

Introduction to Special Section on Course Management Systems in Higher Education

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Course management systems are common on today's college campuses. Blackboard, Desire2Learn, Sakai, and Moodle are among the highly recognizable course management systems being used in higher education institutions. Course management systems are characterized by Jarrahi (2010) as having two primary functions: "(1) content distribution, including management and

retrieval of materials, and (2) facilitating interaction between academic staff and students" (p. 257).

These systems have become integral to the teaching and learning function of higher education institutions. While course management systems are the primary vehicle for the delivery of the growing number of fully online higher education courses and programs, they also play a large role in the delivery of on-campus face-to-face courses and programs. Face-to-face courses are often supplemented with some teaching and learning conducted via a course management system. These face-to-face courses may use the course management system to house primary and supplementary course content, deliver tests and assessments, or provide space for student collaboration and interaction.

A recent exploratory study by Brown, Hale, and Guo (2012) found that more than 600 articles addressing course management systems in higher education were published across 300+ peer-reviewed journals during the 2008-2012 time frame. They found that more than 75% of this research dealt with teaching and learning (pedagogy), while less than 15% dealt with planning and managing (administration) and the remaining 10% covered the other topics, including the future of course manage-



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ment systems. Note that these counts do not include the many articles on the topic that appear in non-peer-reviewed publications. This special section adds to the growing body of literature by providing seven articles on the topic in a single journal issue. The articles showcase the different uses of course management systems in higher education and highlight the support needs of the students and faculty who use them.

In "Accidental Pedagogy Redux," Patricia McGee (The University of Texas at San Antonio) and Colleen Carmean (The University of Washington, Tacoma) provide a historical view of the changing landscape of course management systems in higher education and provide some insight into their future. This article builds on earlier work by Jafari, McGee, and Carmean (2006).

In "Exploring LiveText as a Technological and Accountability Innovation in a College of Education," Peggy Lumpkin (Georgia State University) presents the findings of an exploratory case study that examined faculty members' experiences with the introduction of LiveText, a web-based learning, assessment, and accreditation system. Though LiveText is broadly considered a content management system, Lumpkin describes its use as a course management system by faculty in one college of education.

In "Integrating an Open-source Learning Management System (Moodle) in an English Language Program: A Case Study," Xin Chen, Christa Guilbaud, Hongxia Yang, and Congwu Tao (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University), present the results of an evaluation that assessed the effectiveness of Moodle as the learning management system for an English language program. The article includes a learning management system selection survey that may be helpful to institutions and programs choosing a learning management system.

In "Using the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBok) Framework When Selecting a Learning Management System," Robert Gibson (Emporia State University) describes how faculty, staff, and students at Emporia State University are using the PMBoK (Project Management Body of Knowledge) framework to guide their selection of a new campus learning management system. The selection process outlined in the article could assist other institutions in their learning management system selection process.

In "Using Facebook as a Learning Management System," Preston Parker (Utah State University) provides a case description of his experience using Facebook to deliver online college-level courses. Parker posits that students' familiarity with Facebook make it a natural choice for online course delivery.

In "Online Learning is Not Flat: An Analysis of Online Learning That Promotes Interactivity," Cynthia Sistik-Chandler, Denise Tolbert, and Valerie K. Amber (National University) use Steinaker and Leavitt's (2008) Interactive Learning Taxonomy (ILT) to scaffold student learning in a graduate-level technology integration course delivered online via the eCollege learning management system. Interestingly, the capstone project in this online course is the development of an interactive online lesson.

In "Training for Teaching Online," Robert Davis (Missile Defense Agency) and Angela D. Benson (The University of Alabama) present the results of interviews conducted with faculty at a rural community college as they reflect on their journey with online teaching and their institution's role in that journey. The article specifically addresses the dual training that participants received, on using the course management system and in online pedagogy, and how that training was reflected in their subsequent online teaching.

Note: The articles in this special section use the terms *course management system* and

learning management system interchangeably. In cases where the terms have different meanings, the distinction is made within the article.

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