

On The Cutting Edge

Showcasing *Distance Learning* in the *NC Community College System*



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Moodle Assessment Released: Moodle Viable Alternative to Blackboard

Moodle open source course management system (CMS) has been found to be a viable alternative to Blackboard; the proprietary CMS used by the majority of North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) institutions. This conclusion was reached by a team of NCCCS staff using three independent research techniques -

each of which verified the findings. The three techniques included functionality comparisons, end of term survey results by both instructors and students, and case studies of four NCCCS institutions that have migrated from Blackboard to Moodle.

The study established that the CMSs had similar overall application functionality and the faculty and students seem equally satisfied with the CMSs ease of use. The case studies indicated that migration from Blackboard to Moodle is challenging and resource intensive at the college level but the four Moodle colleges are uniformly satisfied with the results and report reduction in overall costs once the migration is completed.

The study identified lack of “instructor comfort” with both CMSs suggesting more effective instructor training is needed.

However, this study did not fully address the issues of technology and funding framed in terms of scalability, compatibility, and interoperability of all learning technology applications used in the NCCCS. The team recommends a determination of the technical and financial solutions required for the next stage of CMS utilization within the North Carolina Community College System.



To access the full report, go to <http://oscmoodlereport.wordpress.com/>

Currently, four community colleges are using Moodle exclusively and 22 others are piloting Moodle or they are in a transition phase to Moodle.

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The North Carolina Learning Object Repository (NCLOR) Benefits Instructors and Colleges

Repositories are popping up all around the world, changing the face of information creation, management, and preservation. These repositories can be as simple as a single institution maintaining digital collections of scholarly works or in-house publications such as dissertations or as complex as multi-dimensional collections spanning dozens of institutions ranging from K-12 to universities. The NCLOR fits into the latter category. NCLOR is an ambitious project spawned out of the NCCCS, yet emphasizing contribution collaboration from K-20.

The NCLOR offers instructors a myriad of professional and personal benefits. It provides an online, centralized location to store teaching resources. There are over 6600 learning objects and assets in the NCLOR. Direct benefits to instructors and colleges include:

- Preservation of resources
- A place to house and post course materials, dissertations, scholarly articles and other publications to share with the academic community
- The opportunity to provide peers with shared resources to enhance courses and engage students resulting in positive performance outcomes
- Collaboration; resulting in cost savings and improved efficiency in

teaching environments throughout the NCCCS

- Copyright protection and digital rights management
- Personal and professional recognition for contributors
- College and/or faculty acclamation
- Alternative to publishing
- Seamless integration with learning management systems, such as Moodle or Blackboard
- Thirty-eight (38) Virtual Learning Community (VLC) curriculum and continuing education courses contain interactive learning objects

NCLOR is now open for business; accessible to 43 NCCCS institutions who have already installed the building block for their course management system.



Visit the website www.explorethelor.org. Login as a guest and Explore the LOR. Create an account and contribute materials to share with other academic faculty.

Daily happenings, a link to materials and contacts, and general information is found at the NCLOR blog <http://nclor.wordpress.com>.

Contact: Dr. Ralph Kaplan, Director, NCLOR, NCCCS, at kaplanr@nccommunitycolleges.edu

Tremendous e-Learning Growth

The North Carolina Community College System has experienced tremendous growth with an increase of over 20,000 new students this Fall.

Of the 860,000 students in the community college system, there were 588,787 duplicated* distance learning enrollments in curriculum courses for 2008-09. Of that number, 310,058 enrollments were in fully online classes (36% of the total). The number of enrollments in blended courses (a mixture of online and traditional coursework) for the same period was 261,740 (30.4%), which indicates a tremendous growth in hybrid/blended courses.

Total distance learning enrollments for 2008-09 increased by 37.9% over the previous year. Total enrollments for the system were up by 9.8% over the previous year.

The total distance learning enrollments for Continuing Education courses (not degree credits) increased 27.5% from 2007-08 to 2008-09, with 57,254 of the 80,822 being online enrollments (70.8%).

The unduplicated** number of students enrolled in NCCCS distance education curriculum courses for 2008-09 is 245,429 students. Of those students, 105,633 (43%) are taking fully online courses and 88,514 (42.9%) are enrolled in blended courses.

