

IWebfolio versus Course Management Tools

Summary by Amanda Hepler

Course management tools (CMTs) are designed as an online forum, enabling instructors and students to interact while involved in an online course. Instructors are able to make specific resources in a course, such as readings, tests or discussions, available to students for a limited time only or after some prerequisite is achieved. Some software allows for online chat discussions between the instructor and the students, as well as online discussion boards. These discussion boards act as forum where the instructor can assign and receive homework assignments and simply make important announcements to the entire course. Online grades are generally available for the courses, and are student specific.

These CMTs are quite different from the iWebfolio software available from NuVentive. IWebfolio contains many more features, and is designed for the individual, not designed for a particular course. In fact, it doesn't even necessarily need to be used in the educational setting. IWebfolio can be defined as a digital portfolio management system, which provides an individual with the ability to store, organize, modify, and selectively control personal information displayed to "third parties." A student could potentially use their iWebfolio for their entire educational career, to provide various functions. It is not limited to providing a forum for student-instructor interaction in one course. It was designed not only for students, but anyone needing to create an online portfolio for others to see. As an educational tool, it allows faculty an opportunity to review portfolios, provide feedback, search, or to extract assessment information. IWebfolio can also be useful for University Assessment Users, University Admissions, University Placement offices, Web resume companies, Corporate HR offices, and Employment recruiters. The key features of iWebfolio are:

- 1) Users create portfolios based upon templates or their own designs. (The templates can be created by an instructor, to permit usage as an online course tool.)
- 2) The User grants permission to Reviewers for access to the portfolios.
- 3) Reviewers can electronically provide feedback to the users.
- 4) Institutions can gather the evidence they need to demonstrate institutional effectiveness.

In summary, iWebfolio is a much more dynamic tool than the available CMTs. It can provide all of the same functions of CMTs, and much more. In an educational institution setting, the iWebfolio can be used for student evaluation at the course level, course evaluation at the department level, and overall university assessment at the institution level. In a non-educational setting, employees of a company could use iWebfolio as a tool to demonstrate achievements within the company. Also individuals looking for employment could make use of this software to provide future employers online access to resumes, examples of prior work, publications, etc.