

Proposer:

Include name, address, phone and fax numbers, email address (expect some correspondence by email), WWW address (if applicable), etc. (This item does not count in the page limit.)

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Statement of Topic:

A short title (to be used in announcements), a longer title (if appropriate), and a brief description.

For Better, For Worse: Hitching Your Course to a Course Management System?

This discussion will focus on the use of course management systems (WebCT, Blackboard, TopClass, et al.) by computer science educators to administer their courses. Come share success stories, "war stories", workarounds, advice, and the like.

Course management systems (CMS) are increasingly used in higher education. Functions of a CMS include convenient installation and management of web pages, student records, and online quizzes, tests, and homework submission. Other typical features include automated monitoring of student performance, threaded discussion groups, dedicated chat room, etc. Proponents would say they make individual instructor web sites a thing of the past. The typical CMS is usable by a wide audience of educators, not only those with sophisticated computing expertise. However, our experience has been that computer scientists have specialized needs and perspectives on CMS use that differ from those of the typical academic users. This discussion will focus on the possibilities and limitations of CMS systems from the perspective of computer science educators.

Significance and Relevance of the Topic:

Please include information about any trends in relation to the topic and possibly describe / cite evidence to that effect. The objective here is to explain why the topic is significant. This information can help your proposal to be selected if resources become an issue.

Course management systems (CMS) are in abundant and growing use in higher education. Functions of a CMS include convenient installation and management of online resources, student records database, ability to create and administer online quizzes and tests, automated monitoring of student performance, threaded discussion groups, chat sessions, and the like. The typical CMS is usable by a wide audience of educators, not necessarily with sophisticated computing expertise. Computer scientists will most likely have specialized needs and perspectives on CMS use that differ from the rest of academia.

Expected Audience:

Please briefly describe the nature AND size of the expected audience. If you expect a particularly large or small audience, please explain why. (This information can help in room assignment.)

Expected audience size: users and potential users of course management systems; 20-30 participants

Discussion Leader:

Please include name, affiliation, a brief summary of qualifications and experience relative to the topic area, etc. If discussion leader is different from the proposer, proposer should indicate whether the proposed discussion leader has agreed to attend the symposium and lead the discussion, and what contingency plans are made in the absence of the proposed discussion leader.

The proposer(s) will lead the discussion, and intend to attend the symposium. They have several years' experience with using WebCT to administer courses in introductory computer science, introductory and intermediate computer programming, object-oriented programming, and concurrent programming. They are investigators in funded projects through NSF-DUE and Pew Center for Academic Transformation for increasing instructional efficiency through use of technology.

This session will be similar to a session conducted at SIGCSE 2002, entitled "Managing Course Management Systems"

Special Requirements, if any:

Please describe (for example, projectors / overheads / other -- I can't guarantee this equipment will be available, but if possible, it may aid in room assignments).

Availability of an Internet connection and a projector that can be connected to a laptop computer (or desktop computer if available) will greatly enhance the ability of participants to share experiences with course management systems.