

**Learning from Experience:  
Developing Portraits of Practice  
Part I**

**A. Learning Community (LC) Title**

Revising Christian Education Courses

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

Benjamin Brown    02/14/08

**C. Abstract (75 Words or less) *if it has changed***

Through a faculty Learning Community, Lourdes College will “reVision” two traditional courses to technology-enhanced courses using Sakai. The core members of the Learning Community will learn technology and pedagogy through workshops and peer mentoring and will effectively revise both courses. Core members will also learn strategies to enhance their own courses. Other faculty on campus will be encouraged to attend some workshops also.

\*Slight change - from Blackboard to Sakai

**D. Learning Community Members, Units, Roles.** List your community members, their units or disciplines and roles, *if they have changed*. Who has been added, deleted?

Core members	Unit/Discipline	Contributions
Not changed		

Associate Members	Unit/Discipline	Contributions
Too many to list. We have over 2 dozen faculty members who are using and learning about Sakai and web-enhanced pedagogy in our monthly workshops, in online discussions and elsewhere.		

E. **Background & Context.** Briefly describe your Learning Community Project and the context within which you undertake it. What do you intend to achieve? What technologies are you using and how? What desired ending(s) would you like for the story of your LC and its project? What types of institutional support do you have? What types of support would you like?

Our project is to use Sakai (a course management system) to enhance two existing religious studies classes. Since the original conception, the learning community has expanded its goals considerably. We have now become the “go-to” group for online/web-enhanced learning in general and we are working to educate ourselves and collaborate with other faculty inside and outside Lourdes to learn together how to use Sakai and other emerging technologies to improve our teaching. Developing fully online courses is a future possibility which is definitely in mind, but not our current focus.

Currently we are using and learning more about standard CMS features (as deployed in Sakai) and experimenting with pod- and vodcasting, wikis and the like. A good ending to the project would be to have not just the original religious studies courses, but 30-40 others using Sakai productively in classes and have Sakai available campus-wide by Fall 2008. We are making progress on both of these goals and should have them completed by Fall 2008.

Lourdes College faculty and administration have been very supportive. We are getting everything that we ask for and faculty members are excited to take advantage of what Sakai has to offer. We hope in the future to get someone at least half time to coordinate Sakai technologically and provide ongoing training and support for faculty.

**F. Description of Your Early Work, Planning and Preparations.**

Describe the preliminary work of the learning community as you prepare for your community project and for attending your Region's Learning Institute (March 14, 2008). What were the key components in your planning and preparation for your LC (Roles? Methods? Timelines? Coordinating schedules?)? What were key issues and concerns, and how did you sort them out? What were the key successes and what impacts have they had? Are there any vignettes that illustrate these?

The preliminary work involved primarily two things: 1) determining an appropriate CMS to use and 2) coordinating the learning community (LC) meetings and workshops.

We had initially determined to use Blackboard, but then awoke to the viability of open source solutions such as Moodle and Sakai. After a careful look at the options and consultation with staff and administration at Lourdes College, we decided that Sakai would be the most likely to be adopted by the College, and so the most intelligent choice for the LC to use in our course revisions. This decision-making process took place in May through the beginning of July.

OLN's OSPilot program allowed us to get started experimenting with Sakai and using it for classes right away with no overhead expense. However, there was still much work to do getting ourselves technologically trained in the basics so that we could begin to use the software to enhance our courses. This took place in July and August. Two of the LC members, Susan Shelangoskie and Hongqin Li, were very helpful in this regard and agreed to run the technology and pedagogy workshops for the LC members and associates.

Planning for the workshops was partly a matter of scheduling, but primarily self-education and prep time - mainly for Hongqin and Susan, who then led the rest of us through the issues and helped us develop good use of Sakai for our classes. We were able to bring in a faculty member and IT staff from Walsh University, which as been using Sakai for several years, to provide a one-day whirlwind tour through Sakai and answer some of the questions that we had. They have also been helpful as we've encountered technological issues since.

The early excitement over the technology quickly led to a dozen other faculty members joining with the LC as associate members, taking an active part in our workshops and discussions. Success stories abound, as do the challenges still being faced (see G. below).

**G. Community Building and Project Development.** Describe early phases of building your community and developing your collaborative project. What key challenges and problems do you face and how do you handle them? What did they - or will they - lead to? What successes have

you enjoyed to date? Are there any vignettes of potential consequence or impacts that you can share? What resources are you using to support community building and how are they making a difference?

The LC and its associates quickly gelled as a group. We have enjoyed and learned much from our times together and everyone has reported very positive experiences. The main challenges laid/lay in technology (including hosting) and discovering good pedagogical practices. The Sakai "class" site that we set up for the LC has been useful in distributing information, sharing ideas and solving problems, but the best part of the experience thus far has been the collaboration as we learn from each other and from working together on various projects.

Our use of Sakai so far to enhance classroom courses has been working so well that from Fall 07 to Spring 08 we doubled the number of faculty using it. A series of training sessions were held at the end of Fall 07 to get new faculty members up to speed - ready to use Sakai and participate fruitfully in future workshops. We plan to provide training in April to the entire campus, readying faculty for Sakai in Fall 2008.

Many students have been very happy with the ease of use of Sakai and the availability of resources online. Faculty have been able to provide an abundance of resources to students, including handouts, website links, study guides, and missed lectures. Students appreciate the availability of resources and being able to view their grades. Students have been able to collaborate on projects together in and out of the classroom; it has been especially valuable for students who are shy about speaking in class. Students enjoy being able to turn assignments in online and receiving feedback from instructors electronically as well; doing so allows instructors the ability to provide more extensive feedback to students in an organized manner.

One quick anecdote: the Master of Organizational Leadership program is beginning to use Sakai extensively. They have taken on self-training. A couple of students have had their work schedules changed and cannot complete the last couple classes to graduate with their cohort, so arrangements have been made to use Sakai to teach the classes online for these students.

**H. Planning Your Assessment Strategies.** How will you evaluate your work/successes? How will you assess member learning, (including technology learning)? your community's growth over the year? student learning or change connected with your project? Both formative (this Portrait is part of this) and summative methods should be used.

We have already begun gathering assessment data both formally and

informally. We created a first-semester survey using Sakai which LC members and associates took in December 2007. We will do the same thing again in May 2008 as well as asking members to provide a narrative evaluation of their experience and description of their learning and their experience of the growth of the community as a whole.

We will also be looking at the effectiveness of Sakai in improving student success. Narrative assessments from faculty will be gathered as well as a comparison of Sakai and non-Sakai courses. Susan Shelangoskie, in cooperation with Debbie Schwartz, the College's director of assessment and retention, is running one of her composition courses this semester with Sakai and one without and will evaluate the difference narratively and look at impact on student success, if any.

**This is the end of Part I**  
*Learning from Experience: Developing Portraits of Practice*

[Submit Part I to [nwlccenter@bgsu.edu](mailto:nwlccenter@bgsu.edu)]

---