Chapter XIV

Building a Virtual Campus

Stephen Ast and Cassandra Gerfen
eCollege, USA

ABSTRACT

For the higher education world, comprising three million faculty and administrators, 15 million students and 60 million alumni (Budzynski & Zabora, 2000), a Web presence is essential. But the means by which institutions “go online” can differ dramatically, including the implementation of brochure websites, development of online registration systems, offering Web-based course supplements and distance learning courses, putting administrative functions online, and giving students Web access to extracurricular resources and other networked information. When delivered together, these functions represent a comprehensive platform, while alone they create a fragmented Web presence.

In this chapter, we will explore the trends leading up to the need for an institution-wide solution; how the eCollege CampusPortal℠ can connect a campus’ administrative, academic and community aspects together through a seamless, single point of contact; the development process and technology that makes this possible; and the building of a virtual campus at Montana State University-Billings.
EXPLORING TRENDS LEADING TO AN INSTITUTION-WIDE SOLUTION

The Internet Becomes Part of Everyday Life

The Internet has become part of our daily lives for everything from communicating, shopping and accessing entertainment, to investing and operating a business. The number of Internet users is expected to reach 320 million worldwide by 2002 (Webber & Boggs, 2001), and for this group, checking e-mail, retrieving news and even analyzing purchase decisions online could become routine. The Internet has also become a primary means for students to conduct research, especially when it comes to pursuing and “virtually” touring prospective institutions.

As more and more prospective students started turning to the Internet to help them decide which institution would best meet their educational objectives, institutions began building brochure websites to market to these students. Brochure websites serve the immediate need of familiarizing students with campus life through text and photos, but are often limited in terms of interaction and administrative functionality.

eLearning Takes Off

The Internet has transformed nearly every facet of life, including education. Both in the classroom and from a distance, this medium has been deemed a key resource to make education more accessible, engaging and interactive. The term “eLearning” was coined to define this practice of forming key learning relationships and processes through the use of Internet technologies.

eLearning is becoming more prevalent in one way or another at many institutions, ranging from those that simply accept applications online, to those offering hybrid courses that meet both in the classroom and online, to those delivering full online degree programs. International Data Corporation (IDC) estimates that schools offering eLearning will double through 2004, resulting in nearly 90% of all higher education institutions offering some type of eLearning by that year (Webber & Boggs, 2001).

The push toward this new way of learning has resulted in faculty members implementing a variety of eLearning tools in their individual classrooms, departments building their own websites and online distance programs, and institutions developing strategies for online administration. This creates an inconsistent approach to eLearning, as varying tools and platforms are being used across campus to fulfill individual eLearning objectives.

Students Demand Technology

Higher education enrollments are on the rise due to a record number of high school graduates, a greater percentage of students attending college and a record
Prosumerization of Mobile Service Provision: A Conceptual Approach
www.igi-global.com/article/prosumerization-mobile-service-provision/60249?camid=4v1a