

Ep. 022: What's New with ReggieNet - Spring 2017

Podcast: <https://prodev.illinoisstate.edu/podcast/2017/ep022.shtml>

ReggieNet, Illinois State University's customized learning management system, received a significant upgrade over the spring break of 2017. CTLT's [Charles Bristow](#), one of the instructional designers who helps faculty use ReggieNet, joins us to talk about new features.

Transcript

JIM: Hi there. I'm Jim.

CHARLES: And I'm Charles.

JIM: Let's Talk Teaching. Welcome to Let's Talk Teaching a podcast from the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology here at Illinois State University. I'm Jim Gee, Happy Spring Break. This is a special episode of Let's Talk Teaching. And we're talking about what's new in ReggieNet, our learning management system here on campus. And joining me today, returning to the podcast to talk about this is Charles Bristow. Hi, Charles.

CHARLES: Hi, Jim, how are you?

JIM: I'm doing fine. So, we're recording this actually the week before spring break. But we know we want to actually a week in a day before spring break begins. But we know that we want to talk about what's due in ReggieNet, because on March 13, ReggieNet will be taking the day off and getting an upgrade. And it's going to bring a lot of improvements we hope to for both faculty and staff, it's going to prove some things under the hood. So, we want to explore that today. But before we get into that, this isn't just something that happens. You and the rest of the regiment team have been working on this for a fair bit of time, right?

CHARLES: That's correct. We, we actually started looking into planning this upgrade way back at the towards the end of last spring semester. Okay. And we were originally going to try and do it at the end of summer. But it turned out that the upgrade didn't get released soon enough for us to do it then. And so that then kind of pushed it back. And then we had to sit down and, and try and figure out okay, when are we going to be able to do this upgrade, because it does require taking ReggieNet offline, probably for the better part of the day. But that meant we had to pick a time to do it that was going to be least disruptive.

JIM: And that's harder to do nowadays, because there is the winter intersession, which we talked about a little bit in our last episode. That's kind of the history and kind of an explanation of why we're doing it over spring break. And it's not ideal. But for the vast majority of users, both students and faculty, is it fair to say that they they'll notice changes because it's going to look differently? And we'll talk about that, but, but their data is isn't going to change, right?

CHARLES: That's correct. Everything should be as it was before the upgrade, it's just going to look different. And there will be some new features involved as well.

JIM: Right.

CHARLES: But everything that's in there now should be there when we come back,

JIM: Right. And one of the new features, which we'll talk about here in a minute is that there is a new gradebook that's going to be introduced. But faculty members, instructors don't have to use that right away, they they're still going to use the one that they are already using for this semester. Right?

CHARLES: There is a new gradebook that will be available. But we certainly don't necessarily recommend switching tools midstream in the middle of the semester, but it will be available for summer and, and well, we'll talk about it more.

JIM: Yeah, I was going to say we can, we can talk more about the timing and stuff like that, but that there is a new gradebook with new features and stuff like that. Because I know that's something that a lot of faculty members have asked about. So, can you give us just a general rundown? Maybe start with the student experience? What is that going to be different? How's that going to be different,

CHARLES: The student experience is primarily going to be different through just the overall changes in the interface. As far as functionality goes, particularly within a course site, they're not going to see much in the way of, of any functional differences. It's primarily going to be the kind of the look and feel of the whole system that that they're going to notice in particular.

JIM: Okay. Okay. And we should probably talk a little bit about mobile devices.

CHARLES: Right, so that this new interface is actually much more I've gone blank on the phrase. Responsively designed. That's what I'm looking for. Thank you, Jim.

JIM: That's what I'm here for.

CHARLES: So, it's, it's a better experience on a mobile device.

JIM: Okay.

CHARLES: That being said, we still don't recommend doing certain things on a mobile device, particularly taking tests and quizzes online, we still strongly recommend using a regular computer for, for that function.

