

**WEBCT @ UF STRATEGIC PLAN:
Supporting and Extending the 21st Century Instructional Mission
May 2002**

Purpose and goals for the WebCT@UF strategic planning process:

- 1) To align the planning for and direction of WebCT @ UF with the University of Florida mission;
- 2) To align WebCT with UF efforts in Enterprise Resources Planning;
- 3) To align the planning for and direction of WebCT at UF with the strategic plan for Information Technology at UF;
- 4) To identify ways that WebCT at UF supports and enhances Information Technology at UF;
- 5) To identify and publicize ways that WebCT at UF supports and enhances the missions of various colleges and departments across the University;
- 6) To clarify the mission and goals for WebCT and for the WebCT Support Group;
- 7) To achieve consensus and buy-in by the various elements of WebCT support;
- 8) To facilitate identification of budgeting priorities for supporting WebCT at UF and to support efforts to seek funding that the University level;
- 9) To develop a document that can be presented to University administration in support of budget recommendations for WebCT;
- 10) To develop a document that can be published for public distribution, especially for UF faculty, to keep people aware of efforts being made and expenditures being recommended to support WebCT at UF as well as to inform the public of anticipated future directions for WebCT that may impact their role as actual and potential users of WebCT at UF.

Proposed Outcome:

A WebCT@UF Strategic Planning document:

- that can be used by AT, IT, and UF administration to incorporate WebCT into current and future strategic planning;
- that can be published (print, digital, Internet) and distributed to UF users of WebCT to inform those uses of future plans for WebCT, enabling them to better envision possibilities for their own commitment to using WebCT in their teaching, research and engagement;
- that can be used by various parts of the University community to publicize the availability, capabilities, and use of WebCT to potential clients as well as to potential audiences external to the University.

**WEBCT @ UF STRATEGIC PLAN:
Supporting and Extending the 21st Century Instructional Mission
May 2002**

I. SUMMARY

WebCT@UF is the phrase used to encompass the various aspects of WebCT use and support at the University of Florida. Four elements make up WebCT@UF:

- The WebCT Support Group: UF staff across three agencies (CITT, CIRCA, NERDC) who install and support the WebCT hardware and software. The WSG first began meeting in October 2000 and meets roughly 8 times per year as needed.
- Faculty and Staff users who design, develop, and deliver entire distance education courses in WebCT or who use WebCT to integrate Internet enhancements into their traditional face-to-face instruction.
- Student users who use WebCT for increased access to course materials, for enhanced communication between themselves and their instructors as well as with their peers, and for other functions such as online testing and assignment submission as implemented by their instructors
- The WebCT Administrator: provides administrative leadership and support to the WebCT Support Group; develops and delivers training for faculty and staff users; consults with faculty and staff for questions involving use of WebCT as well as about pedagogy and best practices related to distance and Internet-enhanced education; provides training for CIRCA Help Desk support personnel; and serves as the “point of last resort” for all support needs unresolved by other sources of support.

Used by more than 250 faculty members to teach more than 500 courses across nearly all colleges of the University, WebCT is now an integral part of the educational experience for more than 20,000 current and former UF students. The future direction of WebCT@UF will play an increasingly critical role in the educational mission of the University and can play an important part supporting the University mission and the stated goal of moving toward the recognition of UF as a top ten university.

This report is the first of its kind at UF and is designed to align planning for WebCT with the University of Florida Information Technology Strategic Plan. That plan, presented in April 2002, identified five strategic focus areas: 1) teaching and Research, 2) Service and Support, 3) Infrastructure, 4) Security and Standards, and 5) Planning, Administration, and Human Resource Issues. Under each of these, a series of goals were articulated to align IT organization and planning with the University mission.

This WebCT Strategic Plan self-consciously follows that IT Strategic Plan to ensure maximum alignment. For each of the five focus areas of the IT Strategic Plan, ways that WebCT can and/or does support the goals of that focus area are discussed in Section VI. Likewise, in Section VII, goals are articulated for WebCT@UF in terms of those five focus areas.

For WebCT@UF to effectively support the goals of the IT Strategic Plan and to realize the goals of this Strategic Plan, WebCT@UF, like the IT Strategic Plan itself, must share in an integrated approach that addresses: 1) On-going strategic planning, 2) The creation of a new IT organization from existing organizations, 3) Strategic allocation of resources and budget guidance, 4) IT architecture planning and management, and 5) Performance measurement to assess benefits and outcomes against total cost of ownership.

II. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of Information Technologies and their growing ubiquity in personal and professional life has had a profound impact on education. In less than three decades, communication and research potential, not to mention data storage and retrieval capabilities, have transformed the way teaching, research, and engagement are performed in higher education.

As part of that transformation, faculty began looking for systems that would integrate a wide variety of IT tools into common environment to support instruction. This desire for integration led to the development of Course Management Systems (CMS).

