

administrative owners of the spaces, and they can refer to those definitions as they describe new spaces."

The team developed SpaceScout in-house using open source tools such as [Django](#), [jQuery](#), and various plug-ins. The open source design means that other institutions can adapt SpaceScout to fit their own campuses and purposes. Indeed, the [University of Illinois](#) already has looked at ways it could use the web app and contributed some improvements to the code, Fournier says.

SpaceScout was the design team's first attempt at building a native iOS app, which the developers described as a

steep learning curve. One hiccup they encountered: a bug that didn't appear until they compiled the app for submission to the Apple App Store.

SpaceScout has been accessed more than 6,000 times since its release in the fall. Last December, 98 percent

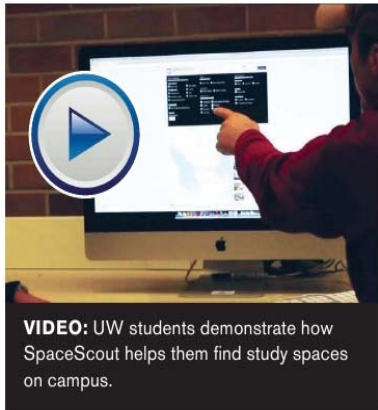
of surveyed users said they would recommend it. But the SpaceScout team is not resting on its laurels: It's focusing on a marketing plan to raise awareness of the app and increase the number of users. "We also are working on tools so administrators can edit their space information, see statistics about usage and what students are filtering for, and perhaps make adjustments accordingly," Civjan says. In other words, information from the app on users' habits will inform campus planners about the kinds of spaces students need most.

The developers are busy adding spaces from the [UW Bothell](#) and [UW Tacoma](#) campuses and integrating real-time data about availability in computer labs. Among proposed new features for 2014 include crowdsourcing, allowing students to rate and comment on spaces, and col-

laboration, allowing students to e-mail space details and invite others to a space. Another possibility is personalization, which would let students view spaces available to a specific group such as business majors. The anecdotal feedback from students is encouraging, Fournier says. "Students say they are surprised at the number of spaces available," she adds. "One said that she orders a latte at a campus coffee shop and while waiting in line, she uses SpaceScout to find a place to study before her latte is ready. Another said she is staying on campus between classes more often because now she can find quiet study spaces."



**"One [student] said that she orders a latte at a campus coffee shop and while waiting in line, she uses SpaceScout to find a place to study before her latte is ready."** —Janice Fournier, University of Washington



**VIDEO:** UW students demonstrate how SpaceScout helps them find study spaces on campus.

### Liberty University

**Project: The Dissertation Portal**

**Project lead: Amanda Rockinson-Szapkiw, assistant professor and chair of doctoral research**

**AS LIBERTY UNIVERSITY'S** (VA) online Ph.D. program in education has grown, so has the complexity of managing

the paperwork involved in tracking dissertation progress. With the program serving more than 600 students at a time, traditional e-mail correspondence was failing to keep up.

"So much got lost in the shuffle," says Amanda Rockinson-Szapkiw, assistant professor and chair of doctoral research in the School of Education. "Documents and versions were hard to track."

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PARTNERS:  
Microsoft**

Files were sent as attachments, saved to desktops, and sometimes lost. "Really annoying was when faculty members would spend time commenting on an older version of a dissertation, only to find that the student had addressed some of those issues already," she says.

Administrators at Liberty, which bills itself as the largest Christian university in the world, were also well aware of the higher attrition rates in online graduate programs. They wanted a clearer picture of which department chairs were working with which students and where they were in the process. There was no easy way to see that information in a single view.

In 2010, the education school's dean asked Rockinson-Szapkiw to study this problem and see if she could find an answer. "I started looking at technology solutions to help us increase retention rates, improve communication, and give us an administrative view of the dissertation process," she says. What they needed, she decided, was a collaborative workspace. She started looking at [Google Docs](#) and [WordPress](#)

but thought they lacked critical functionality, such as strong security controls and integration with Microsoft Word, which most of the graduate students were using. "Then another faculty member reminded me that the university's existing campus agreement for Microsoft licensing already included [SharePoint Server](#), although SharePoint hadn't been used for educational purposes yet at all. So I ran with it."

