

ENHANCING TEACHING & LEARNING WITH SHAREPOINT: A CONSORTIUM APPROACH TO SHOWCASE DEVELOPMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

If this is the first time you are hearing about the Higher Education Consortium, welcome!

This is a program that is being designed based on feedback received from multiple Higher Education institutions over the last few years. Its focus is to enable New and Innovative Workflows in Higher Education. New and Innovative Workflows can span the gamut from enabling next generation Student Collaboration to Service Oriented Architectures.

We believe that the consortium could be a vehicle for Microsoft and the Higher Education community to collaboratively transform ideas that have been gestating into real tangible solutions. The consortium becomes a venue for the community to debate and validate ideas. **Validated concepts become the feedback mechanism for future Microsoft products and investments.**

Any consortium has legs only if it can prove that it can deliver tangible results. As such, a small set of projects around student and classroom collaboration have been identified with a delivery timeframe of Late November / Early December 2007.

In the next few weeks, we will be collecting and consolidating specifications for these projects. We need your help in reviewing and driving successful outcomes for these projects. All projects directed by the consortium will be made available as Shared Source Code for the benefit of all Higher Education institutions. As these projects are delivered, we will look to the consortium to **advise on the next phase of effort.**

The consortium will consist of 4 Boards so that peers can collaborate with one another and Microsoft on these projects. They are the following:

1. Community Colleges Board
2. Independent Colleges Board
3. Research Universities Board
4. State Universities Board

If you wish to participate in any of these boards, please send email to hsc@microsoft.com.

INTRODUCTION

Microsoft SharePoint Services and Portal Server were introduced about 5 years ago to the corporate and educational marketplace. Since then, almost every Higher Education institution has at least one department that has deployed SharePoint on campus.

The usage of SharePoint in a Higher Education setting spans a wide spectrum from a web site where faculty and administrators collaborate on documents to a campus dashboard. It can be said though that most deployments, with some exceptions, have focused on simple portal or document repositories for faculty and administrators. This wide deployment of SharePoint Portal solutions has also created a set of IT experts in Higher Education who are extremely knowledgeable on the setup and deployment of a SharePoint-based Intranet.

Not only are these experts well versed about the inner workings of SharePoint, they have been very successful and in deploying SharePoint cost effectively on their campuses. Armed with this expertise and low platform acquisition costs and cost of ownership, Higher Education administrators have expressed great interest in leveraging their SharePoint investments and capabilities further into the Student Collaboration space.

Many institutions have approached Microsoft asking for solutions that would enable the SharePoint platform to support faculty/student collaboration as well as specific course activities. A number of Higher Education institutions, on their own initiative and expense, have developed additional SharePoint capabilities (e.g. MyClasses web parts, Assignment Drop Box, Student Online Activity Tracker, etc.). Furthermore, they have provided these web parts in a shared-source environment, allowing other institutions to take advantage of these resources. However, for SharePoint adoption to increase, there are other critical capabilities necessary to enhance the value proposition for higher education administrators.

THE NEXT GENERATION STUDENT COLLABORATION

The objectives of this showcase project are two-fold. First, it is designed to address missing, but critical, teaching and learning work roles and second, it is intended to jumpstart the collaborative process for using SharePoint as the development platform for the next generation Higher Education Collaboration system.

In order to achieve the first objective, the most frequently requested work roles enabled by SharePoint will be addressed. These include:

- An Integrated Grade Book Web Part/Web Service
- Integrate the Testing Functionality from the SharePoint Learning Kit; fill in any gaps required for Higher Education community to utilize it as an Online Testing Platform
- Migration of existing web parts (e.g. MyClasses Web Part, Assignment Drop Box, Student Activity Tracker) to Microsoft Office SharePoint Server (MOSS) 2007

In order to achieve the second objective, it is proposed that the development of these additions to SharePoint be accomplished through a collaborative effort between Microsoft, several community colleges, several four year universities and at least one outside vendor. Such collaboration should not only provide a robust set of web parts for SharePoint, but it also should help us to be closely tuned to the needs of the higher education community.

Higher Education institution Chief Information Officers and Chief Academic Officers have on more than one occasion communicated how some of the components within the SharePoint Suite make it attractive for Student Collaboration.

