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WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

Overview
In this workshop you will learn how to use several SacCT communication tools which include: Messages, Mail, Announcements, Calendar, Discussion Board and Blogs.

Prerequisites
Individuals taking this workshop should have basic computer skills, ability to work in either the Windows or Macintosh OS environments and a basic understanding of SacCT.

Objectives
Individuals in this workshop will:

- Learn how to use communication tools to provide information to students
- Learn how to use communication tools for student collaboration
- Identify the appropriate communication tools for your specific course and student needs
COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Informative vs. Interactive

Communication tools in SacCT can be divided into two general categories based on their function and the actions they require from users: Informative and Interactive.

Informative tools include the Announcements and Calendar because they provide a location where users can obtain information about the course such as due dates, class activities, resources, etc.

Interactive tools include the Discussion Board, Blogs and Messages because they allow the user to interact with others either through discussion posts, messages or blog posts.

In the following sections we will look at how these various tools can be used and where they are located.

Where are they?

Communication tools can be accessed from three main areas in a course.

1. **Course Menu** - a customizable menu that displays links to course content.
2. **Content Area** - containers or folders that organize and display content such as folders, files, web links and links to course tools.
3. **Control Panel** - the interface for managing the content, features and appearance in a course.
Course Menu

The **Course Menu** is one of the main areas where students and instructors access course tools. It is located on the left navigation area of a course.

In a new course, the default course menu may only display a couple of the communication tools available in a course. The sample course menu here, lists several communication tools already, such as announcements, discussions, blogs and messages.

You can customize the course menu by adding different tools you will be using in a course and renaming the links as needed.
ADD A TOOL TO THE COURSE MENU

From the course menu instructors and students can access course tools, links to external websites, specific content areas or folders, among other options. In order to make any of these items available you need to add them to your course menu.

Follow these steps to add a tool to the course menu:

step 1. Ensure Edit Mode is in the On position.
step 2. From the course menu, point your mouse to the add icon.
step 3. A contextual menu with several options will display. Select Tool Link.
step 4. Enter a descriptive name for the link that will display on the menu.
step 5. For Type, select one of the course tools from the drop down menu
step 6. Click the checkbox next to Available to Users to make link visible to students.
step 7. Click Submit to save changes
step 8. A new link to the course tool will display on the menu.
step 9. Drag and drop link to desired location on the course menu.
step 10. Additional options such as Rename, Hide and Delete, can be accessed from the actions icon at right of link name.
A content area is another main area where students and instructors can access course tools. Course tools appear as icons/links, on their own or within folders in a content area.

Use the **Action Bar** located at the top of the content frame to add a course tool to a content area. Simply choose from the four content options:

1. **Build Content** – many options to add or create content such as a folder, a single file, an item, a web link, or link to any course tool, etc.
2. **Assessments** – create and link to tests, surveys, assignments, and self and peer assessments.
3. **Tools** – add a discussion board, blog, journal, wiki, or group
4. **Publisher Content** – add a list of required or recommended textbooks and/or other publisher content.
Control Panel

The control panel is located below the course menu on the left side of a course and is only visible to course instructors.

It contains a list of all course tools. From the control panel, instructors can enter a tool option to begin building the available tools in their course.

Once you have added the communication tools based on your specific course needs and viewed or made any necessary changes to their settings you are ready to begin using them.

Edit Mode

With Edit Mode On you can build the content in your course and also interact with students across the different tools you have decided to add.

For example, you can setup a discussion board, create announcements, create a calendar event and other content in the course. You can also post to a forum, send a message to students, read and grade assignments or manage the grade center.

With Edit Mode Off you can view some areas of the course as a student to test whether tools, links, and other content is working normally. For example, you can test links in content areas, ensure links in course menu are visible, check whether an exam or assignments is available, etc.
Announcements

Use the Announcements tool to post information about course events, due dates or other time sensitive information, in a central location for all students to read.

