Sharing Technology and Academic Resources-New York (STAR-NY) Consortium:
Using the WorldWideWhiteboard® Online Collaborative Learning Platform to Power a Statewide Online Tutoring Consortium

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Client: Sharing Technology and Academic Resources-New York (STAR-NY) Consortium

Challenge: Beginning around 2000, the campuses of the State University of New York system addressed a new challenge: growing numbers of students sought support through learning assistance programs, often from locations the schools could not serve in the traditional face-to-face format. At the same time, the number of online courses was increasing. Online students needed individual assistance at all hours of the day and night. In short, student use of the Web was exploding, both for traditional and "virtual" learners, and each campus was struggling to develop and finance online tutoring solutions to reach the increasingly diverse student population. Sharing Technology and Academic Resources-New York (STAR-NY) Consortium provides a unified framework for the entire SUNY system to address this challenge. The purpose of the STAR-NY Consortium is to share the resources and expertise of several colleges to increase online tutoring usage for each of those colleges. STAR-NY, in this way, allows the entire SUNY system to benefit from the experience and skills of the institutions that have been early adopters of effective online tools.
Core areas of need include online tutoring to support students in basic courses, such as mathematics, science, and English and a dependable implementation of technology to keep tutoring available 24/7.

Solution: Representatives from five New York colleges and a representative from Link-Systems International met on June 7, 2011 to design a pilot project for an online tutoring consortium. From the outset, STAR-NY adopted Link-Systems International (LSI) as a private partner in expanding online tutoring services throughout the state. The LSI WorldWideWhiteboard® provides a platform for online communication and conferencing – the pre-conditions for collaborative learning. The development team at LSI is rooted in the concerns of educators and informed by continuing research into the way the Web functions to facilitate learning. Major factors that led STAR-NY to select the LSI WorldWideWhiteboard include the following:

- LSI has extensive experience with SUNY schools. The WorldWideWhiteboard platform was launched in 1996 and is designed to address the needs of both instructors and learning assistance professionals on college campuses.
- The WorldWideWhiteboard platform software, recently re-written in HTML5 for use on mobile devices, facilitates both real-time one-on-one and group tutoring, as well a asynchronous interactions .
- The platform features subject-specific symbols, generous screen area for the discussion of student questions, and record and playback of live sessions.
- Built-in modules of the WorldWideWhiteboard allow for
    - tutor critique of papers submitted by students as well as live discussion of math and science questions

- o asynchronous as well as live interaction so that students can submit questions 24/7
- o student printout of all tutoring sessions
- o regular statistics about student usage for every institution
- Peer-reviewed studies have repeatedly found that the WorldWideWhiteboard addresses the issue of educational collaboration more completely than other Web communication software. The input of academic experts continues to be an important part of the platform's development.

In addition to these considerations, the experience of the five campuses initially involved in STAR-NY has shown that, during the pilot phase, administration of the program could be handled by LSI until the consortium developed its own administrative resources.

At the same time, the participant-run STAR-NY consortium format allows for each campus to train and monitor the work of its own online tutors.

Result: To date, STAR-NY involves SUNY campuses, universities, state colleges, and community colleges with a total enrollment of nearly 100,000 students. LSI works with representatives and leaders of STAR-NY to successfully integrate the WorldWideWhiteboard platform with the learning management systems at each campus. Use of the platform ensures that online tutoring will be available to SUNY students anywhere there is an Internet connection. Most important, it allows SUNY's own trained tutors to interface with learners at the point of need.

As for student response, many students sign up ahead of the semester to receive STAR-NY tutoring. Thousands of online tutoring sessions have been conducted in three years of operation. The consortium leverages the strengths and funding of its participating campuses to achieve an impact on student engagement and success. It also enables a cost-effectiveness difficult to match as separate institutions, while ensuring the autonomy of each school's learning assistance programs.