



**ANTELOPE VALLEY COLLEGE
DISTANCE EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE**

**February 28, 2012
3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
SSV 151**

To conform to the open meeting act, the public may attend open sessions

- 1) CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**
- 2) COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS**
- 3) OPENING COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**
- 4) APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 - a. February 14, 2012 (attachment)
- 5) ACTION ITEMS**
 - a. Recommendation of Course Management System
- 6) DISCUSSION ITEMS**
 - a. Administrative Rights over Software used by Faculty and Staff
- 7) OTHER**
 - Spring 2012 DETC Meetings: March 13, 2012; March 27, 2012 (BE 241); April 10, 2012; April 24, 2012; May 8, 2012; May 22, 2012
- 8) ADJOURNMENT**

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**ANTELOPE VALLEY COLLEGE
DISTANCE EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE**

**February 28, 2012
3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
SSV 151**

1) CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Mr. Rick Balogh, Distance Education and Technology Committee (DETC) Faculty Co-Chair, called the February 28, 2012 DETC meeting to order at 3:37p.m.

2) COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS

- Dr. Charlotte Forte-Parnell reported the Substantive Change Report submitted to the Accreditation Commission to reflect the growth of AVC's Palmdale Center and 20 online based programs offered through the center was approved. The committee's approval indicated that at least half of the coursework required for 12 degree and eight certificate programs can be completed online through the Palmdale Center.

3) OPENING COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

- Dr. Claude Gratton stated that he would be in favor of the committee approving an alternate Course Management Systems in lieu of Blackboard. He indicated he has a vested interest in the outcome of the discussion as the decision will impact his courses. Upon thorough understanding of the issues he stated it would be prudent for the committee to decide to maintain Blackboard as the campus Course Management System (CMS) given the training issues, technology compatibility issues, and overall fiscal implications.

4) APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. February 14, 2012 (attachment)

A motion was made and seconded to approve the February 14, 2012 Distance Education and Technology Committee meeting minutes. Motion carried with one abstention.

5) ACTION ITEMS

a. Recommendation of Course Management System (CMS)

A motion was made and seconded to open the discussion of the DETC's recommendation for the campus CMS. Mr. Balogh reported the fees for the three CMS platforms changes daily. He provided a cost overview for each CMS platform fees and services provided. See "Course Management Costs" attachment for complete details. Participants were requested to rank the three CMS platforms given the provided information and previous discussions:

Nancy Bednar: 1) Blackboard; 2) Etudes; 3) Moodleroom
Joseph West: 1) Etudes; 2) Moodleroom; 3) Blackboard
Charles Hood: 1) Moodleroom; 2) Blackboard; 3) Etudes
Scott Lee: 1) Etudes or Blackboard; 2) Moodleroom
Greg Krynen: 1) Blackboard; 2) Etudes; 3) Moodleroom
Bonny Curry: 1) Blackboard; 2) Etudes; 3) Moodleroom
Ken Shafer: 1) Etudes; 2) Blackboard; 3) Moodleroom
Priscilla Jenison: 1) Blackboard; 2) Moodleroom; 3) Etudes
Ken Sawicki: 1) Blackboard; 2) Etudes; 3) Moodleroom
Katherine Mergliano: 1) Blackboard only
Charlotte Forte-Parnell: 1) Blackboard; 2) Etudes; 3) Moodleroom
Scott Tuss: 1) Blackboard only – definitively against Etudes
Rick Balogh: 1) Blackboard; 2) Etudes; 3) Moodleroom

