



IMS Campus Case Study

Louisiana Community & Technical College System Online



LCTCSOnline
An initiative of the Louisiana Community
& Technical College System
Changing Lives, Creating Futures

IMS Global Learning Consortium helps Louisiana Community & Technical College System Online as it develops portable online programs in an open source environment

In 2008, the [Louisiana Community and Technical College System](#) launched an online initiative with two strategic objectives in mind: to ensure the state's residents have access to all of the resources the system has to offer, and to serve as a catalyst for further uniting the online objectives of Louisiana's 16 public two-year institutions.

"LCTCSOnline is the president's initiative to bring together all of the e-learning resources and programming into one central location," said Dr. Robert Johnson, Executive Director of the initiative. "It was created to do two things: to deliver courses online more efficiently, and address the quality issue. We can assure high quality programming."

There currently are 63 general education courses available online with one full degree available in the liberal arts. Johnson said LCTCSOnline is expanding into other areas of instruction and has a current enrollment of about 700 students. Each of the system's colleges also offers online programs. Students enrolled in LCTCSOnline courses must affiliate with one of the residential colleges in order to receive credit.

A primary challenge for LCTCSOnline is to establish standardization among the 16 colleges' hardware platforms and software applications. The system recently chose to consolidate all of the colleges on SunGard Higher Education's Banner ERP system. "There also are issues around course numbering and common course descriptions, competencies and so forth that are required for an e-learning program," said Johnson. "To participate in this online initiative, colleges have to come to certain collaborative agreements."

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– Dr. Robert Johnson, Executive Director of LCTCSONline

Early in 2010, LCTCSONline made the decision to move from its proprietary course management system (CMS) to an open source platform. “I’ll never forget the moment when we sat around the table and someone said, ‘We can either remain in a proprietary environment, spend a lot of money doing it, and continue to feel frustrated, or we can join a worldwide community of innovators,’” added Johnson. “At that point, we all realized we needed to be in open source. We also needed to make sure that we made all of our content portable.”

Johnson said once the decision was made to move to an open source environment, they realized the thing they did not have was time and money. “We needed to innovate quickly and at the least possible cost. Frankly, we needed a CMS to do what we needed it to do and that was manage the learning process and not just have a system in which to place things. We needed guidance through what we realized could be a quagmire of open source. You’re in an environment that is open and there are many different paths that you can take. One can become disorganized very quickly. We were looking for an association that could help guide us through the process.”

LCTCSONline turned to [IMS Global Learning Consortium](#) for guidance and support in migrating to an open source environment as well as ensuring that all content offered through the system met standardized guidelines. IMS Global is a global, nonprofit, member association providing leadership in shaping and growing the learning and educational technology industries through collaborative support of standards, innovation, best practice, and recognition of superior learning impact.

IMS Global supported LCTCSONline once it chose to use the open source platform Moodle as its CMS. “We also were looking for IMS to help facilitate dialogue between us and other member organizations with similar experiences like the Tennessee Board of Regents. Both of those things, migration to Moodle and involvement with other organizations through IMS, I’m pleased to say, is happening.”

LCTCSONline has exclusively used [Pearson Course Content](#) to populate its offerings. With IMS Global assistance, the system moved content from e-College, which it had used previously, into Common Cartridge in order to ensure the information could be accessed and utilized through a variety of hardware and software applications. Introduced by IMS Global in 2007, Common Cartridge enables the integration of digital content with stand-alone learning tools, such as adaptive tutors or assessment engines, creating a seamless learning experience for both students and teachers.

Johnson said in addition to determining where future course content will come from and how it will scale, LCTCOnline is interested in applying textbook ancillaries to its offerings, such as gaming, testing, simulations and assessment tools. IMS Global has been instrumental, he said, in helping the system identify and adopt applications that meet interoperability standards.

“We want to be able to grow our enrollments quickly because Louisiana is last among the Southern Regional Education Board members in terms of online participation,” he said. “And we want to make sure we are continuing to innovate, open-entry learning, such as getting rid of the semester system. Learning needs to happen all the time. Open-entry, individualized learning is the direction in which we need to be heading.”

Through the IMS Campus program, Johnson said he looks forward to working with publishers and peer institutions to address the challenge of integrating publisher-provided learning applications with other learning management systems in order to provide a more robust online environment. Accepting common standards, he added, opens the door for more collaboration while, at the same time, encouraging uniqueness among offerings.

“As a relatively new member of IMS Global, we have already realized great benefits,” he added. “Those benefits have primarily been in the form of excellent guidance and advice as well as enabling us to become more connected with other organizations like us. Even before we became a member, the fact that we were able to go and talk with content providers like Pearson using IMS language was helpful in getting our Common Cartridges built. IMS knows the right questions to ask. For those who know of it, IMS Global is a very important organization and I think its value to education is going to continue to be elevated.”