Josh Baron Sakai Webinar (June 18, 2009)

> **(i) Webinar Summary**
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> This page provides a recording of Josh Baron's Sakai webinar that stemmed from his comments on the Educause CIO list. It also provides answers to many questions that were asked during the session. You may also find the New to Sakai FAQ useful.

General Questions

Q: Is a recording of the meeting available?
A: The recording for this meeting can be accessed at Screencast.com.

Q: How many people attended the meeting?
A: 81.

Q: What about the 10th Sakai Conference in Boston:
A: The conference website has more information on the 10th Sakai Conference.

Migration

Q: What CMS did Marist move from?
A: Marist was using "Educator" from Ucompass.

Q: What was your adoption rate of your previous CMS?
A: At Marist, the first wave of migration to Sakai they hoped for 15% of faculty. They ended up with 65%.
From University of Delaware: We got similar results at UD in the Fall 2008: Target 20%, reality: 50%

Q: What is the largest number of courses migrated from another LMS to Sakai?
A: Marist migrated 1200 and assumes that is small compared to some other colleges.

Q: How did the migration process work?
A: Josh wasn't able to provide an quick/brief answer to this question.
The Sakai conference is a great place to hear migration stories. The Sakai wiki also contains information on migration from other LMS systems. This information is not complete and the Sakai email lists are a good place to ask more detailed questions.

Sakai compared to Moodle (and other systems)

Q: Did you consider other alternatives, such as Moodle? Did you use a scorecard to compare?
A: Marist developed 5 high-level criteria for it's decision:

1. Functionality: Are there Critical, Essential or Desirable functionality gaps?
2. Staffing & Support Requirements: Will we have to increase staffing?
3. Organizational Stability: Is the Sakai community here to stay?
4. Reliability & Scalability: Can we scale up to meet demand over the next decade?
5. Realizing Innovation: Will innovation be realized?

Q: Any benefits of Sakai vs. Moodle?
Q: Did you look at other open source alternatives or just Sakai when you did your research?
Q: At some point I hope you will contrast Sakai with Moodle and other open source learning management systems.
A: Josh conveyed his respect for Moodle, but felt Sakai was a better fit for Marist according to the criteria they developed. The enterprise-nature of Sakai was also attractive as was the integrated e-portfolio functionality.
There will be a "Blackboard, Moodle and Sakai" panel at Educause 2009 in Denver.

Integration (with SIS and other systems)

Q: Is there integration functionality with SunGard Banner? If so, then what?
Q: Do you know what the timeframe is for the banner integration with Sakai?
Q: Is there real-time (incoming) SIS integration with Datatel Colleague?
A: Marist plans to integrate Sakai with Banner in 2010. Other universities have integrated Sakai with Banner as well. These include UC Davis, UC Merced, Yale, Virginia Tech, Georgia Tech, University of Hawaii and Rice.
Several Sakai institutions have also integrated Sakai with Datatel. These include Mount Holyoke, Saginaw Valley State and Albany Medical College.

Sakai also supports the IMS Learning Information System standard and the University of Michigan has used that standard to integrate with the PeopleSoft SIS. For more information on IMS LIS visit the IMS Website.

Q: Can you speak a little more to the SIS integration process?
Q: What built-in modules are in Sakai to import SIS data from SIS systems? Are there built-in modules (e.g. LDAP) that can authenticate logins from an SIS source in real time? Discover enrollments in the SIS source system?
A: Sakai is typically integrated with the campus SIS. The Sakai wiki contains information about integrating other systems with Sakai.

Q: Does Sakai integrate with other 3rd party products such as Wimba, eInstruction, Respondus?
A: Yes, Sakai integrates with a variety of products. Wimba, Respondus, Elluminate, TurnItIn, SoftChalk, Zimbra and DSpace all work with Sakai. Stanford is working on an integration with Sharestream.

For more information on the details of integrating other applications with Sakai, simply send an email with your question(s) to sakai-dev@collab.sakaiproject.org. This email list is read by hundreds of individuals with Sakai experience who may have information pertaining to your questions.

Support & Hosting

Q: How many staff support your Sakai implementation?
A: Marist has 2 to 2.5 people supporting Sakai. You don't really need a large team to support Sakai--that's a myth that may have had some truth when the project was quite young.

Stanford said that in a comparison with Ivy League's schools running Sakai and other similar systems and found that staffing levels didn't really vary according to system.

Rice has 1.85 FTE to support Sakai to support 10,000+ users. Cerritos College has 2 FTE. Cape Town supports 30,000 users with 3.5 FTE. Claremont Colleges have 5 FTE. These FTE numbers may include roles varying from system administration to instructional design.

The Sakai Foundation maintains a database with production deployment information. Feel free to contact us and we'll try to connect you with a university similar to yours.