- Ms. Katherine Mergliano, Computer Systems Manager, stated the committee should keep in mind the price structure would increase if the campus goes over 10k students, Each CMS probably calculates CMS users differently (i.e. duplicated count, total number of student users, etc.). This issue should be thoroughly researched prior to the committee recommending an alternate CMS. The current data reflects AVC has 18, 132 potential student users, since every class has its own shell to be used at the instructor's desire for face to face instructed classes. At present, less than 10,000 students are using Blackboard.
- Mr. Calvin Madlock, Information Technology Services Director, stated the committee should take a good look at the costs, flexibility, functionality, training, and accessibility issues to determine the best CMS for the District. Based on his research of each CMS, Blackboard exceeds the other two CMS currently being researching based on cost of ownership and training required. Etudes is not LDAP compatible therefore requiring possibly two additional user IDs in addition to the user ID for MyAVC. This issue will significantly increase ITS Help Desk calls for assistance. Mr. Madlock indicated he didn't see any interface issues but would need to research conversion issues from Blackboard to Etudes to obtain a thorough perspective on this issue.
- Mr. Rick Balogh reported Etudes is looking into moving to a single sign in and expect to have the issue of multiple user IDs addressed by October 2012. In researching alternate CMS platforms and taking into consideration all the issues the campus will be forced to address including the financial implications he believes maintaining Blackboard as the District CMS platform is the best choice. The feedback received from the campus email regarding researching alternate CMS platforms resulted with fourteen responses. The breakdown of the fourteen responses is: Two faculty stated they would support switching to Moodle. Five responded they would support switching to Etudes. There were seven faculty that indicated they didn't support switching to an alternate CMS platform but wanted to stay with Blackboard.
- Dr. Nancy Bednar stated given the current budget climate, the training needs required to facilitate a smooth transition to a new CMS, a potential campus shut down over the summer, and the time frame faculty will have to work with to acquire assistance from the Technical Trainer, the most reasonable decision would be to maintain Blackboard as the campus CMS platform. The major issue is training and the time frame needed to adequately provide a smooth transition for faculty and students.
- Dr. Claude Gratton indicated the committee should also keep in mind the issues pertaining to student transition. Students will have to learn a new system and if support or technology functionality becomes an issue they will be negatively impacted.
- Dr. Scott Lee stated if the decision to switch to an alternate CMS platform was being made a year ago to facilitate a longer transition period he would be more comfortable voting for an alternate CMS platform, although given the time constraints and the lack of resources which will be available due to a probably campus closure he cannot comfortably vote for a alternate CMS platform at this time. Ultimately, the process to begin researching alternate CMS platforms should begin sooner than the year the existing CMS platform contract is scheduled to end.
- Mr. Greg Krynen stated the overall trouble call process and functionality for Blackboard has improved significantly and is expected to improve in the upcoming months. Currently there are fifteen documented issues in the queue. There is an increase in frustration due to the recent upgrade and changes made to some of the features. There is an obvious training issue but faculty have not requested personal assistance or training in the newly upgraded system to alleviate some of the issues.
- Mr. Ken Shafer stated he has lost so much faith in Blackboard as the functionality has always been an issue for him therefore he stopped calling in problems.
- Mr. Scott Tuss, Information Technology Services Programmer Analyst, provided a brief overview on some of the major functionality issues that will impact the campus if the committee decides to switch to Etudes. Etudes will require at the very least every user to have two passwords and possibly two user names. This is something that will have to be communicated to online student and will undoubtedly cause student frustration

and an increase in trouble calls to the ITS Help Desk. The Etudes CMS platform only requires a four digit password which is very insecure and easily breached causing a security issues. In addition, this platform does not require for students to change their password upon entry therefore allowing students to maintain the four digit automated password. This again causes a high likelihood for the system to be breached. Technical Support is limited to a single identified campus representative to call in trouble call issues. Users cannot individually call in problems. Finally, Etudes does not support grade transfers as currently seen with Blackboard. Faculty will have to manually enter grades into Banner cause additional work for faculty at the end of the semester. These are some of the immediate functionality and technical issues that the committee should take into consideration when considering switching to Etudes.

- Mr. Joseph West, Institutional Media Center Lead Technician, stated he appreciated the comparison summary of the two CMS platforms, Blackboard and Etudes. The technical breakdown sheds light to some serious issues switching to Etudes will undoubtedly cause. He understands the idea of staying with a known produce and maintaining consistency although the committee needs to also take into consideration any long term benefits.

A motion was made and seconded to call for the vote to recommend a CMS platform to the Academic Senate as the District CMS platform.

A motion was made and seconded to recommend Blackboard CMS as the campus online platform.

