

WebStudy—Comments and Observations from Faculty

Please note that any sub bullets that are below questions are responses from WebStudy on their product.

General Comments/Questions:

- The presentation seemed to suggest that nothing would be lost switching from Blackboard to WebStudy.
- Seems from Curt Corbi, the Chief Technology Officer, that WebStudy could do everything that Blackboard could do, and more.
- Everything that I currently do on Blackboard seemed “do-able” on WS.
- Did not find the WebStudy “notebook” or Timeline to be that much more “user friendly” than the BB or D2L formats.
- Wasn’t sure how typical or easy it would be to export courses from Blackboard— it seemed like the demonstrator did a lot of tweaking and organizing to get the Blackboard course to look the way it did in WebStudy—it could take hours of work for each course
- Content appears to be dumped in one area and you have to reorganize it to be the way you want it to be
- The content storage feature seems appealing. Right now, if I have content in one module of a course on Blackboard, I need to copy that file into a different location. I don’t know if I would like this WS feature better than the feature in D2L that would allow the set up of “master courses” with separate sections. Both seem to be better than our current BB system.
- Clarification on terms: “tests” and “assignments” are graded, “quizzes” are ungraded
- Wish that we could have the option to have the email be internal to the server or have it go to PSC email
- The built-in email system seems like it would work well, provided students were regularly accessing the system. You could not send them an email to remind them to look at something in the CMS, though, unless you knew they were going into the CMS already (as opposed to sending them an email at their PSC account).
- Am not sure if I like the grade book setup or not; that might just be a matter of getting used to a new way of looking at grades for students.
- What does the impact of video on our PSC network?
 - Per Brian Donovan, Director of ITR: our network will be upgraded by the time this would be implemented, so this will be a nonissue then
- They mentioned their video works with dial-up. What does the impact on the video with dial-up really mean? They mentioned the quality would be less...but how much lower is the quality? Do students run into problems where they cannot view the video?
 - Per Curt Corbi, Chief Technology Officer at WebStudy: The delivery of video is directly related to the bandwidth available to the recipient. If the student has a dial-up connection the video will be delivered at 56 KBS. If broadband, it will be delivered at 150KBS. The quality reflected will be the same as any video encoded with these bitrates. Our experience is that the delivery of the low

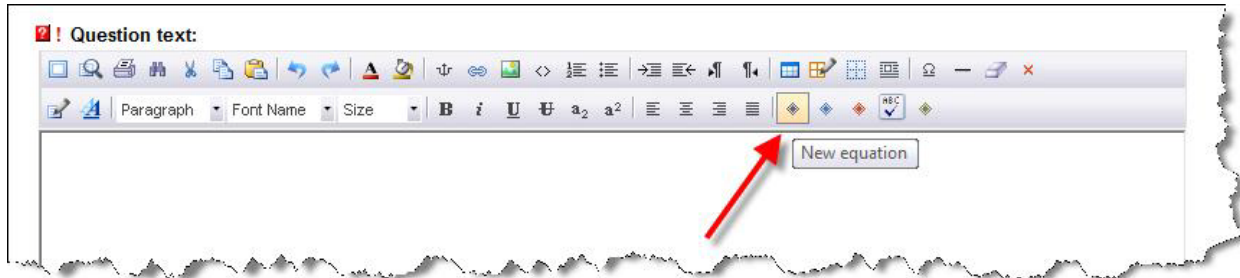
bandwidth video is certainly adequate for the student to view and understand the content. If you wish, I will attach a video to one of your sandbox accounts and you can see for yourself.

