

CONTINUING *tech*



Computing and Online Technology
for Continuing Education Students
at Eastern Illinois University



The search is on to replace Eastern's longtime learning management system

Eastern continues to make progress toward its goal of replacing the university's WebCT learning management system (LMS).

Requests for proposals from nine different companies that offer LMS software were received in October by the university search committee overseeing the WebCT replacement process.

These will be reviewed in November and December, and several finalists will be selected, and representatives of these, in turn, will be invited to campus in January for interviews. A winner will be selected sometime during the summer.

Eastern is replacing WebCT because the program, which has been in use

at the university for more than a decade, is being phased out and followed up with newer technology by its parent company, Blackboard, in January 2013.

WebCT is an online learning management system which provides a virtual learning environment for faculty to deliver classroom instruction to students. The

software has been used at Eastern Illinois University since 1999 to supplement traditional classes that meet on-campus, as well as to deliver instruction totally online to off-campus students. Based upon the number of course accounts created and survey data reported by faculty, more people at Eastern are using WebCT

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Search

every year, and it is the linchpin of the university's Continuing Education program for delivering online courses to off-campus students.

"The committee is in the process of reviewing the bids and deciding who to bring to campus for interviews after the first of the year," said Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs for Technology John Henderson of Eastern's Center for Academic Technology Services. "These interviews will be open to all of campus, and we will compare their input to that of the search committee (composed of faculty and staff) and narrow it down and determine an outcome."

Here's a look, in question and answer form, at the WebCT replacement process:

Why is Eastern replacing WebCT?

Blackboard, the company that owns the WebCT brand,



will discontinue support for the product a year from this coming January. This means that Blackboard will provide no further updates or technical support, nor any security patches or development for the software. Updates and maintenance to local WebCT servers and databases could render an unsupported WebCT environment non-functional. For these reasons, courses in WebCT will be migrated to a new learning management system. This transition will occur prior to January 2013.

Why not just replace WebCT with the product that Blackboard is replacing it with, Blackboard Learn 9.1?

The user interface of the

Blackboard Learn 9.1 is very different from that of WebCT, creating a situation where upgrading would be a major change for users, anyway. That makes it an opportune time to look around and see what other options are worth considering at Eastern.

Did the campus community have input in the search?

Yes. Faculty, staff and students were surveyed prior to the seeking of bids for a replacement product. These constituent groups were asked what they are looking for in an LMS. This information was used in constructing the request for proposals. Newer LMSs offer features such as the addition of mobile apps, allowing input from iPads, iPhones,

smartphones and tablets, easier ways to add content, and easier ways to check notifications.

How will student who use WebCT be affected during the transition period?

In the interim, students will notice no changes as the legacy LMS continues to be used. When the transition is made, the university will offer instruction on how to use the new product, with both online assistance as well as instruction at the Gregg Technology Center on campus. Online students, such as those served by Continuing Education, will have tutorials and training videos made available to them, and they will be able to call School of Continuing Education technical support for assistance.

"Any way you look at it, it will be a supplement to teaching and learning, just a means used to deliver content to students and communicate with them," said Henderson.

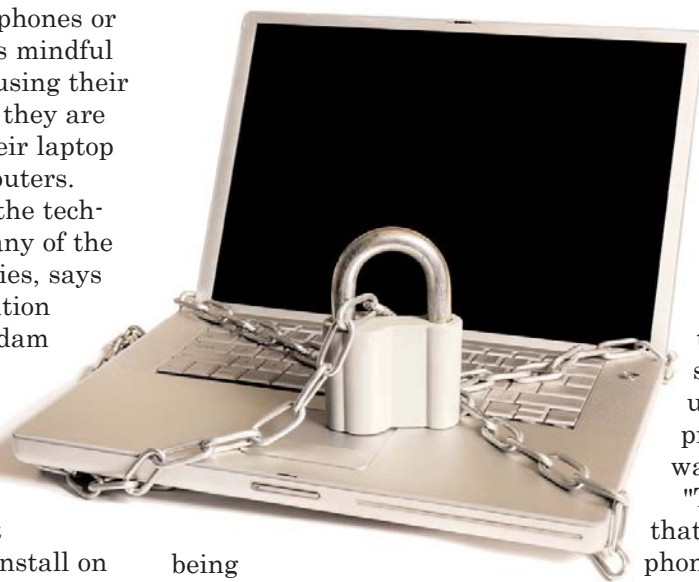
Tablet, smartphone users must be mindful of security, too

Users of smart phones or tablets must be as mindful of security when using their mobile devices as they are when they use their laptop and desktop computers.

That's because the technologies share many of the same vulnerabilities, says Eastern's information security officer, Adam Dodge.

"Smart phones really are mini computers, so be smart about what applications you install on them and what websites you visit," said Dodge. "People need to be aware of the risks out there so they can take precautions."

As mobile devices become more popular, users are



being exposed to a whole new set of risks. Fortunately, there are steps they can take to protect themselves.

