

UC DAVIS INTRODUCES

SMARTSITE ucdavis.edu

TEACH, LEARN, WORK—together.

Editor's note: Familiar with HyperText? Well, this issue is different. Instead of covering a range of tech topics, this special issue is dedicated to SmartSite, a set of new online collaboration tools available to UC Davis students and instructors this fall.

Are you sick of jumping from site to site, obsessively checking MySpace, then hopping to DavisWiki.org, only to realize you've neglected Facebook for a week? Meanwhile, you're probably trying to dodge thousands of instant messages popping up all over your desktop while checking your homework on MyUCDavis, right?

Technology is revolutionizing our lives, if not sometimes making us dizzy. But imagine cutting through the chaos and condensing all of these academic, collaborative, and social networking tools into one, convenient, easy-to-manage location, accessible anywhere via the Internet. Imagine managing your class schedules, assignments, club meetings, band gigs,

*"I really enjoy the idea of SmartSite being open-source. We can keep building new and innovative tools, while improving the ones we already have."
— Andy, student, political science*

and esoteric nightly chats from a single portal.

For students at Davis this opportunity is right around the bend, thanks to SmartSite, the newest set of course management and collaboration tools to hit campus since MyUCDavis.

Students can use SmartSite to host

Web sites, plan events, share files with friends and classmates, form social networks, organize student groups and clubs, host online study sessions, collaborate on creative projects, and create research groups—all from the same system where you download your syllabus, review your grades or check your class schedules.

(continued on page 4)



WHY GO HERE, THERE, and BACK AGAIN

SmartSite houses many features under one roof

Facebook, DavisWiki, MySpace, and AOL Instant Messenger are fun and handy, and most Davis students use them; but imagine having tools similar to these packed neatly into a single site. And imagine that information for your UC Davis classes is also tucked away in the same location, so you no longer have to scrounge around for your syllabi, test schedules and practice quizzes.

Thanks to SmartSite, this vision is close to coming true.

FACEBOOK

In SmartSite, as with Facebook, you'll be able to keep in touch with friends, stay current with a calendar tool, track email, and upload pictures to share. And, just like

Facebook's My Messages tool, SmartSite comes with a Message Center tool.

Want to write on someone's wall? Why not write on their wiki instead?

Many Facebook users like to organize into Facebook groups. For example, as of early June The California Aggie group had 101 members and the Lamar Heystek for Mayor of Davis group had 366. A fencing group had 60.

With SmartSite, you can create your own groups (known as "project sites"). You'll have the Facebook features you're used to—group information, contact info, photos, recent announcements, and discussion boards—but you'll get more features as well, like wikis, chat rooms, etc.

You'll save time by not hopping from site to site.

DAVISWIKI

Familiar with DavisWiki or Wikipedia? SmartSite has its own wiki that you're free to use.

You can design these editable Web sites with your friends. (Apply for your own project site by emailing smartsite-info@ucdavis.edu and filling out a "Project Site request form.") When your site is activated, you could use the wiki to collaborate on a short story with a friend, or co-write a group essay.

Instructors will also have the wiki tool. If your instructors use SmartSite, they can activate the wiki for the whole class, making it possible for everyone in the class to collaborate with classmates from *(continued on page 2)*



DIGGING IN DEEP: STUDENT EXCITEMENT GROWS

Davis Honors Challenge participants try SmartSite

After intense research and hands-on experience, Davis Honors Challenge students Tim Fullman, Venessa Laurel, Deepak Koilvaram and Bukky Oseni-Olalemi have not only placed their stamp of approval on UC Davis' SmartSite, but are happy to hear that the course management system they tested and recommended will arrive on campus this year.

Among other features, the four-year honors program gives highly motivated students a chance to work on projects together. This year the students were asked to research and evaluate SmartSite before it was released to the campus community. Would students find the system valuable? That was the key question.

The honors students decided that—instead of simply researching SmartSite's academic applications and doing interviews—they would also use the SmartSite tools to document their research, communicate with each other, and collaborate on their presentations. In a sense, the success of their project relied partly on the usefulness and reliability of the SmartSite tools they used to organize it.

The results were more than promising. The team envisions a keen future for SmartSite. They see a potential to bring together clubs, extracurricular activities, classwork, tests and discussion into a single environment.

"SmartSite bridges a gap," said Oseni-Olalemi. "It makes learning easier and more enjoyable at the same time."

"Student groups should pay attention to what SmartSite can do for them," Laurel said.

As a result of their findings, UC Davis now plans to let students apply for their own worksites on a first-come, first-served basis. Students in study groups, clubs, and even classes at the Experimental College may apply for their own site on SmartSite.

