Use of E-Learning to Deliver the Florida Certified Crop Advisor Self-Study Program

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Objectives

1. Develop an integrated platform for online, asynchronous Extension training programs
2. Web-based format for easy learning and anytime access
3. Develop a specific integration of existing online assets for extension programs
   a) E-Learning[1] course management software
   b) Electronic Data Information Source (EDIS) Extension documentation resource
   c) IFAS Extension Bookstore accounting and credit card implementation
4. Implement this platform for Florida Certified Crop Advisor Self-Study Program
   a) Offer Continuing Education Units (CEUs) in each of four study areas
   b) Each study area should have 10 documents, each offered for 1 CEU

[1]Blackboard Learning System Vista Enterprise License.

Component Software Description

E-Learning

1. E-Learning is designed for formal online course management
   a) Requires registration before beginning of the course
   b) Assignment of unique enrolled-student identification
2. E-Learning provides easy communication, organized presentation of oral and written materials, quizzes and polling, grade book, and internal e-mail system

Electronic Data Information Source (EDIS)

1. EDIS is the Electronic Data Information Source of UF/IFAS Extension
   a) A collection of more than 6,600 documents in fact sheet, circular, or bulletin format
   b) The EDIS resource is a component of Solutions for Your Life, the UF/IFAS-Extension portal

IFAS Extension Bookstore

1. An electronic means for purchasing products from the University of Florida
   a) Credit cards, checks, cash are all accepted
   b) High level of fiscal accountability
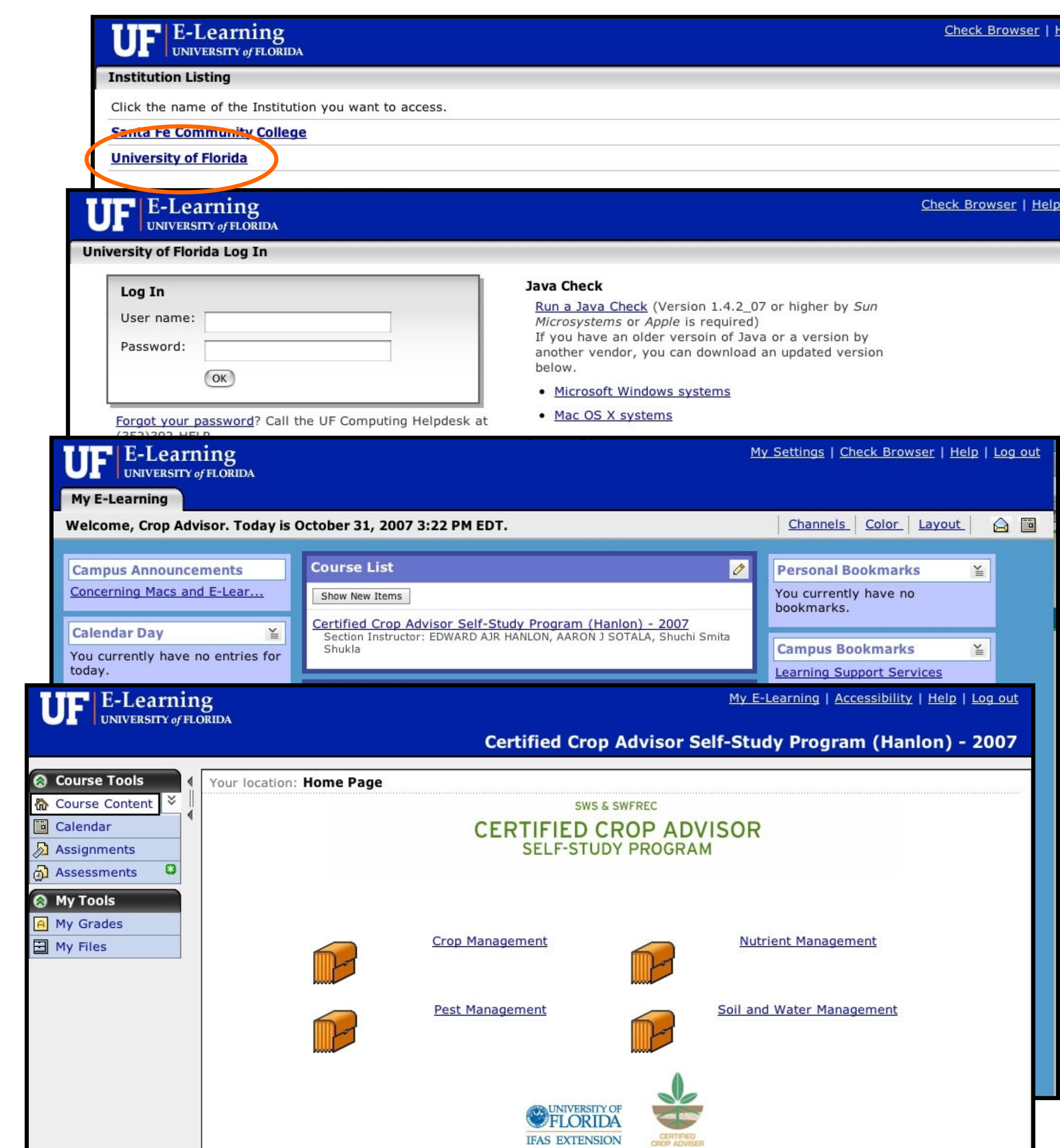
Solutions for Extension Training

