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NU Information Technology Announces Major Upgrade to Course Management System

Increased flexibility and navigability are key aspects of NU's Blackboard-based Course Management System (CMS, known also in the past as CourseInfo) that will be made available to faculty as of June 24.

The enhanced version provides timed release of content, a more customizable interface, and areas for students and instructors to maintain personal notes. One instructor who has seen the new version in test commented, "I tried it out and it worked like a charm. I love the interface! I'd say the sooner we can get it, the better."

Instructors will be able to set dates for automatically "revealing" and "hiding" different kinds of documents they create; students will not be able to view the hidden documents until the scheduled date arrives. Instructors will also be able to work on course sites and keep them inaccessible to students until such time as the instructor is ready to make course material available.

When faculty log into the CMS Web site at http://courses.northwestern.edu, they will be able to view all the courses they are currently teaching. A default entry point can be set by faculty for their course material; the new interface clearly displays a user's current location within a course site from links on the top of each page.

The CMS "home" page displays a list of courses in which that user is participating and offers a number of helpful links and features including a note pad, search engine, student-related and faculty-related calendars, and up-to-date news links. A sidebar has links to tools such as course-related announcements, Plan-It Purple, the Web Email Gateway and Ph.

An instructor using the Course Management System for the first time will have the opportunity to explore the interface and consider the system's potential for contributing to his/her teaching without having to first request that a course site be created.

NUIT is also working actively to develop additional learning tools that can be embedded within the Course Management System.

To access the CMS Web site, go to http://courses.northwestern.edu. For additional information about NU's Course Management System, see http://course-management.northwestern.edu.