- Mr. Ken Shafer expressed his concern and frustration with the committee’s decision to maintain Blackboard as the campus CMS platform. If the committee approves maintaining Blackboard as the campus CMS platform he doesn’t want to hear any complaints about the functionality or technical problems. In addition, he stated before signing a contract it would be prudent to determine if we are over or close to exceeding the the 10k user total. Mr. Charles Hood stated that the transition is feasible if deemed necessary. Ultimately faculty would have to find the time to address the change in platform system, although given that Blackboard has competitively reduced their fees they have become the safe and comfortable option. Originally, Blackboard was not even being seriously considered due to the high fees required. Dr. Scott Lee stated that he is not comfortable with committing to a five year contract but would rather see the campus contract for a three year time frame. Motion carried. (9 – in favor of the motion / 2 – opposed the motion)

6) DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Administrative Rights over software used by Faculty and Staff

Due to time constraints this agenda item was postponed to the March 12, 2012 DETC agenda.

7) OTHER

- Spring 2012 DETC Meetings: March 27, 2012; April 10, 2012; April 24, 2012; May 8, 2012; May 22, 2012

8) ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the February 28, 2012 Distance Education and Technology Committee meeting at 4:47 p.m. Motion carried.

MEMBERS PRESENT			ABSENT MEMBERS
Rick Balogh	Charles Hood	Calvin Madlock	Walter Briggs III
Nancy Bednar	Priscilla Jenison	Ken Sawicki	Tom O'Neil
Bonnie Curry	Greg Krynen	Ken Shafer	Mike Wilmes
Charlotte Forte-Parnell	Scott Lee	Joseph West	<i>Classified Union Rep. Vacant</i>
GUESTS PRESENT			<i>ASO Rep. Vacant</i>
Claude Gratton	Katherine Mergliano	Scott Tuss	

Course Management Costs

Cost (5 year contract)	year 1 (FY 2012-2013)	year 2	year 3	year 4	year 5	5 year total	Maximum active users	Comments:	Course shell for every AVC class?
Blackboard									
Service	\$99,133	\$101,116	\$104,149	\$108,315	\$113,731	\$526,444	10,000	"AVC will have the full functionality that you experience today, and will not be losing any critical features and functions that your faculty and students are used to interacting with on a day to day basis" [Matt Lord, email received 2/28/12]	yes
Moodlerooms									
Service	\$67,500	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$411,500	10,000	Same training as Mt. Sac.	yes
Training	\$12,000	\$12,000	Assumed not needed	Assumed not needed	Assumed not needed				
Etudes (2 options with difference in course shells)									
Service	\$42,000	\$84,000	\$84,000	\$84,000	\$84,000	\$428,000	15,500	Training and all upgrades no additional cost	no
Membership	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000				
Service	\$67,500	\$135,000	\$135,000	\$135,000	\$135,000	\$657,500	unlimited	Training and all upgrades no additional cost	yes
Membership	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000				

Report to Academic Senate Regarding Etudes

The Committee on Online Learning (COOL) was reconvened this year to address issues of online learning. The committee was charged by the Senate with looking at pedagogical concerns of online learning. The first project taken up by the committee was to collect and share concerns from faculty about the Classroom Management System, ETUDES. This topic is first on the minds of most faculty when the discussion of online learning is begun and so that it was the logical place to start.

The Senate was asked to contact their Divisions and forward feedback. The members of the committee spoke with many representatives from every area of the Foothill Online learning community. This information was shared with the Senate throughout this process and feedback from the floor was also incorporated into the report.

This report is not a condemnation of the ETUDES system, but feedback on what we need from the system to do our jobs as teachers. Every online teacher has different needs, so we have attempted to prioritize both by frequency and severity of the challenges. Foothill College is in the position of being a major user of the ETUDES system and as such is in the unique situation to give information on improvements to the system desired by many faculty.

This report has five parts.

Summary

General praise and criticism voiced by faculty

Mission-critical specifics that are curtailing productivity

Wish-list items

Recommendations

Summary

The Academic Senate Committee on Online Learning (COOL) solicited comments about the current Etudes CMS from Foothill divisions through its representatives in the Fall and Winter Quarter 2008-2009. We received comments, both positive and negative and organized them, based on the severity and frequency of the feedback and issues.