Access Announcements
Students and Instructors can view announcements from several areas in SacCT:

1. **Global Navigation Menu** – from the Updates section, user can view Course and System Announcements. Click Open next to Course Announcements to view announcement in its course.

2. **My SacCT page**
   a. **My Announcements module** – shows course, organization, and institution announcements for the past 7 days. Click more announcements in the module to view a full list.
   b. **Tools module** – click the announcements link to open the full Announcements page.

3. **Announcements Tool** – locate the tool from the Course Menu in any of your courses.

The Announcements Area
The example below shows an announcements area in a course. A couple of announcements display in the list which contain mostly formatted text and a web link. But announcements may also contain other elements such as images, links to course content and video.

Announcements are listed in chronological order with most recent announcement at the beginning of the list.
Announcements

New announcements appear directly below the repositionable bar. Reorder by dragging announcements to new positions. Move priority announcements above the repositionable bar to pin them to the top of the list and prevent new announcements from superseding them. The order shown here is the order presented to students. Students do not see the bar and cannot reorder announcements.

Create Announcement button

Repositionable Bar

Post date

Title Bar (double arrow icon)

Actions Link

Legend

1 Create Announcement button use to create new announcements

2 Repositionable Bar drag and drop below announcements you would like to display first in the list

3 Post date below each announcement subject indicates when the announcement began to display.

4 Title Bar (double arrow icon) displays when you hover on an announcement. Use to reorder announcements by dragging and dropping

5 Actions Link displays a contextual menu with Edit and Delete options
CREATE AN ANNOUNCEMENT

**step 1.** From the Control Panel menu click Course Tools.

**step 2.** Click Announcements.

**step 3.** Click the Create Announcements button.

**step 4.** Enter a name in the Subject field.

**step 5.** In the Message box type in a description and details. Use the Text Editor options to format text if needed.

**step 6.** Under Web Announcement options choose date and time restrictions if announcement will be date restricted.

**step 7.** In the Course Link section, browse for an item to link in the announcement.

**step 8.** Click Submit.
The announcement below is an example of a welcome message to students via the announcements page. This is the student view of a typical announcement that contains text, links to external resources such as a website and a course link to a file or other course material.

Calendar

The Calendar tool allows you to post important information about your course and can serve as an online schedule to keep students informed about the course as the semester progresses.

You can add calendar events such as due dates for any activity in the course, reminders about class events such as guest presentations or class trips, and provide details and resources within the description.

Access Calendar Course Events

Like course announcements, calendar course events can be accessed from several locations:

- **Global Navigation Menu** – located on the top right hand corner of SacCT. Can be accessed at any point in the course. This is the best way for students to access events since they are clickable and will show event details such as a description and other details.
- **Course Menu** – an instructor can the Calendar tool link to any course.
You can view and create events for any of your courses from either location.

**An Overview of the Calendar**

The calendar page is divided into two main areas: the left panel and the main calendar area. The left hand side panel contains several options to manage the display of calendar events. For example, you can change the display of course events by selecting one of the three view options: **view day, view week, and view month**. The small version of the calendar can be used to quickly navigate to another month and/or day.

Directly below is the Calendars area, which lists the calendars for each course you are enrolled in. These calendars are color coded to make it easier to distinguish calendar events between courses. By default, the calendar will show events from all of your courses, but you can filter which event to show by deselecting the calendars you do not need to view.

The second area of the Calendar tool, is the main calendar display space. This area will display calendar events based on the view option you selected from the left panel (day, week, month). This is also the main area where you can add a calendar event from. To add an event you can either click the + icon on the top right of the calendar page or click inside any date to open the create event window.
Course event(s) will display on the right main calendar view. Upon clicking on a course event, its full details will display which includes: event title, course name, due date if available, and event description.