Q: I heard that there are companies that will host Sakai. Is that true?
A: Yes, there are companies that host Sakai commercially. The Sakai website contains a list of official Sakai Commercial Affiliates.

Q: What has your start up costs been and do you have a projected cost of ownership over then next 3-10 years?
Q: How much are you spending on support with the commerical providers? Is this significantly less than your license costs with the CMS vendor that you left?
A: This wasn't answered in the webinar and won't be publishing financial information. We suggest you contact individual institutions to see if they can help provide the data you're looking for. The Sakai Foundation can help find a university similar to yours that is using Sakai.

Feature Questions

Q: I'm not sure if you plan to cover the specific program offerings, but what is the level of security of quizzes/tests?
A: Tests and quizzes in Sakai offers the typical abilities for locking down assessments to individual machines, classrooms of machines, time-limits, etc.

Q: Is there a grade book option?
A: Yes, Sakai has a fully featured grade book and significant enhancements are planned for Sakai 2.7.

Q: What about a math equation editor? Does one exist?
A: Sakai does not contain a math equation editor out-of-the-box, however, some people have been custom-integrating solutions, such as a WebEQ plugin with Sakai's default rich-text editor or LaTeX support.

Q: Can you do attendance within Sakai?
A: Yes, there are ways of doing this with Sakai. At Marist we generally use the assignments tool to track attendance.
Hosei University in Japan has developed a tool to automatically track attendance using a card reader and student ID cards. This is not part of the default Sakai functionality, but may be something that can be added to your Sakai installation.

Q: What is the difference between Discussion Forums and Forums?
A: Previously Sakai offered two distinct "forum" tools, one called Discussion and one called Forums. The former tool has been deprecated, and removed from current releases, in favour of a single-solution, Forums. Discussion is still available as add-on tool, along with other implementations of "forum" capabilities, such as Yaft.

Q: Can "My Workspace" be public?
A: Yes, you can share some or all of it with the public, depending on how permissions and configuration options are set. This is true for all sites in Sakai.

Community & Code

Q: If your institution uses Sakai, does it have to pay the $10,000 to join the foundation?
A: No, membership is optional, but encouraged to help maintain a vibrant, active open-source community. The activities of the Sakai Foundation are sustained primarily by membership dues.

Q: Does Marist have a programmer contributing code to the project/community? If so how is it working? What lessons have you learned from that. Thanks!
A: Marist does contribute some code to the project, mainly support for IBM DB/2 and WebSphere products. Stanford does significant work on Tests & Quizzes and supports others in the community who want to make contributions to that module. University of Deleware notes that there are other ways to contribute as well, by participating in the Teaching & Learning group and helping write use cases and requirements.

Q: According to the licensing arrangements, are changes introduced to Sakai by a commercial firm REQUIRED to be released back to the Sakai community, as is the case with the GPL?
A: No. First a clarification on the GPL. It requires changes that are externally distributed also be released under GPL. You **can** make modifications of GPL code for internal use only without releasing those back to the community. As soon as you distribute it, though, you must apply the GPL license to your changes/additions.
Sakai's Apache-style license does not have this requirement. This allows Sakai Commercial Affiliates to provide value-added options for their customized distributions of Sakai; and, though they are not required, experience has shown they do typically contribute back useful modifications and bug-fixes to the community in a timely fashion.

Q: I did a quick search of Sakai Teaching and Learning Group on Google and couldn't find any information Do you have a web site?
A: The Teaching and Learning Group has a space on the Sakai wiki.

Q: When will 3.0 be ready for pilot? We are wanting a system by fall 2010 but want to start piloting this fall.
A: If you are looking for a full featured LMS for Fall (northern hemisphere) 2010, Sakai 2.7 will be the best candidate. It will contain some of the features of Sakai 3 and will therefore make an excellent transition point to Sakai 3.
There is information about Sakai 3 on the Sakai Project website and wiki. Preview versions of 3 will likely become available for piloting starting later this year, however, they will initially only provide partial functionality. You should consider how you might balance your need for functionality, aversion to risk, and gaining experience early to determine when it would be best for you to begin exploring Sakai 3.

General User Experience Questions

Q: I really like Sakai but think it might be hard to train users not to use the ""back"" button, which leads to unpredictable behavior due to the number of iFrames in Sakai. How do you handle that?
A: This was a significant problem in early versions of Sakai but has improved over the years. It is not a big issue at Marist. University of Delaware and Stanford University confirm that it is not a significant issue for them. It is unlikely to be a problem in Sakai 3, which is being designed with back-button support in mind.

Q: Does Sakai have a problem with a single user with a single browser window open using multiple tabs to access different courses?
A: Earlier versions of Sakai, released prior to the advent and growth in popularity of multi-tab browsing, did have difficulties in some instances. More recent releases have addressed those issues, either by directly adding support for capabilities used in multi-tab situations or instituting appropriate warnings so that users do not find their way into difficulties using multiple tabs.