E-Learning

1. Developed a Generic Log-in assigning a temporary User Identification and Password
   a) Done on the fly…, when the client requests access to a specific Extension training venue
   b) Not associated with formal UF course registration
   c) Allows high-security access to E-Learning
   d) Good for as long as program leader chooses
2. Within E-Learning:
   a) Quizzes are automatically graded
   b) E-mail alert is sent to program leader indicating that a quiz has been completed
   c) Review of quiz and determination is easy to do
3. Hyperlinks from within E-Learning to the EDIS documents are created in a separate window
   a) Client may return to the E-Learning environment by returning to the original window

EDIS

1. Use of EDIS assures that the most recent documents are used for training
2. Most documents also contain links to additional documents, aiding in deeper learning and understanding of the subject material
3. Documents selected for specific Extension training are available for both online study and in printable format (PDF)

IFAS Extension Bookstore

1. An email with client identification and selected purchases is sent to the program leader
2. Accounting and funds handling are accomplished without intervention of Extension personnel
3. Client has confirmation that purchase has been made
4. Financial records are a part of the UF accounting system

Keeping Track

1. Emails from the E-Learning and IFAS Extension Bookstore systems are sent to the program leader
2. The program leader must:
   a) Associate the e-mail for E-Learning (quiz completion) and the e-mail for the IFAS Extension Bookstore (payment) with the same client and selected study document
   b) Forward the completed/try again message to the client and the official channel for recording CEU completion (done by e-mails)
   c) Store quiz use and score for a minimum of a 2-year cycle to comply with rules for CCA training (This requirement is specific to the CCA program only)
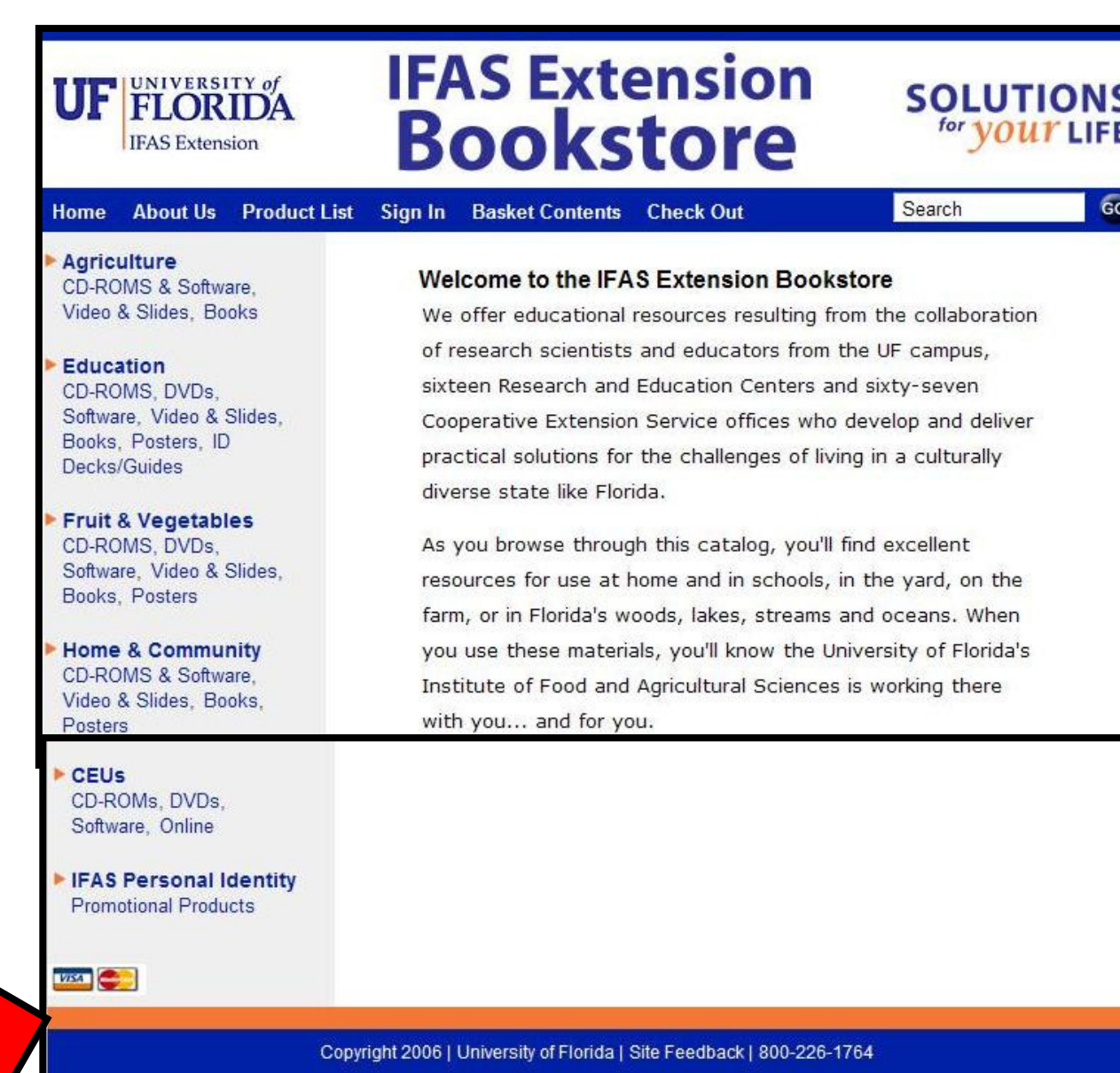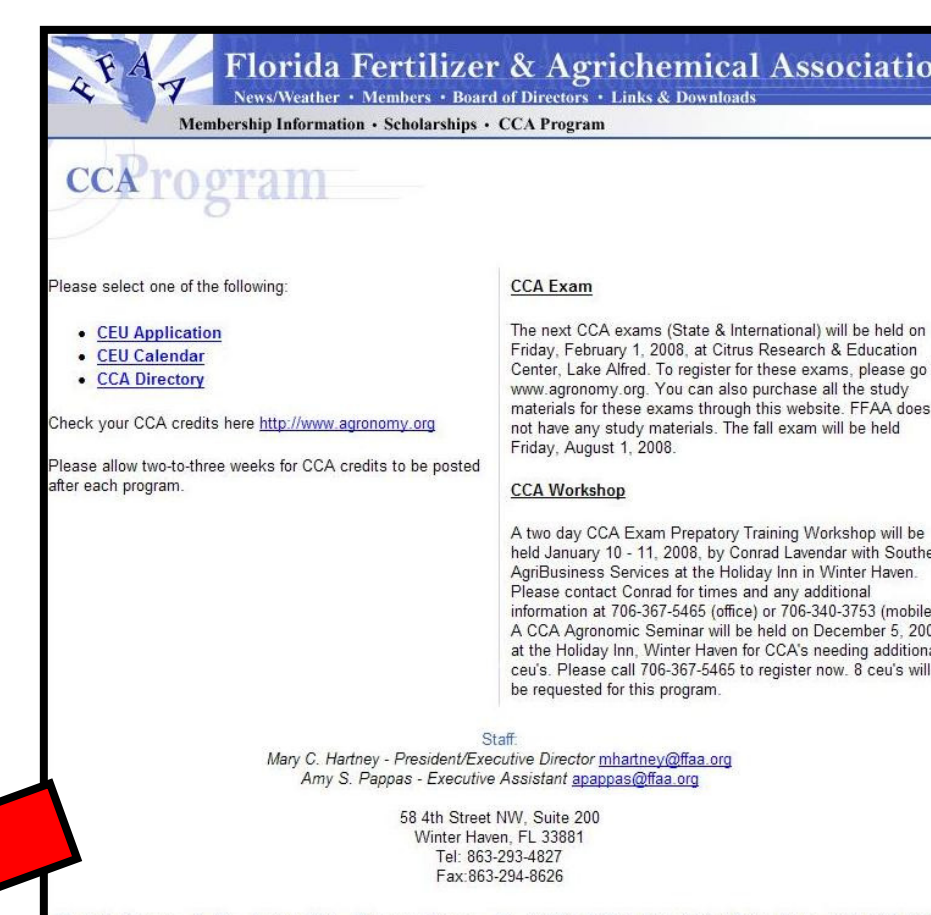   d) Update the E-Learning grade book regularly, and renew the CCA Self-Study course annually