- How would we be able to test what the webcam submission looks like when a student is viewing it on dial-up? We want to see proof it works okay...
 - Per Curt Corbi, Chief Technology Officer at WebStudy: Unfortunately, I do not have a dial-up connection available to share (I found a colleague with a dial-up account and borrowed it for a test). The minimal connection for CourseLive to operate is 56KBS. Below that level, it will operate but the Flash playback will pause for buffering. There are settings on the player available by a right-click in the image area to allow adjustment to the playback quality (high, medium and low) which also can influence the experience.
 - Per Curt Corbi, Chief Technology Officer at WebStudy: Candidly, I've seen over the past two or three years a trend on the internet to deliver materials with the assumption that users are connected with minimally a DSL connection. Yes, there are still dial-up accounts but frankly, working on the internet these days in a CMS or otherwise at dial-up speed is tedious. Our directive is to provide WebStudy at dial-up speeds, and we do, but it's not my recommendation to do so.
- With the ePortfolio and students taking it with them for a small monetary amount...1) is the portfolio really staying on your server, but they have an external link to the portfolio once they leave?
 - Per Curt Corbi, Chief Technology Officer at WebStudy: Yes, the portfolio content remains on our server and students will have a unique external link to offer to the recipients of the content views. There WILL be the option to "export" the content but this really will not serve the same objective as it will be strictly exported content and not a "presentation."
- With the ePortfolio, what is the time duration they have access to the portfolio? Is it infinite or a finite number of years?
 - Per Curt Corbi, Chief Technology Officer at WebStudy: It will be available indefinitely for a yearly fee. Note (although not directly related to this question) that ALL content in WebStudy remains intact and available indefinitely... RE the case I mentioned in my presentation of faculty in colleges that have been with us for 10+ years may instantly access courses delivered over that period.
- How many clients do they have?
 - Per Curt Corbi, Chief Technology Officer at WebStudy: I guess I would ask, what answer do you want to hear? I'm afraid if I say "hundreds" you'll believe you won't get the attention you need from our support desk. If I say a lesser number you'll think we're too small. The quantitative answer is less than 100 (very loyal) schools but growing monthly. Remember – we have only offered WebStudy publicly for the past two years. Our schools are of diverse size but are prestigious and recognized institutions. The largest, The Community College of Philadelphia at about 50,000 FTE. Smaller schools, both 4 year and community colleges, include schools like Widener University (<http://www.widener.edu>)

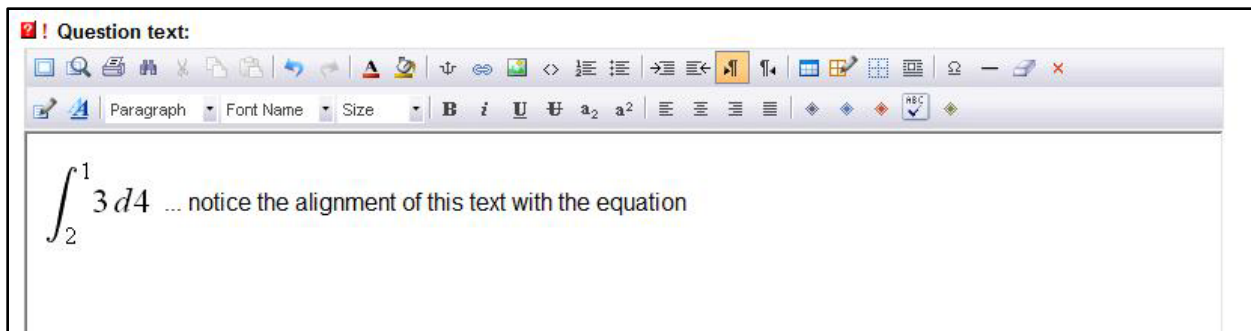
among the top 100 national universities. These schools have revisited their decision to work with us on a regular basis – evaluating other CMS options including the ones you are currently considering. In ALL cases we have been “re-selected.”

- We were told that their server has never gone down—this is difficult to believe
- When will the grade book be updated to include a matrix?
 - Per Curt Corbi, Chief Technology Officer at WebStudy: We are evaluating the input we have received from several schools and are formulating a “best case” presentation. We would WELCOME your participation in this project. Our goal is to have an enhanced grade book that includes our current presentation along with a new matrix style by spring 2010. Again, you’re invited to contribute.
- Can you change the names of the tabs like you can in Blackboard?
 - Per Curt Corbi, Chief Technology Officer at WebStudy: No, you can include or exclude the tabs but the tabs all have a pre-defined purpose that aligns with the overall pedagogy of WebStudy. We ARE able to create flexible options as I demonstrated in my presentation related to the PSC Library functionality.
- Mixed feelings on the notebook graphic
- They mentioned that there is a self-contained email in WebStudy. They did also mention that there is a plan to be able to integrate with external emails. When they do integrate, will each individual instructor have the option to either use the internal email or the external email, or will it be a campus-wide decision?
 - Per Curt Corbi, Chief Technology Officer at WebStudy: Per Curt Corbi, Chief Technology Officer at WebStudy: Our proposed plan is to first of all enable interaction with external email at the institutional level. Once enabled, the instructor would have the option of working within the existing closed system or having composed email copied to the student's external email address which IS captured in the student's demographic info and updatable by the student. Variations of this plan are invited. Regarding the decision to use either internal or external – this, of course, can be done now if an instructor so desires. I don’t recommend this approach however.
- Is there an option for students to have an equation editor in both the discussion and tests?
 - Per Curt Corbi, Chief Technology Officer at WebStudy: YES. Our equation editor is available in Forums, Tests, Email, and other areas in WebStudy.
- What is their deal on intellectual property? Since the course content is located on their server, do you they any boundaries set around that? Is this in the contract schools sign?
 - Per Curt Corbi, Chief Technology Officer at WebStudy: The data on our servers is treated as strictly confidential information. You might consider the analogy of a bank. They are bound to protect the confidentiality of the information of their customer's account information. All employees of WebStudy operate under a similar non-disclosure and confidentiality agreement. Our contract with Prairie State will reflect this also. I'm sure Judy or Gisele can provide you with a draft contract to review if you wish.