General Praise and Criticism

Response to our questions about Etudes was broad. Many instructors had very good things to say about Etudes in its current form. Some mentioned that Blackboard, ECollege, Interlearn and Moodle (which at least two faculty have used) are far behind Etudes in features and ease of use. Responsiveness is generally very fast. Comments also praise its student-friendly system and seamlessness.

However, even with such high kudos, some of the same instructors had constructive criticism. One said, "With such an incredibly responsive team I hate to burden them with more requests, but ..." Also there were some instructors who had mostly negative comments. Of course, the "negative" constructive criticism must be more detailed and therefore takes the bulk of this report.

General Comments About Etudes and the Etudes Team.

- + System has improved considerably since introduction two years ago.
- + Staff works hard to implement features and fix bugs.
- + User's group offers a fluid support mechanism to voice concerns and get answers.

- TTS area does not yet handle assignments properly.
- Etudes staff is making unilateral decisions about what should be implemented, many times in stark disagreement with repeated requests posted in user's group.
- Many faculty reported that their comments were dismissed and often deleted from the user's group if they voiced a request or criticism that was not considered shared by the Etudes staff.

Mission-Critical Deficits

Implementing assignments in TTS is the most common source of complaint. Assignments need to be more easily authored and changed. TTS is very awkward for assignments, even with new features.

Instructors also mentioned that the lack of a selective-release survey or quiz is impeding the evaluation process. This refers to the option that used to exist in Etudes Classic in which a student was required to complete a quiz or survey in order to gain access to new material.

Technical courses are seriously hampered by the inability of the Etudes editor(s) to handle technical (i.e., programming) code.

The absence of student tracking was seen as a source of extra work, unresolved conflict between instructor and student and difficulty in complying with state required attendance monitoring.

Elaboration: Mission Critical Problems

A published assignment cannot be modified once a single student has viewed it.

Assignments should be changeable whenever the instructor wishes. This includes the ability to make any change even after a student has looked at, or some students have submitted, an assignment. Disallowing this action is a judgment call made unilaterally by Etudes staff and not shared with faculty. It is a giant step backwards from the old assignments, and is preventing faculty from embracing TTS as a replacement. An instructor knows when it is reasonable and not reasonable to make a change to an assignment, or modify or extend a date. The restriction is adding unnecessary work in forum posts, deletion and recreation of assignments from scratch, apologies to students about unfixed typos that must linger all quarter, and countless work-arounds that place assignment content in resources or forums where it doesn't belong.

Selective Release Quizzes or Surveys Needed

Besides gating students into new material based on their success on past quizzes, there are other reasons why selective release is critical. Instructor evaluations for online courses have been difficult or impossible because of low response by students. We need the ability to require that a survey that must be completed by the students before work can continue. Until this is done, online instructor evaluations are going to be in the 10% - 25% participation range.

Supporting Data

- The online student evaluation committee did a "pilot of the pilot" Fall quarter where Dolores Davison and Kate Jordahl each did student evaluations. The level was in the 20 to 30% range. Both faculty really worked to get responses, something that might not happen in the 'real' world.
- An additional pilot ran Winter quarter and will continue through Spring. Numbers are not yet available, but we think it will be running at similar response levels.
- Thus, we think selective release would be a good additional tool to help evaluation response rates to increase significantly.

Editing

Those who teach programming and web development are unable to display code easily - or at all - when that code contains tags and special symbols. XHTML and programming instructors find that they cannot list a block of code for students because the editors, even in pre-formatted text mode, interpret the tags rather than display them. These editors do a poor job of pre-formatted text. They collapse and disallow editing, placing break and other unwanted tags within the `<pre>` tags, and do not observe the new lines placed there by the author. Programming instructors spend hours every week tweaking these editors, trying to get them to display code as code. Attachments are a weak fallback as the explanations and code must flow and be as one. Whether authoring or attempting to post a question about code, the editors are failing to support the needs.

Instructor Override of Registration Drop/Add Needed

Instructors want to be able to override registration by either dropping a student and having that student stay dropped, or un-dropping a student and having him/her stay in. There is at best, a two day lag between registration and the course, and it causes headaches when students can't get in while they wait for the registrar to process a reinstate.

