

Learning from Experience: Developing Portraits of Practice Part II

To be worked on after your **March 14, 2008 Learning Institute**
and finalized before the end-of-year EXPO.

I. **Community Curator(s).** Who has prepared Part II of this Portrait on behalf of your LC? What date was it completed?

Benjamin Brown May 14, 2008

J. **Key Resources.** Who and what are the beneficial people, organizations, materials, websites, and other resources you have utilized? What help/support did you get from instructional designers, IT staff and other tech support personnel? What types of support did you receive from departments, colleges, administration? Of all resources, which were essential and why were they essential?

Hongqin Li and Susan Shelangoskie (both part of the learning community) coordinated the workshops that we ran and put together the many resources we've created/compiled, as well as a dozen other important functions. This has been an essential and much appreciated element of our work.
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Cable Green at OLN was helpful in providing information and references for our work with Sakai and mediating the starting process. He got us going with the OSPilot program, which was itself crucial to the beginning success of our learning community work.
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Michael Killian and IT staff at Lourdes College - lots of work in collaborating and researching in order to arrive at a decision to pilot Sakai and then the decision to support it institutionally for the foreseeable future.

The Lourdes College IT helpdesk and WIN center (academic, tutoring and computing center) staff have been helpful in aiding students (and faculty) in the use of Sakai when they needed help, which fortunately, was not often, but much appreciated when needed.
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Matthew Hudas and Kathleen Buttermore at Walsh University provided a one-day introduction to Sakai and answered all of our questions.

Carolyn and Mike from IDEAL at Bowling Green facilitated a most helpful workshop on the good pedagogical use of the tools available through course management systems, Sakai in particular.

The Longsight Group has been great with their technical support of Sakai, both when they hosted the OSPilot program and since they have been hosting Sakai for us. We expect to continue a longterm relationship with them.

K. Your Assessment Strategies. How did you evaluate your work/successes? How did you assess member learning, (including technology learning)? your community's growth over the year? student learning or change connected with your project?

What have you observed or concluded at this point with respect to member learning, your community's growth, and student learning?

We used a number of assessment strategies.

- 1) The success of the learning community's work can be seen in the growth of the project over the year. We went from 8 interested individuals to a hub of activity involving over half of our faculty members (= over 35). Many are now using Sakai to one extent or another to enhance student learning in the classroom as well as a smoother and more appreciated tool for facilitating online classes.
- 2) We collected feedback formally through surveys using the survey feature of Sakai at the end of each semester.
- 3) Learning community members provided a narrative assessment of their experience of and growth through the learning community.
- 4) We tested the success of the use of Sakai by running two sections of a course, one aided with Sakai and one without, taught by the same instructor, Susan Shelangoskie.

We've reached a number of important conclusions on the broad level; I will not mention all of the learning about specific technologies and pedagogical strategies/tools that took place. First, Sakai is a very good course management system, and we are very glad that Lourdes College has adopted it for the future. Only one person with experience of other CMSes thought that Sakai was not as good. Secondly, faculty collaboration, sharing, peer-teaching, and the like are very useful ways to develop, revitalize our teaching, and become familiar with something new. Across the board, everyone appreciated the workshop collaborative environment. Thirdly, course management systems are very helpful tools for enhancing classroom classes. Everyone who used Sakai for class thought that it increased student success and Dr. Shelangoskie's more careful study demonstrated that in the case of her two composition classes. Survey data and Dr. Shelangoskie's report are available for anyone interested.

L. **What Others Know About What You've Done.** Beyond your community members, who else is vested in what you're doing? How did you communicate and update these stakeholders on your efforts and successes? What questions do your colleagues have? What have you told your students about your learning community?

Every member of the faculty has heard of our work, at least by email if not more particularly. Over 800 of our students are in a class that is using Sakai. As mentioned above, over half of full-time faculty members have become familiar with Sakai, and many of them are using it in at least one course this semester. Those faculty members who are involved have been participating in monthly workshops designed to expand and deepen our communal knowledge of Sakai and its best use in the classroom. Email and the regular workshops have been the primary means of communication. See below for more.

M. **Dissemination.** What visible bridgework -- structural elements, findings, lessons, ideas, beauties, legacies, processes, relationships, etc -- is your learning community leaving, that inspires others to *build their own bridges as they walk on them*? What digital resources have you developed that you will place into the E-Learning Athenaeum of Ohio? What might members offer, such as informal "brown bag" lunches, research, written articles, and presentations about your work? What is important to tell others "not to do"?

J and L above already begin to give a pretty good idea of the extent of the project, its success and its future. Our learning community's work was essential to familiarizing many faculty members with the features of course management systems, Sakai in particular, and their use for teaching/learning. Most of this group of faculty have either adopted Sakai or will be doing so for Fall 2008. We have created a substantial compilation of resources for aiding in bringing other faculty members on board and in continual improvement.

Our learning community's work was also crucial for getting Lourdes College to adopt Sakai as our institutional course management system, whereas before we had none. It is in the budget for next year. We hope to be able to establish a director for academic technology for Fall 2008, who would carry on and expand the work we have begun.

N. **20/20 Hindsight.** If you were to start over again, what would you do differently and why? What key challenges, problems, solutions, struggles, and failures, would you handle differently? To what degree would you change your goals? What additional successes would you enjoy? What worked - or didn't work -- and why?

Based on the feedback received from learning community members and associates, we would shorten the time of the workshops to 1 hour and include a number of less formal discussion times where faculty members could share their successes and challenges with each other, learn useful techniques, etc.

There is nothing substantial that we would change. However, given the growth of the last year, there is so much more that we could do from here on. We look forward receiving the Title III grant for which we are applying and then to hiring a director of academic technology who will carry on this work.

O. **What's Next?** Will your community continue? Formally? Informally? What could be next in another cycle of reflective practice? The next steps may not be totally predictable, yet they may take you in another fruitful direction that builds upon your community's growth and knowledge.

We have established a strong network of collegiality and friendship which I expect will continue informally. We have developed the habit of drawing upon each other's knowledge and experience, and many at Lourdes recognize the members of the learning community as people they can go to for help when they need it.

A more formal next step is the new learning community that is forming in order to develop the college e-portfolio system. Currently, some departments have adopted LiveText, but we will be exploring Sakai's e-portfolio tool once it matures further.

We have also applied for a Title III grant that would substantially advance the work that we've begun. We are very hopeful for our success in receiving the grant.

This is the end of Part II
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