- How can you use the equation editor to make a test question? How do students use the question editor to answer a question?
 - Per Curt Corbi, Chief Technology Officer at WebStudy: The Equation editing icons are not as obvious as they could be. The three icons are:
 - - New Equation
 - - Edit Equation
 - - Align text and equation (A WebStudy exclusive)



Note that in the question types, there are two special types named: RTF Single Choice, RTF Multiple Choice – these special question types allow the use of the equation editor in the question answer set also. If a student is required to submit an equation as his answer, the question must be set up as “open ended text” to provide the RTF box and the equation editor. Note also that equations submitted by the student are not auto-graded.



- What kind of security is there around grades and confidentiality? Since they can access the courses, what kind of privacy do students have?
 - Per Curt Corbi, Chief Technology Officer at WebStudy: Really, the same answer as #1 (intellectual property question) applies here. We are bound by the confidentiality agreements noted above along with FERPA guidelines. Students have total privacy and their information is secure. We will respond to instructors’ inquiries about recorded student course submissions pertaining to THEIR courses or an administrator’s inquiry about data owned by their institution. Because we operate in the SaaS model, these are paramount directives relating to our operation of WebStudy.

Pros:

- Liked the simplistic look to it—would be easy for students to understand
- Liked the idea that email is self-contained rather than separate
- Understand the benefits of opening up at a screen where you can actually begin to engage the course content, especially perhaps for the students
- Impressed with the concept of the ePortfolio
- Liked the fact that support for students and instructors was unlimited
- Found it very easy to maneuver in
- Content repository is clever and it is appealing to have all content in one spot
- Avatars would be enjoyed by students
- Webcam/whiteboard is cool and could add value to the classroom
- The fact that all features are included in price is a nice benefit
- Hotline staffed with mini-Kims is cool
- Liked the "faculty lounge" idea where faculty could communicate without needing a separate class structure
- Dynamic notes is cool
- For on-line language courses, the audio integration feature seemed amazing. It seems like that could be useful for Communication classes as well.
- 24/7/365 support service could be GREAT for students! It also would be wonderful during the conversion phase from BB to WebStudy. It seems that, for the price, you are getting a lot of service and attention from WebStudy, compared to D2L and BB.
- Knowing that there have historically been significant issues regarding reliability with BB as well as compatibility, it seems that WS would be a vast improvement in those areas. When Curt stated that the system had NEVER gone down, I was very impressed.
- With regard to grades— did like the idea that the instructor could see the grades for one student without having to create a report.

Cons:

- Surprised there wasn't a grade matrix—it seemed that you would have to type a grade in, scroll, type a grade in, scroll, etc.—this is horrible that it wasn't implemented already
- Also did not like the number system in the grade book—this numbering system is really outdated
- Seems to be more complicated to organize if you are just having a web-enhanced course
- WebStudy seems very scrolling-based, which is very much from 1998
- The frames made things very difficult—if you have a small screen you don't have enough real estate to have both windows show much which makes editing very difficult
 - Frames are where you have the top part of the screen being the actual view and the bottom part of the screen being the area where you edit
- The simplistic functionality seemed impeding
- Did not like that you could not rename the notebook tabs in WebStudy like you can in Blackboard
- Didn't like the title of "Timeline"
- Thomas had difficulty uploading a flash video to WebStudy in his sandbox environment

- It'll take me longer to set up my course after the Bb transfer than it will with D2L.
- Messaging seems like it could cause friction if you're online doing another teacher's work, my message pops up.
- Emails don't leave the course shell, so my students will have to look 2 places for email? Never going to happen.
- Manipulating materials did not seem as easy in WebStudy as it did in D2L
- Because I have so many students who are constantly handing in work, the initial page of WebStudy could feel somewhat overwhelming