

Can e-Learning Revolutionize Quality Assessment?



Karen Gage
WebCT
karen.gage@webct.com

Catherine Finnegan
Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia
catherine.finnegan@usg.edu



Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia
"Creating A More Educated Georgia"

Preparing for Accreditation Self-Studies

Most accrediting bodies require campuses to review academic and administrative impact as part of their decennial visits. Departments often struggle to identify means collecting data over time. Student information collected and reports and tools available within the CMS can provide information necessary for the systematic assessment of programmatic effectiveness.

Areas of Concern

- Administrative Effectiveness
- Academic Effectiveness

Data Used for Accreditation

- Administrative Effectiveness
 - Institutional, Group, & Course Reports
 - Tool Usage
 - Course Components Usage
 - Content Usage
 - Overall Usage
- Academic Effectiveness
 - Pre-, Post- and Intra Course Assessments
 - Discussions
 - Assignments
 - Student Tracking Reports

Results of Study

- Reports used for administrative effectiveness can be analyzed for trends over time.
- Outcomes data can be tracked across courses, programs and institutions through assessments, discussions and content viewing.

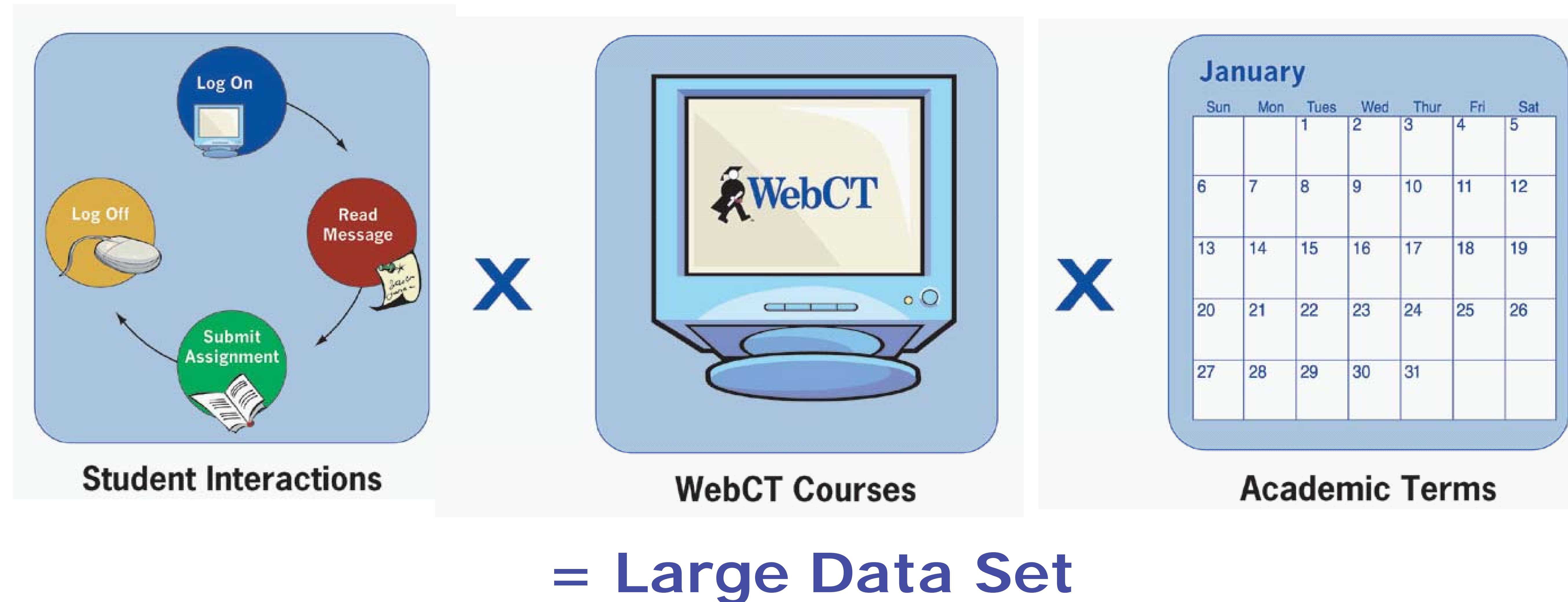
Why Do We Care?

- Continuing emphasis on accountability at the state and national levels
- Changes in professional accreditation standards to outcomes measures
- Desire to improve learning experience for students and faculty
- Increasing number of courses and programs using technology
- Continuing costs of technology

Conclusions

- Data collected in e-learning and other systems can be used to improve academic analytics
- New sources of data offer opportunities to study perennial questions from different perspectives

Emergence of a New Data Set



How is this data different from typical assessment inputs?

- It's what the students actually did, as compared to self-reporting
- It captures the steps of the process rather than the outcome alone
- It's quantitative
- It's easy to collect this data across a large number of students
- It's systematic and ongoing

How can the data contribute towards assessment?