The CMS market has been intensely competitive, with commercial systems competing with “home grown” systems. Likewise, homegrown systems have spun off to become commercial systems. In this competitive market, two CMSs have emerged as the clear market leaders: WebCT and Blackboard.

The University of Florida has, at various times, experimented with both commercial and homegrown CMSs. Three systems continue in use at UF: WebCT, Blackboard, and a homegrown system. The latter is in use in the College of Business and is used, in particular, to support the online MBA program. Blackboard is in use in the Health Sciences Center. WebCT is the system adopted for institution-wide use.

WebCT was first implemented at the University of Florida in the Fall of 1998. The initial installation was considered “temporary” to allow faculty to examine WebCT and consider using it. From a small number of “early adopters” use of WebCT has grown at a consistent rate of roughly 125% per year. Growth was such that by October 2000 the WebCT was supporting 755 course accounts and more than 15,000 user accounts. This level of demand exceeded the capabilities of both the hardware and the software supporting WebCT resulting to severe problems for both users and support providers.

As a result of these problems of scale, in the Summer 2001, the Office of Instructional Resources (now Academic Technologies) made a large investment in an enterprise-class server to run WebCT. Technical difficulties delayed implementing that server until May 2002 when it went online to support Summer 2002 courses. At the same time, a system of Gatorlink Authentication was implemented by CIRCA to utilize GatorLink to populate the WebCT global database.

Current growth patterns suggest that by Summer 2003, WebCT should be supporting roughly 830 course accounts and 27,000 user seats. The planning efforts reflected in this document are designed to prepare WebCT @ UF to meet this growth and that of the future, ensuring reliable, effective support for face-to-face and distance education courses at the University of Florida.

III. THE MISSION OF WEBCT@UF

The mission of WebCT @ UF is to provide a reliable, well-supported, suite of Internet-based tools to support faculty, staff, and students as they pursue the mission-driven goals of the University of Florida. Through this set of tools and support, WebCT@UF seeks to:

- Improve the quality of education at UF by providing an integrated set of content, communication, assessment, administration, and reporting tools to assist faculty in their teaching, research, and engagement, both face to face and at a distance;
- To facilitate team teaching and incorporation of outside experts into the classroom by providing any-time, any -place access to those whose contributions may be at a distance;
- Support enhanced student learning by providing increased access to content and learning activities capable of addressing various learning styles and needs;
- Increase student time on task by providing 24/7 access to course content, class documents, resources, and other materials;
- Improve interaction between faculty and students and between students and their peers;
- Offer training that provides the skills necessary to use WebCT and which encourages pedagogically sound methods for integrating WebCT into instruction;
- Establish a support system that results in high reliability and availability of the WebCT course management system;
- Provide comprehensive, 24/7, user-centered support for faculty, staff, and student users to expand the learning experience and the instructional, research and engagement missions of the University;
- Integrate WebCT into the broader strategic planning and mission-based objectives of the University of Florida.

IV. CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

WebCT was first implemented at the University of Florida in the Fall of 1998 to provide to faculty the opportunity to explore an integrated system of online course management tools. Over subsequent years, "word of mouth" advertising resulted in steady growth in the number of course accounts as well as faculty and student users. Beginning in the Fall 2000, growth began to accelerate to its current rate at which the number of WebCT course accounts in service more than doubles on a yearly basis. Also beginning in the Fall 2000, demand outstripped the capabilities of the WebCT server resulting in repeated support problems until the purchase and implementation of an enterprise-class server in May 2002.

Nearly four years after implementation, and now serving more than 500 course accounts, more than 260 faculty users, and more than 17,000 student seats, WebCT has become an important part of the academic and information technology supporting the instructional mission of the University. WebCT is currently being used to support face-to-face instruction, distance education courses, entire distance education programs and degrees (e.g. Forensic Toxicology), and numerous extension efforts, primarily through IFAS. WebCT is also being used at UF to provide a collaborative environment for courses connecting students across continents (the West Nile Virus Project in Veterinary Medicine), for global programs in support of teacher training and resource development (Partnership for Global Learning), for programs linking the training efforts of multiple institutions (Learning Technology Consortium), for collaboration among instructors at universities around the world (African Studies), and for dissertation research (College of Education).

The University of Florida is currently supporting multiple installations of WebCT on a number of different servers.

Production Server: As of May 9, 2002, the production server supporting WebCT at UF is a Sun Solaris Enterprise 4500 server utilizing four, 400 MHz UltraSPARC processors, 2 GB RAM, and 72 GB of locally-mounted, mirrored hard drive space. This server is housed at and supported by NERDC.