It is unrealistic to push this off to registration when the instructor is on the front lines and can do it, while registration will always lag a couple days behind. What is requested is not a *CHANGE* to the existing mode: we do not want to undo the auto-updating that is currently there. What is requested is a check-box that gives us the *option* to override registration until we uncheck it.

Student Tracking

The college is required to take attendance in all courses to comply with Title V. The Etudes system provides no mechanism for tracking student attendance. Instructors are dropping students who later request re-instatement, or leaving students in who should be dropped. This is completely due to a failure of the system to provide the basic information about student system usage. For years, Etudes Classic helped resolve student and instructor participation and conflict issues in seconds through the student tracking mechanism. Now, it is nearly impossible to tell which students are participating.

Note:

A recent update from Judy Baker, Dean of Distance and Mediated Learning, indicates that as of Spring, 2010, Etudes will release tracking (Early Alert) of student attendance in the course site. We would like to see *much more detail* about what options this update will address and perhaps provide input as to the option. We would also urge an earlier release due to the compliance issues mentioned above. If this is not possible, we would like to see a firm commitment to the Spring 2010 date.

Archiving of Student Data

The Foothill and DeAnza faculty Senates are currently in process with the Board about the length of time a student can challenge a grade. This decision is a Title 5 regulation charging the college district to define and requires the colleges and/or faculty to store records to address a student challenge. How this is to be done is a current district-wide discussion.

It has been announced that starting with 2009 summer session, content in Live Etudes course sites will be available via web browsers for 1 year after the end of the quarter and then archived (stored in .zip format) for another 2 years. This archived course site files will NOT include student records. Student records in Live Etudes course sites will be available for 1 year after the end of the quarter. There is reported to be a method for faculty to download student records if they wish.

This once again adds work for the faculty member and puts the responsibility of storing the data on the faculty, an issue currently in discussion about all classes with the College's administration.

This issue is not likely to be resolved in this school year. We need to have open communications with the Etudes Consortium on our storage requirements to meet our District requirement and not have this change implemented until we are sure we can comply with the rights of students and faculty in cases of grade challenges. We also feel strongly that more work should not be put on the faculty to download, store and back up records.

Technological vs. Pedagogical Issues

Pedagogical decisions are the responsibility and prerogative of the faculty. A number of technological issues that affect this have not been treated with respect or responsiveness by the Etudes staff. When issues have been posted in the Users Group that differ from the perspectives of the Etudes staff, there have been incidents of these postings being deleted by the administrator. Such deletions should only be tolerated in cases of inappropriate language or harassment of other users and the poster should be notified that their post has been deleted and why.

Foothill faculty, to comply with Title 5, and to teach in a manner that we have found pedagogically sound, as stated in other parts of this document, want certain tools like selective release, student tracking and TT&S modification after publication. These requests are not technologically impossible, but are rejected because they are philosophically counter to the Etudes Consortium. We respectfully request that the Consortium be responsible for technology and the teachers be responsible for decisions about teaching.

Wish List Items / Other Areas of Concern

The following items are mentioned by multiple instructors, but did not seem to merit the priority of the above items.

File upload size allocation

Multimedia file size limits do not reflect the reality of multimedia. Faculty would like an allocation that a department can share so that those instructors and students who need to upload large files (50 MB) files can be offset by others that require less storage space (< 1 MB). Placing a 5 MB limit on all classes interferes seriously with some classes.

Question Pool model for Assignments is bulky

The Question-Pool layer being separated from the Assessments might make sense for tests, but for One-question assignments it is a major annoyance. At best, instructors who stopped complaining about it have just worked hard over a period of months and years to adjust to the extra steps. However, some instructors simply refuse, using the old Assignments tool and Discussion Forums as places to house their assignments until this separation is removed for One-Question assignments.

Pasting XHTML content in authoring tools

Pasting content from web authoring tools works differently in assignment authoring compared to modules. In Modules, all embedded images are uploaded to the server. In TTS, such images must be manually uploaded to Resources and then links manually added. It is very time-consuming, especially because assignments, unlike tests, often require lots of image links. This is another example where we see the hidden assumption of Etudes developers that faculty are creating short text-based tests rather than rich assignment documents.