* Duplicated enrollments – a student taking 3 distance courses is counted 3 times.

** Unduplicated – a student is counted only once even if he/she is taking more than one distance course.

Contact: Wanda Barker, Director of Distance Learning, NCCCS, at barkerw@ncccommunitycolleges.edu



EASTERN REGIONAL WORKSHOP:
Friday, Nov. 6, 2009, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM,
Carteret Community College
Workshop Focus: Innovative Resources
for Distance Learning Instructors

Hands-on sessions will include Moodle Basics, Best Practices, Social Networking, Assessing DL, Podcasting, Blogging, iTunes & YouTube along with updates on distance learning initiatives of the NCCCS including the NC Learning Object Repository (NCLOR).

To register, email Pre-Ah Hill at hillp@carteret.edu or call 252-222-6397 by Monday, Nov. 2, 2009, and complete the [Eastern Regional Registration Form](#). [Click here to view the agenda](#).

WESTERN REGIONAL WORKSHOP:
Friday, Nov. 6, 2009, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM,
Davidson County Community College
Workshop Focus: If It's Free, It's For Me:
Leveraging our Resources in an
Economic Recession

Come learn about free technologies, tools, and resources available to faculty; *Show and Tell* session by faculty showcasing best practices, techniques and tips; updates on NCCCS distance learning initiatives including the NC Learning Object Repository (NCLOR).

To register, email Kelly Kirk at kkirk@davidsoncocc.edu or call 336-224-791 by Monday, Nov. 2, 2009, and complete the [Western Regional Registration form](#).

Study Finds that Online Education Beats the Classroom

Community colleges throughout our nation are experiencing record breaking enrollments of students. These high enrollments include students seeking more affordable educations, those enrolled in school while working at part time and full time jobs, and students seeking retraining after the loss of a job. To accommodate all

of these factors and the lack of enough traditional classrooms for students, more students have turned to online courses that allow them to attend college not bound by time and close proximity to the school.

The quality and engagement of online courses has changed dramatically in the last 10 years. Courses that used to be flat, often boring, text-based experiences have evolved into efficient well-structured learning experiences that include digitized resources, chat rooms for students and instructors, online library resources, and other enhancements to engage students and promote learning. Students have embraced the new role that technology takes in the learning environment.

Evidence of this change in education is found in a recent study conducted by SRI International for the US Department of Education, reported by Steve Lohr in the New York Times in which online and traditional classroom learning was compared. The study covered a 12-year span from 1996 to 2008 and involved students in K-12, college, and continuing education environments. After analyzing 99 studies of quantitative comparisons of online and traditional classroom performance of the same courses, researchers concluded, "On average, students in online learning conditions performed better than those receiving face-to-face instruction."

The study's lead author, SRI International Educational Psychologist Barbara Means said, "The study's major significance lies in demonstrating that online learning today is not just better than nothing – it actually tends to be better than conventional instruction."

For more information, access this article at <http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/19/study-finds-that-online-education-beats-the-classroom/?em>

Contact: Kathy Davis, Distance Learning Specialist, NCCCS, at davisk@ncccommunitycolleges.edu

Register for the Distance Learning Directors Institute, November 17, 2009, 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., NCCCS Office

Contact: Wanda Barker, NCCCS Director of Distance Learning
barker@ncccommunitycolleges.edu

Surry Community College – Moving to Moodle

Surry is in the process of moving from Blackboard to Moodle. The planned two-year phase over is scheduled for Fall, 2010. Surry's approach has been to provide monthly training sessions on using the various Moodle features with the main course content being converted by Distance Education office staff. Group, division, and individual training sessions are being offered to meet the needs of all online instructors. These training sessions have been a success confirmed by the positive student and instructor feedback during this transition period from Blackboard to Moodle. Significant credit for Surry's online program success is due to the work of the adjunct online instructors who teach for Surry each semester. Since these adjunct instructors are not local to the community and often cannot travel to participate in the Moodle training, an online Moodle instructor's course was offered in mid-July. The online Moodle instructor course was developed by Dr. Candace Holder, Director, Distance Education, at Surry.

