaps.
- IT Services has not been provided any additional staff to complete this implementation. Since Moodle is open source, there is no vendor escalation in cases where IUP is dissatisfied with a feature or lack of functionality. Given these realities, IUP must focus on core business and business that has very low risk.
- IT Services is providing full support for both WebCT and Moodle.

Responses to the Recommendations:

#1. Moodle should be made available for non-instructional purposes (advising students, student organizations, etc.).

IT Services will address this response by breaking down the request into two separate categories. The first is non-instructional use related to faculty advising. The second will be “other” non-instructional use.

First, replacing the academic advising capability currently being utilized in WebCT is within the scope of the project as a secondary priority and IT Services will be responsible for implementing an appropriate solution for faculty currently using WebCT for advising. Three specific considerations when determining our course of action are 1.) it appears only about a dozen faculty currently utilize WebCT for this purpose, 2.) IT Services is being required to support Microsoft SharePoint as a collaboration platform and 3.) SharePoint is already the PASSHE standard for collaboration and it is becoming a standard for a variety of IUP collaborations ranging from committee work to search committees.

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Unlike academic advising, Banner may not contain the data related to membership of other non-instructional activities, so this will require a separate approach. Replacing the current usage of WebCT for these activities, however, is also within the scope of the project as a secondary priority and IT Services will be responsible for implementing a solution. It is important to note that such a solution will include internal IUP constituents that already have computing accounts. IT Services understands that the use of Moodle could be a valid tool for such “other” non-instructional needs; however, it is suggested that ACPAC work with appropriate folks to clearly define the needs and related procedures/guidelines for the “non-instruction” category, regardless of a specific tool, and then work with IT Services to implement as a secondary priority.

#2. Moodle should be made available for instruction beyond ‘traditional’ courses (i.e. those that do not appear in the Banner course schedule)

A fundamental need for IUP as part of its transition to Moodle is the creation of a truly enterprise-level business and support model for online learning as we proceed into the next decade. One piece in this process is the expansion of the Banner Student module to include ALL courses being taught and identification of all students in those courses. There are a variety of legal, financial, security and instructional reasons for embracing this portion of the transition.

IT Services supports a model in which master courses, instructors of record and students are created in Banner and then related to each other via the registration process. Access to Moodle will require that this relationship be established in Banner Student. This is a critical step forward in IUP’s adherence to governance, regulatory and compliance issues, both technical and non-technical.

Within these requirements, Moodle will support instruction beyond what are now considered ‘traditional’ courses.

#3. Faculty should be permitted to continue the practice of granting individuals without IUP computer accounts access to Moodle on an on-demand basis

IUP has a simple, long-standing process for the creation of computing accounts for individuals who do not have a ‘formal’ relationship with the university (faculty, staff, students, affiliates) involving the creation of a ‘no pay’ employee record in Banner by the Office of Human Resources. As per the response for recommendation #2, this process will be extended to online learning as part of the Moodle implementation and this will permit the current service level to remain in place.

#4. Moodle’s lack of an internal e-mail mechanism should be resolved

Standard Moodle does not include an internal e-mail mechanism, so this request falls outside of the scope of this project and will need to be created and ranked as a separate priority. IUP currently lacks the personnel resources, the time and the finances to attempt this implementation until IT resources supporting WebCT can be reallocated for this purpose.