

Blackboard Enterprise Edition: Same Chassis, But More under the Hood

At the commencement of the spring '06 semester, NEIU students and faculty logged into the familiar "Welcome to Blackboard Academic Suite" page to get to their Blackboard courses. What they likely did not notice was the absence of two words: "Basic Edition". Since the beginning of the year, NEIU has been running the Enterprise Edition of Blackboard. As we mentioned in a previous CTL Bulletin (#18-11/01/05), upgrading to Enterprise Edition was necessary, since we had far outgrown the 3,000 user limit of the Basic Edition and needed to gear up for the eventual integration with the campus ERP system (more on that later). We tried to make the transition from Basic to Enterprise as seamless and non-disruptive as possible. Judging by the lack of problem calls that we received, it appears that we were successful.

New Features in Bb Enterprise



Blackboard Enterprise comes with several new features that were not available to us in the Basic Version. We are in the process of testing these features to make certain that they are stable and work the way that Blackboard publicity says that they should. Some of the new features that will be made available are:

Multi Language Capability

Using the "Set Locale" command, Bb menus can be set to display in English, Spanish, French, German, Italian, Portuguese or Dutch.

Adaptive Release

Historically, faculty had only two choices to display content in Bb: 1) Everybody can see it or 2) Nobody but the instructor could see it. With the "Adaptive Release" feature, faculty can specify that content be made available to users according to date, completion of a test or assignment, membership in a group or by individual user.

Assignments

The often irritating Digital Dropbox is being phased out by Blackboard. The Assignments feature is a much improved and more capable feature that makes it quicker and easier to create assignments, Bb Gradebook items, correct and grade assignments and deliver instructor comments and feedback to students.

Assessment Options

There are more types of test items that can be created in Bb.

Learning Units

Rather than only being able to choose between hyperlinks or a single static page, content can now be presented in successive screens (kind of like a basic PowerPoint presentation) and navigated with forward and back buttons.

Reporting & Performance Dashboard

Usage data for an entire course can be accessed from the Bb control Panel. Instructors can view student progress and see whether students have reviewed specific content items.

Building Blocks

Over 100 applications written by third-party vendors extend Blackboard's current capabilities. Some of these Building blocks are rather expensive, but many are free. More info on Building blocks can be found at <http://www.blackboard.com/extend/b2/>.

Impatica and Lectora

We are currently field-testing two programs that promise to make interactive multimedia content available in Bb. Impatica converts PowerPoint presentations with narration/audio into compressed files that can be delivered in Bb, while Lectora allows interactive computer-based tutorials to be developed for Bb courses.

Integration with Campus ERP System

When Blackboard is fully integrated with the new ERP system, we are anticipating that creation of new Bb courses and enrollment of students into Bb courses will be done by the ERP (rather than manually, as they are done now). We look forward to the time when students will have a single username and password for all NEIU transactions, including registration, financial aid, library, transcripts, add/drops, and Blackboard.

For further details on the information provided here, visit the CTL's Blackboard website at <http://www.neiu.edu/~ctl/blackboard.html> or contact Dr. Anthony Piña at a-pina@neiu.edu.



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Bb Blackboard Faculty Resources @ NEIU
Blackboard

Log Into Blackboard
Access your Bb account and courses (requires username & password)

Request a New Blackboard Course
Click here if you wish to have a new Bb course created for you

Renew an Existing Blackboard Course
Click here if you already have an existing Bb course and you wish to use it for the upcoming semester

How to Begin in Blackboard
Short (two pager) for getting started in Bb

Blackboard Faculty Manual
Comprehensive faculty manual from Bb

Upcoming Changes in Blackboard (CTL Bulletin)
Answers to questions about our upgrade to Bb Enterprise

Frequently Asked Questions for Faculty
Answers to our most commonly asked questions about Bb

Copyright Basics for Instructors Using Bb
Helpful guidelines from the NEIU Librarian David Green

Blackboard "how to" Links
Some of the best Blackboard resources at our sister institutions