

Executive Summary:

BOSTON COLLEGE

- **Boston College required social software to stimulate the education process & create lively interactions between students and faculty.**
- **Wikis found to dramatically enrich classroom through up-to-date content development & active discussion that ultimately helped students achieve better scores.**
- **Socialtext provided easy-to-use platform for wiki collaboration that seamlessly integrated with email, RSS feeds, search and other popular web-based technologies.**

Background

As one of the oldest Jesuit, Catholic universities in the US, Boston College confers more than 4,000 degrees annually in more than 50 fields of study through seven schools and colleges. Faculty members are committed to both teaching and research and have set new marks for research grant awards over the last ten years, more than \$44 million in the last year alone. Boston College has experienced tremendous growth in recent years, including a 43 percent increase in undergraduate applications over the past decade. During the same period, a remarkable increase in revenue from voluntary giving has helped to move the University's endowment to approximately \$1.4 billion, among the 50 largest in the nation.

Educational institutions, like Boston College, increasingly depend on web-based tools that facilitate learning and increase communication between faculty and students, as well as collaboration between the students. Furthermore, schools are increasingly under pressure to incorporate the latest Web 2.0 technologies into the education process, since many students come to school expecting access to these tools and commonly use them in their personal lives as a way to collaborate with their peers. Websites and applications like MySpace, Flickr, Facebook, Wikipedia, instant messaging and blogging are already widely adopted by students. The challenge for educational institutions is finding ways to best incorporate these existing tools into the classroom experience, while also identifying new tools that can provide value in the education process.

Why Wikis?

Every business student that passes through Boston College takes the Introduction to Management class. The professors leading the class historically tried sites like Facebook and their discussion board

capabilities as a social network tool to better connect together students and facilitate interaction. Over time, specifically for the requirements in the classroom, the existing solutions were found to not provide adequate discussion capabilities and for example lacked robust features for editing, commenting and general content creation. In addition, since the curriculum of the business class required constant updates to the content taught in the classroom, alternatives beyond just textbooks were needed.

Boston College evaluated various options for increasing communication and collaboration in the classroom, including staying with Facebook, but in October 2006 ultimately decided to use the Socialtext hosted service for wikis. With Socialtext, Boston College found the wiki provided a valuable ability to enrich the classroom through up-to-date content and active discussion. The Intro to Management class for example integrates relevant news content, from sites like The Wall Street Journal, Businessweek and The New York Times, using RSS feeds and creates a 'virtual newstand' to support the in-class activities. In order to publish content to the wiki, the faculty and students are all registered with access to update the wiki using the simple-to-use, web-based interface. Email is also used as a complementary tool for both inputting content into the wiki by emailing directly to the wiki page that needs updating, as well as using email to notify users of any changes to wiki content.

“Before introducing wikis into the classroom, we struggled with existing tools to create dynamic social interactions between our students and faculty. With Socialtext, we've been able to leverage the power of wikis to enrich our curriculum and create rich collaboration both in and outside the classroom setting that drives the learning process forward.”

At Boston College, today the wiki provides a valuable framework for real-time discussions, so the in-class curriculum can be modified on-the-fly to reflect the latest events in the business world, as well as

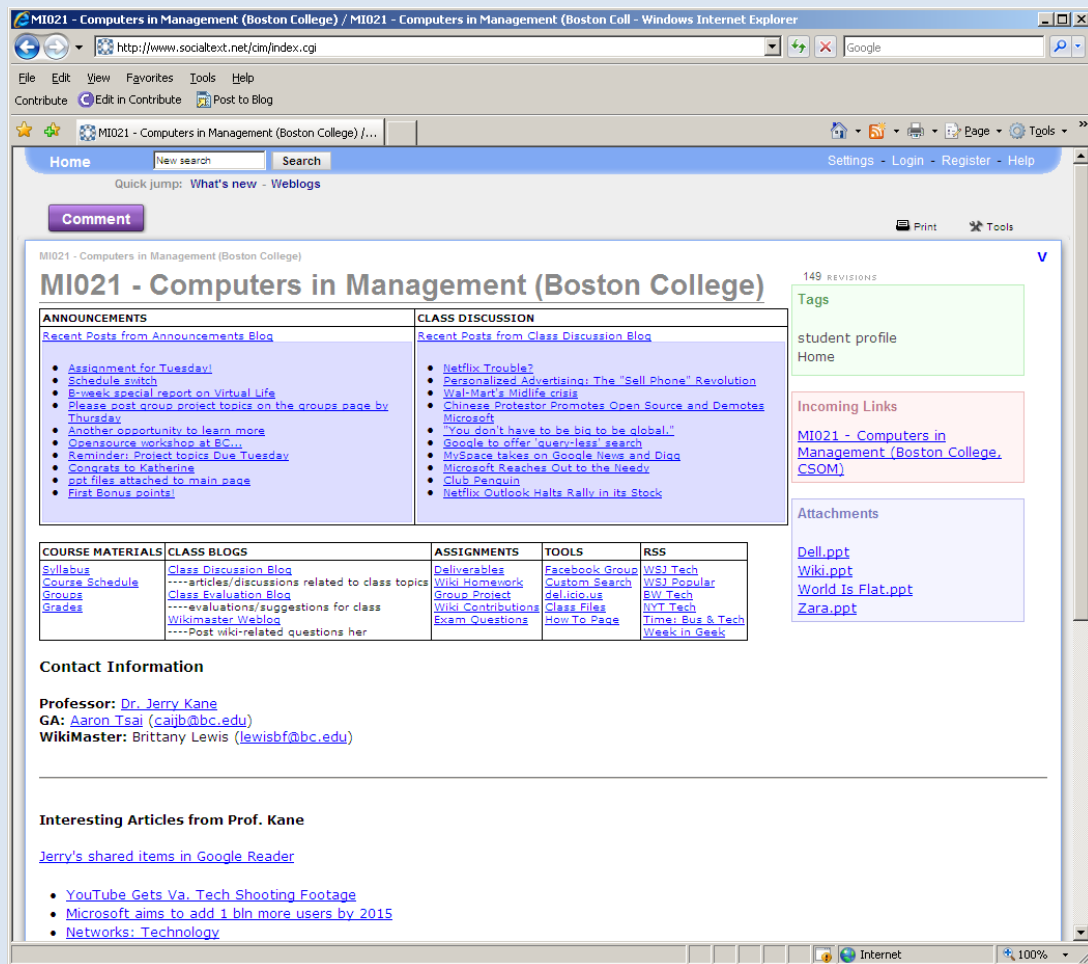
“Students like the Socialtext wiki because it creates a more interactive educational environment and provides them with the tools to help improve their scores.”