"As more of our lives get put on mobile devices — be it text messages, Facebook,

banking information, email, social sites — we use them more and more to communicate and keep track of our lives. That's more information out there to lose for someone to steal unless we take precautions," warned Dodge.

"The good news is that every smart phone has an easy way to set up a passcode, whether it's a slide code like on a Droid or an (alphanumeric) password," added Dodge, "and there are easy and simple ways to protect yourself from ID

theft and other problems."

It's important to learn about the security features of your particular device. This knowledge will enable you to set up a passcode or other encryption. "This may take some getting used to, but it will help protect data from harm," Dodge said.

Some new smart phones have the ability, after wrong passwords have been entered a certain number of times, to shut themselves down. Some can allow you to remotely delete personal information from them if they are lost or stolen.

Another concern is rogue apps.

This security risk is not so much of a concern for iPhone users because of the

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Security

stringent controls Apple puts on application developers, but there have been instances of the Android marketplace containing fake apps that, once downloaded, steal contacts or looks for banking and social site passwords. Google has taken steps to eliminate such apps once they are identified,

"But you need to be careful of what you download, especially as they relate to financial institutions, social networking sites and even educational institutions, making sure that the app is authorized," said Dodge. "All of these apps will tell you who created them so you can do your own research. As with smart computing, you need to

think a little, before installing random programs, in order to protect yourself."

Finally, Dodge warned, you should be aware of all of the data you allow others to collect about you when you are online. Newer Android and Apple smart phone operating systems let users know who is collecting information about them based on their usage and location.

You should be aware of how to limit that access. The downside: you may not be able to use all of the capabilities on your device if you do so, but that's the tradeoff. Apple, for example, used to store information about users' location when they were using their phones. This was done to map out cell coverage, but it caused a stir among users.

If you need help, technical assistance just a telephone call away

If you are an off-campus student experiencing problems with your home computer or your connection to Eastern's information technology resources, you may wonder where to turn to get help. The answer is to call SCE Technology Support information (Call or contact SCE Technology Support at 217-581-7227).

When you call School of Continuing Education Technology Support for assistance, please have the following information ready in order to expedite assistance with your problem:

SCE technical assistance contact:

The School of Continuing Education technical assistance contact phone number for students is 217 581-7227.

By e-mail, students can access SCE technical assistance at scetech@eiu.edu

E-number

Your e-number is your essential means of personal identification at Eastern. To protect against identity theft, the university limits the use of Social Security Numbers, substituting a nine-digit e-number instead.

This number can be found on your Panther Card. Use

it to identify yourself in all communication with SCE Technology Support.

NetID

Every Eastern student also is assigned a NetID when he or she is first admitted.

Your NetID is the same as your EIU e-mail address without the @eiu.edu suffix.

Your NetID is a combination of your initials and last name and possibly a number. For example, if your name is John Q. Student, your NetID might be jqstudent.

If you don't know what

your NetID is, search for yourself in Eastern's Web page phone book (top of the university's main Web page at www.eiu.edu). Find your entry, which has (Student) or (Gradstu) after your name. Click on "Additional Information." Your NetID will be listed in the pop-up window (example):

Student, John Q.
(Student) Phone: <no entry>
Email: jqstudent@eiu.edu
www:
<http://pen.eiu.edu/~jqstudent>
Curriculum: Technology
NetID: jqstudent

Computer recommendations for Continuing Education students

Students at Eastern frequently ask what type of personal computer they need. While the university does not require most on-campus students to have their own PC, for continuing education students who do their classwork mostly from home, a computer is a necessity.

For students about to purchase a computer, Eastern makes recommendations for minimum specifications, which will be academically appropriate and compatible with the campus network.

Any brand-name personal computer currently available off the shelf at retail

will function on the Eastern network and meet your basic academic needs. Computers purchased within the last two or three years should work properly, too.

Whether you use a desktop or a laptop computer is up to you, too, and is a matter of convenience.

You need not spend thousands of dollars for a computer, as long as your machine meets these minimum guidelines established by Eastern's Information Technology Services department:

Hardware

These are the minimum recommended specifications

for a desktop PC:

Processor: 2 GHz or better
Screen: Your preference
Video: Directx 9 capable 3D video
Memory: 2GB or more. (3GB for 32bit Windows and 4GB for 64bit Windows)
Hard Disk Drive: 160 GB or better
Floppy Drive: None (We recommend students purchase a 128MB or larger USB flash drive)
Optical Drive: DVD burner or DVD combo
Operating System: Microsoft Windows 7 / Microsoft Windows Vista / Microsoft Windows XP Pro / Mac OSX / Kubuntu Linux
Antivirus Software:

Symantec, Norton or free software such as AVG.