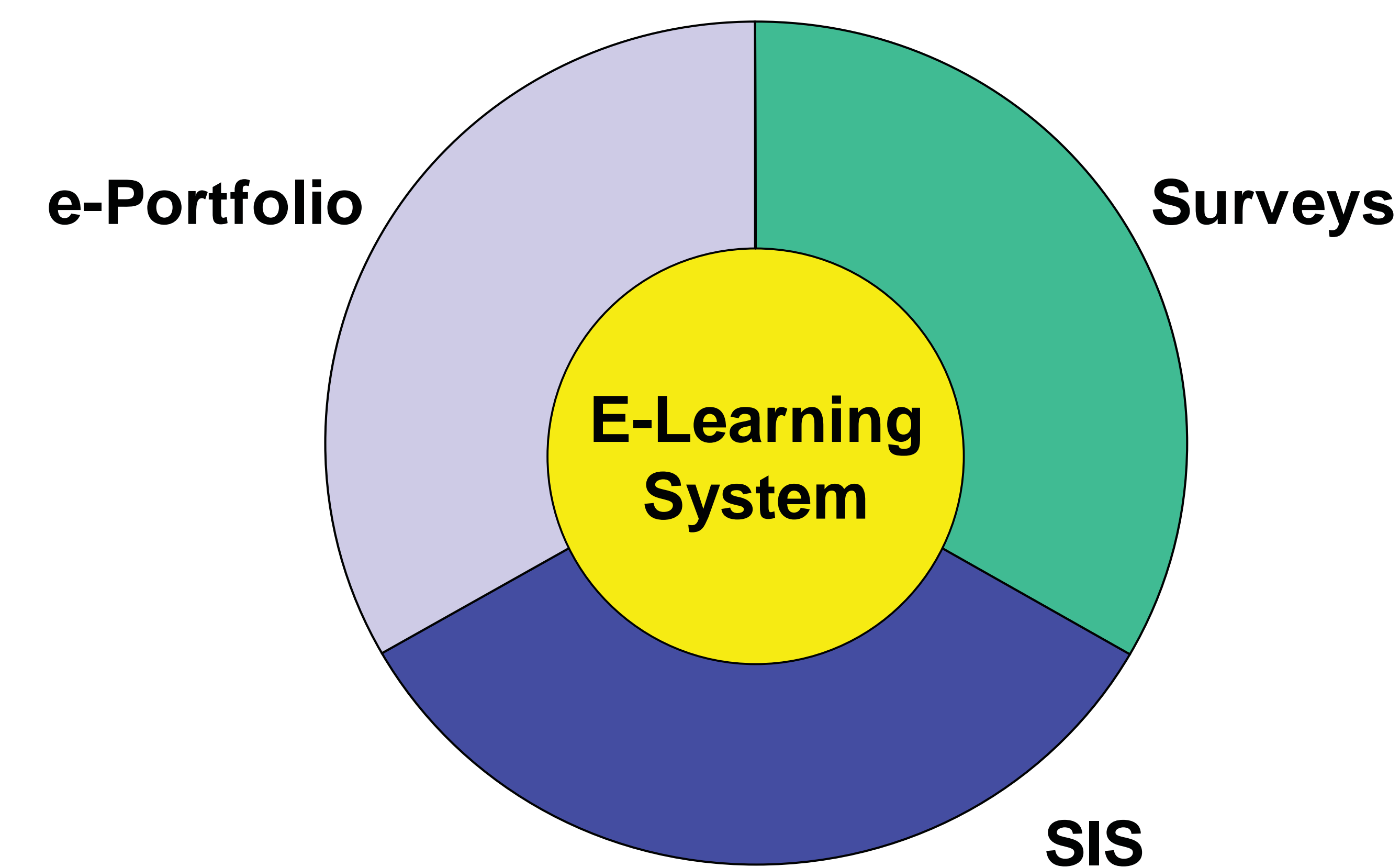
- See patterns and trends
- Tell a story that explains the results
- Identify areas of improvement and targeted change
- Evaluate impact of changes

Using a Learning System in Assessment

- New quantitative evidence
 - Complements surveys, grades, and portfolio data
 - Very detailed information about engagement and learning processes
- Reduces burden on faculty and staff
 - Automatically collects evidence
 - Leverages tools already in use

"Really, shouldn't the data from learning system play a role in assessing learning?! This is the system where the learning activities are actually occurring!"

- New evidence for...?
 - course-level reviews
 - internal and external program reviews
 - college-wide curricula reviews
 - institutional accreditation



Studying Retention in Online Courses Using Tracking Data

Data on student actions tracked within WebCT can be associated with data typically collected in a campus student information system to learn more about the behaviors and characteristics of successful online students.

Research Questions

- What is the relationship of student participation to persistence and achievement?
- Are there differences in persistence and achievement by student academic background and demographic variables?

Data Used in Study

- Aggregate number of and time on task for
 - content pages viewed
 - discussion posts viewed
 - original posts created
 - follow-up posts created
- Course Grade
- HS GPA
- SATV and SATM
- Gender

Results of Retention Study

- Students who spend more time viewing content and participating in discussions are more likely to persist
- Frequency and duration of content pages and discussions viewed are excellent predictors of student success
- Frequency and duration of original and follow-up discussions created are also good predictors of student success
- Only high school GPA is a good demographic predictor of student success

Why Do We Care?

- Faculty can use individual student tracking data to identify students who may be at risk early enough to intervene
- Students and advisors can make more informed choices based on time for success

Conclusions

- Data collected in e-learning and other systems can be used to improve academic analytics
- New sources of data offer opportunities to study perennial questions from different perspectives