The production server runs three installations of WebCT Standard Edition. The primary installation (webct1.nerdc.ufl.edu:8900), serving all but a hand-full of course accounts, is integrated into GatorLink through an authentication process developed at CIRCA. The second installation (webct1.nerdc.ufl.edu:8910), is not integrated into GatorLink and is set up to serve extension accounts whose primary clients are not affiliated with the University and who are not, therefore, eligible for GatorLink accounts. Planning is currently underway to develop mechanisms that will integrate these two installations and serve the full range of WebCT@UF clients. The third installation (webct1.nerdc.ufl.edu:8920) was set up to test integration of GatorLink Authentication and the Respondus Quiz and Test creation tool, licensed by UF to support WebCT courses.

A fourth installation on the production server (webct1.nerdc.ufl.edu:8940), is of the WebCT Campus Edition, currently being tested and prepared to become the production server beginning in August 2002.

Migration Server: An older installation of WebCT SE is currently running on SPNODE16. Until May 2002, this was the production server and primary installation. This server is now supporting only a few course accounts whose calendars do not operate according to the general UF course calendar. As these courses conclude, they are being backed up, archived, and moved to the new production server.

Testing Server(s): CIRCA supports additional servers running WebCT for testing and development purposes. These servers are deployed and retired as necessary.

Development Server: Plans are underway to implement a system of two-server support for WebCT at UF. This system would use one server, supported by NERDC, solely to run classes in progress during the current semester. A second server, supported by CIRCA, would be implemented for development purposes: for courses not currently running but either under development or in short-term storage between semesters. Courses in long-term storage or no longer in use will be archived on permanent

media (CD-ROM, DVD-R, or Tape). Implementation of a development server will allow the production server maximum support for the demands of courses in progress.

Additional Server(s): The College of Engineering supports an additional WebCT server. This installation is licensed only for course development and not for student use. The College of Engineering uses the current production server for its active classes.

V. OVERVIEW OF SERVICE UNITS AND STAFFING FOR WEBCT@UF

Academic Technology/CITT

- Through the Center for Instructional Technology and Training (CITT), AT purchases the WebCT software and some hardware and provides the position of WebCT Administrator.
- The WebCT Administrator's responsibilities include:
 - Overseeing the entire WebCT at UF operation and coordinating integration of services;
 - Serving as the "help desk" of last resort to ensure prompt, effective problem resolution;
 - Providing consultative assistance to faculty and staff using WebCT in support of the instructional mission of the University;
 - Providing advice, assistance, and training to colleges, departments, and programs seeking to establish in-house support for faculty and student users of WebCT (e.g. IFAS, College of Education, Forensic Toxicology Program);
 - Chairing the WebCT Support Group which is tasked with discussing and making recommendations to unit directors regarding software and hardware purchases and upgrades;
 - Recommending and guiding development of policies and procedures for operating and supporting WebCT at UF;
 - Developing and delivering faculty training in the use of WebCT and in "best practices" for using the Internet and WebCT for enhancing student learning;
 - Training CIRCA Help Desk personnel to provide effective student user support and to consult with CIRCA personnel regarding specific situations that may fall outside the routine support situations.
 - To remain current on WebCT development and to advise the Director and Associate Director of AT regarding trends and developments

Note: the position of WebCT Administrator at UF is currently a part time tasking.

AT/Center for Instructional and Research Computing Activities (CIRCA)

This unit:

- Provides system administrators and programmers to setup and maintain the WebCT software and to develop enhancements to the system to improve user experience and integration of WebCT with other campus systems (i.e. GatorLink Authentication).
- CIRCA personnel advise and assist the WebCT administrator and participate in the WebCT Support Group.
- CIRCA also provides student user support through the Computer Help Desk

NorthEast Regional Data Center (NERDC)

This unit:

- Houses and supports the WebCT production server;
- Provides technical assistance to integrate WebCT into broader campus computing initiatives (e.g. gigabit Ethernet, NFS/JPFPS);
- Advises, assists, and makes recommendations to the WebCT Administrator particularly in the area of hardware needs
- Provides 24/7 support to ensure that the WebCT server remains operational.

WebCT Support Group (WSG)

The WebCT Support Group was created in Spring 2000. The purpose of the group is to more effectively coordinate and integrate support for WebCT. The WSG comprises representatives from AT/CITT, AT/CIRCA, and NERDC. This group:

- Provides integrated oversight and support for WebCT at UF;
- Develops and makes recommendations to the Director of AT and the Director of NERDC regarding support for WebCT;
- Advises and assists the WebCT Administrator in developing and implementing policies and procedures for use of WebCT at UF;

Staffing:

Currently, there are no full-time staff supporting WebCT at UF. This is increasingly a problem for supporting WebCT at UF.

- AT/CITT provides one part time WebCT Administrator (nominally .5 FTE)
 - Doug Johnson
- AT/CIRCA provides three part time support personnel
 - Mike Wright
 - Rodger Hendricks
 - Marilyn Keeling
- NERDC provides two part time technicians
 - Stephen Ulmer
 - Gautam Das
 - Additionally, two technicians have been participating in recent discussions regarding the possible adoption of WebCT Vista (Eli Ben-Shoshan and Alan Rout).
- AT/CIRCA Help Desk provides support for WebCT users as part of their overall support.
 - The WebCT Administrator provides training for Help Desk consultants.