Some capabilities that were articulated are as follows (excerpted and adapted from Microsoft SharePoint 2007 Feature Comparison):

Collaboration: *Help keep teams connected and productive by providing easy access to the people, documents. Windows SharePoint technologies support collaboration and community, document life cycle capabilities, alerts, task notifications, Really Simple Syndication (RSS), the basic Web-based user interface, and navigation. It also comes with in-built Wikis and Blogs.*

Search: *The search component has been significantly enhanced. The new features provide a consistent and familiar search experience, increased relevance of search results, new functions to search for people and expertise, ability to index and search data in applications, and improved manageability and extensibility make it extremely useful for Higher Education.*

Enterprise Content Management: *Windows SharePoint Services provides core document management functionality: major and minor versioning, check-in/check-out document locking, rich descriptive metadata, workflow, content type-based policies, auditing, and role-based-access controls at the document library, folder, and individual document levels.*

SharePoint is also an extensible platform. New applications can be built and “plugged-in” to the portal as **web parts** extremely easily.

Quite a large a body of web parts has already been created by administrators, educators and students for Higher Education.

For example, Washington State University has a student competition that awards \$1000 to the student who creates the most compelling and useful web part(s) that supports Teaching and Learning. The Microsoft Education Products Team has created web parts to deliver Online Testing over the web through the SharePoint Learning Kit.

The Higher Education Solutions Collaborative (www.hsc-community.org) has created a set of web parts for classroom collaboration.

Some of the existing web parts perform the following functions:

- MyClasses Web Part/Web Service – provides students a view into the classes that they have signed up on the portal; the portal link allows them to go directly into their class portal site
- Assignment Drop Box – enable students to submit assignments so that only their professors see their work
- Student Activity Tracker – allows professors to monitor student progress in the course; professors receive statistics on student online participation
- Threaded Discussions
- Class Calendar Web Part – allows the class to view their due dates of class assignments and projects

The above web parts are available as Shared Source code for anyone to use.

It should be noted that the list above, represents only a small sample of the body work that is available to Higher Education today. These web parts have been developed somewhat organically to-date.

The Consortium is meant to deliver a focal point for not only the body of work that exists today but as a springboard for a streamlined worldwide Higher Education collaboration working in concert to build the next generation Class Collaboration experience.

DELIVERING THROUGH MANY SMALL PROJECT WINS

The Consortium is going to be only as useful as the value it can deliver to its members.

As such, the team is looking at clear wins on a small set of projects on the outset. To achieve that goal, the team is looking at delivering its first set of projects by the end of November, in time for Winter Quarter deployments.

The following is a sample of projects that have been earmarked for investments in this first phase:

- An Integrated Grade Book Web Service
- Integrate the Testing Functionality from the SharePoint Learning Kit; fill in any gaps required for Higher Education community to utilize it as an Online Testing Platform
- Publisher Content Integration (allows content from McGraw Hill as an example to be loaded and viewed within SharePoint)
- Migration of existing web parts/services (e.g. MyClasses Web Part, Assignment Drop Box, and Student Activity Tracker) to Microsoft Office SharePoint Server (MOSS) 2007.

The above list is by no means the final list that the Consortium can be expected to deliver on. It is meant as a starter list to consolidate some of the feedback we have already received.

Any worldwide initiative such as this Consortium needs the active feedback and participation from the community at large. This is where the Higher Education Community at large comes in. In addition the investments that will be made, we need your help on a number of fronts!

TIMELINE

Below is a rough timeline of the first phase deliverables:

Date	Deliverable
July	Collect and consolidate existing specifications from institutions.
July	Circulate specifications for institutional review. Consolidate feedback.
Early-August	Vendor selection
Mid-August	Project kick-off
Mid-August – Late November	Milestone deliveries; demos; institutions test out components in their environments; provide feedback
Late November	First phase projects complete
Late November	Gather requirements for second phase

BENEFITS

There are many benefits to being part of this Higher Education Consortium. First and foremost, this presents a great opportunity for you and your institution to drive and provide **leadership** for the next generation innovative workflows in Higher Education. Good ideas do not just remain ideas. Microsoft and the community collaborate to transform your ideas and vision into real projects and real solutions that benefit everyone!

