

LMS Assessment: Student and Instructor Survey and Focus Group Results

The Faculty Instructional Technology Center (FITC) and Information Technology Services (ITS) have undertaken several survey and focus group studies during the past two years that are relevant to the current LMS Assessment. This document contains a summary of results from those studies. Themes that recur in multiple forums are highlighted.

2007 LMS Assessment Undergraduate Focus Group

On November 27, 2007, the LMS Assessment Team hosted an Undergraduate Focus Group. Participants were solicited with flyers and were promised pizza and the chance to win prizes for participating. Nine undergraduates attended the event; six stayed for the entire event. All of the participants had taken at least one course using WebCT. The following opinions were echoed by multiple participants.

- ◆ A future **LMS should have an intuitive interface and better navigation**. The interface should be intuitive enough that student training should not be necessary. They thought course web sites should take cues from social networking sites.
- ◆ **Students dislike the wide variation** in navigation, access, and interface among different departmental and non-WebCT course web sites.
- ◆ **Technology cannot replace the professor**, class, and in-person pedagogy, however students expect online resources, such as syllabi
- ◆ Students want to receive notifications about assignments and cancelled classes, but are aware that there is still a gap between digital haves and have-nots, and do not want students who cannot afford the latest technology to be penalized for not having it
- ◆ Students want to be able to "shop online" for courses, and think that having course materials available publicly (they mentioned MIT's Open Course project) is valuable for enrolled students and the community at large. They were also interested in **the ability to sample courses outside their major**.

2007 LMS Assessment Undergraduate Survey

On November 28, 2007, the LMS Assessment Team distributed half-page surveys at College 8, Porter, and Colleges 9/10. Students who completed the surveys had the chance to receive prizes from a random drawing of participants. The following opinions were echoed by multiple participants.

- ◆ Students feel that the use of **technology is mandatory in today's educational system**; however many students enjoy traditional classes and **do not want technology to interfere** with the in-class experience.
- ◆ Students want educational technology to be faster and more convenient.
- ◆ They see the main use of technology in education as facilitating completion of homework assignments.
- ◆ Students appreciate it when instructors keep their course web sites **organized and updated frequently**. Several students expressed anxiety about the use of online submittal of assignments.
- ◆ Students see technology as facilitating life-long learning where they can research their own **personal interests outside of class**.

2007 LMS Assessment Graduate Focus Group

On November 29, 2007, the LMS Assessment Team hosted a graduate student focus group. Participants were solicited with flyers and were promised pizza and the chance to win prizes for participating. Four graduate students attended the event. Only one of the graduate students had experience using WebCT. The following opinions were echoed by multiple participants.

- ◆ Graduate students' use of technology includes videoconferencing, faxing, specialized discipline-specific software, and research. (This was different from undergraduates' use of technology, which was primarily for communication.)
- ◆ Graduate students often fulfill a go-between role for professors and technology.
- ◆ Access to adaptive technologies for graduate students is seriously sub-par.
- ◆ They felt the need for redesign and consolidation of UCSC web pages, and **did not understand why web services were so fragmented**.
- ◆ They believed that prospective graduate students rely heavily on departmental and faculty web pages (although not on course web pages) when deciding to which universities they will apply.

2006 and 2007 Surveys of Students and Instructors Using WebCT

For the second year in a row, the Faculty Instructional Technology Center has surveyed students and instructors about WebCT. In the 2006 survey, 653 students (out of 4,447) and 31 instructors (out of 168) responded. This year, 10,564 students and 142 instructors were surveyed. Of these, 621 students and 17 instructors responded.

In this preliminary analysis, this year's results are compared to last year's.

2006 Survey Results	2007 Survey Results
<p>It's not the tool itself, but how you use the tool that matters.</p> <p>In 2006, there was a clear correlation between overall student satisfaction and the perception that the instructor was updating the site at least 3-4 days a week. The likelihood of students to review lecture notes and complete assignments was significantly and positively correlated with more frequent updates by instructors.</p> <p>Suggestions for improvement to WebCT fell into two broad categories: suggestions for improvements to the program itself and suggestions for how it should be used in teaching. In 2006, 75% of student suggestions were concerned with usage, indicating a much greater concern among students with how WebCT was used than with features of the application itself.</p>	<p>The tool is inadequate, and is a barrier to best practices.</p> <p>In 2007, the correlation between satisfaction and frequency of instructor updates was still significant, but students' satisfaction peaked when instructors updated the site 1-2 days a week, and then declined with more frequent updates. Usage also correlated positively with review of lecture notes and completion of assignments, and also peaked at 1-2 updates per week rather than 3-4 per week as in 2006.</p> <p>Student suggestions for improvement to WebCT were much more strongly focused on improvements to the program itself (41% in 2007 vs. 25% in 2006) than they had been in 2006, although the majority of suggestions still fell into the usage category.</p> <p>A review of students' open-ended comments about problems with WebCT shows that 60% of the problems cited have to do with WebCT itself, and only 40% are concerned with how it is used in instruction.</p>
<p>Students' and Instructors' WebCT experience was mixed.</p> <p>In 2006, several measures of student satisfaction yielded high marks: in open-ended comments, 60% were positive and only 16% negative (with 24% neutral); 75% of students stated they would like to have WebCT used in all courses; and the most frequent suggestion for improvement was for all or more classes to use WebCT.</p> <p>In open-ended comments, instructors tended to be negative about their most recent experience with WebCT (43%) rather than positive (25%), but 60% of instructors agreed that they would like to use WebCT in all the courses they teach.</p>	<p>Both students and instructors were less positive about WebCT than last year.</p> <p>The 2007 measures of student satisfaction indicate a shift from positive to neutral evaluations of the WebCT experience. In open-ended comments, 52% were positive and 37% were neutral (with 11% negative); and only 53% of students stated they would like to have WebCT used in all courses.</p> <p>In open-ended comments, instructors tended to be neutral about their most recent experiences with WebCT (50%) rather than either positive or negative (25% each). Only a third of the instructors agreed that they would like to use WebCT in all the courses they teach, with 41% noncommittal on the proposition.</p>

