UC DAVIS’ NEW PLACE TO TEACH, LEARN AND WORK ONLINE
is a high-tech wizard.

resource for other students.

For others, the tipping point might
with a TA or professor from home.

the “virtual office hours” feature,

some users when instructors add

work in widely different disciplines

management tools now available on MyUCDavis.

before.

to teach more effectively , and to do things they couldn’t do

hopes to make it easier for instructors to teach, for research-

virtual office hours, wikis and more.

teract and collaborate with students,

management and online collaboration toolkit called SmartSite.

Today. To keep up, UC Davis is introducing a new course man-

gagement and online collaboration tools called SmartSite.

instructors use SmartSite to help manage their classes this year, and each

Instructors should find ways in SmartSite to teach more effectively, and to do things they couldn’t do

Before that, the existing MyUCDavis course management tools will run in tan-

SmartSite will be available for all Davis courses next year. For another year

SmartSite has plenty of other tools ready for use—making this summer and fall a good time, organizers say, for the campus community to start playing with SmartSite and learning what it can do.

Boohyun Lee, a Ph.D.

School of Education, explores SmartSite (Sakai) at a workshop on May 5 in Hutchison—one of the first campus events introducing the new system to general Davis students.

WHAT IS IT?
The course management tools in MyUCDavis have become increasingly difficult to extend and scale. Using SmartSite helps the campus trade up, and integrate its course management features with other emerging instructional technology and communication tools.

WILL SMARTSITE REPLACE MYUCDAVIS? The course management side of MyUCDavis, yes. The MyUCDavis course tools will be re-

HAS ANYONE TRIED IT AT UC DAVIS? Several faculty members have tried pilot ver-

WHAT’S IN IT FOR ME? The core management tools in MyUCDavis and MIT. About 100 institutions of higher education are work-

SmartSite uses Sakai open-source software. Sakai originated at the University of Michigan and Indiana University several years ago after each began independently to develop open-source course management and collaboration systems. They teamed with MIT and Stanford soon joined in, and today about 100 institutions of higher education are part of the Sakai Project.

WHO CREATED IT? SmartSite uses Sakai open-source software. Sakai originated at the University of Michigan and Indiana University several years ago after each began independently to develop open-source course management and collaboration systems. They teamed with MIT and Stanford soon joined in, and today about 100 institutions of higher education are part of the Sakai Project.

D. Kern Holoman, Joe Kisiel and Birgit Puschner

work in widely different disciplines—music, physics and veterinary science. Although each knows tech, none is a high-tech wizard.

Still, the three UC Davis instructors have found it fairly easy to use SmartSite to help manage their classes this year, and each sees potential for using the online system to do their work better, more easily, or both.

SmartSite is based on Sakai, a course management system started in 2003 by a partnership of universities in the United States. They set out to create a better way for instructors, re-

Let’s be honest, though, that description is a little too stiff to tell you what the system can really do.

SmartSite becomes engaging when an educator finds a way to use one of its tools to do something useful—maybe surprisingly useful—

With less tedium than it takes to do the same task in a traditional way.

That moment might arrive for some users when instructors add the “virtual office hours” feature, which lets students get face time with a TA or professor from home.

For others, the tipping point might come when students fine-

Boohyun Lee, a Ph.D.

student in the UC Davis

School of Education, explores SmartSite (Sakai) at a workshop on May 5 in Hutchison—one of the first campus events introducing the new system to general Davis students.

But we’re getting ahead of the story. The first wave of about 12 UC Davis faculty members road-tested SmartSite this winter and spring, before it was even christened SmartSite, using tools that any instructor in the university can now sign up for as the campus starts rolling out the system for wider use. (It will eventually

re-
The annual ASUCD Excellence in Education Award, presented by the Associated Students of the University of California, Davis, honors faculty nominated by students for superior undergraduate teaching.

The students prize Jones’ commitment to helping students learn better, she said. The evidence includes his extra seminars for students, well-attended office hours, and his efforts to teach faculty how to use technology in the classroom.

“We were particularly impressed by his willingness to meet with students outside class and office hours,” Johnson said. “We also thought it was incredible that he takes the time to teach others how to teach, it is important to share his amazing methods with other faculty, thus influencing all the more students.”