WebCT Support Hours of Operation:

AT/CITT :	8am – 5pm M-F; other hours as necessary
AT/CIRCA	8am – 5pm M-F; other hours as necessary 6pm – 10pm S-Th Call in Help Desk support
NERDC	8am – 5pm M-F; other hours as necessary Problem reporting: 24/7 x 365

VI. ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER IT STRATEGIC PLANNING

The IT Strategic Plan (April 2002) identifies five Focus Areas:

- Teaching, Learning and Research
- Service and Support
- Infrastructure
- Security and Standards
- Planning, Administration and Human Resources

For each of these Focus Areas, three to five goals are identified.

With careful planning and adequate support for implementation, WebCT@UF can contribute to each of these five Focus Areas.

Teaching, Learning and Research

Comment: WebCT provides a number of tools for faculty that can enhance student-instructor communication and increase efficiency of course administration. These benefits make possible increased faculty attention to the actual process of teaching, research, and engagement.

Goal 1: Use innovation and best practices in teaching using technology

Comment: There is an emerging body of research that indicates: that while there is no significant difference in student-learning outcomes between traditional face-to-face instruction and distance education there are surprising gains in student learning through the use of hybrid courses that use the tools of distance education – Internet-enhanced instruction – to supplement face-to-face classes. WebCT provides an ideal environment for such hybrid courses. Indeed, roughly 80% of the course accounts in use at UF are used in hybrid contexts.

Comment: The training provided for faculty is already being re-conceptualized in terms of guiding faculty as much toward pedagogically sound practices for employing WebCT as well as for the simple skills of using WebCT.

Goal 2: Provide on-going support for learning and skill development.

Comment: WebCT allows, at the instructor's discretion, 24/7 access to course documents, content and other materials, self-assessment and graded assessment opportunities, and numerous other functions that enhance and extend the learning process by increasing student time on task and expanding the learning environment.

Comment: While currently not utilized in this capacity at UF, WebCT can provide an environment for 24/7, synchronous and asynchronous access to staff development opportunities.

Goal 3: Invest in synchronous and asynchronous learning programs.

Comment: WebCT is exactly this kind of system. Furthermore, it is the market leader among all available course management systems.

Service and Support

Goal 1: develop and maintain instructional and evaluative materials services.

Comment: WebCT course accounts could easily be developed to provide various kinds of surveys and assessments. Inquiries have already been received regarding using WebCT for departmental end-of-semester course evaluations. Such evaluations are being done on an informal basis, but there is interest in possibly formalizing this process.

Comment: Course accounts could be utilized as repositories for learning objects that could be downloaded and used by UF faculty and staff.

Goal 4: Improve Help Desk support.

Comment: The WebCT Administrator has already developed and implemented training for CIRCA Help Desk personnel to better enable them to support users of WebCT. Additionally, WebCT has a built-in Help Desk feature to which trained CIRCA consultants have been given access to enhance their to assist students with various kinds of course enrollment and access problems.

Infrastructure

Goal 1: Develop and IT infrastructure in support of the university mission.

Comment: As a centrally-adopted course management system, available for all faculty and staff to use at no cost beyond their own time, WebCT is an important element of the IT infrastructure for UF.

Goal 2: Be complaint with and aware of accessibility issues.

Comment: The WebCT Administrator has already incorporated into his faculty/staff training information about ADA and Section 508. Part of this information includes recommendations regarding how to address certain accessibility and accommodation issues.

Comment: WebCT Campus Edition v3.7 and WebCT Vista are both ADA and Section 508 complaint. Adoption of either of these systems will be a significant step by UF toward meeting accessibility considerations.

Security and Standards

Goal 1: Support standards for compatibility and minimum functionality.

Comment: WebCT Campus Edition and WebCT Vista are IMS/SCORM compliant. Therefore, implementation of either system will be a significant move by the University toward critical established standards. WebCT representatives are a part of the IMS development committees; therefore WebCT will continue to be among the forerunners of IMS compliance.

Planning, Administration and Human Resources

Goal 5: address emerging intellectual property issues.

Comment: WebCT provides for faculty and staff a secure, password-protected environment in which intellectual property can be posted with reasonable expectation that the ideas and work will be preserved against unauthorized appropriate or use.

Comment: The substantial number of users of WebCT at UF could easily become a source of participants to establish a committee to develop a UF policy for intellectual property in the context of computer-mediated instruction, both on-campus and at a distance. Ideally, such a committee would be composed of UF administration, faculty representatives, and representatives from the General Counsels Office, among others.

VII. WEBCT STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS AND INITIATIVES

The focus areas identified below seek to align with the UF IT Strategic Plan, Section VIII (April 2002).