Summary

1. An inexpensive method for linking useful programs available from the University of Florida has been demonstrated
2. The resulting association of these programs allows for Extension use with a minimum of web development
3. Extension use does require tolerance of some incompatibilities among these stand-alone programs
4. All programs are supported by professionals within the UF structure

Client Access

1. For this specific CCA Self-Study Program, an extension client may access this online training from:
   a) The Florida Certified Crop Advisor Program, maintained by the Florida Fertilizer and Agrichemical Association (http://www.ffaa.org/cca.asp).
   b) The Florida Certified Crop Advisor Program website (http://cca.ifas.ufl.edu/index.html).
      i) This site has a tutorial for first-time clients to assist with registration and navigation within E-Learning
   c) The IFAS Extension Bookstore (http://www.ifasbooks.ufl.edu/)

Abstract

Instead of designing a self-contained Web site, the authors accepted a challenge from the Dean for Extension, UF/IFAS, to adapt the E-Learning formal course management system to an extension training function. The authors have developed a Self-Study Program for Florida Certified Crop Advisors (CCAs) that is flexible enough to be used to offer Continuing Education Units (CEUs). One of the primary obstacles to be overcome was the student authentication and registration process for E-Learning that ties in with the UF Gatorlink system maintained by the Registrar. Because CCAs are not typically UF students, a mechanism had to be created to allow them to access E-Learning. Although that mechanism is not perfect, it allowed the authors to begin delivery of their program while working with E-Learning administrators on a better, more permanent solution. The current Self-Study Program contains 40 offerings in the four competency areas required by the CCA program. Study materials consist of a link to electronic files residing within the UF/IFAS EDIS system for on-line study, PDF versions of those files for off-line study, and an on-line quiz. Upon submission, quizzes are scored automatically and results are sent via an alert email to the program coordinator. Quiz information is archived, and an additional email is forwarded to the CCA system to record the score and officially count the quiz as evidence of CEU completion. For CEUs in the Pesticide competency area, the CCA may elect to receive credit for both the CCA program and the Florida Pesticide License Program via a choice on the quiz. A copy of the quiz is then also sent to that program's coordinator. System use and results of a survey of CCA users will be reported in the poster.