JIM: One of the bits of feedback I get about ReggieNet, when I'm either teaching or in other circumstances, when it comes up and I'm talking to students is that they want an app, they want to read unit app. And that's and that opens up a whole other. So, what's that app like experience? Well, we're not going to have an app for Reggie yet, but we're getting closer to that with, with a more mobile friendly layout. So, if they want to quickly jump on and check the messaging tool, if they're messages from their

instructor, or they want to check when an assignment is due, or if their grades have been posted yet that's something that those are tasks that they certainly can do without, without concern.

CHARLES: Right and, and the interface will just look better on a on a mobile phone. You won't have to shrink down a tiny screen to try and find things.

JIM: So, yeah.

CHARLES: Yeah, less pinching and zooming as it were.

JIM: Okay, so from the instructor standpoint, a lot of the changes that are happening, that are not just bug fixes and stuff like that a lot of the changes are going to be geared more towards the instructor's perspective. So, what can the instructor expect to see, that's different.

CHARLES: So, the instructor will obviously also see this, the new interface. But there, there are some new features that that are very nice, particularly in the Lessons tool. The Lessons tool will now allow you to format your content in both sections and columns. And you can mix and match those. So, it gives you a much more flexible layout of content that you want to put into a Lessons page.

JIM: Right.

CHARLES: Makes it look a lot nicer. So, we're kind of excited about that. And then there's another new feature as part of the Lessons tool called a checklist, which allows you to set up a list of items, and then the students can go in and check those off. You can do it as a completion checklist. And then from the instructor point of view, you can see a list of all the students and what they've checked off in in a very simple view. So, it's kind of a nice tool for potentially tracking progress or...

JIM: We do. We actually have one scheduled during our Spring Institute. Right, you know, if you're, if they're doing a project based if you're doing some sort of project based learning, and you've created a lesson in the lesson tool, to accompany that to walk them through step by step or, or to make sure that they you know that there are certain things that you need to prepare at this point that Yeah, I think that's a great. I mean, I can imagine myself using it in the classes I teach. So, I'm looking forward to it. And I haven't made an extensive use of the Lessons tool. We should mention, though. And I know a couple other faculty members who've asked me about this recently, after spring break. So, in the last half of the spring semester, we do have a couple of ReggieNet lessons workshops, I think scheduled. So, people go to our website at CTLT.IllinoisState.edu. Oh, that's right. Okay.

CHARLES: I believe it's on Thursday.

JIM: Right.

CHARLES: But I don't remember the time off the top my head.

JIM: Yeah. Now that's okay, people can go to our website at CTLT.IllinoisState.edu. And you click on the workshops link, and then it'll take you to the Spring semester. And you can, you can see all that you can also find a list of workshops, if you visit our ReggieNet support pages, it's just a different way of getting to the same, same place ultimately on the website. So, that's the Lessons tool. There are a couple of tweaks, I remember reading about to some of the other tools, I know that the schedule tool is just being renamed.

CHARLES: That's right, it's being renamed to calendar, which is in our case is actually a reversion to what we used to call it right. So, and I think it's a better name personally, yeah, there's also a change in the Resources tool, where rather than deleting an item, you now just put it into trash, okay. And the nice thing about that is, trash is recoverable, it's not gone for good. So, if you accidentally remove something, you can still get it back without having to re upload it or, or recreate it. That's great. So, that's a nice little feature. Those are the main kind of new features that are available. There's also a new question type in Tests and Quizzes, it's an image hotspot.

JIM: Oh really.

CHARLES: Where you can upload an image and mark out one or more hotspots that the student then has to click on.

JIM: So, if it was an image that was a map or something like that, or if your, your diagram Or image of a face, if you're doing something with anatomy or something like that label these parts or whatever. That's great. That's great. Well click on the part that is...

CHARLES: Or diagram. Click on this.

JIM: Yes.

CHARLES: Thing in the image.

