IT Student Governance Board
University of Colorado **Boulder**

**IT Student Governance Board [ITSGB]**
Office of the Associate Vice Chancellor for IT
and Chief Information Officer
University of Colorado at Boulder

**POSITION STATEMENT OF THE IT STUDENT GOVERNANCE BOARD**
POSITION STATEMENT REGARDING THE LMS EVALUATION & SELECTION INITIATIVE

November 10th, 2016

**Committees of the LMS Evaluation and Selection Initiative**
University of Colorado at Boulder

To Whom it May Concern,

## Background and Position

The IT Student Governance Board (ITSGB) represents the CU student body within the CU OIT governance structure. Our board has developed the following ranked criteria, use-cases, and perspectives regarding the evaluation and possible replacement of CU Boulder's current Learning Management System, "Desire2Learn". These criteria are intended to represent the CU student population as a whole - indicating features and requirements from a student based perspective. The *ranked* criteria are:

1) **Ease of Use with Simplistic and Intuitive Design**
2) **Mobile Application Support**
3) **Ease of Dissemination of Information and Files**
4) **Facilitates Effective Communication between Student and Faculty**
5) **Consistent Interface for Viewing Current Course Grade with Breakdown**
6) **Availability of Pre-existing Features**
7) **Availability to Connect to Outside Resources (Plug-ins)**
8) **Availability of Student ePortfolios**

## Explanations and Use Cases

The following criteria were developed by the ITSGB in order to represent current trends in student usage of modern LMS software, and student needs as brainstormed by the board. The ITSGB is developing a student survey, to be deployed in last 2016 or early 2017, to fully qualify these criteria.

### Ease of Use with Simplistic and Intuitive Design

Ultimately, increased, meaningful use of the LMS by student and faculty is the overarching goal of this project. Therefore, the number one metric to ensure individuals will use an LMS is the ease and convenience with which they may do so. Many sites suffer from "feature bloat". They attempt to display too many things at once, often in a manner that is not only confusing, but contradictory. For instance, consider the common use case of a student downloading a file (lecture notes) at the beginning of a class. If the lecture notes are buried behind more

than a few clicks (login, course website, course materials, lecture notes, date, open file, download), the student not only wastes time, but creates a distraction within the classroom environment.

Furthermore, misunderstandings in how to submit files, inconsistent/redundant locations for commonly utilized functions, and lack of a common design language are all situations which can cause frustration. A good LMS would insure that commonly used functions are intrinsically intuitive to even the most inexperienced of users.

**Mobile Application Support**

According to the 2015 ITSGB survey, 83% of students surveyed utilize a smartphone for their daily computing tasks, while 33% also use a tablet/iPad. For this reason, it is *absolutely and fundamentally essential* that any new LMS has a functional and well-developed mobile solution. In today's world of "apps", there is no excuse for such a vital and frequently accessed part of student's lives not to have a mobile app. A good LMS should have a consistent mobile solution for all major operating systems, specifically iOS and Android.

With a properly implemented mobile solution, an LMS can significantly increase student involvement and awareness. "Push" notifications are invaluable for important reminders such as class cancellations, due dates, and grade postings. Many students even use their mobile devices as their primary note-taking device! By that logic, a good LMS can not exclude these devices from its overall design language and usage scenarios.

**Ease of Dissemination of Information and Files & Facilitates Effective Communication between Student and Faculty**

In many cases, faculty prefer to use the LMS less as a centralized learning experience, and more as a file and information source to supplement in-class activity. As discussed earlier, if this is difficult, faculty tend to move to less accessible, but less complicated systems. One such system is email. For students, it is not uncommon to receive an email before every class, containing reminders and lecture notes for the class. There are multiple issues with this approach, which a properly integrated and used LMS would mitigate.

For instance, email is uncentralized. In the same list of seemingly unconnected messages, a CU Boulder student might find recitation notes, a CU Today newsletter, email from a professor announcing a class cancellation, and professional communication regarding an internship. This mess leads to confusion and the loss of communication.

An LMS which allows for easy dissemination of news and information allows faculty to stick to *one* location when forwarding information. This not only keeps class information segregated and easily accessible, it creates a consistent and simplistic contact point between students and faculty. Ideally, a well implemented LMS could function as a personalized, university-only news-ticker. Students could login for information on both current, timely information on their classes, while also seeing important campus events and alerts.

**Consistent Interface for Viewing Current Course Grade with Breakdown**

Currently at the University of Colorado at Boulder, there is no consistent nor overarching way for a student to see how they are doing in a course. While professors may implement methods of checking your grade - D2L, Moodle, in-person conferences, returning grading assignments, etc - it is extremely inconsistent. By not allowing students to have an overall sense of understanding of their position within a course, in the best case scenario, students simply receive a grade they did not expect. This can delay students in pursuing their academic goals, along with a litany of other issues. In the worst case scenario, it enables faculty to assign grades arbitrarily and without transparency. In short, students are unaware quantitatively how their grade is calculated, and what (if anything) they could do to improve.

A well-selected LMS would solve this issue by incentivising, if not requiring, faculty to report grading information via the LMS during the semester. This process should be easy for both faculty and students. Simplicity on the faculty side ensures that grades would be kept accurate and up-to-date, allowing faculty to

implement whatever grading policy they require without difficulty. Simplicity on the student side allows students to frequently check their standing in a course, and gain a clear understanding of how to meet their goals. Furthermore, insuring a centralized location for all grades reduces operational complexity for both administration and student.

**Availability of Pre-existing Features**

**Availability to Connect to Outside Resources (Plug-ins)**

**Availability of Student ePortfolios**

**Request for Response**

As a subset of the Office of the Associate Vice Chancellor for IT and Chief Information Officer, the ITSGB respectfully requests a response to this position statement, acknowledging receipt and consideration of the positions stated within.

Sincerely,

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