The honors students were glad to hear that the tools would not be restricted to classes. They liked the idea of graduate students, for example, using SmartSite to organize dissertations.

Applying for a site is fairly straightforward. Interested students email smartsite-info@ucdavis.edu, complete a request form, and name someone to take responsibility for the site.

Overall, the honors students came away with high hopes, but emphasized that students will play an important role in encouraging their instructors to jump on the SmartSite boat. Students can do that by showing professors how the tools can support teaching and learning, both in and out of the classroom.

"Instructors really do care about their students, and through feedback, you can make a difference in how your instructors teach and the resources they provide," said Fullman. He hopes more instructors will offer SmartSite as a standard class resource starting this fall.

Fear of change "may at first make the campus community hesitant to adopt a new system," he said. "However, SmartSite is very easy to learn. . . I would strongly urge users not to avoid it just because it is new."

Laurel believes SmartSite is powerful because it will evolve. (The system is based on Sakai, an open-source educational software system developed by a partnership of about 100 universities and other institutions of higher education. Partners can work on improvements as they see fit.) Students and faculty can customize the system according to their needs; new tools will be released, and innovative new uses for existing tools discovered.

"Faculty members are the gateways to knowledge, and students want to learn," Laurel said. "[SmartSite] is a tool to bridge the two together." ■

(Here, There and Back Again -continued from page 1)

any computer with Internet access.

You could even work the wiki together on the quad, if you have a laptop with a wireless connection.

MYSPACE

Some students love MySpace, while others think it's a viral epidemic. Even if you hate it, you've got to admit that the MySpace tools are useful. SmartSite will offer many of the same functions.

Keep friends and classmates up to date by using the announcements tool. Your messages will appear right on the front page for all to see.

Want to share funny or useful Web links? Pull outside Web resources directly into a SmartSite site by using the Web content tool. Just provide a URL, and the tool automatically creates a button for you! If you know how to build Web sites, you can upload and link to your own HTML files.

And if you're not into coding but still like the idea of designing your own pages, with distinct images, colors, links, and content, you can use the WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) editor on the modules tool. This baby allows you to build all sorts of useful Web content without knowing HTML.

Perhaps you're more of the communication guru. Yes, you like the social networking aspects of MySpace. Well, SmartSite has many of MySpace's communication features, and then some. For example, you can host study sessions

in a chat room, argue your views on discussion boards, create mailing lists, add news feeds, and participate in the fast and loose wiki environment.

AOL INSTANT MESSENGER

Instant Messenger is popular. Still, do you ever find this tool a tad distracting? All the blinking messages and pop-ups can get irritating when you're trying to work on a paper.

SmartSite has a chat feature that's less intrusive and more flexible. With the chat room tool, you can chat with multiple people at the same time. What's more, all of your chat logs are saved automatically for later review. Go back and check them from any online computer.

Don't need certain messages? Only want to save one? Simply delete the unwanted ones. ■

APPLY

for a SmartSite Project Site

Research project?

Study group?

Club?

This summer, you can apply for a Project Site by sending your request to smartsite-info@ucdavis.edu. Spots limited.

0100100101010001010101011100100001010100001010111010100001101011010101010101001101110

COMPARING THE TOOLS

TOOLS	MyUCDavis CURRENT	SmartSite (Sakai) FALL 2006	2007
ANNOUNCEMENTS Inform site participants of current items of interest	✓	✓	✓
ASSIGNMENTS Create, distribute, collect, and grade online assignments	✓	✓*	✓
CHAT ROOM Carry on real-time conversations with worksite participants	✓	✓	✓
DISCUSSION BOARD Discuss topics in structured public forums and conduct private messaging	✓	✓	✓
DROP BOX Share documents within private folders between instructors and students		✓	✓
EMAIL ARCHIVE Keep track of course or project site email correspondence	✓	✓	✓
GRADEBOOK Manage grades and submit final grades	✓		✓
MODULES Create ordered content for student use		✓	✓
NEWS Add news (RSS) feeds to your worksite	✓	✓	✓
PROJECT SITES Use SmartSite for other purposes besides teaching (e.g., research collaboration)		✓	✓
QUIZ AND SURVEY Create online assessments and surveys	✓		✓
RESOURCES Make digital materials available online	✓	✓**	✓**
SCHEDULE/CALENDAR Organize and post items in a calendar format	✓	✓	✓
SYLLABUS Post and maintain your course outline	✓	✓	✓
WEB CONTENT Choose external Web sites to display within your worksite or point to sites hosted within SmartSite		✓	✓
WIKI Create/contribute to a collaborative, editable Web site		✓	✓

*Support for multiple class sections available in 2007

**SmartSite actually improves this quite a bit over MyUCDavis

OPEN SOURCE SUPPORTS *the future of SmartSite:*

Add-ons. Enhancements. The works.

