

## How NEIU Faculty use Blackboard: Results from a Survey

Following two years of pilot-testing, NEIU has recently completed its first regular year of Blackboard use. CTL staff took this opportunity to conduct a survey amongst faculty users to determine:

- Ease of commonly utilized Blackboard features
- Degree of faculty satisfaction with those features
- Ideas about common barriers for effective use.

We thank the 67 faculty members who completed our survey and promise to use the data to improve our services and support your teaching needs through Blackboard. We are currently in the process of conducting follow-ups in the form of focus-group interviews to supplement the mostly quantitative data with more in-depth statements. The full report of the survey will be available on the CTL website at [www.neiu.edu/~ctl](http://www.neiu.edu/~ctl). What follows in the next paragraphs are some highlights from the survey and our preliminary observations and conclusions.

### **Blackboard Features most commonly used by NEIU Faculty:**

- 74% of respondents considered Bbd “very effective” and 20% “somewhat effective” for making relevant course materials readily available
- 66% considered it “very effective” and 25% “somewhat effective” for organizing materials for their courses
- 61% considered it “very effective” and 27% “somewhat effective” for posting announcements or reminders in between classes
- 50% considered it “very effective” and 22% “somewhat effective” for enabling links to informational websites, newspapers, broadcasts, and chat-rooms
- 55% considered it “very effective” and 12% “somewhat effective” for posting class notes. However, 31% did not use this feature.

### **Blackboard Features less commonly used by NEIU Faculty:**

- 78% of respondents did not use Bbd for allowing class participation of outside guests
- 61% did not use it to help distribute student presentations

- 57% did not use it for connecting to digital information through the library; 9% found it not effective for this purpose
- 56% did not use the library for creating digital content (such as online reserves, PDFs, etc.) for Bbd. Some didn't know the library provides this service
- 55% did not use Bbd to deliver practice tests for students
- 51% did not use it for integrating media (e.g., audio, pictures, video) into their course
- 48% did not use it for helping students work on group projects, and 8% found it not effective for that purpose
- 46% did not use the grade-book feature for allowing students to check their class standing; some stopped using it because they did not consider it secure or reliable enough
- 43% did not use it for encouraging student discussions in between class sessions; and 8% found it not effective for that purpose
- 42% did not use it for allowing students to submit student work

### **Preliminary Observations:**

When course management systems such as Blackboard are implemented on a campus, the implementation typically happens in different phases, starting with more organizational and housekeeping functions and then gradually moving to more interactive levels. The picture that emerges from our survey suggests that Blackboard has been widely accepted among its users on our campus as a classroom management tool. It has clear utility for organizing one's course materials so students have ready access to them; it is convenient for making announcements in between classes; for posting the instructor's class notes in preparation for or in review of a given class; and for linking useful web resources to the course.

We are now ready to take it to the next level, where the medium's potential for learner interaction becomes more prominent. At this level, Blackboard supplies an extra channel for fostering class discussion; for occasionally integrating outside guest speakers into the course dialogue; for making students active contributors to the learning process both through electronic group work and electronic presentations; and for giving students more opportunities for judging their mastery of the course material in practice tests.

There is no doubt that these features can be more difficult to implement because neither students nor instructors are used to reformatting classroom learning and instruction into an electronic, asynchronous medium. That is why the CTL will use the coming semesters to introduce you to structures and examples of how to accomplish these more complex procedures that Blackboard makes available. We look forward to working with you on these issues and welcome any input you can provide.

This and previous issues of the CTL Bulletin are available on our website at [www.neiu.edu/~ctl/](http://www.neiu.edu/~ctl/)