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# Common Collaboration & Learning Environment: A Briefing Document

*University of California, Los Angeles*

**UCLA**

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## Executive Summary

### Vision

- By providing a common collaboration and learning environment, UCLA will provide students and faculty with a consistent IT experience to support teaching and learning across academic boundaries.
- This same environment will support inter-disciplinary research collaboration both on and off campus.
- It will also provide the opportunity for IT developers campus-wide to collaborate and respond rapidly to innovative uses of technology and emerging faculty and student requirements.

### Challenges

- UCLA has a long history of distributed IT selection, development, support and funding. To take us in a transformational direction, we need a new way of working together to make campus-wide decisions that can provide a consistent and innovative technology environment for our faculty and students.
- UCLA has a decade of experience developing and using course management systems. The common solution needs to provide increased value to students, to faculty and to local IT support staff.
- The current funding models for support of IT instruction range from minimal to the Instructional Enhancement Initiative. None of the current models include funds for a common good. We need new models that provide for the multiple phases of building a new community-driven service with the capacity to serve the campus, enabling an adoption and transition process, and providing an ongoing service that meets the functional, technical and support standards of the campus.
- UCLA places a very high value on individual autonomy and innovation. The decision to “opt in” to using the campus service will only follow when the UCLA community sees the quality of service, as well as the continued availability of local control and local innovation.

### Status

- Over a period of four years, the Faculty Committee on Educational Technology led the campus to embrace a vision of a common environment to support teaching and learning Introduction.
- This vision has been endorsed by the Educational Technology Executive Sponsors, the IT Planning Board, and a campus-wide committee composed of faculty, staff and students.
- The FCET has unanimously selected Moodle as the open source platform to serve as the standard solution for CCLE course/collaboration tools on which UCLA should converge. This decision is now being reviewed by the campus-wide committees that are part of the IT governance process.
- A campus Project Oversight Group is doing preliminary planning and scoping the project timeline and budget requirements. The current plan is to provide a test environment for early adopters within three months of funding availability, an early adopter limited service within 6 months, and a production service in 9 months.

- Several academic units have indicated they are in urgent need of a production service as soon as possible, with the intention of migrating some or all of their courses, projects, faculty and students by fall 2007. The groundswell of interest is already outpacing the campus consultation process that is currently underway.

#### Critical Decision Points

- An investment is needed now to launch the service, in order to build on the growing campus interest and meet the immediate needs of early adopter units.
- In parallel with service launch, business models will be developed that support the phases of a 3 to 5-year adoption cycle, from start-up service for early adopters to full production capacity to serve and support a critical mass of the campus.
- Models will include both realignment of existing resources and approaches to generating new resources.

## Introduction

### Vision

UCLA students and faculty use technology pervasively in teaching, learning and collaboration. As usage increases and as technology evolves, the potential for significant impact on the academic experience continues to grow, particularly in inter-disciplinary programs and education. The cycle of innovation and change continues to surprise us and challenge how we use technology to position UCLA competitively in terms of research and the student experience. By creating a common environment to support teaching, learning and research collaboration, UCLA will be able to provide students and faculty with a consistent experience across organizational boundaries that will greatly simplify and encourage electronic collaboration and the sharing of data, tools, and support across the institution. IT support staff will have the opportunity to collaborate on the development of new tools to support innovation throughout the campus.

### Direction

On behalf of the Educational Technology Executive Sponsors and the Faculty Committee on Educational Technology, we are planning the Common Collaboration and Learning Environment. The CCLE will be an open source common solution to our learning and research collaboration needs, which will be fully integrated into the UCLA IT infrastructure.

The CCLE will provide students and faculty with a consistent IT experience to support teaching, learning, and research collaboration that facilitates inter-disciplinary teaching and collaboration across academic unit boundaries.