Dates of closure of tests/assignments

Students cannot see the final date of closure of a test or assignment. This should be posted along with the due date.

Schedule and/or Calendar

Instructors wish to have dates of work automatically placed in a calendar. They would like a place where students can see all content for given week bundled.

Auto-Base Dates and inter-semester preparation time

The time for preparation for each term went from a few minutes in Etudes Classic to a few hours for the current version of Etudes. Automatic changing of base dates is one reason for this. The grade cutoffs in "grading options" resets each quarter and must be re-entered manually. Importing has improved but is not yet ideal as evidenced by these two examples.

Browser Compliance

Etudes has not kept pace with new browser development in a timely manner. This is especially frustrating in classes and labs where updated browsers are required. Software should be updated in a timely fashion to comply with current standards and versions.

Authoring in FCK and SFRYX Editors

Faculty would like the ability to set Preferences for editing that persist across classes and editors.

Site Info

Instructors would like the ability to set preferences for all items in one place for all classes including editing preferences (fonts, sizes, etc.), number of students shown (30, all, etc.). At present, no preferences settings persist.

General Guest Account

An account whose password can be set by the instructor and not changed by students, is needed to allow access to students who the instructor wishes to "let in early" or "browse the course". The current one student-at-a-time guest account is clumsy for this purpose.

Forums and Messages.

Instructors mentioned that they would like to see notifications upon login about new forum posts or private messages. Email message option for notification of a new message should include content to obviate logging in.

Assignments

(Pre-TTS) As stated above, some instructors are not going to move to TTS until the basic flaws of TTS vis-à-vis assignments are fixed. They will simply use the old Assignment tool, and when that option is removed, use forums.

One instructor had comments about the old Assignment Tool he hopes to see fixed. While we hope that the new TTS will be adjusted so that it satisfies this instructor and others like him, we pass on these comments.

"When changing dates on assignments, the grade-book does not reflect this. Assignments have to be removed and re-added to grade-book. Immediate changes to assignment dates reflected in grade-book would be nice. Students who paste code with formatting and links sometimes have problems in assignments."

PDA's

Some Etudes content does not work with phones PDA's.

Publishing Tests without Penalty

Faculty would like to be able to publish names and dates of tests so that students can see them from the beginning of the term. This is not possible now without the publishing issues mentioned above.

Grading Options

Grading Options settings should be importable from quarter to quarter (like modules, tests, forums, etc). Every quarter we have to manually enter the percentage values for final grades in the Grading Options menu, leading to potential errors and extra work. If faculty forget to re-enter the (same) information from previous quarters, Etudes defaults kick in and the assigned grades are incorrect. If we are lucky, the student will complain when s/he notices an incorrect grade before final grades are submitted to the registrar. However, it could happen that no students notice, or only a few are affected, causing a bigger problem when the incorrect grades are transferred to the registrar on final grade report sheets.

Auto-submissions of assignments

In TTS, when the closing date arrives, assignments without any content are submitted on behalf of the students who did not complete the assignment. While this might be fine for tests, it is a problem for assignments. At the end of the quarter, as we are wrapping up grading of late submissions, we suddenly see a profusion of auto-submitted blank assignments. This is another example of how TTS is not yet an adequate replacement for Assignments.

Recommendations

These comments reflect the best efforts COOL has been able to make regarding faculty concerns about the current course management system and articulating them in manner that is understandable by Foothill community's online learning participants.

We recommend that the Academic Senate adopt this document and make the following recommendations:

By January 15, 2010, the Mission Critical issues outlined above should be resolved. Judy Baker, Dean of Distance and Mediated Learning and other administrators, whose main focus is Distance Education or Instructional Pedagogy, meet with Etudes staff to present this document no later than June 30, 2009.

This administrative group should periodically report to the Academic Senate concerning the status of resolution.

A faculty review committee be established to explore other distance education platforms in the event that resolution is not achieved.

