Open Source Best Practices in International Education

Andrew Ilnicki
VCUarts
United States
ilnickiap@vcu.edu

Abstract:

With increasing levels of familiarity and adoption of open source technologies in higher education - new and innovative IT solutions have never been easier to implement. As a result, international partnerships and collaboration in education has never been more attainable. In this session, the presenter will share specific case studies from VCU School of the Arts where open source technologies and social networking tools were leveraged to create a new platform for collaboration, interaction, and communication between international partners. Not only was this strategy successful in creating a model for ongoing coursework and collaboration, it provides a unique learning opportunity for both faculty and students.

Proposal:

My intention is to share with the AACE the following case study in Online Education best practices using open source technologies and social networking tools along side Blackboard and Moodle shell platforms.

With Funding from the VCU Global Education Office, the School of the Arts Department of Art History has begun a collaborative venture with the Department of Art History at the University of Córdoba (UCO) and VCU to offer an innovative undergraduate course on the Islamic Art of Spain.

The purpose of the interaction is to allow the two groups of students to report on what they have learned and participate in asynchronous online discussion or commentary; to post and share photographs; to post, share, and discuss recorded lectures. At the end of the semester, the two groups of students meet in Córdoba for a week to share their research findings and to tour sites they studied in the course such as the Mosque-Cathedral of Córdoba and the archaeological site of Medinat al Zahra. Experts in the field of Islamic art will lead these tours.

The two groups of students interact at various points in the semester using an open source web-based platform that was developed at VCU which integrates with Blackboard (used by VCU) and Moodle (used by UCO) – specific tools used to develop the platform include:
• Wordpress MU – open source CMS and web publishing tool.
• BuddyPress – social networking tools for WordPress powered websites.
• Netvibes – collects resource feeds for coursework.
• Echo360 – video and presentation capture, mapping, and publishing.
• Camtasia Studio – personal video lecture creation, editing, and share.

My proposal is to demystify the process of creating such a platform in an open source environment, while at the same time securing buy-in from the upper administration, faculty, and IT teams involved.