JIM: Then there was something that interested me that I saw in the statistics tool, which is or something like that, that you were able to generate individual reports now for of student activity. Do I remember something like that?

CHARLES: Well, that's, that's always been there. There is actually there's also a new feature in the Tests and Quizzes tool that allows you to there's a, it's called the Student Activity Log.

JIM: That's it.

CHARLES: Where, yeah, right now, what we have is there's an event log that you can pull up that shows all the students and, and when they've started and completed assessments, but now there's a student activity log that gives you somewhat different information per student, where you can see how they did on each quiz that they've submitted and how long they took, what percentage they got, what their raw score was. So, another way of generating some overall information for a particular student to kind of allow you to gauge progress or, or gauge how the student is doing. Yeah, in that particular tool.

JIM: There is one other change that's happening. And I think it's it involves this thing called SCORM. What is SCORM?

CHARLES: I should have known you were going to ask me that I think I can never remember exactly. Yeah, what it stands for.

JIM: What does it do? What is it?

CHARLES: Basically, it's, it's a standardized format for packaging content, usually in some kind of module or something like that. And in our case, the primary use is from people that use a program that we have called Soft Chalk. Well, actually, it's Soft Chalk Create. Is the name of the program that has interactive activities that can be scored. And, and the idea is that if this is uploaded correctly into ReggieNet, you can actually capture those scores in the gradebook. The change in version that we're undergoing means that the process that we've used to upload the SCORM modules to ReggieNet is changing, unfortunately. But at the moment, it appears that that affecting limited users and we're going to be, we will have reached out to those users right at time this podcast airs, to make sure that that they know what's going on. And we have a process in place to get them updated, and things fixed.

JIM: Yeah. So, the takeaway here is that if you are already using SCORM modules in your teaching for this semester, spring 2017, for that, by the time you would be listening to this podcast, you already will have been contacted. But if if you haven't been or if you're planning to use SCORM modules, in subsequent semesters, then you'll want to go to our website and or give us a call,

CHARLES: I would say don't go to the website, give us a call.

JIM: Give us a call. Okay.

CHARLES: Definitely contact us and directly and make sure that things are fixed.

JIM: Okay. And so just to kind of wrap things up, I guess the other thing is that, again, this has been an ongoing process. And it's and we are a week and a day out from when this upgrade happens. And I know things are still being tested and still being worked on. So, it's not like it's you know it right up to the last minute we're doing things, which means that the documentation, the, you know, updating all of our support documentation or whatnot is going to take a little while. But people are always welcome to call us if they can't find something on our website that they're looking for.

CHARLES: That's certainly true. We are in the process of updating all our handouts and the How-To videos. Yeah, but it's going to take a little bit of time to get those all up. And we kind of got a prioritized list of what we think is, okay, what do we need to get done right away, and then some of the ones that can,

JIM: I mean, not...

CHARLES: Take a little bit.

JIM: ...not to get too deep into how we make the sausage here at CTLT. And how we create all of this stuff. But it's actually in some ways more challenging, I would suspect, to do an upgrade like this where there are a lot of little things that are changing as opposed to a wholesale upgrade. In that there are a lot of you know, just what you click on the thing that you click on is the same thing. But it has a different name now,

CHARLES: Right? Yeah, there's a few little name changes here and there and some of the menus and, and so all of those things have to be found in our handouts and changed.

JIM: Yeah, I think having been had the opportunity to look at it a little bit. In the development, the developer environment, I think faculty are going to, for the most part respond really well to this. So, me of the little things that just didn't, that just made a little harder to use, I think have really been addressed in this latest upgrade from the Sakai community. Even just organizing your favorites list. At the top of the screen now your, your favorite courses that you're using this semester, this this makes much more sense now. I was thrilled to see that and that there are little icons and stuff. It just is easier to filter through menus and stuff like that. So, So is there anything else that we need to emphasize as part of this upgrade?

CHARLES: Well, we could talk a little bit more in depth about the gradebook.