"Learned to run" with it might be a more apt description, since Rockinson-Szapkiw knew nothing about SharePoint and didn't want to wait until the next budgeting cycle when she could hire consultants. Sniffing around the university, she found expertise and help from a student employee and a few members of the university's faculty support group. Their day job is building courses in [Blackboard](#), but they offered her some ideas on how to proceed. "I watched hours and hours of videos on [Lynda.com](#) about how to use SharePoint," she recalls, "and then built it from the ground up."

Rockinson-Szapkiw thought she was building a basic content management system, dubbed the Dissertation Portal. But, since its fall 2010 launch, when it housed documentation for the dissertation process, the portal has gradually developed into a shared workspace where Ph.D. candidates can collaborate with their peers. Each candidate now has an individual

secure site to post his or her progress and collaborate with a dissertation committee. Users take advantage of discussion forums, document sharing, and multiple-person editing. Students post status updates that the administration aggregates to track progress of all students in the process. In addition, administrators get the dashboard view that they wanted, giving them more oversight of the process.

Since the portal's inception, Liberty has sought to measure its impact. The college surveyed students before and after implementation, using a "doctoral student connectedness scale" that was designed to identify students at risk of



**LIBERTY U's Dissertation Portal provides Ph.D. candidates with an individual secure site to post their progress and collaborate with their dissertation committee.**

dropping out. The research found that use of the portal increased doctoral candidates' connectedness by 9 percent as measured on the scale.

What's more, the dissertation approval process time has been cut in half. "Documents aren't sitting on one professor's computer waiting for that person to finish looking at it before handing it off to another," Rockinson-Szapkiw says. "On the portal, any committee person can go in when they have time, in any order, to comment. That concurrent review saves lots of time."

Although the original goal was to improve workflow between candidates and faculty members, the collaborative nature of SharePoint is allowing the students to work together as they participate in discussion forums about topics such as research methodologies and how to do literature searches. A future goal is to create research teams in the portal that align with faculty expertise, so that students and faculty can naturally organize themselves around areas of common interest.

Melanie Dunn, a high school Spanish teacher in the Forsyth County, GA, school district, completed her Ph.D. at Liberty in 2012. "I found the organization within SharePoint most helpful," she says. "All the documents I needed for IRB [institutional review board] approval and proposal development and approval were right there. It's comforting to know that you and your chair are working on the same version," she adds. "And both parties get an e-mail notification

when a change has been made to the document."

Dunn and her fellow students at Liberty may be on the ground floor of a wider collaborative dissertation community. Since Microsoft published a case study on the college's use of SharePoint in August 2011, several universities have asked Rockinson-Szapkiw for consulting help on replicating aspects of the system.

## LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE, AND POLICY

### Union County College

**Project: Superstorm Sandy Disaster Relief Plan**

**Project lead: Margaret McMenamin, president**

**AS UNION COUNTY COLLEGE** (NJ) President Margaret McMenamin surveyed her storm-ravaged neighborhood the morning after Superstorm Sandy ripped across the Eastern Seaboard, she knew she had a monumental task ahead of her.

"I knew we had to reopen our campus, right away," she recounts. "Most of New Jersey had no electrical power, so people didn't know what was going on. We had to find

a way to reopen our schools, start communicating with people, and get students back to classes."

While UCC did have an existing disaster strategy, the devastation caused by Sandy was beyond what anybody expected.

The institution's inner city facility, Elizabeth, had power but the main campus in Cranford had to close. It had no power and damage to the area was estimated at more than \$6 million, [according to news outlets](#). Worse, early reports predicted it could take up to two weeks to restore services. If this happened, how would the school recover and continue the semester?

McMenamin quickly assembled her team to hammer out a new plan, scraping together every possible tool at their disposal. Their chief goals were to reestablish communication with the community, protect billable credit hours and ensure students could finish the semester, and preserve critical IT systems and business functions. The Elizabeth campus became the command center through which they'd carry out the plan and serve the battered community.

Beth Ritter-Guth, director of instructional design for UCC, recalls McMenamin contacting her through an unconventional outlet: [Twitter](#). It was just after midnight on Oct. 30, Ritter-Guth says, when McMenamin tweeted to ask her if the college's Angel learning management system was func-

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