Veterinary Educator Collaborative 2011

Four years ago, Dr. Theresa M. Bernardo wrote: 'New means of collaborating to organize, share, and impart knowledge are proliferating and will be brought to bear on education, research, and service. We will have the tools at hand; we must also inculcate the necessary behaviors to operate more successfully in the future.' (Bernardo, 2006, JVME) Today, four years later: We have those tools at hand!

The Veterinary Educator Collaborative. An initiative to develop an organization and system for sharing expertise, teaching resources and products was defined at the Educational Symposium hosted by AAVMC in March 2008. During the symposium, these priorities were identified:

1. Select case-authoring software and develop a national system that would allow construction, archiving and sharing of teaching cases.
2. Develop a national peer-review system for a veterinary medical teaching product, particularly Web-based materials.
3. Develop effective practices to assess outcomes, including approaches and tools for clinical competency assessment. Establish a searchable database of competencies mapped to AVMA-COE competencies.

Solutions. Today, 2 1/2 years later, the technological solutions for those tasks have matured. They are well-tested, easy to use, supported by a huge community of users and professionals and they are free (open-source).

A powerful system for sharing expertise, teaching resources and products based on the Moodle Community Hub Framework is described at: www.VetEd.net. With such a system, we can connect all veterinary schools' Virtual Learning Environments into one super-productive veterinary learning network. Each school will be able to promote its courses, projects and communities of practice (databases, wikis, forums, etc.) to a local or global veterinary community; each student, veterinarian or faculty member will be able to search for content, networks or activities of his/her interest; and everybody will be able to collaborate in a fast, safe and convenient manner.

The system, as it is presented at VetEd.net, can provide these solutions:

Case studies. Elaborate branching simulations can be done by the Moodle Lesson module and shared across institutions through the Community Hub. For example, a simulation may start by presenting a few symptoms. Students could choose to order a test or do nothing. If the student orders a test, each branch would present the results and ask the student what to do next. Each page could include an option to switch from diagnosis to treatment, which would branch the student to a different set of options.

Peer-review system. The review system can have two components: a well-structured peer review and a more open system for rating and commenting.

- **The Peer-Review system** is an independent site where each group of reviewers and each item to review have separate reviewing/working rooms. Each reviewing room is equipped with all forms and other tools for individual/anonymous review or collaborative feedback.
- **System for rating and comments** will give options to all or just selected users to rate and comment on courses published at the Community Hub and to leave comments inside each course. An example is available at http://hub.veted.net.

Assessment. Very sophisticated tools for summative and formative assessment are integral parts of the Moodle Learning Management System and can be combined with offline assessment practices. In addition, E-portfolios, a valuable learning and assessment tool, can be fully integrated in the Moodle network.