

OLN Courseware Support Strategies

November 22, 2000

The goals of OLN Courseware Support Strategies are to remove barriers for faculty and staff to use courseware tools and to better enable faculty and staff at Ohio's two and four year colleges and universities, as well as partners within PK-12 institutions, to teach at a distance using these tools.

- 1) Statewide Licensing – Currently the Ohio Supercomputer Center holds a statewide license for WebCT on behalf of the 22+-institution consortium. This license will be transferred to OLN at the end of the license term (July 31, 2001). OLN will begin negotiating the next contract with WebCT in January, 2001, and plans to complete negotiations no later than April, 2001.

OLN has ended conversations with Blackboard.com for a statewide software license. Blackboard was unable to offer Ohio a discount larger than 10%. Conversations were held with interested Blackboard campuses and it was determined that a Blackboard license for the state was therefore, not beneficial. Conversations with Blackboard.com regarding training for Ohio campuses continue.

- 2) WebCT and Blackboard Training – OLN and the TELR (Technology Enhanced Learning and Research at OSU) offered four “pilot” introductory one-day WebCT training classes. Two were offered in Central Ohio, hosted by OSU, and two were offered in northwest Ohio, hosted by Owens Community College. Classes had 12 students with one certified WebCT trainer (OLN's preferred student to teacher ratio for an optimum experience). Evaluations were extremely positive. Based upon these 4 events, OLN and TELR are negotiating the delivery of up to 15 additional WebCT trainings throughout the state, with 8-9 “Introduction to WebCT” and 5-6 “advanced WebCT training” (Paths & Quizzes, Discussion and Course Management). These classes will take place throughout OLN's 6 regions between early February through late May, 2001. To date Kent, Akron, NEUOCOM, Cleveland State, OSU, Franklin, Columbus State, Lima, Hocking, and Central State have expressed interest in hosting these trainings.

Additionally, OLN is planning on offering 8-10 regional Blackboard training classes throughout OLN's 6 regions. Currently OLN Distance Learning Specialists are contacting campuses to host Blackboard training and has had conversations with Lakeland Community College, Ohio

University, University of Cincinnati, Marion Tech, and Shawnee State University.

- 3) Regional User Groups -- OLN has solidified the Regional User Group (RUG) concept as a necessary and beneficial way to provide ongoing support for new courseware users. OLN is also in the process of establishing listservs for WebCT and Blackboard support, as an integral component of RUGs. Within each OLN region, a campus will host a regional user group F2F meeting, which will be the "kick off" for RUG and listserv activity in that region.
At the conclusion of each of the WebCT class offered in November, OLN Distance Learning Specialists described the Regional User Group (RUG) concept and distributed regional RUG interest forms. This model will be utilized at each WebCT and Blackboard training offered between February and late May, 2001. Each of the 12 listservs (6 WebCT and 6 Blackboard) will have a paid "expert moderator" who will facilitate conversation and sharing pedagogical resources.
- 4) Call in Support Center - This concept is currently on OLN's "back burner" until OLN is able to collect enough evidence that this service would truly be a value added service to Ohio campuses