Penn State University, with over 95,000 students and 10,000 course sections in the ANGEL Learning Management System (LMS), is faced with selecting a new LMS. This multi-year review and selection process includes looking at a number of replacement products as well as developing a protocol for migrating courses to the new system. During this transition time, strategies are being investigated for reducing the current reliance on ANGEL so the migration will be less time consuming and easier for students, faculty, and staff.

A number of the strategies developed over the past few years at Penn State may be beneficial and replicated by others facing the same decisions and challenges. A primary strategy being implemented to reduce the time and effort related to an LMS transition is the separation of course content from the LMS. One way of accomplishing this is by using open source content management systems such as Plone and Drupal, or by creating a custom system where content is maintained on university servers separate from the LMS system. Another strategy being investigated is to examine other ANGEL tools such as discussions, quizzing, and drop boxes and if possible, moving them to a system outside of the LMS. However, we continue to utilize the LMS for tools such as rostering and the gradebook that are tied to the university’s secure student record system. The presenters will talk about how we have seamlessly integrated the LMS with the open source tools to create a user-friendly interface for the students. They will also share examples of our course design and tools, and discuss best practices in implementing these strategies.