Create a Course Event

step 1. From the Control Panel menu click Course Tools.
step 2. Click Course Calendar. (If you have added a link to the Calendar on your Course Menu access it from there instead)
step 3. Click the plus + button on top right of calendar page. Alternatively, click inside any of the calendar dates. The Create Event window will display.
step 4. Enter an Event Name, this will become a clickable link on the calendar.
step 5. From the Calendar drop down menu, select the course you would like to post your event to.
step 6. Next, select the start and end date and times for the event
step 7. In the Event Description box type in a description and details.
step 8. Click Save.
Use the **Messages** tool to send and receive private and secure course messages. You can also read and organize course messages into custom folders.

Unlike external email applications where you have to type in an email address or setup a contact or distribution list to select recipients from, the Messages tool already contains all course users.

Your course users are listed to easily select the recipients of your message(s). **Users must be logged into the course to access course messages.**
Cate a Message

step 1. From the Control Panel menu click Course Tools.
step 2. Click Messages. The Messages Page will display.
step 3. By default, two folders will be listed.
   a. Inbox contains all messages received.
   b. Sent contains all messages sent to course users.
step 4. Click the Create Message button. The Compose Message page will display.
step 5. Select your Recipients by clicking the To option. You can also add recipients in the Cc or Bcc areas.
step 6. Add a message Subject.
step 7. Use the Text Editor to compose and format your message
step 8. Use the Upload Attachment option to add a handout or other resource if needed.
step 9. Click Submit
step 10. A copy of the message can be found in the Sent folder.
View Messages

step 1. From the Messages page click the **Inbox Folder Link** (clickable blue link)

step 2. Messages will display and by default are sorted by date, most recent message at top.

step 3. Click the **Subject Link** to open (blue clickable link)

step 4. The **View Message** window will display additional options: **Reply, Forward, Delete** or **Print**

step 5. Click **Ok** to go back to the Inbox
Send Email

The Send Email tool is one way you can send messages to course users. When a message is sent, course users receive the message in their saclink email account.

Since this tool only permits messages to be sent one way, from course user to a user’s saclink email account, use it for quick messages that will not require a response.

Create an Email

**step 1.** From the Control Panel menu click Course Tools
**step 2.** Click Send Email.
**step 3.** From the Send Email page, select the option for the type of recipients you would like to send the email to.
   a. For students enrolled in your course, select All Student Users
**step 4.** A new window will display your recipient email information in the To area.
**step 5.** In the Subject field type in the main topic of your email message
**step 6.** In the Message box type in your message.
**step 7.** Select the checkbox next to Return Receipt, if you wish to receive a copy of the message in your saclink email.
**step 8.** Use the Attachments option to attach one or more files
**step 9.** Click Submit to send your email
For more **extensive and detailed** communication, use the **Messages** tool instead which has options to reply, forward, and format messages.

Students will receive the email in their Saclink Email account, similar to the example below.
Discussion Board

The Discussion Board is an area where students and instructors can post about various topics related to the course. These topics, known as Threads are grouped into separate Forums which the instructor creates.

Forums can be set in two ways:

1. **Forum is the discussion question:** enter the discussion question as the forum’s title and add specific instructions in the description. Students reply to the forum by creating message threads.

2. **Forum is the General Subject:** Forum title contains the general subject of the discussion and students reply to a thread(s) instructor has created.

Some ways you can use a discussion forum include:

- Create several discussion forums to help students reflect about course material and share ideas and resources.
- Foster a sense of community among students and instructor
- Create a space for common FAQ’s where students can post questions or obtain answers to their questions about the course.
- Create group forums so groups can meet online and discuss about their progress in projects.
Threaded Discussions

Threaded Discussions begin with an initial message post (typically from the instructor) that provides the students the starting point for the discussion. This initial post can include:

- Question(s) and/or Description about the topic to be discussed
- Instructions for students about what to include in the discussion message
- Resources such as a handout or article related to the topic that will help the student reply to the topic. These resources can be attached or you can provide a link in the post, to the website the resource(s) is located on.