### Benefits

Imagine that:

- students can integrate information, assignments and resources across courses and research projects in a single workspace, and collect their exemplar work in a portfolio space;
- faculty can integrate course related materials and resources across courses in a single workspace to which they can give colleagues or teaching assistants access in order to co-develop or share materials;
- faculty and administrators can use tools across programs to improve the quality of education;
- faculty and librarians can collaborate on updating online references and materials for a course, providing direct access to students from within a course, topic, or assignment;
- faculty can provide students with access to research information, data, and computational resources that have been created as part of research projects or collaborative work sites;
- communities of faculty, graduate and undergraduate students can create collaborative work spaces that focus on academic areas of interest that cross quarters and courses
- information flows between functions so that the individual has no need to re-enter data; for example calendars and grades are updated wherever data is changed;
- non-UCLA participants can quickly be given access and participate in specified workgroups by faculty and other types of workgroup leaders.

This type of seamless work flow that crosses the conventional boundaries of quarters, courses, projects, and applications comes only from a new perspective of what technology can do to provide students and faculty with one environment in which they can accomplish all their work as individuals and in groups that change over time. It requires a new level of commitment from all service providers to weave together one environment in which the activities that should be omnipresent become invisible to the user and the focus of both IT support staff and end user shifts to the individual innovative needs of teaching, learning and research.

## Key Issues

- UCLA has a history of distributed IT, which has its benefits and problems. The proposed initiative must enable a commitment for working together to select and provide a common IT environment for faculty and students, which will also enable IT support staff to share expertise, tools and support responsibilities.
- While one of our goals is to enable greater integration of faculty research into instructional opportunities, there are funding issues, such as the IEI fee, that explicitly create a separation between instruction and research activities.
- The CCLE will move us into a new age of enterprise-level academic systems. We will need to support the acquisition of new skills by IT staff in learning new programming languages, community-based programming methodologies, and collaborating with a broad community of developers.
- To be successful, UCLA will need to provide a cohesive IT enterprise infrastructure that makes it possible for the CCLE to be a sustainable campus-wide service.
- To ensure faculty and students have a consistently high quality of support, we will need to collaborate on the definition and provision of tiers of support services at the campus and local levels.

## Status:\

- Over a period of four years, the Faculty Committee on Educational Technology led the campus to embrace a vision of a common environment to support teaching and learning. They worked with cross-campus groups to define needs, evaluate possible approaches, and to pilot Sakai as part of the vision building and endorsement process.
- Educational Technology Executive Sponsors have endorsed the proposal for the CCLE as recommended by the Faculty Committee on Educational Technology in 2005. The IT Planning Board has endorsed a work plan for selecting a shared framework.
- Functional and Technical Sponsor Groups have collected requirements, defined scenarios and endorsed the FCET recommendation to select a common open source platform.
- The Assessment Taskforce provided an analysis of open source candidates that resulted in an in-depth analysis of Moodle and Sakai. Based on a discussion of the ATF report findings and the goals of the CCLE initiative, the FCET unanimously selected Moodle as the open source platform to serve as the standard solution for CCLE course/collaboration tools on which UCLA should converge. The FCET also decided that UCLA should remain engaged with the higher education community in planning and achieving next-generation CCLE inter-operability.
- A CCLE Project Oversight Group has been established to develop an Implementation Plan for the CCLE and, if funding is made available, oversee its implementation. An advisory group will

be established to advise the Project Oversight Group to facilitate broad campus participation in the process.

- OIT/ATS has agreed to host the campus-governed CCLE service, working in close collaboration with academic units and the CCLE Project Oversight Group.

## Crucial Features

The following features of CCLE are crucial to the vision. While there are downsides and upsides to any complex decision, we feel that UCLA is now in a situation where the upsides are more important and we need to act.