JIM: Oh, that's right. Yeah, so why don't we do that.

CHARLES: So, there is a new gradebook coming. We've been using a tool that that's been labeled Gradebook 2

JIM: Yes.

CHARLES: First started using Sakai, here on campus, or Regina as it's more commonly known.

JIM: Yes.

CHARLES: But the, the Sakai community has developed a new gradebook version. And the old Gradebook version is no longer being supported. So, we will be switching to this new version. It looks nice, it has pretty much all the same functionality as the old gradebook. And it's actually got a few new features that instructors will like when you're looking at it acts a little bit more like a spreadsheet,

JIM: Right.

CHARLES: As far as when you're looking at it from a grade entry point of view.

JIM: And when you say that, specifically, I think you can now integrate in that sort of spreadsheet view. Is that right?

CHARLES: That's correct.

JIM: Okay.

CHARLES: One nice feature is you can now enter grades that are higher than the maximum point value. So, you don't have to say if you do have extra credit on an exam or something like that, you don't have to set up a separate item to enter those points. To make some people happy.

JIM: I think so.

CHARLES: There is also a way to view the total points that a student has earned so far, in the course of the semester. That's something that that faculty have been asking for, for quite some time.

JIM: Yeah.

CHARLES: And so, we can now say, here it was. they'll be and just the, the overall look, the way the columns are displayed it actually you can choose whether to group things by category, if you're using categories that and it shows kind of their, their grade so far for that particular category as a as an extra column. So, there's some nice new features in there that that we did not have in in Gradebook 2.

JIM: The one thing that I know we're going to get questions about. And so, we tried to anticipate this. So, again, faculty members, instructors don't have to change for spring, we wouldn't want that to happen, we recommend against that. They have the option of using the old we'll call it the old Gradebook or the new gradebook. For simplicity's sake, they have the option of using either one for the summer. But the plans right now are for fall, what?

CHARLES: To be using the new gradebook exclusively.

JIM: Okay, so in other words, they won't have that old version of the gradebook available. And if they want to go back and look at grades in in past courses, the new gradebook, there's a process will help them through that. And

CHARLES: Well, at least initially, for some time, the old Gradebook tool will still be present.

JIM: It'll still work. In other words.

CHARLES: And it will still work if it's already in a course. Okay, but it's going to become what we call stealth, which means it will no longer be available to be added to a course

JIM: A new course?

CHARLES: Right.

JIM: Okay.

CHARLES: We will have lots of workshops.

JIM: Oh, yeah, no. And yes, I'm sure we will have I'm sure we will have lots of workshops, a disproportionate number of grade book workshops. But I think that it from what little I've seen it, I think it's fairly intuitive, isn't it?

CHARLES: It is it's not too bad to navigate through the settings.

JIM: Yeah.

CHARLES: Because most, as I said most of the settings are, are similar to what they are now, it's just a different interface on how you access.

JIM: Yes. And I think we would agree is probably best, you know, I know this was part of the calculation, it's probably best to if this transition has to be made, and eventually, we have to use this gradebook exclusively because the old one is no longer being supported. Right.

CHARLES: And eventually, at some future update, it will be taken out entirely

JIM: Right. And so, we figured it's better to do that at the beginning of an academic year. Because again, we're not thrilled about making changes in spring, but you know, we have to do it this semester. So, anything else we need to know?

CHARLES: I think that's mostly it.

JIM: Okay. Charles, thank you so much for being here.

CHARLES: Well, thanks for the opportunity to share what's coming out in Regina.

JIM: Okay. And that's all the time we have for this week's episode of Let's Talk Teaching. You can find out more about what we talked about, including about how to find ReggieNet support on our website at CTLT.IllinoisState.edu. And we'll link to some of the resources we've been talking about today on today's show page. For Charles Bristow and everyone here at the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology. I'm Jim Gee until we talk again, Happy Teaching!