Multiple-section courses, especially those where some consistency of content is desired, offer a special challenge for faculty and students alike. In fall 2008, Seton Hall University launched a University Core Curriculum that includes two common courses that use a course management system in creative ways to prepare faculty and deliver the course. Both courses are taken by all undergraduates at the university, in their first and second year respectively. They are taught by full-time faculty from across the university, in 65 sections of 20 students. The first course, The Journey of Transformation, aims to deliver a common experience to all entering freshmen, which is accomplished by a core set of readings that address "questions central to the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, broadly understood, and also other wisdom traditions." The second course, Christianity and Culture in Dialogue, focuses on Christianity's engagement with cultural others such as Greek philosophy, Jewish and Islamic religious thought, modern science, and modern thinkers such as Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche. All sophomores take this class. Like the first course, faculty work from a common website, syllabus and exam across all sections of the course. Faculty prepare to teach these interdisciplinary courses by participating in an on-line community supported by a Blackboard website with course materials, a wiki, and a blog. During the semester when faculty are teaching the course, a course template replicated across all sections, but also easily adapted, provides a common starting point for the student-faculty learning community. The Journey of Transformation is linked with “University Life,” a required one-credit course, with the same 20 students, as well as their Freshmen Mentor and a Peer Advisor. As an element in University Life, students create a digital portfolio of their first semester experiences.

This roundtable will briefly present the Blackboard course template that is replicated into the 65 sections of the course, and will focus on the use of a wiki syllabus as a means of providing a common starting point for the course, while also making it easy for individual instructors to tailor the course to their particular section. The presentation will include a brief overview of some of the other elements being used to provide a common experience. We will also show several versions of the wiki as developed by individual faculty for their own sections. The rest of the session will be devoted to small-group discussions where attendees will be able to ask questions about this approach and brainstorm ways they might use this approach on their own campuses. This application is worth considering for any multi-section course, but especially those taught by a diverse group of faculty, such as courses taught by large numbers of adjuncts. If there is time, we will also consider how other elements of the course website can be useful for the delivery of a large common course. These include the use of SafeAssign antiplagiarism software for common essay assignments, the journal/blog tool for informal writing, and the grade center, which sets up the common grading scheme for the course. Finally, we will discuss assessment strategies and how assessment results can be used for ongoing course development.