

EMPOWER in the Online Course Environment

INTRODUCTION

Colleges large and small are offering online course content as a vital part of their programs. A great deal of research and development effort has been done to create effective pedagogical practices and systems to make distance learning effective and rewarding. EMPOWER fits well into this environment as it offers a quality administrative “front end” for online courses and interfaces with content systems to make them seamless with the on-campus program.

EMPOWER WEB SELF-SERVICE

The Web Self Service Module is the starting point for online course support. This element of the system brings administrative tasks to the computer desktop of your students and faculty—registration, rosters, grading, email contact, billing, and so forth; all of them being fully supported. A unique feature of the Web Module is its direct connection to the full academic database and the variables, business rules, and administrative policies of the institution.

In this environment, activity on the Web is identical to the functions performed in the office. Registration schedules, holds, requisites, seat counts, tuition, fees, advising and other requirements are upheld. Grading and evaluation are placed directly into the database and can be immediately accessed by students thus eliminating extra steps and inquiries.

EMPOWER’s prospective student inquiry and application system provides a completely flexible tool for non-technical users to create any number of unique forms for the Web to meet any need. Special forms can be set up for individual programs, terms, degrees, etc. at your convenience. In every case, data collected goes directly into the proper positions in the admissions data structure to enable full processing through your procedures, tracks, response practices and so forth.

Note: Web features and access are controlled by the policies and procedures of the institution. All user access is enabled through the login and password system. Final posting of any Web-based data capture is subject to your review and approval.

EMPOWER'S CALENDAR FLEXIBILITY

EMPOWER supports completely flexible term calendaring. The academic year can be set up in any way you wish. Terms can overlap, be of any length, contain unlimited numbers of sessions, include unique financial conditions, etc. Cohort groups and rolling schedules are easily set up. There are virtually no limits. Term characteristics are easily rolled over to create other similar terms with no re-keying of information. This flexibility is of prime importance in online course delivery where traditional definitions of semesters are of no use.

EMPOWER also supports the concept of non-scheduled or rolling registration for those online environments where there are no fixed terms or where classes begin at enrollment. This feature provides for any length of class duration, expected and actual completion dates, and extensions.

INTERFACE BETWEEN EMPOWER AND LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

The standard interfaces provided by Blackboard, WebCT, Angel, Sakai and other common course delivery systems are supported by EMPOWER. For the most part, this interface consists of transferring complete roster information from EMPOWER to your content system and returning grading and evaluation data back to EMPOWER.

MOODLE is supported in the EMPOWER environment by a set of extracts and loads which transfers registration information to the LMS then moves grades and attendance information from it to the student information system. This structure enables MOODLE users to take full advantage of MOODLE's open-source flexibility.

Course sections designated as distance learning are set up with the identifiers, fees, and other conditions that make them unique.

