Considerations for a Tech Enhanced Education User Forum

Summary:

The User Advisory Group, Instructional Technology SubCommittee and Faculty interested in collaborating across groups and schools about Technology Enhanced Education projects recommend an exploration and, assuming a satisfactory outcome, implementation of an online platform to allow the exchange of user advice on the educational technology tools that NYU supports. Tentative name: NYUser Forum. The advantages of this initiative are that it will give faculty a place to exchange tips and tricks in their own lexicon, crowd-source simple forms of user support, foster conversation about teaching across the University, and allow NYU Academic Technology units to gather information about user concerns and questions on a continuous basis. We imagine a question-and-answer form organized by tool; if possible, it will be accessible through the relevant K-Base article as well as directly.

In addition to a suitable platform, in order to succeed the initiative will need to be seeded with some common questions and answers (probably by the UAG and related groups), will need to be easy to find, and require minimal monitoring.

Moderation Model:

Moderators from the instructional technology side will need to:

- Comb out any items that violate FERPA or Copyright restrictions (the site can include information about what constitutes such violations as part of the process for making a post) - if a post contains material in violation, the moderator should hide the post and communicate with the author of the post, asking for revision before the post can be shown again
- remove anachronistic posts
- redirect posts to proper forum (police metadata)

Moderator’s review would be post-facto; the platform would need to generate a log of new posts for moderator(s) to check and give users the ability to flag/report potential violations

Granular List of User Needs for NYU User Forum Platform

- Available on and off campus and at all sites (not limited to VPN)
- Analytics for IT/Admin to draw reports from the platform
• Ability for admins to hide/show posts

• Ability for author of a post to “resolve” a thread by indicating the best answer

• Ability for authors to link to other posts in the platform (“see response X in forum y”)

• Ability for users to be badged as “expert” responders (in a particular area - eg, NYU Classes)

• Some way for users to favorite good answers so they are more prominent (see Stack Exchange or Piazza or Experts-Exchange)

• Ability to limit users to faculty and instructional technologists (not students, unless they are also faculty/admins)

• Posts and media to be searchable by any word that appears in a post

• Taxonomy - need some kind of directory; need some control over taxonomy - users will need a menu to choose from when tagging posts. We imagine a tools-based tagging system, with a simple top-line menu like “NYU Classes/WordPress/Albert/NYU Stream/etc” and more precise tool lists underneath

Possibilities for services to be included:

○ PILOT
  ■ NYU Classes (tool based)
  ■ WordPress (dashboard based)

○ FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION
  ■ Google Apps for Ed (or would that be redundant with the google forum?)
    • Drive
    • Docs
    • Groups
    • Sites
  ■ NYUStream
  ■ Qualtrics?
  ■ Albert?
  ■ Bobcat/Library Services?

○ There is a risk of nomenclature slippage between the NYU name (eg meetings tool) and the base-code name (eg BBB) for third party apps. Tentative solution: include the NYU name in our forum, but with link out from our forum to the platform-based forum; eg, from the Meetings Tool to BBB, or from google docs NYU forum to the larger google forum
- Opt-in notifications when an answer to a question is posted
- Admins need ability to redefine taxonomy/nomenclature as they change over time
- Ability to include links and images in posts
- Incentives for use - formalize activity with evaluation of users’ service contributions to the University (see also badging above)
- Password-protected by NYU net id
- Identification of posters by name, title, and affiliation (automatic, if possible)
- Service link personnel to monitor forums (see above) and provide answers when necessary (by pointing to a k-base article). Include notice in Forum that, if you find a bug, please put in service link ticket. Should be circular; that is, the user can post k-base links in the forum and the k-base articles link to the appropriate forum (eg, “for user perspectives on this tool, see [link])
- Link from the platform in question to the forum (eg from NYU Classes to the NYU Classes forum)
- Multiple means to find the platform - e.g., both from the NYU Classes and WordPress platforms (for pilot) and from wherever K-base links are posted and from the appropriate tab in NYU Home
- Guidelines/template for submission - need an easy form for submitting posts, with some caveats (see above re moderation) and drop-down menu for tagging to correct forum

Next Steps

- In collaboration with ATS, review possible platforms for delivering NYUser Forum
- Run a limited pilot that includes only the NYU Classes and WordPress platforms. The pilot might start from seeding by the UAG Executive Committee, include the larger UAG and the NYU Instructional Technology community, and then expand to the University at large and to additional platforms.
- Some tools for consideration of a pilot were discussed and captured in this document (HERE) as possible options for the platform.
Prioritized Needs

**Must Have to Launch**

- Knowledge Base Integration
- Moderation Capacities
- guarded, limited users, not for students (SIS integrated)
- taxonomy (Categories, tagging)
- ability to respond back to a post
- ability to add links and images in posts
- Password-protected by NYU net id
- Link from the platform in question to the forum (eg from NYU Classes to the NYU Classes forum)

**Need to Optimize Use (could be rolled in during pilot)**

- Badging
- searchable words

**Nice to Have (platform can serve is basic purpose without these features)**

- Ability to run reports
- Identification of posters by name, title, and affiliation (automatic, if possible)