

## The Three Ws: WebCT, the World Wide Web, and Washburn University Online Education Options at WU

Washburn University faculty members who are new to the world of online education may be unfamiliar with the different options available to them and the pros and cons of each. This brief document will outline some of those differences.

### Three Approaches to Online Education

#### *The Web*

In these days of the Internet, many faculty members have taken advantage of the World Wide Web to make certain information easily accessible to all students. Some instructors include their curricula vitae, office hours, and answers to common questions. An Online Syllabus tool allows instructors from every department to create, edit, and post their syllabi online.

#### *WebCT*

Washburn University has a course management system called WebCT. This system enables e-learning through blended courses (students meet on campus but also use WebCT) or fully online courses (students do not meet face to face) for a variety of subjects. This area is linked to MyWashburn, so it is a secure area in which instructors and students can interact. WebCT offers a number of tools such as Quizzes, Surveys, Assignments, Discussions, Mail, Calendar, Syllabus, Chat, and Content Modules. A protected WebCT area helps define a virtual "classroom," which is handy when dealing with issues like copyright Fair Use and the Teach Act.

The graphical interface is a little different at first, but most faculty members begin creating their online courses after two short training sessions. Students and faculty can access online courses through the MyCourses tab within MyWashburn. This area also includes links to WU WebCT Support, Faculty Resource Guide (self paced training) and a self-guided online Student Orientation.

#### *MyWashburn Course Homepages*

Faculty and students who access the MyWashburn portal will find a variety of news and information at their disposal. In addition to offering personal e-mail, calendaring, and group features, MyWashburn also offers faculty members a chance to use basic online communication tools to keep in touch with students outside of the classroom. These tools include: Class Links, E-mail, Bulletin Boards, Chat, and a Calendar.

All on-campus courses not designated as WebCT-assisted will have access to MyWashburn Course Homepages. These tools can be especially useful in Web-assisted (or "blended") courses that combine traditional on-campus teaching with online resources.

## Maximizing Web Resources

Various approaches to online education all have different benefits. WebCT and MyWashburn offer password-protected areas. Conversely, the Web is accessible to anyone. MyWashburn offers a simple set of tools that are easy to learn, while WebCT offers a more robust set of tools that offer a classroom environment online. The following highlights the pros and cons of each.

### **The Web**

**Pros:** Accessible without a password to the whole world. More flexible to alternate forms of content (such as Flash or Shockwave). The Online Syllabus tool allows easy creation of an electronic syllabus available to all students.

**Cons:** Accessible without a password to the WHOLE WORLD! Knowledge of HTML (a Web authoring language) is required.

**Recommendation:** Use the Web only to post syllabi and other general public information. Course materials should never be posted to the Web.

### **WebCT**

**Pros:** Password-protected environment. Many tools for student assessment and evaluation. Relatively easy use with training. Cross-listed courses can be combined into one large course within WebCT to minimize duplication efforts. Great for a fully online course.

**Cons:** Requires training or previous experience with online courses. HTML is not required, but very handy.

**Recommendation:** Use WebCT to take advantage of the TEACH Act and Fair Use guidelines in the US Copyright Code. This is the best solution for posting course materials, including assignments and quizzes.

### **MyWashburn Course Homepages**

**Pros:** Password-protected environment. Easy access to communication tools.

**Cons:** No control over the look and feel. Limited tools compared to WebCT.

**Recommendation:** Use MyWashburn Course Tools for Web-assisted on-campus courses. Ideal for a little extra contact with students outside the classroom or to store files normally printed and handed out during class time.

## For More Information

To access the Web sites referenced in this document, please refer to the addresses below:

**Washburn University on the Web:** <http://www.washburn.edu/>

**WU Online Education:** <http://www.washburn.edu/online-education/>

**MyWashburn:** <http://my.washburn.edu/>

**Online Syllabus Tool:** <http://www.washburn.edu/online-syllabi/>

For more information on these tools, please contact the person(s) designated below:

**World Wide Web:** Eileen Brouddus, webmaster ([eileen.brouddus@washburn.edu](mailto:eileen.brouddus@washburn.edu))

**Online Syllabus Tool:** Bill Bunten, programmer ([bill.bunten@washburn.edu](mailto:bill.bunten@washburn.edu))

**WebCT or MyWashburn Course Homepages:** [webtech@washburn.edu](mailto:webtech@washburn.edu)

**WebCT Training:** Stuart Murphy, WebTech ([stuart.murphy@washburn.edu](mailto:stuart.murphy@washburn.edu)) or [www.washburn.edu/its/seminars/webct.html](http://www.washburn.edu/its/seminars/webct.html))

**WU WebCT Support:** [webtech@washburn.edu](mailto:webtech@washburn.edu) or [www.washburn.edu/its/webct](http://www.washburn.edu/its/webct)