

# System improves college communication, accuracy and efficiency

CurriculumBank is more than a Web site designed to store and share curriculum. It is a secure content management system that keeps track of curriculum projects in progress, allows for online faculty collaboration and approval of work in progress, and stores final curriculum documents.

Since Worldwide Instructional Design System (WIDS) rolled it out in 2003, many colleges have purchased their own CurriculumBank Web sites – branded with each college's unique look and feel – to improve college-wide communication, accuracy and efficiency.

Accessible anytime, anywhere, CurriculumBank sites are used by colleges as a central, electronic repository of final curriculum documents and learning materials stored as MS Word documents, WIDS documents and files, images, videos, PowerPoints, PDFs and more. Secure and password protected, faculty from these colleges can download final curriculum courses and programs for use in their classes, knowing the downloaded curriculum is their college's most recent and final version.

## Online collaboration

Moreover, via CurriculumBank, instructors separated by great distances can collaborate in the development of revisions or new curricula. Everything can be done online, including discussions, revisions and approvals.

"When faculty from different campuses or colleges collaborate on curriculum projects, CurriculumBank's forum feature is a huge advantage," according to WIDS Director Judy Neill. "It brings people separated by distance closer and makes the process



of course design simpler," she said. "It's an excellent way to pull the approval process together." Colleges can set up a collaborative workspace that allows educators to vote on curriculum changes, download meeting forms and post announcements and projects, added WIDS Trainer Terri Johnson.

Simple to learn, users log in; navigate to the program area of interest; choose to download curriculum documents; participate in discussions or upload documents; and log out.

In Central Nebraska, Central Community College (CCC) relies on its CurriculumBank site to bring three campuses – separated by an average of 65 miles – closer, according to Eric Jones, dean of educational services. "We struggled for a number of years shuffling curriculum files among the campuses," he said.

At CCC, the course approval process starts with instructors who develop and approve curriculum together. From there, the associate dean, cluster dean and vice president of instruction review and approve it before the curriculum is considered final. "We used to never know where the final course was," said Jones. "Now we have an electronic file cabinet and know up-front that course is published and available to faculty."

Using CurriculumBank, CCC posts all final course curricula, including course competencies, performance



The CurriculumBank course management system keeps track of curriculum projects in progress, allows for online faculty collaboration and approval of work in progress, and stores final curriculum documents.

standards and learning objectives for instructor download. That way, instructors teaching the same course at different campuses, teach the same outcomes.

While CCC has had a shared file system for five years, it didn't work well for "filing" curriculum because it was only accessible for people on campus. The network couldn't be accessed off-site. Moreover, it didn't provide educators the chance for online collaboration – something instructors desperately needed, according to Jones.

## Online access to curriculum from anywhere

Using the CurriculumBank site, CCC educators "now have a sophisticated and secure system that allows faculty to communicate whether they are at home, in the office, or elsewhere," said Jones. "We can share and manage curriculum files instead of losing them. In the past, it would

sometimes take a year to get a course approved because we didn't know where the file was. Our communication is enhanced using CurriculumBank."

The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) uses its CurriculumBank site similarly; to store all state-funded, aligned curricula, according to Annette Severson, associate vice president-office of instruction. "When a program is aligned across Wisconsin, no matter where or how it is delivered – online or face-to-face – it has the same course titles, numbers, credits, descriptions, competencies (outcomes) and performance standards," she said. Using CurriculumBank, Wisconsin's 16 technical colleges have immediate access to the most recent aligned programs – ensuring WTCS students achieve the same skills and competencies for a given course, no matter where they are enrolled.

## Password protection and security

To date, the WTCS CurriculumBank has 2,671 registered users and stores 23 aligned programs, plus 679 courses and 20 occupational analysis (DACUM) charts developed with state funding. Each of the aligned programs is available for download by WTCS faculty and staff, but no one else can gain access to the copyrighted work. "The site allows all of us to work from the same curriculum document," Severson said, "no matter where we are teaching."

## Bringing a single college with multiple campuses together

When it comes to faculty collaboration – essential to course revision and new course development – CurriculumBank is a timesaver, added Jones. From CCC's "Works in Process" page, instructors post, review and edit curriculum projects.

Once the curriculum is approved – via a digital signature process – it is posted onto the "Approved Courses" page.

Like WTCS and CCC, Southwest Technical College (SWTC), in Fennimore, Wis., and Northcentral Technical College (NTC) in Wausau, Wis., prevent lost curriculum files, facilitate the exchange of ideas among faculty, and ensure the continual improvement of courses and programs using their own CurriculumBank repositories.

## Custom-branded for each learning community

"Our site has the SWTC name on it and is exclusive to our faculty," said Julie Pluemer, curriculum specialist.

"We have a very limited IT department," added Susan Allen, director of institutional advancement. "Our IT support person thought the site was a very good deal, considering its complexity. It will save us time when training new faculty and save faculty time because they know where course curriculum is kept and how to get it," she said. "Sometimes teachers lose curriculum files if they haven't taught a course in awhile." The new site will ultimately save SWTC money and worry, she said.

## Simplifying accreditation and articulation

By having a centralized, electronic depository for curriculum documents – documents that show where core abilities and course competencies are taught and achieved throughout a program – less time is spent searching for the most updated curriculum files, according to Allen. Curriculum files at SWTC used to be stored in desk drawers, filing cabinets and on computer hard drives all over campus. In turn, finding and updating courses and programs proved a challenge. Having curriculum in one, easily accessible location, facilitates articulation agreements between colleges and high schools; simplifies accreditation processes; prevents the loss of curriculum if faculty retire; and expedites the process of getting new faculty and adjuncts up to speed regarding course curriculum development. The college simply downloads the necessary curriculum documents whenever needed.

"For the price," added Jones, "CurriculumBank is an inexpensive, outsourced solution that is incredibly easy to use."

In addition to CurriculumBank, WIDS provides a set of tools to educators, including curriculum design software and services. A non-profit organization, WIDS offers advanced tools and personal support to help clients design and manage effective performance-based curriculum. ▲



Join *Community College Week* as we celebrate 20 years of service covering community, technical and junior colleges. Watch for *CCW*'s Notable Spotlights on past editions, new features and look for *CCW* 20th Anniversary announcements in our expanded e-newsletter.

To take advantage of advertising opportunities associated with our 20th Anniversary, call (703) 385-1982 or e-mail [ads@ccweek.com](mailto:ads@ccweek.com)



# Community College Week

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE COVERING COMMUNITY, TECHNICAL AND JUNIOR COLLEGES