

# Reporting opportunities

With an *open database structure* new opportunities exist to examine CMS usage and to support unique needs. For the first time Augsburg is able to quantify how many course sites are visited during key times in the term. While this data doesn't say much alone, it does give a starting point to do further exploration of use.

Time	Activity defined as a user visit
Last week of fall term 2005	53% of course sites had user activity (335/634)
First week of spring term 2006	62% had user activity (478/771)
Last week of spring term 2006	56% had user activity (432/771)
First week of fall term 2006	53% had user activity (750 /1408)

Moodle has also allowed Augsburg to better *avoid student achievement problems*. Online courses are relatively new to Augsburg and the potential for students to drift out of an online course is a concern. The college has an existing *Academic Alert* system for alerting the advising office, the faculty advisor, and the student when the student is in academic trouble. We created an *activity monitor for the online courses* that emails the instructor a list of students each week who have not been active in the course in the past 5 days. The email includes a link to Academic Alert as well as all the student information needed to submit an alert. This activity monitor *code is freely available* on the web for others to use with moodle. See

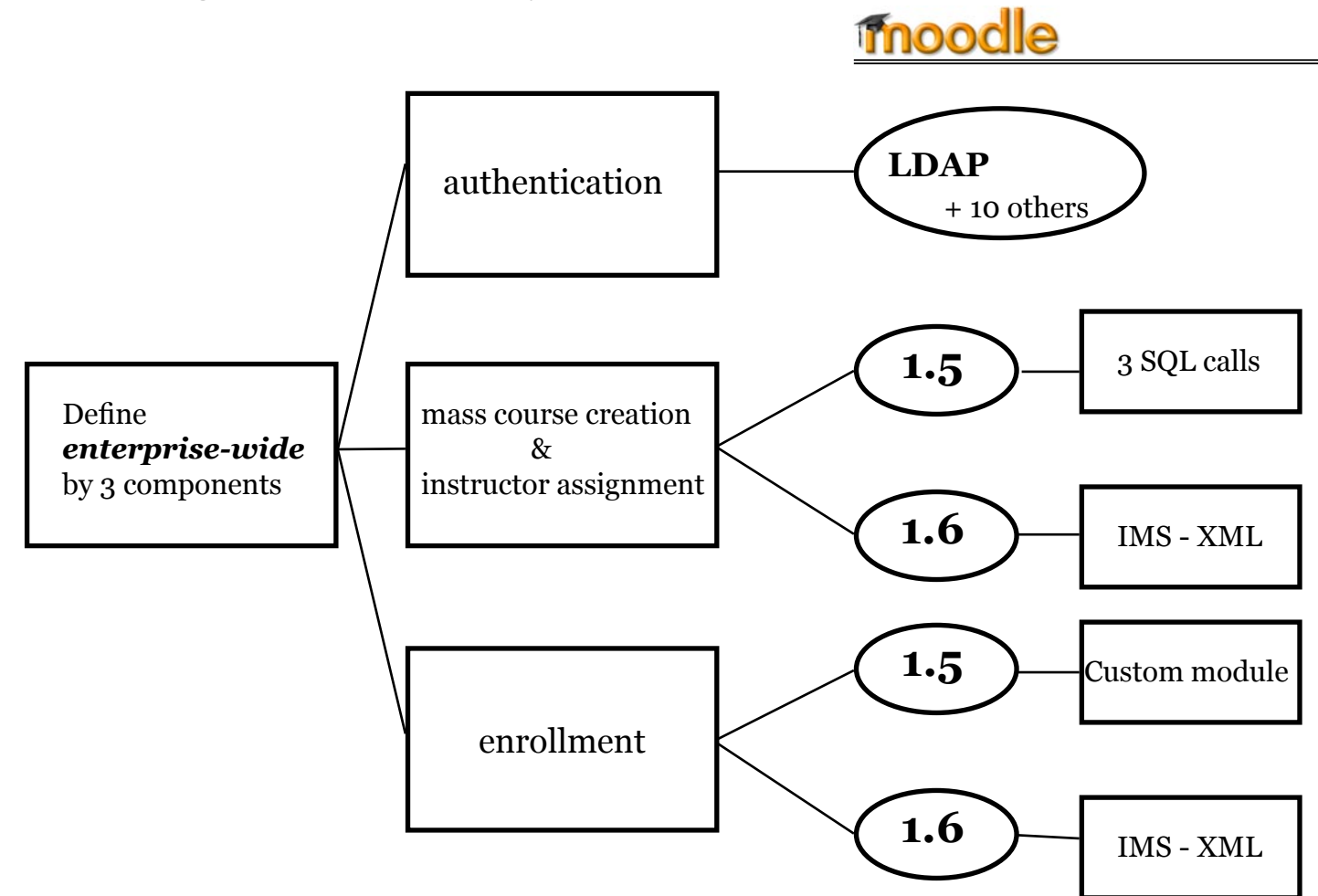
<http://web.augsburg.edu/~krajewsk/moodle/mods.html> and  
<http://www.learningtoo.info/scottblog/?cat=10> for code and musings.

