

## 2003-04 Student Technology Fee Project Report

### **Support for the Blackboard Learning System and Portal** Blackboard Online Learning System

Project Managers: Karen Adsit, Walker Teaching Resource Center; Clint Smullen, Center of Excellence for Computer Applications

#### **Brief Description of the Project**

The Student Technology Fee covered the costs of the license for the Blackboard Learning System and the Blackboard Community Portal System to UTC. To support these capabilities, a support person dedicated to Blackboard was hired. This specialist managed the Blackboard course delivery system, installed the new release of Blackboard, version 6, developed methods of automating course creation and user registration, and assisted faculty with using Blackboard. In addition, the specialist managed the development of the UTC portal, and assisted various groups in the UTC community to utilize the portal to build their communities, including academic and student groups.

This proposal directly addressed several of the Information Technology Enterprise Issues identified by the Technology Committee, and several of the Distance Learning Goals of UTC. The goals for this project were as follows:

1. Maintain the reliability and availability of the web-enabled course management software at UTC
2. Continue to support expanding web-enabled course offerings at UTC
3. Provide better support for the users of the course management system by assigning a full-time support person to Blackboard
4. Provide web-portal software to support improved access to information, enhanced flow of information for various groups at UTC, and a user-customizable view of the UTC online system
5. Evaluate the usefulness of web portal systems at UTC

#### **Project Status**

A significant upgrade, from Blackboard 5.5 to Blackboard 6, was accomplished in the summer of 2003. The users were trained in the use of the new system, new training modules for Blackboard were completed and posted online and in the Blackboard 6 Online class on the system. Blackboard 6 was placed in production use for the fall semester of 2003. Minor upgrades were made during the year; the current production system is 6.0.11.

In cooperation with the Computer Center, the creation in Blackboard of classes, student/faculty/staff accounts, and class enrollments have been largely (but not entirely) automated. Logins to Blackboard are now authenticated through the Onenet system, so the same user id and password are used for both systems. Beginning with Fall 2003, all credit classes were automatically created and assigned to instructors.

Respondus, a software application that works with Blackboard, was purchased to support faculty creating and managing tests and exams. These tests can then be directly imported into Blackboard or be used independent of the online course management system.

## Evaluation of the Blackboard project

The Blackboard system has become an important part of the teaching and learning environment for UTC. As UTC expands in distance education offerings, Blackboard will play an even larger role in delivering courses and communities to UTC students. For 2003-04:

- 1295 courses used Blackboard this year, double the number reported last year.
- Over 75% of UTC students used Blackboard for at least one course this year.
- Every student, faculty, and staff member at UTC has a Blackboard account.
- 59% of full time faculty and 39% of all faculty (including part time instructors) used the Blackboard system this year.
- 57 organizations have “communities” defined in the Blackboard portal.
- Twenty-three faculty have been trained and use the *Respondus* testing system.
- 90% of student survey respondents stated that they rarely, if ever, had trouble finding what they needed in Blackboard.
- Over 90% of faculty feel the new Blackboard system is better than the old system.
- The Online Technologies Coordinator serviced over 2000 telephone calls and over 1200 emails for direct user support calls and emails about the Blackboard system, in addition to other maintenance, security and inter-office email and calls.
- The UTC Help Desk handled over 95 calls related to Blackboard; about 1/3 of these were UTCID and Onenet password problems.
- The Blackboard system was available over 99% of the time it was scheduled for use.

A summary of the faculty and student survey results is at the end of this report.

## Blackboard Usage Statistics

Fall 2003	
Available Classes	510
Active Users	
Faculty/Staff	265
Students	6107
Active Orgs	12

Spring 2004	
Available Classes	521
Active Users	
Faculty/Staff	255
Students	6454
Active Orgs	20

Summer 2004	
Available Classes Sum 1	155
Available Classes Sum 2	98
Available Classes Sum 3	11
Active Users Sum 1	
Faculty/Staff	82
Students	3145
Active Users Sum 2	
Faculty/Staff	66
Students	1356
Active Users Sum 3	
Faculty/Staff	5
Students	112
Active Orgs	

## Financial Report (July 1, 2003 – June 30, 2004)

### Online Technologies Coordinator

Salary .....	\$ 45,000
Benefits .....	\$ 17,715*
BB license fee .....	\$ 70,000
Telephone .....	\$ 349
Echo Ad .....	\$ 240
TN Higher Ed IT Symposium registration .....	\$ 45
Total expenditures .....	\$133,349
Technology Fees requested .....	\$127,600
Deficit .....	\$ 5,749

\* **Note:** Benefits charged to this account represent 39.4% of salary, significantly above the planning figure used to prepare Student Technology Fee proposals. The proposal for this project was prepared in December of 2002, before the Online Technologies Coordinator was hired. Hence there was no past history of the actual benefits charged to determine how much to include for benefits in the request. We will submit a request to the Technology Committee to amend the funds for this project to cover the deficit.

### Resources from other Departments

The Help Desk provides the initial level of primary support for faculty and students (especially for those with username and password problems). The Walker Teaching Resource Center (Karen Adsit, Charles Hart, and Marcus Myers) and Clint Smullen (CECA) spend a portion of their time supporting the Blackboard system. The Walker Teaching Resource Center provides all faculty training and there is a small portion of funds expended from that department's account for copying of Blackboard training handouts. CECA provided funding (\$1,700) for the Respondus license.

### Faculty Survey Results

Half or more of the faculty respondents post syllabi, assignments, grades, and links to other resources on Blackboard. Almost 40% post lecture notes. About half the respondents expect their students to communicate with them and with other students using Blackboard features. Most faculty expect students to spend a couple of hours a week attending to content they put on Blackboard.

Most faculty use their office computer to connect to Blackboard. In general, faculty expect to spend a little more time on Blackboard than they expect their students to spend. Over 80% of the faculty described the Blackboard training as useful or invaluable to their success with the system. Ninety-six percent of faculty rarely if ever had trouble finding information in the UTC Blackboard online documentation.

A majority of faculty would consider allowing some type of limited access to their Blackboard courses. Over 90% of faculty feel the new Blackboard system is better than the old system. It was the respondent's impression that most service interruptions to Blackboard were less than five minutes and that their students were able to get to the system throughout the semester. Currently, 11% of the respondents use Macintosh computers while 89% use Windows.

## **Student Survey Results**

Students currently have an active Blackboard component for about half the courses they are enrolled in at UTC. These Blackboard class components are mainly being used as a one-way information delivery medium. Computer usage for students mirrors faculty usage with about 90% using Windows and 10% using Macintosh. Most students use Internet Explorer to connect to Blackboard.

Ninety percent of student respondents stated that they rarely, if ever, had trouble finding what they needed in Blackboard. Most students indicated that they rarely had trouble connecting to Blackboard and if they did, it only lasted thirty minutes or less. Common comments were that they needed to use current technology because the work place would expect this. Also, Blackboard has been a great time saving addition to their college experience.

July 8, 2004