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Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to describe our use of a software program to create a pedagogically effective web-based educational environment.

There are numerous variables which impact web-based learning. These include getting started early, time management for both student and instructor, developing student comfort levels in this medium, developing student collaboration, appropriate interactive tasks, release time, faculty collaboration, faculty support, and coping with differing learning styles. Preparation and time are the key components for the designer/instructor. Starting early, obtaining release time, and taking WebCT development courses are vital to the facilitating student learning. Preparation should focus upon the content and pedagogical components, keeping it simple and interactive. Meet with the students before the course begins to ensure they are aware of the requirements, responsibilities and expectations for success. This type of learning environment is typically best suited to self-directed, self-disciplined students with at least sound technological skills. Once the course is underway, the instructor needs to continually monitor student progress, continue to "sell" the WebCT medium, establish rubrics for projects and other learning activities, ensure high student to student interaction via a mix of learning activities. Grading, particularly with large classes can consume large amounts of time, so spacing these projects appropriately across the semester is essential for the instructor. As always, evaluation of the course and learning should be formative and summative utilizing the various built-in strategies, coupled with surveys and self-efficacy assessments.