

Jim Heynderickx

From: Jim Heynderickx
Sent: Wednesday, June 07, 2006 12:53 PM
To: Jim Heynderickx
Subject: EdLine Introduction: Please Review Before US Faculty Meeting (June 13th)

Dear US Faculty,

The tech department has spent the year reviewing faculty use of SharePoint sites and comparing them with other online options for course pages and services. We looked at expensive systems used by colleges and universities, and free systems we could build ourselves. Our goal was to see if we could find an alternative to SharePoint sites that was

1. Easier to use by faculty and students.
2. Easier to create for all courses, faculty and students.
3. Secure and encrypted.
4. Expandable for new features in the future.
5. Unified, in that a student, faculty member or parent would go to one place for all classes.

Our goal wasn't to immediately change to something new, but to find out what our options were. We also wanted a solution that will be the best choice for as long as possible.

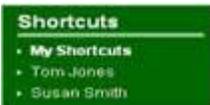


The top candidate after this review was an online service called EdLine (www.edline.com) that is used by just under 10,000 schools. Edline is unique in that it is an affordable solution hosted on the Internet that would allow us to upload the entire US course schedule, student and faculty lists into the system, which automatically creates course web pages for all courses.

When a student (or a parent of the student) logs in, they see a welcome page that lists all of their classes, and a "combined calendar" that puts together all items from their class calendars. That way, if the courses have main assignments on their calendars, a student could see at a

glance the due dates for all projects and units. Parents can log in and see the same information, unless a teacher chooses to exclude parent access to some materials.

When a faculty member logs in, there are additional benefits. The faculty member will see links to all the courses he or she is teaching (with a combined calendar of their course entries), as well as Shortcuts to his or her advisees. Through the advisee links, the faculty member can see the



students' EdLine pages and combined calendars. There is also a "My File Locker" where files can be stored, and in the future there would be "Old Class Documents" where all previous course materials would be available for re-use. Teachers can post pictures, documents, web pages and other materials to their course pages. Students can also upload documents to the course sites.



Another option is that the system can also host an unlimited number of groups and activities. A separate page could be created for Dorm Parents that would automatically be listed on members' pages (and add events to their combined calendars). Student Council could have its own page, and its members could share documents there, share calendar information, and other materials. Parent committees and groups could also have pages and share information.

A screenshot of a spreadsheet or data table. It has multiple columns and rows. The columns are labeled with dates from 1/15 to 1/22. The rows contain various data points, possibly related to student information or course schedules. The table is organized in a grid format with clear headers and data cells.

The last feature we'll mention is online grades. Built into GradeQuick (and two other electronic grade books) is the option to automatically upload grades and reports to Edline. The faculty member selects what information to share, the information is uploaded, and then each individual student has a private report in EdLine about missing assignments, grades and other progress report information. If selected, these reports can also be seen by advisors and parents. If we move forward with Edline next year, we would not try to implement online grades or reports with all faculty, but we may try it out with a pilot group.

(In the future, similar "private reports" could be generated for Student Store purchases and other information.)

We would like to share a little more information about the system and answer questions about it at the last US Faculty meeting on June 13th at 9:30 a.m. So far, we have presented information about the site to Rob Brisk, the Grade Deans, and the Curriculum Committee. A proposed course of action may look like this:

- 1) Implementing with only a subset of US courses would be difficult, since EdLine imports all students, faculty and courses from our student information system. When a student or parent logs in, we would like them to see links to all courses being taken. I
- 2) To implement this with all faculty members, we would request only a minimal level of participation. If all faculty could cut and paste main assignments and their due dates in the individual course calendars, for example, students, advisors and parents could benefit from seeing combined calendars. Faculty would also have combined calendars of their own assignments. Another step would be to upload any course syllabus or statement about the course per page. The first time these steps are taken would be the largest time investment, since all of the information can be re-used in the future.
- 3) Rob Brisk is thinking of creative ways to enable time for training and completing these activities, along with support so that everyone is comfortable with the process. Our experience so far with Edline indicates that the system is stable and relatively speedy, and the process of adding information to the calendars and uploading documents is simpler than using a SharePoint site. It appears that this system has been used by enough schools to work out most of the bugs and irritations.
- 4) We would prefer to work with only a limited group to try out the online grades feature. Other independent schools that are using these types of systems, and EdLine in particular, have reported a decrease in parent emails and phone calls about grades, and an increase in the quality of parent conferences as a result of having reports

online. These schools reported that their faculty were concerned about the system at first, but they soon noted clear benefits.



Disadvantages of EdLine: Not all features of SharePoints are currently replicated in Edline. This summer, for example, they are planning to enable online collaborative tools for the course websites (discussion areas, chat, shared whiteboard, etc.), but these features are not available yet. For the faculty who actively used discussion boards with students, for example, we can easily maintain SharePoint sites for those parts of the course if they aren't integrated into EdLine by next

fall.

So, we look forward to sharing and discussing EdLine in the last US Faculty meeting on June 13th. It would be great if the US could take a leadership role in piloting this system, since it could be expanded to all three divisions in the future. Please email me if you have questions in advance. You can visit the "public" OES EdLine page we've been playing with at https://www.edline.net/pages/Oregon_Episcopal_School.

Jim Heynderickx