Multiple institutions participating in joint efforts such as these **increase project success**. Anytime a component or solution is built, multiple institutions (and not just one institution) test and deploy the component. Any issues are exposed immediately, serving as a valuable **real-world testing and proving ground** to the solutions being delivered.

Finally, institutions can **save costs** by not having to reinvent the wheel every time any new capability is required by your institution. Already built and shared components serve as the basis for new functionality.

ORGANIZATIONAL SETUP

Consortium Eligibility: Any Higher Education institution can be a member of the consortium.

For simplicity, the [Carnegie Basic Classification](#) will be used to connect like-minded institutions.

The consortium will be divided as follows:

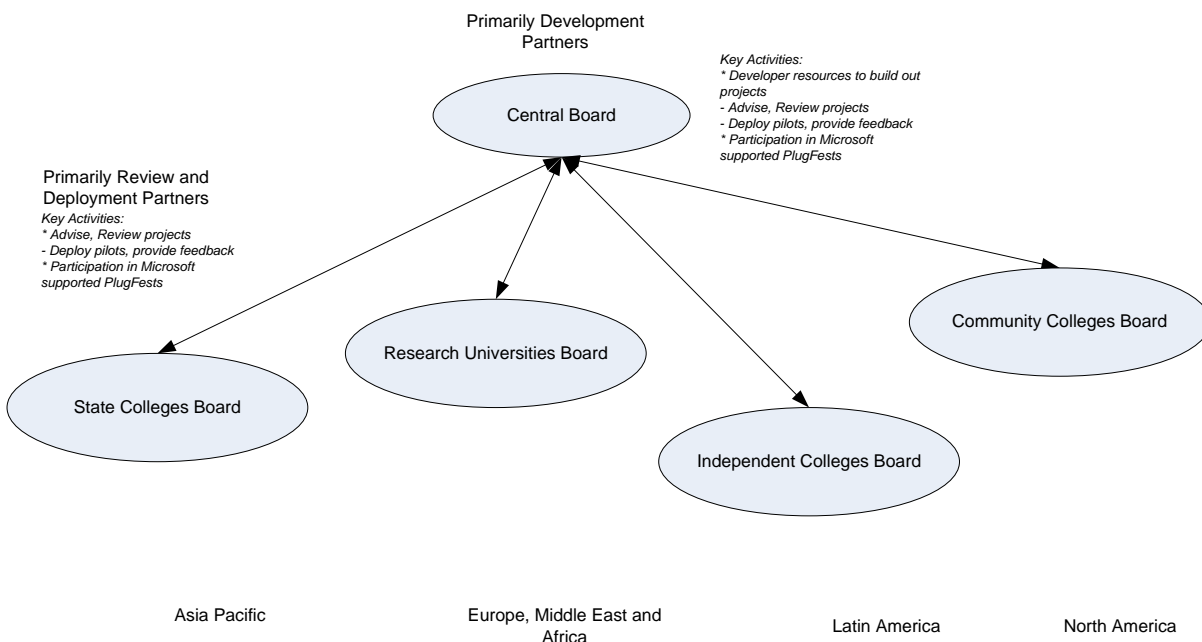


Figure 1: Organizational Structure of the Consortium

Note: This is only a draft proposal and subject to review and recommendation by members.

All boards support the needs of the consortium membership with the following functions:

- Articulate the priorities of the community
- Provide recommendations to the on development priorities
- Provide feedback on deployment experiences

To provide global coverage, we would be seeking representation from the following 5 designated regions:

Africa and the Middle East, Asia Pacific (including Australia), Europe, Latin America, North America

WHERE DO YOU SIGN UP?

Information about this program will also be available at <http://www.microsoft.com/education/consortium.msp>.

Four MSN Groups have been created. They are the following:

community-colleges-board@groups.msn.com

independent-colleges-board@groups.msn.com

research-universities-board@groups.msn.com

state-colleges-board@groups.msn.com

The above 4 groups will be the primary media by which consortium members can interact with peers and Microsoft to drive and review projects and investments. The MSN groups are by invitation only.

Your email and participation cannot be viewed by the public as they have been set up as private groups. You will also be able to set your MSN group membership such that messages are delivered directly to your email "Inbox".

If you are interested in being part of this program, please send email to hsc@microsoft.com so that we can set you up with the appropriate MSN group today!