1. FACULTY AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Teaching and learning are critical elements of the university mission. WebCT supports these elements in a variety of ways. To further enhance WebCT's role in teaching and learning, effort must be made to expand knowledge of the availability of this course management system, to increase knowledge of how to effectively employ the CMS in support of teaching and learning, and to transmit research in best practices related to pedagogy.

A. Awareness of WebCT and Training Opportunities

Description:

Development of programs and procedures to advertise the availability of and uses of the WebCT course management system.

Implementation Strategies:

- 1) Develop a WebCT@UF brochure for distribution to interested audiences (e.g. new faculty orientation).
- 2) Develop a short, visually appealing presentation that can be presented at college and department meetings.
- 3) Collaborate with Human Resources to explore ways that WebCT might be used as a vehicle to deliver staff development programs.
- 4) Seek other avenues to disseminate information about WebCT to discover other potential WebCT users outside of faculty and staff training.

Outcomes:

- 1) Increased awareness of the availability of WebCT.
- 2) Increased use of WebCT.

B. Technology and Pedagogy Training and Development

Description:

An expanded, multi-faceted approach to provide ongoing support for learning and skills development.

Implementation Strategies

- 1) Continue current initiatives in WebCT training to incorporate pedagogically sound, "best practices" use of WebCT will be expanded.
- 2) Develop specific courses targeted toward high-level use of targeted features of WebCT will be developed and implemented (e.g. using the student presentation tool, multimedia database, etc.)
- 3) Expand existing training to offer a series of courses to give faculty the opportunity to explore research in computer-mediated communication, distance education, learning styles, personality types, and related topics that impact the effective use of instructional technology.

Outcomes:

- 1) Improved quality of computer-mediated instruction using WebCT.
- 2) Improved overall teaching and learning as a result of the infusion of best pedagogical practices knowledge among UF faculty.
- 3) Improved student time on task and learning resulting from the 24/7 availability of course content and materials in an Internet environment.
- 4) Increased curricula modeled on best practices in computer-aided instruction.

C. Pedagogy and its Interactions with Technology

Description:

A recognition and award program for faculty who develop exemplary hybrid and distance education courses.

Implementation Strategies

- 1) Establish an evaluation rubric to assess courses designed using WebCT.
- 2) Seek administrative support for rewards (e.g. financial award, development grants, leave time) for award winners.
- 3) Advertise the award program and publicize the entry and evaluation criteria.
- 4) Establish a committee to assess entries.
- 5) Publicize winners and use their courses as models of best practices.

Outcomes:

- 1) Increasing understanding of best practices for technology-infused instruction.
- 2) Increased faculty interest in and enthusiasm for supporting instruction using WebCT.
- 3) Increased exemplary curricula suitable for publicity and promotion.
- 4) Enhanced student learning.

D. Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning

Description:

Enhanced support for synchronous and asynchronous learning initiatives and programs.

Implementation Strategies

- 1) Identify colleges, departments, and other units engaged in or considering synchronous and asynchronous learning programs.
- 2) Develop a collaborative infrastructure linking Instructional Design consultants, e-Learning specialists, and WebCT specialists to provide enhanced support, on-site training opportunities, etc. to facilitate development and deployment of synchronous and asynchronous courses and programs.
- 3) Seek funding for a program similar to the existing AT mini-grants to provide assistance to faculty engaged in developing online learning opportunities.

Outcomes:

- 1) Increased integration of campus wide synchronous and asynchronous learning programs.
- 2) Improved availability of any time, anywhere teaching and learning for students, faculty, and staff.
- 3) Enhanced support for face-to-face, distance, and distributed education.

E. Americans with Disabilities Act and Rehabilitation Act, Section 508.

Description:

Develop training and support for content developers and course designers about designing for accessibility to improve support for faculty and students evidencing disabilities covered under ADA and Section 508.

Implementation Strategies

- 1) Upgrade the WebCT Course Management System to ADA and Section 508 compliant versions (WebCT 3.7 CE and/or WebCT Vista).
- 2) Train local staff on ADA and Section 508 accommodations and the techniques of web design for accessibility.
- 3) Develop and deliver training for faculty and staff users of WebCT on designing for accessibility and implementing ADA/508 accommodations under WebCT.
- 4) Evaluate and purchase/recommend software (e.g. AccessEnable, AccRepair, etc.) to provide locally hosted site evaluation for UF web developers.

Outcomes:

- 1) Increased awareness of ADA/508 issues in instruction.
- 2) Improved compliance with ADA and Section 508 regulations and requirements.
- 3) Enhanced Internet use and improved technology experience among faculty, staff, and students with disabilities.

2. Service and Support Focus Areas

High level use of any technologically mediated learning system requires the development of an enhanced knowledge base and skill set among both faculty content developers and student users. Because demands on faculty, staff, and students are already heavy, it is critical that initiatives toward enhancing use of Information and Academic technology provide adequate support, training, and time to developers and end users. This will allow users to reach and sustain a level of competence that leads to effective and efficient use of the technology.