The course begins with an overview of online instructional design tips and follows the new Virtual Learning Community (VLC) guidelines. The training focus is on developing a course that meets the "Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs," endorsed by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the Southern Association of

Colleges and Schools (SACs), regional accrediting agencies. Using the VLC online course design template allows Surry to easily meet these standards.

Contact: Dr. Candace Holder, Director, Distance Education, Surry Community College, at holderc@surry.edu; or Dr. Linda Nelms, Vice President of Student Services, Wayne Community College, at lmnelms@wayne.edu

Blackboard Workshops for NCCCS Faculty and Distance Learning Administrators

Blackboard will present workshops for NCCCS faculty and distance learning administrators on November 18, 2009 via video conference technology. To participate in these workshops, contact Cindy Pannill at pannillc@ncccommunitycolleges.edu to schedule your college's video conferencing room.

Workshop Topics

- 9am – **Administrators Workshop:** Upgrading to Release 9
- 10am - **Administrators Workshop:** Enabling Student Collaboration & Social Learning
- 11am - **Faculty Workshop:** Creating Customized Learning Paths and Identifying Students at Risk with the Early Warning System (focusing on Release 8)
- 1pm - **Faculty Workshop:** Creating Engaging Courses
- 2pm - **Faculty Workshop:** Release 9 Best Practices

Contact: Wanda Barker, Director of Distance Learning, NCCCS, at barker@ncccommunitycolleges.edu

Montgomery and Halifax Community Colleges Recognized for Exceptional Digital Technology Support
<http://www.centerdigitaled.com/story.php?id=109181>

Wikis and Chat Rooms: Online Collaborative Projects for Nursing Students

Blue Ridge Community College nursing instructors introduced the use of two wikis for freshmen nursing students to replace a requirement of a written paper. The initial wiki assignment for incoming students is an "Introduce Yourself" wiki in which a student creates a personal webpage. The wiki encourages social networking and serves as a valuable scaffolding exercise. Students teach themselves the rudimentary skills of constructing a wiki: making a new page, creating text, inserting a picture, hyperlinking to a website, and creating navigational links.

A wiki is a type of collaborative software program that typically allows web pages to be created and collaboratively edited using a common web browser. Websites running such programs are themselves referred to as wikis. (Source: Wikipedia)

These skills then enable the students to perform the group project; an online nursing case study. Five students are assigned to each group. The resulting wikis are well designed and very detailed. The students are furnished with a grading rubric, which assesses content and affective behaviors, including intergroup dynamics. Instructors can verify student participation through the "history" tab in the Moodle Wiki.

Last semester, students evaluated the wiki project favorably, stating that they found the asynchronicity of the project convenient.

One synchronous online venue that nursing students have embraced is the Moodle Chat Room, run by the instructors on the evening before hospital or agency clinical experiences. Each participant has a screen where he or she can type in a box, see the postings for the entire group, and see icons of participants. Students can obtain new sources of information, seek clarification

about clinical assignments, and ask questions about their clinical write-ups.

Contact: Pamela Phillips, Nursing Instructor, Blue Ridge Community College, at p_keull@blueridge.edu and Alice Crisp, Director for Instructional Technology and Distance Learning Support, Blue Ridge Community College, at alicec@blueridge.edu

New VLC Courses Now Available

The Virtual Learning Community (VLC) hosts 38 new courses in its online library complete with interactive learning objects in Blackboard 7.3 and Moodle 1.9 course management systems. These new courses expand the choices for instructors and students as the NC Community College System experiences record breaking growth in the online environment.

The VLC offers 248 curriculum and 38 continuing education online courses. There are 33 complete degree programs in the VLC. The VLC centers will develop 9 new continuing education courses; 10 new STEM courses; 4 new developmental courses; and edit three older continuing education courses in 2009-2010.

The State Board of Community Colleges awarded course development centers to Wayne and Wake Technical community colleges in August 2009. VLC Support Centers were awarded to Surry, Wake and Fayetteville Technical community colleges. These centers draw on the expertise of instructors from colleges throughout our system.

Courses are developed in Blackboard (Bb) version 7.3. To provide greater access and flexibility for instructors, all new VLC courses will also be converted to Moodle, an open source course management system.