We recommend that administration establish a minimum of four FULL one-quarter release times and/or 3-6 units of PAA for faculty to explore and research other CMS with budget for these faculty to purchase a one-course license from prospective vendors.

In order to represent faculty concerns, promote constructive and factual flow of information to Divisions, and allow COOL to be a substantial voice at the College and District level, faculty representation on the COOL committee needs to increase. COOL currently meets three to five times a year, a modest commitment. We recommend that every Division elect a representative.



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January 3, 2012

Dear LMS RFP Review Committee:

As the dean of distance learning at Foothill College, I have worked directly with Vivie Sinou and other Etudes, Inc. staff since 2006. Foothill College has used the Etudes course managements system (CMS) with great success during that entire time. Most recently, we contracted with Etudes, Inc. for course management system hosting services from July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012

Foothill College is a mid-sized community college located about 40 miles south of San Francisco. We had 118,312 enrollments and 13,458 FTES in 2010-2011. In the fall quarter of 2011, Foothill College offered 413 course sections that used Etudes CMS with a total of 13,278 enrollments. Of these, 207 course sections were fully online. Over 200 faculty members at Foothill College are currently trained in the use of Etudes CMS.

Over the past few years, Foothill College has switched from an in-house SIS to Banner. Starting with the summer session of 2010, we successfully integrated Etudes CMS with our Banner system. The Foothill-De Anza Community College District Educational Technology Services (FHDA-ETS) has developed an automated process which synchronizes class rosters in Etudes course sites with Banner rosters twice daily. FHDA-ETS has expressed a willingness to share their Banner/Etudes integration process with other colleges.

As a course management system, Etudes CMS is not only comparable to Blackboard, Moodle and other major CMSs, but also uniquely superior in some respects. Etudes CMS has all the expected features and tools including powerful communication tools (JForum discussion forums, live chat, announcements, private messages, calendar), content authoring (WYSIWYG editor), classroom assessment (exams, quizzes, assignments, surveys), and classroom/user management (gradebook, content import/export, groups, bookmarks, student-tracking, selective release of course content) and administrative tools (user backups, user access control based on roles, customization of course site look and feel). A fully functional mobile version of Etudes CMS will become available in early 2012. In addition, Etudes CMS provides faculty with wiki, podcast, blog, RSS feed, and course evaluation tools to pilot-test upon request. Many faculty have expressed appreciation for the Course Map tool and the Users Present feature for their practical value. Most noteworthy, however, is the outstanding reliability of Etudes CMS as a robust product with its consistent record of extremely few data corruption problems or unplanned service breaks.



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Etudes, Inc. has provided remarkable hosting and backup services (account and site management, roster importation assistance, and faculty support) to Foothill College, especially in terms of responsiveness to user requests for new features and tools. Etudes, Inc. actively solicits input and suggestions from faculty in a number of ways: targeted email announcements; Discussion Forum postings; verbal requests at Etudes Summit conferences; and focus group meetings. As a result of these genuine outreach efforts, Etudes, Inc. has continued to improve the Etudes CMS product in ways that are very meaningful and useful to faculty users rather than simply cosmetic.

In addition to providing an Etudes training course for faculty via the Internet, Etudes, Inc. provides faculty and students with tutorials (in online, zipped and PDF formats) about how to use Etudes CMS.

Foothill College faculty and staff requests for technical assistance from Etudes, Inc. are consistently addressed in a timely and professional manner. Most technical questions and concerns are resolved within minutes, and the rest are often resolved within 24 hours.

By hosting an online Discussion Forum devoted to those who use Etudes CMS (called Users Group) and the annual Etudes Summit conference, Etudes, Inc. also encourages and supports faculty efforts to communicate and assist each other as well as collaborate on best practices for teaching online effectively. Etudes, Inc. has successfully fostered and nurtured a mature learning-community-of-practice with educators who care deeply about the success of students in their Etudes course sites.

In summary, I highly recommend Etudes as a CMS product and Etudes, Inc. as a CMS provider for your district. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you might have. I can be reached at 650-949-7388 and bakerjudy@foothill.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Judy Baker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Judy" and last name "Baker" clearly legible.

Judy Baker, Ph.D.
Dean, Technology and Innovation