AC TechTimes

Talk the Talk:
The AC Online Vocabulary

Like other software systems, AC Online, a product of Angel Learning, has its own unique vocabulary. Impress your friends by becoming the first to master these new terms:

Learning Object: self-contained unit of learning that can be reused and placed in multiple online courses.

Learning Object Repository (L.O.R.): the place where you store your learning objects

Token: a tool that allows you to automatically generate information within your course—such as adding the individual student's name to an announcement.

Agent: a tool that allows you to automatically release content and execute predefined actions on a scheduled or event-driven basis.

Daiquiris & Demonstrations

Amarillo College employees will have the opportunity to get to know AC Online at a **Hands-On Happy Hour**. This chance to enjoy non alcoholic daiquiris or margaritas, nachos and demonstrations will take place from 3-5 p.m. on Thursday, November 6 in the Oak Room on the Washington Street campus.

"The purpose of this session is to allow employees to explore the new learning management system in a relaxed and fun session," said L.M.S. Communications Sub-team Leader Becky Easton. "E-Learning Instructional Designer Brenda Davidson will give short demonstrations of the new system to introduce you to the AC Online teaching and learning environment," she noted. Easton also pointed out that members of the teams working on the L.M.S. implementation will be on hand to answer questions and address concerns.

The November 6 Happy Hour will also feature a special screening of the AC Online vs. WebCT commercials starring David Hernandez and Sam Schwarzlose. Tacos Garcia has donated the chips, queso, guacamole, and virgin margaritas for this come-and-go event. Demonstration sessions will be repeated several times so employees are encouraged to drop by the Happy Hour and stay as long—or as little—as fits their schedules.

Additional Happy Hours will be held throughout the upcoming school year to provide new avenues for sharing knowledge and fellowship. If you have an idea for a topic for Happy Hour, please contact Faculty Development Committee Chair Monique Dupuis at dupuis-mm@actx.edu.

Faculty Give AC Online High Marks

AC Online is opening to rave reviews. That's the consensus from the AC faculty members who have had the chance to use the new learning management system. During October, a group of faculty and staff trainers received two days of training from Angel Learning Systems. All said they were very pleased with the software.

"I know change is hard...but as educators we should always be changing, evaluating, and reworking," said Assistant Professor Pam George. "Here is our chance to do that with this exciting new system whose possibilities seem almost UNLIMITED!" George noted that she found AC Online much easier to use than WebCT and called it very intuitive. Her favorite features of the system include its ability to personalize and automate tasks and information and its "drag and drop-ability". She pointed out that the training made her want to rework her course to take full advantage of these new tools. "I would hope that online instructors would open their minds to the possibilities and to the opportunity to make their courses better and not just reuse old WebCT courses. There is so much that CAN be done with AC Online that we never had the opportunity to do before…. USE THE NEW LMS TO ITS FULLEST!"

E-Learning Instructional Designer Brenda Davidson seconded that opinion. She called AC Online "a fun to use system that inspires new ideas and is not hard to learn." When asked to compare AC Online to WebCT, Davidson said, "AC Online has more features to help evaluate students and has more communication features. In general, I think it seems much more streamlined and up-to-date."

Associate Professor Jan Martin described AC Online as having the best features of WebCT in a much more user-friendly package. "I think everyone is going to love this system. The learning curve is not quite as steep at WebCT and it has so much more potential for creating powerful, high-quality online content," said Martin. "I am more enthusiastic than ever about the change."

Ask Techno Geek

Dear Techno Geek: I am afraid to schedule events because I might miss AC Online Training. What should I do? Sincerely, Anxious at AC

Dear Anxious: Currently, there are 10 trainers training to train the faculty. They will spend the months of November and December developing knowledge about the product. Beginning in February, there will be 11 sessions offered each week for faculty to attend training and open labs. All online instructors will be required to attend (2) 2 hour training sessions in the lab and complete a 10-12 module online course that will take approximately 2 weeks. It is our goal to have everyone trained by the end of February to mid March.

Dear Techno Geek: But what if I miss the email announcing training dates? Sincerely, Still Anxious

Dear Still Anxious: There is always a possibility of missing someone. The LMS team is working very hard to seal all cracks by working with department chairs to identify instructors that need to be trained. The team is cross referencing online faculty lists with the course listings from the registrar's office.

Dear Techno Geek: I've found that my students do not know what Web CT means on the AC Website. They go to MyAC and think they are in the online classroom. How will AC Online solve this problem? Sincerely, Dazed and Confused

Dear Dazed: There has been a lot of discussion about this situation, and that is why the LMS team decided to brand the new LMS with the descriptive name "AC Online". We are limited on tab size in MyAC. so we could not use the label "AC Online Classroom". To solve this problem, an announcement on how to log in will be placed on the main MyAC page, and faculty will have to post an announcement within their MyAC classes instructing the students where to enter the online classroom.

Dear Techno Geek: Here's a problem that I've been having with WebCT. Sometimes students are pushed too early into online classes, which causes me to have to adjust the course shell and post a message to the students before classes even start. Will I have the same problem with AC Online? Sincerely, Early Bird Not Getting the Worm

Dear Early: Great question! Online faculty should not be penalized because they have an online classroom. That is why AC Online will allow faculty members to activate the course at the beginning of the semester and inactivate the course at the end of the semester. Course shells will be available for all instructors 1 month before the each semester starts. This means the instructor will have one month to upload a developed course into the live environment. The students will not see the course until the instructor activates the course. Courses will remain accessible to students for 7 days following the end of each term. Instructors can disable the courses sooner if they want. Special situations such as incompletes will have 30 days past the term.

If you would like to have a psychotic exchange of information or you have a question for Techno Geek, email biggers-cj@actx.edu