Common Learning Environment

Guiding Principles

1) Innovation: We will strive to create high quality and engaging learning experiences, working to put this project on the forefront of online technological production whenever possible.

2) Open Source Path: We will use open source solutions wherever possible, and we will work to partner with vendors who are willing to integrate closely with open source platforms.

3) Re-Use of the Good: In striving for innovative approaches, we plan to retain what is good and useful about current online technology and course material.

4) Accessible Solutions: We will build and adopt accessible solutions that will improve access for all learners.

5) Transfer of Assets: We will be working to create both course content and technological tools that can be deployed and adapted readily in other systems.

6) Learn As We Go: Throughout the project, we constantly will be collecting data on how well the students are learning, enabling assessment of their performance and giving faculty the opportunity to make adjustments in their course material when needed. The technology itself that we use will be configured to assist in this data collection.

7) Sharing: By working in a common environment, we will be operating in a realm that is readily conducive to sharing among faculty, students and campuses. This approach offers an exciting potential for enhanced academic interchange that otherwise would be unlikely to occur.

Common Learning Environment Implementation Layers

We envision three distinct layers that make up the technical and learning environment for the project. We expect that the implementation will happen in a phased manner, moving from the top layer of the common learning environment, downward through the supporting frameworks and core infrastructure, with each level becoming progressively more complex and interdependent in its implementation to accommodate the scaling and sustainability of the project. Here is a breakdown of those three layers:

**Common Learning Environment:** This is the level at which most faculty will operate. It includes the tools that the faculty and learners directly interact with as instructors and learners. These tools will support active and engaged learning between students and instructors, tutors, and their peers. The environment will include:
• The Learning Management System (LMS): Learning analytics reports and student support services;
• Course Materials: Video, multimedia, text documents, web-links, e-journals;
• Interactive Engagement Tools: Peer tutoring, chat, web-conferencing, shared annotation, discussion forums, blogs, wikis, quizzing, content authoring and publishing tools.

These tools may be tightly integrated with the LMS or loosely coupled and may include access to tools and services that are offered from other external systems “via the cloud”. The environment will strive to support accepted quality online pedagogical practices such as case studies, group activities, formative assessment and coherent/comprehensible navigation.

Shared Frameworks: This is the level that will assure the faculty’s course is constructed technologically so that it may transmitted to students through a multitude of different systems. This may include centralized multimedia authoring tools and templates; video capture, processing, and distribution; learning content repository; a mobile framework for delivering information to faculty and students via mobile devices; course evaluation. These components are shared because they must span across the campuses and because sharing can bring down the total cost of ownership and serve to increase scalability of the project.

Core Infrastructure: On this level, the faculty need have no hands-on involvement – it is the province of the technology staff.
This infrastructure mirrors what is currently offered (at least to some extent) at each campus but relies on web services (communications among systems) in order to aggregate the appropriate cross-campus data as necessary without creating redundant systems. This information may include: Identity management; authentication; student enrollment data; faculty course data; catalog and articulation data; grades & transcripts data.