The wiki and chat rooms are open for business. A tool to catch plagiarism? That's merely a maybe. But, assuming that SmartSite hits its goals, the new course management system will soon offer Davis students several tools that it doesn't offer now—and the lineup will keep evolving in the years to come. That's by design.

"The whole idea is to architect a new system that can keep up with the times," said Kirk Alexander, program manager for SmartSite at the university. (SmartSite is based on the Sakai open-source software system.)

Some early add-ons simply complete the initial Davis system—inserting a more powerful editor in the wiki, for instance, to handle advanced math equations. That's expected this fall.

Further out, the lineup of potential features turns more speculative. A plagiarism catcher, suggested by some Sakai developers, isn't necessarily something UC Davis will add here.

But ideas that Sakai programmers are considering at various universities involve some pretty cool stuff, such as:

- An easy-to-use utility to set up audio or video conferences.
- An on-screen whiteboard that users can share simultaneously.
- An advanced music player able to cue easily to precise parts of a song—to help a student learn, say, about tempo.

Ideas for future tools can come from any of the universities and education groups that are collaborating on the Sakai Project—a group that numbered about 100 as of May.

Features that UC Davis might add, Alexander said, include an image repository and a library interface that people would use to retrieve search results from a library.

"The SakaiLibrary tool will allow students [and] faculty to search for images or references from the library and paste them directly into the built-in editor on Sakai sites," Alexander said. He hopes the tool will go live in spring 2007.

New tools will basically be inspired by whatever the universities decide they need.

"Any user or school, as they respond to their local users' need, can say, 'ah, that's [a feature] we can work on,'" Alexander said. "And others might want it too."

Jesse Davis, a senior in music/art studio, would like to see SmartSite boost its integration of student-to-student communication features. He'd also like students to gain the ability to personalize their own home pages—put pictures on them if they want—and would like to see Gecko mail (the campus e-mail system) incorporated into SmartSite.

He'd love to have a calendar-access box, next to the email screen, that students could use to quickly enter new items into their personal calendars. If a friend wrote asking to meet at the Silo at 6, Davis could type the time and place into the box and have it automatically update his calendar.

Operationally, the program remains in the early stages at UC Davis, but it's hitting some milestones. This autumn, the School of Veterinary Medicine will be the first school at Davis to use a core version of SmartSite—known at VetMed as CERE, or Collaborative Educational Research Environment—for all of the courses the school teaches. ■

BE SMART

make a difference

GET A JOB AS AN **ET PARTNER**

Help faculty with educational technology

Earn good money.

Work flexible hours.

Get specialized training.

Develop marketable skills.

Work on real-life projects.

APPLY TODAY!

etpartners.ucdavis.edu/app/students/index.htm

(Introducing SmartSite - continued from page 1)

By adopting SmartSite, the university hopes to make it easier for students to learn both in and out of the classroom. Students will be able to use the same resources for both academic and extracurricular activities.

SmartSite is designed to grow and evolve. It uses the Sakai system,

an open-source application with roots at the University of Michigan and Indiana University. Today about 100 institutions of higher education are working together on Sakai with the goal of designing the most intuitive, feature-rich tools available.

Earlier this year, students and instructors across campus volunteered to test the tools and suggest improvements.

These righteous technophiles are battle-

testing the application in advance of SmartSite's full rollout.

So when is this thing coming? More faculty are trying it each quarter. More tools will be available in 2007. For another year or two after that, the existing MyUCDavis course management tools will run in tandem with SmartSite tools, giving people time to switch. Eventually the course management tools in MyUCDavis will retire.

So far, SmartSite does not yet have the Gradebook and QuizBuilder tools that can fully meet instructors' needs, so some instructors are waiting to join. But students can hop onto the system now. SmartSite has plenty of other tools ready to go—making this summer and fall a good time for folks to start playing with the system to learn what it can do. ■

"I'd like to use SmartSite for my dance team. Without an option like this, I was forced to make a Web site myself. With SmartSite, my dancers could just hop on, get announcements, and chat!"

— Natasha, student, electrical engineering

hypertext

is written and designed by students and published by the Office of the Vice Provost of Information and Educational Technology.

Layout and design: Robin Weir
Graphics: Robin Weir, George Suarez
Stories: Stephanie Polizzi, IET staff

Contact us: ietpubsjr@ucdavis.edu
For more student computing information, visit scg.ucdavis.edu.