

THE NISOD PAPERS



An occasional publication dedicated to topics of interest to community and technical college educators.

Putting Syllabi at the Center of Compliance: A Full Implementation Effort to Meet Texas HB 2504 Standards at Angelina College

Angelina College's mission is to provide quality educational opportunities and services that help students reach their full potential. The mission is manifested through the variety of programs offered, individualized student support services, and numerous off-campus instructional sites in Deep East Texas. In 2019, a college-wide student information system conversion prompted a review of academic information, including course syllabi.

The review highlighted inefficient syllabus management processes and inconsistency in course information. Over the years, faculty committees had developed and revised standardized syllabus templates intended to create a uniform message to the campus community. Despite employing a syllabus template, incorrect information was still finding its way into course and department-level documents, resulting in confusion and misinformation. Consistency between the main campus in Lufkin and off-campus instructional sites was imperative, especially since multiple teams at the institution need to access the syllabi.

In addition to their efforts to ensure consistency and accuracy across all syllabi, Angelina College also needed to make course information public in order to be in compliance with Texas HB2504. Adopted by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in 2009, HB2504 requires that each institution of higher education, other than a medical and dental unit, make available certain course information to the public on the institution's website. In addition, the institution must post information about work-study opportunities and departmental budgets. Due to their commitment to instructional quality and student success, Angelina College immediately set out to find a solution that could swiftly unify syllabi at the institutional level, provide autonomy for instructors to edit their individual course sections, display faculty CV information, and meet HB2504 compliance requirements.

Getting Prepared: Recognizing the need for accurate information across all locations, Angelina College searched for a solution that would integrate with Blackboard and

Jenzabar EX, the college's student information system (SIS). They wanted something they could work directly in, or in conjunction with Blackboard to manage syllabus information from a central location. It was a must that this new platform allow for multi-level access points to different roles on campus, including IT, faculty, academic affairs, program directors, and more. A dedicated team was identified to administer such a tool, and the plans were put in motion.

Let's Get Started: Full implementation of a new solution can be a heavy lift. There are a lot of moving parts and people involved, and when you have ten locations spread throughout a region, the logistics can be quite complex. Angelina College had the added pressure of the public legislative microscope positioned over their course material and policies. It would be no small feat to get everything and everyone rowing in the same direction. They needed a way to quickly get current syllabi and CVs online while simultaneously working to create institutional, departmental, and course-level syllabus templates. The goal was to make current syllabi available online for summer 2019 and roll out structured syllabi created from master syllabus templates in fall 2019.

Angelina College found the perfect solution to meet their immediate needs: Concourse, a powerful cloud-based syllabus management solution. Concourse's introductory platform, Concourse Starter, became Angelina College's first step in syllabus organization and access. Concourse Starter provided Angelina College a quick solution to creating a searchable, integrated, public-facing repository of all institutional syllabi, and allowed instructors to continue authoring Word or PDF files to upload directly into Concourse through Blackboard. Once in Concourse, syllabi could be viewed by students, managed by administrators, and discovered by the community. Angelina College implemented Concourse Starter in May 2019 with the continued goal of implementing structured syllabi created within Concourse using syllabus templates within the coming months.

Almost immediately, instructors began to upload their syllabi into Concourse without issue. Syllabi were publicly available in plenty of time for use during summer session I. Better still, it complied with HB2504 with succinct and accurate data. Getting comfortable with Concourse Starter that summer, the Angelina College team

successfully designed and uploaded a uniform syllabus template by early August to ensure a smooth transition from uploaded syllabi to structured syllabi for fall 2019.

Happily in Compliance: With the SIS conversion behind them and syllabus management underway with Concourse Starter, fall 2019 implementation of the full Concourse platform went smoothly. Not only were instructor CVs and syllabi available online and consistent at all locations, faculty and program directors were enjoying the freedom of enriching their syllabi with specific course information without jeopardizing the overarching framework or policies. With Concourse, Angelina College was well on their way to mastering syllabus management and legislative compliance.

A Long-Term Solution: In addition to fortifying consistent information across all syllabi, Concourse has enabled Angelina College to maintain a centralized approach to managing access to CV and course- and institution-level information with ease and confidence. Faculty can include CV information in their Concourse profile and can focus on what's most important – teaching their students. Plus, since it's cloud-based, faculty only have to add the CV information once and then update it as needed, saving a significant amount of time long-term. College administrations have the peace of mind knowing all syllabi include consistent and accurate information. For Angelina College, Concourse really was the perfect syllabus management solution.

About Angelina College: Located in the heart of East Texas, Angelina College provides a wide variety of technical programs, courses and cutting-edge facilities to equip you on your road to success. With just over 4,500 students enrolled, you will be part of a “Rowdy Road-runner” community.

About Texas Housebill 2504: Adopted by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in 2009, TX HB 2504 requires that each institution of higher education, other than a medical and dental unit, make available certain course information to the public on the institution's website. In addition, the institution must post information about work-study opportunities and departmental budgets.

About Concourse: Since 2007, we have been focused on one thing: helping our clients improve syllabus management. We know what it takes to make the syllabus management process smooth and seamless, and we are ready to help you put this powerful tool to work for your institution.

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