A new feature of VLC courses is the addition of interactive learning objects. These self-contained learning objects provide interactive content, goals, objectives, and assessments delivered with the latest software enhancements including Camtasia, SoftChalk, and Flash. These learning objects are not course specific and can be used throughout the VLC in any related content area. Instructors can add learning objects to their courses by providing a link in their course to the resource in the NCLOR (NC Learning Object Repository).

VLC courses are available to all NCCCS instructors. If you have not used a recent VLC course, preview the new courses and experience the interactive learning objects for yourself.

To preview these courses and/or to have them downloaded to your college's server, simply contact your distance learning administrator.

For additional information on the VLC, go to the following link:
<http://vlc.nccommunitycolleges.edu>.

The following table lists newly developed VLC curriculum and continuing education courses.

New VLC Online Courses	
	New Curriculum Courses
ACA 090	Study Skills
ACA 112	Intro to Distance Learning
BIO 175	General Microbiology
BIO 275	Microbiology
CHM 251	Organic Chemistry I
CHM 252	Organic Chemistry II
CIS 070	Fundamentals of Computing
EDU 118	Teacher Assoc. Principles and Practices

EDU 222	Learners with Behavior Disorders (formerly EDU 147)
EDU 223	Specific Learning Disabilities (formerly EDU 148)
EDU 235	School Age Development & Program
EDU 247	Sensory and Physical Disabilities
EDU 248	Developmental Delays
EDU 275	Effective Teacher Training
EDU 285	Internship Experience - School Age
ENG 070	Basic Language Skills
ENG 080	Writing Foundations
MAT 050	Basic Math Skills
MAT 060	Essential Mathematics
MAT 280	Linear Algebra
PHY 152	College Physics II
PHY 252	General Physics II
	New Continuing Education Courses
ANS 3011	Veterinary Assisting
EDU 3000	Lateral Entry - Orientation
EGY 3000	Renewable Energy
FLI 3717	Conversational Spanish for Healthcare Workers
HOS 3060	Meetings and Convention Planning Introduction
HRD 3001	Employability Skills
HSE 3264	Activity Director - Basic
MKT 3438	Customer Service
MLS 3808	Leadership
	Edited Courses
BUS 110	Introduction to Business
CIS 111	Basic PC Literacy
ENG 111	Expository Writing
MAT115	Mathematical Models
MAT 140	Survey of Mathematics
MAT 161	College Algebra
PSY 150	General Psychology
PSY 241	Developmental Psychology
SOC 210	Introduction to Sociology

Contact: Wanda Barker, Director of Distance Learning, NCCCS, at barkerw@ncccommunitycolleges.edu

C.O.P.S. Program Provides Online Criminal Justice Technology Resources

Police and other professionals working in the criminal justice system across the state have turned to Coastal Carolina Community College's Curriculum Online for Policing Services (C.O.P.S.) program to help them advance their career and work towards earning an Associate of Applied Science Degree in criminal justice technology.

Established in 2005, a total of 55 law enforcement professionals have received training through the web-based program. The program's coursework is tailored to the demanding schedules of today's law enforcement personnel. "C.O.P.S. is an online program for anyone in a public service position within the criminal justice system," said Benjamin Botero, criminal justice department head at Coastal. "The course is especially helpful to those who work rotating shifts that prevent them from taking criminal justice classes in an on-campus traditional classroom setting," he added.

The college's criminal justice technology curriculum is designed to provide knowledge of a broad range of criminal justice systems and operations. Study focuses on local, state and federal law enforcement and the criminal justice system's role within society. Emphasis in the C.O.P.S. program is placed on criminology, juvenile justice, interview/interrogations, terrorism, loss prevention, organization and administration, investigative principles, ethics, court procedure and community relations.

In the fall and spring, C.O.P.S. is offered in eight week sessions. The summer semester runs for ten weeks.

Contact: Contact: Kevin Forsythe, Coastal Carolina Community College, at forsythek@coastalcarolina.edu

Contact: Dan M. McClellan, E-Learning Coordinator, BioNetwork BioEd Center, DMCCLEL@gaston.edu

NCCCS BioNetwork Releases Custom Science Simulations

North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) BioNetwork has released three custom science simulations. The simulations are tailored for BTC 181 Basic Lab Techniques and LBT 110 Laboratory Methods I. These labs are available to be used in other science courses.

