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**To:** PORTALS@LISTSERV.EDUCAUSE.EDU  
**Subject:** [PORTALS] Notes from Portal Constituent Group

Hi all,

Here's my quick notes from our meeting. I apologize for the randomness; we seemed to go all over the map, which I think is just fine.

We had about 35 or so people attending. Roughly a third were undecided and still investigating portal options. A third had purchased portal products including Lumnis, Oracle, and PeopleSoft. The last third had a combo of homegrown and open source products, such as uPortal.

We discussed the mailing list traffic briefly. It's been rather slow lately. Jameson speculated the reason was that when it initially was begun, many people were still in decision mode with what product to look at and still attempting to define a portal strategy. In the years since, the portal market and our expertise has somewhat matured. This leads us to an opportunity to elevate the conversation from 'what portal product and why?' sorts of questions to 'what services are useful, and who wants to work with us on this?'

We discussed the difference between a static HTML-based web site for institutions versus using a portal for the entire web presence. If external visitors to a site just had guest-level rights to the portal, what's the difference? Many made the distinction that, "the web site is for everyone, the portal is for us." Some argued that a portal is really good at pulling together disparate pieces of data together from various sources and at authorizing different levels of users or roles to them, but doesn't do a great job at presenting text and images in a focused marketing message sort of way. This may have more to do with an individual institution's ability to radically customize the portal interface from what's delivered from the vendor.

Someone raised the question, "Was it a no-brainer to implement a portal?" Responses generally were yes. One person pointed out that entering freshman expect to have customized web sites or portals built for them.

An interesting discussion occurred regarding affiliate groups access to the portal, namely parents. At Gettysburg, approximately half their parents have portal accounts. Students control access to what his/her parents are allowed to see, including homework and grades.

Someone asked the question about supplying access to external news sites, primarily thru RSS feeds. Some avoided external news completely, some said they had zero problems with allowing all sorts of news in, and others cautioned about focusing external news to purely academic sources. Some portals allow users to customize their experience and what RSS feeds they want, so administrators simply provide a long list of news and allow users to make the choices.

Those are the highlights I wrote down. Please contribute others. Thanks, and see you all next year!

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