## After the honeymoon

The faculty reaction to moodle has *generally been positive*. Many faculty are *excited* about enhancing their face-to-face courses with an online presence. Some faculty have even made moodle their *central living syllabus* for all the course activities -- online and off-line. Suggestions are offered frequently and often these are easy to implement due to the modular PHP-based architecture.

The main downsides have been a *lack of textbook pre-packaged modules* as well as *no online whiteboard* tool.

Our definition of an integrated, enterprise-wide course management system is one that uses enterprise authentication, enterprise course creation and instructor assignment, and enterprise enrollment. Both the courses and the enrollment must come from the registrar's information system.



This handout will show both why Augsburg choose moodle as well provide details on how it customized moodle to meets its own needs.

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### Why moodle?

With the *rising cost* of Course Management Systems (CMSes) and the growing expectations of both faculty and students that the CMS is an *integrated part* of the campus information environment, smaller institutions are turning to open-source solutions. Augsburg College, a small (<3000 student FTE) private liberal arts institution chose to go with moodle for its CMS platform in 2005. The *inherent pedagogical bend* of moodle (social constructivist) and the *faculty- and student-centered design* fit well with Augsburg's creative faculty who really make the courses they teach their own. A course's web presence should be able to be *easily customized* to look the way the faculty wants it to look – to reflect it being their course. Moodle's PHP-based code made it easy to customize and fit well into the open-source platform choices in IT. It was also key for IT to have a CMS be *integrated enterprise-wide* through authentication, enrollment, and course creation and instructor assignment. Moodle could satisfy all these needs.

### When moodle?

After testing moodle *internally in December of 2004*, a small group of faculty was approached to try it out and by *April 2005 a live course with students* was using moodle. Moodle was presented to the faculty at large in May 2005, in “*moodle in may*” sessions. At the sessions they saw the many positive ways moodle could enhance their courses. Many faculty wanted to *change on the spot*. After more piloting over the summer, *fall 2005 became a transition term* with two CMSes running. Augsburg was running Blackboard 5.5.1 at the time. A move to Blackboard 6.x would require the same relative training required to learn a new CMS so the time was right to move. Also, *faculty were not inspired by the current CMS* and felt rather constrained by the structure it imposed on their courses.

### SQL secrets

With moodle prior to version 1.6 Augsburg ran SQL statements directly on the moodle database to create courses and assign instructors. With moodle 1.6 this was no longer necessary.

*TIP:* Each table in moodle has an *id* field that is the unique identifier for the row. This value is used by other tables to reference the row.

*TIP:* In both the mdl\_course and mdl\_user tables *idnumber* is a field used by enrollment modules to identify a course and a user, respectively. These are often tied to institutional identifiers like student id number and a unique course identifier.

A course is defined by entries in two tables: mdl\_course and mdl\_block\_instance.

These moodle.org posts have information relating to those tables:

<http://moodle.org/mod/forum/discuss.php?d=24835&parent=125422>

<http://moodle.org/mod/forum/discuss.php?d=27333&parent=131526>

### XML example

moodle 1.6 brought *IMS Enterprise Enrollment* which can create users and courses, assign instructors and then enroll students. It does everything Augsburg required for enterprise course management.

*TIP:* A *roletype* of 01 is a student, 03 is an instructor with course editing, 02 is an instructor without course editing ability. 03 is the preferred instructor access level.

In this example a student, Scott Student, is enrolled in one class, Principles of Math, which is MAT101 section A in fall 2006 (MAT101-A-FALL-2006). In addition Scott Teacher is teaching that class. Both users are defined in the file in case they need to be created. The <id> parameter corresponds to the idnumber field mentioned above. The example file is at

<http://web.augsburg.edu/~krajewsk/moodle/augsburg.xml.txt>