These simulations were developed as part of a hybrid course enhancement project led by the BioEd Center and subject matter experts from Brunswick, Cleveland, Fayetteville Technical, Forsyth Technical, Gaston, South Piedmont, and Pitt community colleges:

- Measuring Weight Using an Analytical Balance
<http://ncbionetwork.org/measuringweights/>
- pH Meter Calibration
<http://ncbionetwork.org/ph/>
- Spectrophotometry
<http://ncbionetwork.org/spectrophotometer/>

Blackboard course shells (zip files) are available along with other instructional materials and lab demonstration videos at: <http://biotechnology.gaston.edu/btc181/index.html>

Explore these resources to use in one of your courses. Students should be encouraged to complete the eight question survey accompanying each simulation. Your feedback and the student surveys will help us create future interactive learning products.



www.latenitelabs.com

Check out over 100 chemistry labs in the REACTOR collection. Request a free instructor PIN by contacting Kathy Davis at davisk@ncccommunitycolleges.edu

LATE NITE LABS Launches Biology Pilot with NCCCS Colleges

Seven NCCCS colleges are using newly created RADIANCE biology simulations for BIO 111 during the Fall Semester 2009. Seven instructors and 234 students are participating in the pilot.

The labs were created after meeting with NCCCS instructors and System Office staff. Instructors shared their course syllabi with Late Nite Labs developers who spent a year creating labs to meet the needs of each instructor's course.

Instructors and colleges piloting these labs are Tia Coleman, Mitchell Community College; Ashley Hagler, Gaston College; Barry Keith, Johnston Community College; Amy Kennedy, Central Carolina Community College; Cindy Seymour and Tanya McGhee, Craven Community College; Kimberly Metera, Wake Technical Community College; and Crystal Sharpe, Roanoke-Chowan Community College.

Developers at Late Nite Labs are completing lab simulations for BIO 112 which will be piloted Spring Semester 2010 by the same instructors and colleges. These biology simulations will be available for use throughout the community college system during Fall Semester 2010.

Contact: Kathy Davis, Distance Learning Specialist, NCCCS, at davisk@ncccommunitycolleges.edu

VLC Support Center Evaluates Online Student Services Needs

As part of the continuing efforts to evaluate the needs of colleges, the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) VLC Quality & Assessment Center, located at Surry Community College, is coordinating a review project of online student services requirements for local colleges. The objective of the project is to gather data and provide recommendations to the System Office to assist local colleges in meeting SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) requirements. SACS requires that online students receive student services comparable to students who receive on-campus resources. These services include information for prospective students in the areas of admission requirements, financial aid, registration, orientation, academic advising, technical support, career services, library services, tutoring, and services to promote a sense of community.

SACS established a set of comprehensive standards that encompass four key areas: 1) institutional mission, governance, and effectiveness; 2) programs; 3) resources; and 4) institutional responsibility for Commission policies (Principles, 2008). These standards combined with the SACS Policy Statement on Distance Education are principle considerations for educational institutions as they face the challenge of providing online student services.

In addressing these student services, institutions are charged with meeting the following SACS standard requirements and Distance Learning Policy statements (Principles, 2008):

3.9 Student Affairs and Services

3.9.1 The institution publishes a clear and appropriate statement of student rights and responsibilities and disseminates the statement to the campus community.

3.9.2 The institution protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of student records and maintains special security measures to protect and back up data.

3.9.3 The institution employs qualified personnel to ensure the quality and effectiveness of its student affairs programs.

Distance Learning Policy Statement Requirements:

- Students have adequate access to the range of services appropriate to support the programs, including admissions, financial aid, academic advising, and delivery of course materials, and placement and counseling.
- Students have an adequate procedure for resolving their complaints.
- Advertising, recruiting, and admissions information adequately and accurately represent the programs, requirements, and services available to students.
- Students enrolled in distance education courses are able to use the technology employed, have the equipment necessary to succeed, and are provided assistance in using the technology employed.