A. Curriculum Development and Assessment Consultancy

Description:

Support for services for all UF personnel developing and maintaining instructional and evaluative materials.

Implementation Strategies

- 1) Establish an evaluation rubric for self-assessment and/or departmental assessment of courses designed using WebCT.
- 2) Tie in self/departmental assessment with *Pedagogy and its Interactions with Technology* (above)

Outcomes:

- 1) Increasing understanding of best practices for technology -infused instruction.
- 2) Increased faculty interest in and enthusiasm for supporting instruction using WebCT
- 3) Increased exemplary curricula suitable for publicity and promotion.
- 4) Enhanced student learning.

B. Enhanced Technology Services

Description:

Increase ease of access/ease of use of WebCT for faculty and student end users.

Implementation Strategies

- 1) Assess and enhance existing services for users such as GatorLink Authentication.
- 2) Develop auxiliary scripts for functions such as creating Guest IDs
- 3) Improve support and training for the Respondus software for quiz and test creation in WebCT.
- 4) On-going assessment of customer needs, desires, and recommendations.
- 5) On-going evaluation of third party tools and resources to enhance use of WebCT.
- 6) Develop programs to address use of mobile wireless technologies (laptop computers, PDAs) with WebCT.

Outcomes

- 1) Enhanced ease of use for WebCT clients.
- 2) Improved end-user experience with technology-mediated teaching and learning.
- 3) Increased productivity of instructional staff.
- 4) Improved attitudes and increased enthusiasm for using WebCT to support face-to-face and distance education.
- 5) Increased availability of any time, any-place teaching and learning.

C. WebCT Technical Consultancy and Collaboration

Description:

Development of a resource pool for WebCT support peer consulting, and developer/user collaboration.

Implementation Strategies

- 1) Identify faculty willing to consult with peers about their experiences using WebCT.
- 2) Organize and host a UF WebCT conference aimed a faculty use of WebCT and demonstration of best practices and experiences, perhaps in collaboration with FVC and other institutions around Florida.
- 3) Integrate WebCT into the IT Technical Consultancy resource pool

Outcomes

- 1) Enhanced use of WebCT.
- 2) Improved instruction in WebCT.
- 3) Reduced development time and effort.

D. Help Desk Support

Description:

Enhanced, 24/7 technical support for faculty and student users of WebCT

Implementation Strategies

- 1) Assess and enhance existing services for users such as the CIRCA and NERDC Help Desks.
- 2) Assess, enhance, and advertise the availability of training programs for student users of WebCT and related technologies (e.g. Basic HTML, PowerPoint, downloading and installing plug-ins).
- 3) Allocate additional FTE to WebCT administration and support.
- 4) Improved and on-going focus on customer service.

Outcomes

- 1) Enhanced responsiveness to customers.
- 2) Improved end-user experience with technology-mediated teaching and learning.
- 3) Increased productivity of instructional staff.

E. On-Site WebCT Support Training

Description:

Training classes designed for staff hired by colleges, departments, and programs who will work at the college, department, or program to provide design and implementation support as well as user support for in-house courses.

Implementation Strategies

- 1) Develop a WebCT support curriculum and "Train the Trainer" classes
- 2) "Market" these training opportunities to colleges, departments, and programs with emphasis on those already having faculty support services (i.e. HSC, CoE, CLAS, DCE).

Outcomes

- 1) Enhanced responsiveness to customers.
- 2) Improved end-user experience with technology-mediated teaching and learning.
- 3) Increased productivity of instructional staff.

3. Infrastructure Focus Areas

The April 2002 IT Strategic Plan asserts, “An important and essential component of the system is the technology infrastructure.” WebCT should be recognized as being an important element in the technology infrastructure of UF’s instructional mission.

A. Infrastructure for Teaching, Research, and Outreach

Description:

Equipment, resources, and infrastructure to support the University mission, both local and distance.

Implementation Strategies

- 1) Articulate the role of WebCT to UF infrastructure assessment committees and to upper administration.
- 2) On-going evaluation and assessment of WebCT software and hardware needs.
- 3) On-going monitoring of WebCT software development, particular of the Vista system.
- 4) Purchase software and hardware “ahead of the demand curve” to prevent interruption of use.

Outcomes

- 1) Enhanced responsiveness to customers.
- 2) Improved end-user experience with technology-mediated teaching and learning.
- 3) Increased productivity of instructional staff.

B. Information Technology Infrastructure

Description:

IT Infrastructure that effectively supports the University’s mission

Implementation Strategies

- 1) Identify, publicize, and expand the role WebCT currently plays at UF as an IT infrastructure for collaboration across program and geographical boundaries.
- 2) Identify and publicize uses of WebCT for student and faculty research.
- 3) Identify and publicize uses of WebCT to support engagement efforts.
- 4) Develop strategies to improve speed and robustness of WebCT at UF

Outcomes

- 1) An improved IT infrastructure to support teaching, research, and engagement.
- 2) Enhanced teaching, research, and extension across time and geographical boundaries.
- 3) Improved collaborative efforts involving students and faculty within UF and across institutions.
- 4) Increased value of and return on investment (ROI) from WebCT.