incorporate input direct from the students based on topics they want to cover or have interest in. Students are encouraged to use the wiki to increase collaboration with one another. For example before submitting research papers, students use the wiki for real-time peer evaluation so they can improve the quality of their final paper before submitting to the professor for grading. The professors at Boston College are finding the wiki helps create a better quality of overall course content, since more people (beyond just the professor) are involved in contributing to the classroom learning. One professor went so far as to suggest that wikis hold the potential to replace traditional textbooks in the

future, which are often out of date as soon as they are printed and include static information that lacks flexibility for changes or updates on-the-fly.

Boston College has about 100 to 200 users each semester participating in the Intro to Management wiki, powered by Socialtext. This accounts for over 100 page views and roughly ten page edits per student per week. The professors are finding that the students that contribute on the wiki are often different individuals than those who participate most actively in the physical classroom. The professors also find that with the wiki they have a better ability to track student participation. One of the most interesting outcomes of Boston College's wiki use is a clear correlation of the wiki use to higher overall grades and test scores.

Looking ahead, the professors that teach the Intro to Management class have plans to extend their current wiki deployment later this year to include graduate students in the MBA program. Furthermore, since the Intro to Management class use-case has generated such positive feedback on the collaborative benefits of wikis in the classroom, they are seeing strong interest from other teachers at the school to deploy similar wikis for their classes. The teachers and faculty are also considering wikis for addressing other departmental communications needs. In fact, the interest in wikis has spread so far within Boston College that the school is now considering a campus-wide wiki deployment in the coming months.



Screenshot of the Boston College wiki publicly accessible at www.socialtext.net/cim

Socialtext Advantages

Some of the key reasons Socialtext's hosted service was selected by Boston College over alternative solutions, such as Jotspot, included its robustness to scale to handle hundreds of students, while continuing to deliver reliable and responsive service even as user counts increased. The Socialtext wiki also makes it easy for administrators and faculty at Boston College to add and delete users, for example as students enroll and then graduate from the Intro to Management class. Another key reason Socialtext was selected was due to its intuitive design and ease-of-use features. Socialtext was determined to offer the right mix of rich functionality, plus simplicity-of-use needed to drive user adoption and regular usage. In fact, Boston College found that on average it took less than 30 minutes for a new user to get trained up and familiar with using the Socialtext wiki and become productive with the tool. The last key reason that Socialtext was selected was for the nature of its wiki solution that was not just a point-product, but a true platform solution that provided rich collaboration using wikis, but also flexible integration with other important tools used in the academic environment, including RSS feeds, email, Google search, Facebook and social networking sites, and more.

About Socialtext

With the most flexible deployment options in the industry - including appliances, hosted services, software and open-source – Socialtext wikis are designed for any organization that wants to accelerate team communications, better enable knowledge sharing, foster collaboration, and build online communities. Today, over 2000 organizations use Socialtext, including Symantec, Nokia, IKEA, Conde Nast, Ziff-Davis, Kodak, University of Southern California, Boston College, among others. Based in Palo Alto, Calif., Socialtext is a privately-held company with world-class investors including Draper Fisher Jurvetson, SAP, and the Omidyar Network. For more information about Socialtext, please visit www.socialtext.com or call 1-877-GET-WIKI.