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<u>Chapter 2 Dorm Post</u>

Here are two articles I found that are useful for understanding our options for course management systems. The first is titled **Open Source vs. Vendor-Provided Software: Comparing Them Side-by-Side**. It is located [here](#).

The second is titled *7 Things You Should Know About LMS Alternatives*. It is located [here](#).

I found both articles by using the EduCause database. I'm attaching both articles as PDF files that I annotated on my iPad (highlighted information).

The [Open Source vs. Vendor-Provided](#) article does a good job summarizing the benefits and challenges of each platform. There are trade offs with each choice, but clearly the decisions about which way to go will depend on the user's needs and situation.

Vendor-Provided software has to be commercially licensed for a fee, but you get access to technical support and other services. Open source software is free, but basically you are your own for support and need to be prepared to handle any technical issues yourself. A vendor-provided product is expected to have an ease of use and there is also a level of accountability that the software will work as advertised. The same guarantees are not made for open course software, but the frequency of updates may be quicker due to the level of collaboration and interest from the user and developer community.

The strength of the open source option is the community though. If you chose a open source software with a vibrant user community, you have a powerful bank of knowledge to tap when needed. It is also possible to customize an open source solution to fit your needs more easily than it would be to modify a vendor product.

Basically, each option has its pros and cons and they need to be evaluated against what your needs are (ex. size of organization, level of on-staff technical support, technical knowledge of users and support staff, financial budgets, etc.

I am likely to go with an Open Source option for my class management system. My school doesn't have Moodle yet, but I have emailed my tech director about it and he has been interested in experimenting for some time he said. I also have been looking at some free online systems, like Ecto Learning that seem to be very feature-rich and easy to use.

The [LMS Alternatives](#) article was interesting because it discusses how a course management system doesn't have to be an application created for that purpose. The first course I took in my MAED program talked about "creative repurposing" of technology for educational uses. In that vein, the professor utilized a Wikispaces web site as our course home rather than Angel. It worked very well I felt. We used the discussion forums to respond to readings and share our thoughts. Individual wiki pages were created for each lecture and there were places designated for us to post our assignments.

An interesting point of the article is that students may be better served in developing their digital literacy skills for the workplace by actually using the Web 2.0 tools as part of of course management and instruction.

The article highlights that one of the pitfalls is that it may take more time to set up a course in this way

and aggregate all of the tools and information. One benefit is the portability though. Your course information isn't locked into a propietary software and can be easily changed or adapted.

As I am familiar with using wikis, I have considered using a wiki or blog for my course management system. I could see it providing me a nice way to structure lessons and projects for students. A wiki also provides an easy way for students to collaborate. They can be made editors of particular pages and share their work. It also would be easier to customize the look and feel of a wiki to suit my needs than it would be a commercial or open-source course management software.

Attachments:
[Comparing Them Side by Side.pdf](#)
[ELI7062.pdf](#)