C. System Accessibility (see section 2.E above)

Description:

Ensuring compliance of WebCT, as used at UF, with ADA and Rehabilitation Act Section 508.

Implementation Strategies

- 1) Upgrade the WebCT Course Management System to ADA and Section 508 compliant versions (WebCT 3.7 CE and/or WebCT Vista).
- 2) Develop and implement accessibility policies for WebCT at UF.
- 3) Develop and implement an evaluation program to assess accessibility of instructor-generated content to be used in WebCT.

- 4) Elicit feedback from UF faculty, staff, and students with disabilities regarding their experience using WebCT

Outcomes:

- 1) Increased awareness of ADA/508 issues in instruction.
- 2) Improved compliance with ADA and Section 508 regulations and requirements.
- 3) Enhanced Internet use among faculty, staff, and students with disabilities.

4. Security and Standards Focus Area

The security of Intellectual Property and of student records and data are critical issues in the world of Information Technology. WebCT@UF must be integrated into planning for security and has capabilities that offer potential resolutions to some of the intellectual property and security concerns that have been raised around UF.

A. Security of IT Resources

Description:

Plans, practices, and policies for secure networking, computer systems, and data.

Implementation Strategies

- 1) Develop and implement a program of regular administrative password changes.
- 2) Continue and enhance current program of system/data backups.
- 3) Develop and distribute to faculty, staff, and student users "best practices" information regarding security of login information.
- 4) On-going implementation and enhancement of GatorLink (kerberos) Authentication.
- 5) Develop and implement disaster preparedness protocols and practices.

Outcomes

- 1) Increased security of networks, systems, accounts, and data.
- 2) Increased reliability and availability of the WebCT system.
- 3) Increased awareness of security considerations by faculty, staff, and student users.
- 4) Increased preparation for intrusion and disaster recovery with decreased downtime resulting from adverse events.

B. Guidelines and Standards

Description:

Implement and enhance standards-compliant use of WebCT

Implementation Strategies

- 1) Provide training to WebCT Administrator and other WebCT support staff on IMS/SCORM Standards.
- 2) Continue to monitor standards compliance in WebCT CE and Vista development programs.
- 3) Develop and implement faculty/staff training on how to design and use standards-compliant course materials.
- 4) Seek WebCT representation on committees creating policies and standards for data ownership, definitions, commonality, and warehousing.
- 5) Seek involvement with and/or provide leadership for processes to develop and implement a copyright/ownership policy for online courses and materials (see 5d below).

Outcomes

- 1) Increased ease of use and interoperability with other Internet and courseware systems.
- 2) Lower support costs.
- 3) Enhanced potential for building a UF database of course materials/learning objects sharable across programs and between instructors and courses.
- 4) Potential for consistent UF "branding" in the context of institutional sharing or commercial distribution of learning objects.

5. Planning, Administration, and Human Resources Focus Areas

While WebCT has been in use at UF since Fall 1998, it has been only since Fall 2001 that efforts have been made to move toward “professional” administration of WebCT. Development of a professional WebCT Administration program is required to support the increasingly mission-critical role played by WebCT in its support for both web-enhanced face-to-face instruction and distance education programs.

A. Continuing Strategic Planning Process

Description:

Regular review, prioritization, and update of the WebCT strategic plan.

Implementation Strategies

- 1) Continue to incorporate strategic planning discussions in regular WebCT Support Group meetings.
- 2) Develop programs for setting priorities and process review.
- 3) Solicit user input regarding user experience and recommendations.
- 4) Establish a program of system statistics analysis and benchmark testing.

Outcomes

- 1) An improved program of strategic planning that effectively directs the development of WebCT at UF.

B. Staff Training, Recruitment, and Retention

Description:

Ability to recruit, develop, and retain high quality WebCT support staff.

Implementation Strategies

- 1) Increase WebCT Administration staffing to 1.5 FTE.
- 2) Develop a pay scale that reflects the increasingly technical and administrative responsibilities of the WebCT Administrator.
- 3) Establish a budget for WebCT Administrator professional development and certification (courses, conferences, literature, etc.),
- 4) Establish a budget for acquisition of technologies being integrated into the WebCT environment (e.g. PDAs).

Outcomes

- 1) Decreased turnover of WebCT Support staff.
- 2) More knowledgeable WebCT Support staff.
- 3) Increased support and program offerings for faculty, staff, and student users of WebCT.

C. Funding and Budget Models

Description:

Reliable funding for hardware and software upgrades and maintenance that enables long-range planning and ensures accountability.