Before you jump in and start practicing, I encourage you to contact our pedagogy and technology consultands at the Teaching Resources Center and IET-Mediaworks. These are highly skilled people who are trained to help faculty deliver exciting teaching programs for all ranges of student groups. They can help move your course materials to SmartSite and deliver the tools so greatly assist collaborative research across our many distributed research groups and programs.

They will help you prepare for what promises to be another milestone in the delivery of education and research at UC Davis.

CONSIDER SWITCHING SOONER IF YOU ...

...are interested in using interactive and collaborative learning tools in your classes.
...consider yourself a self-starter and are comfortable with technology.
...want to build a large question pool or transfer an existing one from MyUCDavis QuizBuilder.
...want to explore ways of enriching your class Web site yourself.
...use GradeBook to record or submit final grades.

CONSIDER SWITCHING LATER IF YOU ...

...use GradeBook in MyUCDavis, which calls its version CERE.
...teach classes without multiple sections.
...consider yourself a self-starter and are comfortable with technology.
...already use online course management tools in MyUCDavis.
...want to build a large question pool or transfer an existing one from MyUCDavis QuizBuilder.
...want to explore ways of enriching your class Web site yourself.
Students!

Even if your instructor won’t be using SmartSite yet, you can still use it for other reasons, explore at smartsite.ucdavis.edu. (One potential reason, for instance, is to help organize a student organization using SmartSite; apply for a site by emailing smartsite-info@ucdavis.edu.)

Researchers!

Some instructors will want to wait for some tools before leaping into SmartSite—but you don’t necessarily have to wait. Explore at smartsite.ucdavis.edu, or apply for a custom worksite by emailing smartsite-info@ucdavis.edu.

Why did you join the pilot?

The pilot was used in Music 10, a very large, extremely popular class in music appreciation. It has been heavily multimedia for 15 years, and has a very high-end, pre-developed existing Web site. It seemed that if the university was going to make this big shift, we needed to be in on the cusp of it.

What did you use SmartSite for?

Half involved adapting pre-existing Web material to fit the Sakai site, and half involved taking advantage of new features. We will try the virtual office hours, and [see] how the music streaming works.

What’s your advice to faculty who haven’t used SmartSite?

Get involved, one way or another. (And) wish one thing at a time. Don’t miss the boat. Don’t get overwhelmed, because it offers so much.
Adding online grading is a sure thing. A plagiarism catcher? That's a maybe.

**WHAT NEXT**

Assuming that SmartSite evolves as planned, the new course management system based on Sakai software will soon offer several tools that it doesn't offer now, and the lineup will keep evolving in the years to come.

“The whole idea is to architect a new system that can keep up with the times,” said Kirk Alexander, program manager for SmartSite. He works in IET-Mediaworks, which helps support SmartSite.

Some early additions will simply complete the initial system. In 2007, UC Davis intends for SmartSite to
- add two important tools that it doesn't yet have this summer—Gradebook (online grading) and QuizBuilder
- (quizzes and tests)
- 
- (it doesn't offer those two features yet because the Sakai versions aren't ready. The campus is introducing 'smartsite anyway because the tools it already offers are useful enough to get some sites started.)
- 
- Further out, the roster of potential features turns more speculative. A tool to catch plagiarism, suggested in a posting on a Sakai collaborative Web site, isn't necessarily something UC Davis will add to SmartSite.

But SmartSite’s basic goals include creating a system that's easy to extend and revise, so that it can keep up with changes in education. The intent, as the years pass, is to retain and update this system, rather than require instructors and other campus employees to learn whole new systems every time the features of an old one hit a dead end.

Ideas for future tools can come from any of the institutions of higher education that are partners on the Sakai project—a group that numbered about 100 as of May. Features that UC Davis will add, Alexander said, include a library interface (a Web page) that people would use to retrieve search results from a library, and eventually an integrated image repository.

New tools, he said, will basically be inspired by whatever the universities decide they need.

“Any user or school, as they respond to their local user’s need, can say, ah, that’s [a feature] we can work on,” Alexander said. “And others might want it too.”

Operationally, the program remains in the early stages at UC Davis, but it's reaching some milestones. This autumn, the School of Veterinary Medicine will be the first school at Davis to use a core version of Sakai—known at Vet Med as CERE, or Collaborative Educational Research Environment—for all of the courses the school teaches.

**COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW OF TOOLS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOOLS</th>
<th>MyUCDavis CURRENT</th>
<th>SmartSite (Sakai) FALL 2006</th>
<th>SmartSite (Sakai) 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANNOUNCEMENTS</td>
<td>Inform site participants of current items of interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSIGNMENTS</td>
<td>Create, distribute, collect, and grade online assignments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAT ROOM</td>
<td>Carry on real-time conversations with worksite participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSSION BOARD</td>
<td>Discus topics in structured public forums and conduct private messaging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DROP BOX</td>
<td>Share documents within private folders between instructors and students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMAIL ARCHIVE</td>
<td>Keep track of course or project site email correspondence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRADEBOOK</td>
<td>Manage grades + submit as final grades</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MODULES</td>
<td>Create ordered content for student review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEWS</td>
<td>Add RSS feeds to your worksite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT SITES</td>
<td>Use SmartSite for other purposes besides teaching (e.g., research collaboration)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUIZ AND SURVEY</td>
<td>Create online assessments and surveys</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESOURCES</td>
<td>Make any kind of materials available online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHEDULE/CALENDAR</td>
<td>Organize and post items in a calendar format</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYLLABUS</td>
<td>Post and maintain your official course outline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEB CONTENT</td>
<td>Choose external Web sites to display within your worksite or point to sites hosted within SmartSite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIKI</td>
<td>Create/contribute to a collaborative editable Web site</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Support for multiple class sections available in 2007

**SmartSite actually improved this quite a bit over MyUCDavis

**Want to learn more? Explore? Sign up?**

For answers to technical questions; general information; to talk to a faculty member who has used Sakai at UC Davis; or to sign up:

Email smartsite-info@ucdavis.edu. They’ll help you from there. You can also check out SmartSite Tech Tips in the support training section of smartsite.ucdavis.edu.

To get some training:

The Summer Institute on Teaching and Technology has scheduled these SmartSite classes on campus this summer: overview, create a site, assignments, resources, tests and quizzes, message center, wikis, and transitioning from MyUCDavis to SmartSite. For details, go to trc.ucdavis.edu/trc.

More workshops are planned this fall. Subjects include organizing your research projects using SmartSite, teaching with SmartSite, and organizing your dissertation using SmartSite. For times and an updated list, go to trc.ucdavis.edu/trc.

To start exploring SmartSite, go to smartsite.ucdavis.edu

---

**JEFF KLEISIK**

Why did you join the pilot?

It just seemed appealing to get my hands on some software that will be better than My_UC_Davis. I would also be getting feedback, so I could feel good about helping shape it for other faculty. Basically, I like computer stuff. I've been using computers since I was an undergraduate [in the 1960s], in physics. But I wouldn't classify myself as a particularly geeky guy, compared to those who are.

What did you use Sakai for?

I used it last quarter in a graduate class in a limited way. The main thing I encouraged students to use is wiki. I already had them writing journals, on paper or by email. So I moved them to a common journal [on the site]. And that worked pretty well. They wrote quite a bit. This quarter, I’ve got a lower division class using it [Introduction to Physics, honors version, about 25 students]. In the past I would’ve used personal Web sites I built. Now that’s over on Sakai. There have been no complaints or unexpected problems [from the students]. Nothing broke. No surprises.

What’s your advice to faculty who haven’t used SmartSite?

That tutorial [pilot users had training during two Fridays in February] helped a lot... And then, to not get overwhelmed by the possibilities. Limit yourself to some tools you and the students can deal with; this makes it much easier to think of other possibilities, once you’ve got one or two tools working OK. Focus on what will help your students learn. If there’s a tool in Sakai that’ll help, use it. If not, don’t use a tool just to use it.

---

**IT TIMES**

technews.ucdavis.edu

The IT Times is published by the Office of the Vice Provost—Information and Educational Technology. It's a free print companion to TechNews, an online source for information and educational tech news available at technews.ucdavis.edu.

IET staffers produce the stories in the Times unless otherwise noted, use of trade or corporation names in the IT Times doesn't equal endorsement by UC Davis, and IT Times articles may be reprinted if the source is quoted and credited accurately.

Layout design by Robin Weir.

The editor is Bill Buchanan. Contact him at wrbuchanan@ucdavis.edu or (530) 757-5797 with ideas, comments or questions

Copyright © 2006, The Regents of the University of California.