As students reply to the initial posting, and to each other's replies, a thread of messages is formed. Students can continue replying under that initial posting or post a brand new message for peers to reply that would form another thread of messages. Thus, the name threaded discussions.
**SCENARIO**

To allow students to reflect and discuss about course assigned readings you have decided to create threaded discussion topics that students must post to, on a weekly basis. You have created a Reading Discussion topic specific to each week’s reading subject. You have included an initial post for each weekly reading topic that guides students on posting a reflection and/or summary of their reading and provide information about additional sources, such as articles and webpages related to the readings.

**CREATE A FORUM**

*step 1.* From the Control Panel menu click Course Tools. (You can also access the Discussion board from the Course Menu, if a link has been added).

*step 2.* Click Discussion Board.

*step 3.* Click the course discussion board name (ie. 0111-COMS005-01-12345 for example).

*step 4.* From the course discussion board page click Create Forum

*step 5.* In the Name field, type in the question(s) and/or topic to be discussed.

*step 6.* In the Description box, type in the instructions/details, add links or other content that students will use to complete their posts.
step 7. Under **Forum Availability**, select the **Yes** option to make forum visible to students
**step 8.** Select **Forum Settings** such as allow anonymous posts, file attachments, thread creation, grade forum options, etc.

**step 9.** Click Submit

**VIEW FORUM POSTS**

**step 1.** Begin at the **Discussion Board page**, which displays all available forums and a summary of activity in each

**step 2.** Click the **Forum Name**, a blue clickable link
**step 3.** Forum **Threads** will display along with a summary of **Total** and **Unread posts**

**step 4.** Click on the **Thread name** (blue clickable link) to open and view posts
**step 5.** The **Thread Detail** page is divided into two sections

- The top section displays a **list of posts** with author, date and time.
- The bottom section displays the first **Post** in the thread.

**step 6.** Use the **previous and next navigation arrows** to move through posts or click on **post name** to open.

**TIP:** You can **view** and **print** multiple threads at once, by using the **Collect** option. Simply use the checkboxes to select the thread(s) or posts and click **Collect**. Selected posts will display on one page that you can later print.
Blogs

Alike discussion forums, Blogs can begin with an initial post from the instructor that may contain a question(s) and/or a statement that encourages the student to provide their thoughts, opinions and comments. As students post their messages, they are organized chronologically. Students can reply to any blog posting by creating a new message or by providing comments to any blog post.

SCENARIO
You have created Blog Discussion topics for key subjects in your course as a place for students to share their thoughts about each of the subjects and most importantly, share with their peers, any resources (webpages, articles) that enhance related course material.

CONCLUSION
Through this workshop participants have learned how to use the various communication tools in SacCT which include informative tools – announcements, messages, mail, calendar and interactive tools – discussion board and blogs. You should now be able to identify the different communication tools available in SacCT and choose the most appropriate tools for your specific course needs.
RESOURCES

Alternate Formats
For questions regarding provision of instructional materials in alternate formats for students with visual impairments, learning disabilities, or mobility impairments that impact their ability to read printed materials, please contact the Services to Students with Disabilities' High Tech Center at (916)278-7915/htc@csus.edu. Website: http://www.csus.edu/sswd/index.html

Technology Learning Center
Located in ARC 3012. Assistance available on walk-in basis.
TLC Website - http://www.csus.edu/irt/fsrc/

Getting Help
Academic Technology Consultants
http://www.csus.edu/atcs/Contacts/index.html
1on1 Help @ ATCS on Thursdays 1-4 pm in ARC 3005 (no appointment necessary)
IRT Service Desk
http://www.csus.edu/irt/ServiceDesk/
IRT Service Desk Help
(916) 278-7337 or http://www.csus.edu/irt/ServiceDesk/Forms/Email.html
SacCT Resources
http://www.csus.edu/sacct
SacCT Help
web-courses@csus.edu

Campus Resources
Accessibility at Sacramento State
http://www.csus.edu/accessibility
Educational Tools
http://www.csus.edu/atcs/tools
eLearning at Sac State Blog
http://elearningnews.atcs.csus.edu/
eLearning at Sac State YouTube Channel
https://www.youtube.com/user/elearningSacState
Training
http://www.csus.edu/training