2006 Survey Results	2007 Survey Results
<p>Students want course materials, lecture notes, and grades kept up-to-date.</p> <p>Students ranked posting of course materials and quick grade feedback very highly in open-ended comments.</p>	<p>Students want course materials, lecture notes, and grades kept up-to-date.</p> <p>As in 2006, students in 2007 ranked posting of course materials and quick grade feedback very highly in open-ended comments.</p>
<p>Instructors like WebCT's instructional and administrative efficiency for both themselves and for students.</p> <p>Administrative efficiency (including easy posting of materials and announcements, ease of grading, reduced time distributing materials, etc.) ranked highest among the benefits of WebCT to instructors in 2006.</p>	<p>Instructors like WebCT's instructional and administrative efficiency for both themselves and for students.</p> <p>As in 2006, administrative efficiency (including easy posting of materials and announcements, ease of grading, reduced time distributing materials, etc.) ranked highest among the benefits of WebCT to instructors in 2007.</p>
<p>Too many students experience problems with WebCT due to home computer configuration, spyware, viruses, or old hardware.</p> <p>In 2006, when students were asked in an open-ended question to describe problems they had with WebCT, about 23% of their responses had to do with problems commonly caused by browser settings, viruses, spyware and/or outdated hardware.</p>	<p>Too many students experience problems with WebCT due to home computer configuration, spyware, viruses, old hardware, or modern browsers.</p> <p>In 2007, 24% of open-ended responses to the question about problems with WebCT pointed to student workstation configuration issues.</p>
<p>Too many instructors find the WebCT interface to be a barrier to greater use.</p> <p>It is widely acknowledged among WebCT users and administrators that the WebCT 4.1 user interface leaves much to be desired. In 2006, instructors ranked the user interface as of the top problem they experienced with WebCT. Analysis of the data revealed that most of these problems could have been resolved if instructors had consulted with the FITC.</p>	<p>Too many instructors find the WebCT interface to be a barrier to greater use.</p> <p>Compared with modern learning management systems and other web applications, the WebCT 4.1 user interface appears less and less intuitive every year. In 2007, instructors again complained about the user interface. Although many user interface problems are amenable to training, it seems unreasonable to expect instructors to accept the interface's shortcomings by compensating with additional training and/or consultation with FITC staff.</p>

2006 Survey Results	2007 Survey Results
<p>Students believe instructors, TAs, and they themselves should have better training in how to use WebCT.</p> <p>In 2006, 33% of students' usage suggestions for improving WebCT concerned training for instructors, TAs, or students. Lack of training by instructors, TAs, and/or students accounted for 26% of the problems described by students.</p>	<p>Students and instructors expect LMS software to be more intuitive, and want instructors to fully utilize its capabilities.</p> <p>In 2007, training still ranked high (26%) among students in suggestions for improvement of WebCT, but mixed in with comments about the need for training were more comments about the need for a more intuitive user interface. An additional 18% of students expressed disappointment that instructors did not fully utilize WebCT capabilities.</p> <p>Furthermore, the top suggestion for improvement of WebCT itself (rather than how it is used) was that it should be more user friendly or visually appealing.</p>
<p>Students want leading-edge, opt-in notification services and a customizable single-login portal to tie it all together.</p> <p>The most frequent student upgrade suggestion in 2006 was automatic notification by email when assignments were due or when announcements were posted. Second was that WebCT should be part of a single-login student portal.</p>	<p>Students and instructors want Web 2.0 features and tighter integration with the rest of UCSC's web-based applications.</p> <p>In 2007, both students and instructors suggested that the LMS contain more Web 2.0 features such as wikis, blogs, student customization. Greater integration with student records and my.ucsc were also mentioned by both students and instructors.</p>

ITS Student Assessment 2007

ITS engaged UCSC students through three distinct assessment efforts in FY07.

- ◆ The broadest assessment activity was the annual ITS Customer Survey effort. In 2007, 4985 undergraduates and 673 graduate students received survey invitations; 778 undergraduates and 125 graduate students responded. The 2007 survey results are not yet available.
- ◆ The Student Technology Town Hall held on February 27, 2007, enabled a relatively large number of students to move freely among various stations to discuss topics that interested them. Conversations with ITS staff were unstructured, with duration depending on the amount of time the student wished to spend.
- ◆ The CUIP Focus Group held on April 23, 2007, allowed for dialog in which a relatively smaller group of individuals were directly asked to express and discuss opinions about specific topics. The discussion was managed and targeted, with topic duration depending upon the moderator.

Comments relevant to the definition of an LMS service from the Town Hall and the CUIP Focus Group included:

- ◆ Students repeatedly commented that they enjoy podcasting and webcasting as an integrated part of learning.
- ◆ Although they **appreciate the ability to access course materials** via WebCT, students felt **many of WebCT's features were underutilized or poorly utilized**, and noted that WebCT course web sites were **more useful when they were kept up-to-date**.