Implementation Strategies

- 1) Integrate WebCT into current discussions of a UF technology fee.
- 2) Implement a technology refresh cycle for WebCT hardware and software.
- 3) Explore return-on-investment mechanisms possible through WebCT Vista institutional hosting agreements and/or sharing of Oracle licensing.
- 4) Explore creating a schedule of fee-based services such as on-site or departmental training related to WebCT and online teaching/learning courses.

Outcomes

- 1) Increased and stable revenue streams for WebCT.
- 2) Planned replacements of hardware and software.
- 3) Improved training opportunities.
- 4) Increased use of WebCT.

D. Intellectual Property

Description:

Investigate and increase awareness of Intellectual Property rights and issues related to WebCT.

Implementation Strategies

- 1) Establish WebCT participation on UF committees dealing with Copyright and Intellectual Property related to distance education and online resources.
- 2) Develop information resources and standards documents for publication and distribution.
- 3) Communicate to WebCT users the available expertise and resources at UF.
- 4) Integrate WebCT into systems and procedures developed at UF to protect intellectual property.

Outcomes

- 1) Enhanced Intellectual property and Copyright policies and procedures.
- 2) Increased understanding of intellectual property issues and resources.
- 3) Decreased risk of copyright infringement.
- 4) Increased use of WebCT resulting from increased security of instructor-developed resources.

6. Strategic Vision Implementation

“The University of Florida is committed to using IT as a mission enabler and as a means to position the University at the forefront of the land-grant institutions.” (IT Strategic Plan, April 2002). As the use of WebCT continues to grow at UF and as Internet-enhanced and distance education become increasingly mission-critical to the University, WebCT can play an important role as a mission-enabler and in supporting the goal of putting forth the University as a top-tier university in the United States and throughout the world.

To these ends, WebCT @ UF should be a vital and visible part of the management practices envisioned for the implementation of the strategic vision for IT:

- Ongoing IT strategic planning
- The new IT organization emerging from existing organizations
- The strategic allocation of resources and budget guidance
- Information Technology architecture planning and management
- Performance measurement

APPENDIX I:

POTENTIAL ADOPTION TIMELINES

WebCT Software	Stage	Timeline	Approximate Cost
Campus Edition	Adoption Decision Implementation Rollout	July 2002 July-August 2002 August 2002	ca. \$85,000
<p>Comments: WebCT CE can be implemented quickly because it will run on current hardware. The primary benefits gained from adopting CE will result from improvements in software efficiencies.</p>			
Vista	Adoption Decision Software/Hardware Purchasing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hardware ▪ Oracle 9i ▪ WebLogic (J2EE) ▪ Vista Installation and Testing Migration and Transition Rollout	July 2002 July-September 2002 August - November 2003 December 2002 January 2003	ca. \$200,000 - \$500,000
<p>Comments: This represents an aggressive adoption/implementation schedule designed to take advantage of substantial discounts offered by WebCT in support of an early adoption of Vista. The recommended adoption/implementation schedule spans nine months and extends the Installation, Testing, Migration, and Transition. The recommended schedule would see rollout of Vista in May or August 2003.</p> <p>The wide range of costs for a Vista adoption reflect varying pricing structures for different licensing options.</p>			

APPENDIX II:

WHY USE WEBCT?

1. Efficiency of content delivery
 - Allows “outside of class” opportunities to provide activities to address various learning styles.
 - Increases student technology skills (“hidden curriculum”)
 - Improves student engagement:
 - With content
 - With instructor
 - With other students
2. Enhance availability of content
 - Increases student time on task
 - Provides students ability to revisit and review lecture material at own convenience
3. Improve administration and management of students
 - Report grade information online allows students constant ability to track and monitor their performance.
 - Cuts down on faculty meetings with students whose sole issue is to find out how they are doing
4. Research on Distance Education
 - “No significant difference” conclusion
5. Research on Hybrid Education
 - Significant improvements over either solely face-to-face instruction or DE alone.
6. Provide and/or improve opportunities for collaboration:
 - Among students by making it easier for students to work together
 - Among faculty colleagues
 - Facilitating involvement of outside experts in classroom teaching and discussions

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA WEBCT SUPPORT GROUP

Fedro Zazueta,
Director of Academic Technology

Eli Ben-Shoshan,
Computer Programmer/Analyst, NERDC

John Bevis,
Assistant Director, NERDC

Gautam Das,
Senior Systems Programmer, NERDC

Rodger Hendricks,
CIRCA

Douglas Johnson,
WebCT Administrator, Academic Technology

Marilyn Keeling,
Senior Computer Programmer/Analyst, CIRCA

Terry Morrow,
Associate Director of Academic Technology

Alan Rout,
Systems Programmer, NERDC

Amalia Shortsleeve,
Associate Director, Academic Technology

Stephen Ulmer,
Senior Systems Programmer, NERDC

Mike Wright,
Systems Programmer/Manager, CIRCA