The main goal of the project is to determine how local colleges are meeting these

requirements and identify resources needed to successfully implement all services.

As part of the evaluation, the team will review WebAdvisor. The program provides students and faculty access to information contained in the colleges' administrative database. When fully implemented, students can search for classes; review grades and grade point averages by term; register and pay for classes; display unofficial transcripts; and track their progress toward graduation. Faculty can retrieve rosters, class schedules, document advising sessions, track advisees, and enter grades.

The project team being lead by Dr. Linda Nelms, Wayne Community College, will be identifying how colleges are meeting online student service needs; how WebAdvisor features can help meet these needs; and evaluating what resources local colleges need to overcome implementation challenges, maintenance, support, and related costs of providing complete online student services.

(Reference: Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, 2008. Retrieved May 8, 2009 from <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2008PrinciplesofAccreditation.pdf>)

Contact: Dr. Candace Holder, Director, NCCCS VLC Quality & Assessment Center, at holderc@surry.edu

Evaluate Distance Learning Courses for ADA Compliance

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act mandates that all NC Community College distance learning courses be ADA compliant. It is recommended that each college develop a process for assessing DL course offerings for ADA compliance on an ongoing basis. Even minor edits to a module could render a course non-compliant. Please visit NC Vital <http://www.ncvital.info/section508.html> to ensure that your course offerings meet these standards.

COLLABORATORS' CORNER...

Thoughts and advice from the NCCCS distance education community

The Challenges Ahead for Community Colleges

By Patrick Keough, Director of Distance Learning, Carteret Community College

Education has changed dramatically over the past 15 years, as far as the way instruction is delivered to students. I've been teaching online all weekend from my home office, something I would never have imagined 15 years ago. In fact, I spend twice as much time teaching via distance learning than I do as the sage on the stage in the traditional classroom environment. I have students from as far away as Iraq and Afghanistan. I love the challenge of making Art History come alive via the Internet.

The sophisticated instructional software tools educators now have at their disposal make teaching online every bit as viable as the traditional classroom and offers students so many more creative options for attaining their education and career goals.



Andei Keough completing an online assignment.

My daughter Andei, for example, is home schooled and took her entire junior year of High School online using Blackboard and loved it. I truly believe she learned a great deal, in addition to developing a sense of

discipline to set goals each day to get online and accomplish her assignments.

The number one challenge ahead for colleges is the economic downturn and how it's impacting educational institutions throughout America. One thing is certain; we can no longer conduct business the same way with the same outdated models. We have to be willing to completely and totally rethink how we offer our instructional services to our students. Students today are very different than students that attended our colleges 10, 15, 20 years ago. They communicate differently, socialize differently, learn differently, and think about their education and careers very differently, and this reality in itself demands that we rethink how we serve and teach them.

My constant goal is to make my online classes every bit as viable, interesting, and dynamic as my traditional classroom lectures and labs. Thankfully, there are a host of new and powerful communication tools that are making it easier and less time consuming to accomplish this objective.

I am excited about the challenges ahead. However, we must consider strategies for overcoming economic hurdles, bureaucratic road blocks, and archaic mindsets to compete and grow in this ever changing, dynamic global economy where students shop for the best services and colleges online and no longer have to attend the institution in their geographical region thanks to online education. One of our biggest hurdles is to change the culture and attitudes about education and how we conduct business – because it is no longer business as usual.

A hard look needs to be directed on the nine to five, Monday – Friday workweek. Is this still viable? This is an excellent opportunity to rethink how we operate, streamline, and begin retooling all aspects of our college services and instructional modalities.

Unfortunately, instructional technologies (and our students) are changing at a much

faster rate than educational institutions are changing. Academia needs to be focused on implementing change and asking the tough questions. How are we communicating to our students? How are we marketing to them? How are we delivering our services to them? Do we go to them or expect them to come to us. Is our web site visually dynamic and interactive? Are we exploring the potential of social networks, as a way to be more proactive in meeting our students' needs?

There are many questions to ask and we may not have all the answers and solutions right away, BUT, if we don't begin the conversations at our institutions we are going to find ourselves losing touch with the very market that sustains us.

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Staff Contacts for Newsletter

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