

2005-06 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, Academic and Research Computing Services

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, and a support person dedicated to Blackboard. This specialist managed the Blackboard course delivery system, installed the new release of Blackboard, developed and improved the methods of automating course creation and user registration, and assisted faculty with using Blackboard. In addition, the specialist managed the development of the UTC Blackboard 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 to Blackboard 6.3 was accomplished during the 2005-06 year. 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 Online class on the system.

In cooperation with the Computer Center, the automation of the creation in Blackboard of classes, student/faculty/staff accounts, and class enrollments has been mostly automated. The only Blackboard operation done by hand is the combining of sections into one Blackboard class and assigning some faculty to their courses. Logins to Blackboard are authenticated through the Onenet system, and will accommodate the single-logon system when it becomes operational. The same user id and password are used for both Blackboard and OneNet. New UT system procedures greatly streamlined the process for new faculty to obtain Blackboard accounts to be ready for the start of the term.

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 independently from 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, and an essential academic resource. Many UTC courses that are not “distance education” use the Blackboard system to provide enhancements to the courses. As UTC expands in distance education offerings, Blackboard will play an even larger role in delivering courses and communities to UTC students. For 2005-06:

- 2249 courses used Blackboard this year.
- The number of courses using Blackboard increased from last year (from 2190 to 2249).
- In the spring 2006 semester, 43% of all sections offered at UTC used the Blackboard system.
- In the spring of 2006, over 88% of UTC student ids used Blackboard for at least one course.
- Every student, faculty, and staff member at UTC has a Blackboard account.
- 151 organizations have communities currently active in the Blackboard portal, representing a steady increase in the number of communities active.
- During 2004-05, the Online Technologies Coordinator serviced over 1700 telephone calls and over 1960 emails for direct user support about the Blackboard system, in addition to other maintenance, security and inter-office email and calls.
- The UTC Help Desk handled 59 calls related to Blackboard; about 1/4 of these were UTCID and Onenet password problems.
- The Blackboard system was available over 99% of the time it was scheduled for use. The Blackboard system had a higher reliability than did the network and the authentication service providing access to it.
- The Faculty Senate elections were held using the Blackboard system to authenticate and manage the voting.
- The Teaching Resource Center offered 56 classes related to using Blackboard; these were attended by 166 people. 643 contact hours of Blackboard-related instruction were delivered.
- The Teaching Resource Center provided 196 consultations on Blackboard.

Blackboard Usage Statistics

Fall 2005	
Available Classes	976
Active Users	
Faculty/Staff	352
Students	8052
Active Orgs	130

Spring 2006	
Available Classes	995
Active Users	
Faculty/Staff	376
Students	7696
Active Orgs	142

Summer 2006	
Available Classes	278
Active Users	
Faculty/Staff	159
Students	4608
Active Orgs	148

Financial Report (July 1, 2005 – June 30, 2006)

Online Technologies Coordinator

Salary	\$ 48,040
Benefits	\$ 19,551
BB license, Respondus	\$ 78,000
Telephone	\$ 350
Training for Coordinator.....	\$ 866
Maintenance, operating	\$ 1,939
Total expenditures	\$148,746
Technology Fees requested	\$153,635
Technology Fees deposited	\$153,635
Surplus	\$ 4,889**

** Amount remaining in account E04-0156-021; about 3% of requested amount

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 and Mike Ward (ARCS) 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.

August 31, 2006