### Instruction

- Instructors can share online course content at the section, course, department, college and institution level,
- Instructors can reference content existing in other content management systems,
- Instructors can store, retrieve and search for course content, including relevant metadata,
- Instructors and students can use MyUCLA gradebook features,

### Research Collaboration

- Instructors can work collaboratively on discussing and preparing research grants across department and university boundaries,
- Instructors can reference content existing in other content management systems,
- Instructors can store, retrieve and search for reference content,
- Instructors, external group members and students can work collaboratively on research project planning and implementation,
- Instructors and groups can set access rights for their materials

### Integration with Campus Systems

- Integration with the campus Student Information System (SIS) will allow the flow of student information between the Registrar's office and CCLE.
- Integration with the Registrar's Office will allow faculty to follow FERPA guidelines regarding privacy of student grades and all content.
- Integration with the campus single sign on initiative.
- Integration with library electronic resources.

## CCLE Scope

### Full Service Model

The CCLE represents much more than a simple choice of technology platform – it represents a new direction for UCLA to follow. For the first time schools, divisions and departments will be able to share a common platform with full integration to administrative systems and data. A collaborative set of support and training resources will be available so that we can work as a campus to support faculty and students in the system usage. This service will include the following:

- System operations
- Product management – ongoing functional development and growth
- Help desk, training and support – for IT support staff, for faculty, and for students
- Local customization by academic units
- Quality assurance and bug fixing
- New tools and functions to support discipline-specific teaching and research collaboration

For this full service model to fulfill our vision, however, the central service providers such as MyUCLA, Integrated Security Information Service (ISIS), Student Information Systems and the Library must fully cooperate in supporting the campus architecture and inter-operability with the CCLE.

### Service Delivery Timeline

If funding is made available, we are ready to provide a Phase I production service for early adopters in Fall 2007, with growth over the 2007-2008 academic year as units adopt in for some or all of the services.

- Winter 2007: order and install system; hire CCLE service staff
- Spring 2007: test the new service with the assistance of early adopter units
- Summer 2007: provide pilot service for early adopter units
- Fall 2007: provide production service for early adopter units

### Adoption Model

There is no plan to mandate local academic unit adoption of CCLE. CCLE will be available as a high-value service they can choose to adopt.

Several academic units need access to the CCLE service as soon as possible. For example, two academic units would like to begin testing no later than late winter quarter 2007 in order to know that a solid service will be ready for their use as of July 1, 2007. Other units are eager to begin testing and customizing the CCLE because they currently have no or only a partial solution to meet their needs. We anticipate that early adopter units will be followed by others over the academic year as units make their decisions about which service functions are of greatest value to them. The

sponsor groups indicated that a three-year adoption curve is a realistic timeframe for adoption by 50% of the users.

## Funding Issues

### Introduction

- Over the past two decades, the campus has consistently invested in its business IT infrastructure. The time is upon us to make the same types of investment in the academic IT infrastructure.
- If we were able to move forward with addressing and solving the funding challenges, we are positioned to make a significant impact on the student and faculty experience.

### Realignment

- Realignment should be based on a value-based proposition. For example, units that opt-in may need a multi-year migration model that tracks their migration from their current solution to CCLE usage and support.
- To encourage adoption, it will be key to balance the desire for cost sharing with the current lack of resources in many academic units to support technology in teaching and research collaboration.
- There will likely need to be a gradual shift (5-years) from seed funding to shared funding to predominantly unit-based funding.
- Units without sufficient funds to support instructional technology will need special assistance to identify new fund sources.
- When there is a critical mass of CCLE users, the timing may be right to consider a campus-wide fee to support the CCLE.
- The benefits to teaching and research may be such that some % of institutional funding will continue to be allocated to the CCLE.

### Resource Requirements to Implement the CCLE

- An investment is needed now to launch the service, building on the campus interest and momentum, while meeting the immediate needs of early adopter units.
- In parallel with service launch, business models need to be developed that support the phases of a 3 to 5-year adoption cycle, from start-up service for early adopters to full production capacity to serve and support a critical mass of the campus.
- Models will include both realignment of existing resources and approaches to generating new revenue.