Network Adapter: Integrated 10/100 Ethernet

These are the minimum recommended specifications for a laptop PC:

Processor: 1.6 GHz or better
Screen: Your preference
Video: Directx 9 capable 3D Video
Memory: 2 GB or more. (3GB for 32bit Windows and 4GB for 64bit Windows)
Hard Disk Drive: 160 GB or better
Floppy Drive: None (We recommend students purchase a 128MB or larger USB flash drive)
Optical Drive: DVD burn-

Computer

er or DVD combo

Operation System:

Microsoft Windows 7 /
Microsoft Windows Vista /
Microsoft Windows XP Pro /
Mac OSX / Kubuntu Linux

Antivirus Software:

Symantec, Norton or free
software such as AVG.

Network Adapter:

Integrated 10/100 Ethernet

Wireless Networking:

Integrated 802.11 G or N

All other features are
optional and at your discre-
tion.

Considerations when look- ing at a warranty for a PC or laptop:

A three- or four-year total
protection plan limited war-
ranty that covers
parts/labor/technical support
with three-year or four-year
accidental damage protec-
tion. Review the websites of
computer vendors to deter-

Set your EIU password with P-Synch/EZ-Reset

Students at Eastern first
get their initial password in
their orientation packet. You
should change your initial
password by using P-
Synch/EZ-Reset, Eastern's
password management sys-
tem, to reset it.

Full instructions on how
to use P-Synch/EZ-Reset are
available online at
www.ezreset.eiu.edu.

mine the limitation to the
coverage.

Example of what the total protection plan might cover:

7x24x365 Technical
Support from the computer
vendor, ensuring a technical
expert is available when you
need them.

Parts and labor warranty,
providing assurance that

manufacturing defects will
be repaired at no additional
costs to you.

Next-business day support
for replacement parts.

If the computer is mailed
to vendor for repairs, the
repaired computer will be
returned to consumer in one
to two business days.

Accidental damage protec-
tion extends the warranty to
cover accidental damage
such as liquid spills, drops,
power surges, or cracked
LCD/monitor.

Software packages recom- mended for a personal com- puter:

Whatever system you
decide to use, your computer
will need the capability of
working with files for word
processing, spreadsheet,
graphics, Web browser, file
transfer, e-mail, and calen-
dar programs. The following
software packages provide
these essential capabilities.

A new computer gives some
assurance of not becoming
obsolete in a year or two. If
you already have a comput-
er, the following information
will allow you to judge
whether your present sys-
tem can meet your current
needs.

Software recommended specifications:

PC or clone:

Windows 7 / Windows
Vista / Windows XP Pro
Microsoft Office XP, 2003,
2007 or Open Office ([openof-
fice.org](http://openoffice.org))

Macintosh:

Mac OS x (10.5 and above)
Microsoft Office 2003,
2008 or Open Office ([openof-
fice.org](http://openof-
fice.org))

Browsers:

Information Technology
Services offers support for
the following Web browsers:
Firefox 3.0 - 3.5
Internet Explorer 7-8
Safari
Google Chrome.

EIU's Information Technology Services launches revised Web page

Information Technology
Services is launching a user-
friendlier redesign of its
Web page with more and dif-
ferent bundles of informa-
tion than the department's
old site, in a more graphically
pleasing package.

The site will be available
at <http://its.eiu.edu/>

While the old ITS page
emphasized text and ver-
biage, the new one is built
around larger and more col-
orful graphics.

The navigation bar on the
left side of the page provides
links to various ITS entities
and sub-units.

Below these links is a sec-
tion to remind campus IT

users of scheduled mainte-
nance outages; a "New
Student and Parent
Technology Information"
link; a link for "Technology
Resources on Campus;" an
FAQ; and a link for down-
loading various ITS-san-
ctioned software.

At the top of the new
page is a rotating carousel
of features/information
pieces. The initial content
lineup focuses on
PantherFile, ITS's Web-
based data storage and
sharing system for faculty
and staff; ITS's new online
application for tracking
relocated and surplus
equipment that eliminates

paper forms and makes
moving transparent; inven-
tory control software devel-
oped by ITS that keeps
Eastern's state-of-the-art
Textbook Rental facility
working efficiently, saving
students money and time;
and this year's student and
employee campus technol-
ogy guides. New subjects
will be profiled as the
carousel is updated periodi-
cally.

Below this carousel, on the
page, are three subsections
of the page.

■ The "I Need Some Help"
link deals with problem-
solving and where to get
technical support.

■ The "Information
Hub" profiles an ITS serv-
ice or resource and will
change on a periodic
basis. The initial feature
deals with PantherMail,
the official communication
channel for all academic
and university notifica-
tions to students and
employees at Eastern.

■ The "Check This Out"
section showcases informa-
tional and documentation
articles as well as past
issues of ITS newsletters.

Finally, the site contains
an announcement section on
IT events such as system
maintenance takedowns and
planned outages.

CONTINUING tech

Information Technology Services publishes CONTINUING
tech semesterly to provide Continuing Education students
information regarding computing resources and activities.



EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

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