

Summary Chart: Focus Groups' Feedback on Blackboard Survey Findings
November, 2004

<u>Question and Highlighted Summary Of Survey Results</u>	<u>Focus Group Questions</u>	<u>Findings</u>	<u>Interpretations</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>
<p>Survey question: How effective is Blackboard for organizing materials for your course? (e.g. electronic student submissions)</p> <p>Close to one half of the survey respondents do not use Blackboard for allowing students to submit work or think this feature is not an effective tool.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do any of your students submit assignments electronically in any format? • If you have tried Bb and it did not work, what were the issues? • What kind of help would you want, if any? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents who were viewed as mid-level or early adopters reported using the internet in various forms to permit student submission of digital work. • Email attachments are the most communal used form with Blackboard the second and the web (via FTP) the third most used format. • The digital drop box was seen as difficult to use • Discussion board and email attachment were perceived as easy to use • Start up users' responses indicated either a lack of awareness of the instructional applications and/or that the concept was too soon in their learning curve • An overall preference for paper both for reading and grading was noted among many participants of all levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even though there are training issues, Blackboard use is growing at a rate comfortable for most faculty to assimilate. • Printing responsibilities and costs shifted to the student 	<p>~ Just in time training ~ Hands on experiences</p>
<p>Survey question: How effective is Blackboard for allowing students to check on their class standing through the grade-book feature?</p> <p>Approximately half of the survey respondents experienced the grade book feature of Blackboard as not effective or reported not using it</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell us more about your experience using the grade book feature? • What have you personally experienced or heard about using the grade book feature? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties in student's ability to access class standings and take ownership of their grades and performance. • Instructors who do not use BB grade book choice to use Excel or paper formats. • Reliability and transferability of BB's grade book are the main issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the number and sophistication of Blackboard users increase the use of the grade book tool will probably increase as well, gaining converts from existing media (Excel) and new users from those just beginning to use the Blackboard system. • The Blackboard grade book still has stability and consistency issues that Blackboard is aware of and is working to resolve 	<p>~ Wait with training on use of grade book till Blackboard upgrades or corrects instabilities</p>

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<p>Survey question: How effective is Blackboard for integrating media into the course (audio, pictures, video)?</p> <p>Approximately half of the survey respondents reported that they do not use Blackboard for integrating media into their courses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there were technical assistance, software and hardware to support this process, would you use it? • What do you think you would use it for? • Would you do it yourself or need someone to do it for you? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery and support issues were identified as a barrier to use of media • Most of the participants reported using media in their courses, whether delivered via Blackboard or in more traditional means such as VCRs delivered to classrooms. • Mid level or early adopters reported using Blackboard and other internet vehicles for the media delivery more often and continued to use the web since it was a preexisting skill. • Start up users indicated that they used Blackboard almost exclusively for internet delivery of media files. • Digital production help is new to campus and it is too early to tell if this type of help will cause use of digital media to increase. Certain applications are likely to prove useful in Distance Education courses and we may see growth in media use in this area. • Technical support for classroom use and phone help were mentioned specifically as problems. • All levels of use's reported desire or interest in use of various types of multimedia with access, production and training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institution-wide support for faculty using Blackboard to deliver media in and out of a classroom setting will become more important as demand increases. • Access to powerful computing resources and software in areas such as the MLRC and the B-Wing labs will be accessed more often by students and instructors who want to create digital files themselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ The Library and the CTL should take a leadership role in developing communication avenues between campus service areas and clients. ~ Faculty support groups could help with addressing clients' needs, distributing news, and building a sense of community. ~ Communities of faculty or project groups could be formed (a la Database Project) to learn and develop multimedia projects
<p>Survey question: How effective is Blackboard for allowing class participation of outside guests?</p> <p>Over 70% of the survey respondents for not use Blackboard for class participation of a guest speaker</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you use guest speakers in any form? • Do you think your discipline lends itself to guest speakers as a useful way to teach your subject matter? • Would a digital guest speaker work in your class? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the participants do not currently use guest speakers in their classes. • There were no reports of digital guest speakers being used. • The concept itself (digital guest speaker) seemed to spark new ideas and applications. • Issues addressed by this concept are based on the logistic issues resolved by a distance/digital solution to the use of a guest. Time, travel money etc. were among the problems that might be addressed by a digital guest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of guest speaker in e-learning could become more important as we developed 100% on-line classes • On campus support for the technology and its reliability is currently lacking and of primary importance for future development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Develop awareness and interest in this feature through e-based newsletters or demonstration sessions. ~

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<p>Survey question: How effective is Blackboard for encouraging student discussions in between class sessions?</p> <p>Approximately 50% of the survey respondents do not use Blackboard for encouraging student discussion in between class session:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you use this technique? • How do you use it? • What outcomes do you think it achieves? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listserv/Email users preferred this medium because the information was pushed to the student email accounts rather than requiring a web visit to collect the information. • Those who didn't use outside discussion wanted the control that comes from class presentations, and were doing so by choice not from a lack of information. • Use of this feature was seen as valuable for extending class time, allowing deeper discussion of topics without impacting class time and giving students a forum for discussion with fewer restrictions than the class sessions would allow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions through Bb seem to satisfy many of the communication needs of the faculty. • Listserv and email are both still viable communication tools. The more aware, trained and supported the faculty are, the more they're likely to use the best tool available for a specific application. • Best Practices for use of discussions board need to be developed and promoted 	<p>~ Provide specific guidelines and workshops for how to use this.</p>
<p>Survey question: How effective is Blackboard as a tool to help distribute student presentations?</p> <p>Over 60% of the survey respondents do not use Blackboard to distribute student presentations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you require presentations in your class? • If so, in what format? • How do you currently distribute student presentations? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear majority of the participants require student presentations in one form or another, with a preference for live in class presentations. While Blackboard tools were often used and seen as satisfactory for this task, the drop box feature was identified as a problem. • Many of the participants saw limited point in sharing presentations, with little value seen in peer evaluation vs. the class time spent. • Participants who reported requiring student submission of digital presentations did so for the purpose of having a copy of the student work as a record. The specifics of how the student submitted the work was generally not seen as important. • There were comments about not wanting to overload the students with more assignments and a reluctance to give up existing content to make room for this technique. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The digital drop box was identified as not satisfactory by a clear majority of the participants. • Distributing files as attachments through Bb tools such as email and discussion board were seen as satisfactory tools for both faculty and students and are processes that students are already comfortable with; 	<p>~ Investigate ways that digital files can be successfully integrated into classrooms and disseminate to faculty</p>

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<p>Survey question: How effective is Blackboard for working on group projects? Over 50% of the survey respondents for not use Blackboard for group projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you require group projects in some of your classes? Group projects can be problematic for students, how do you think Bb affects any of these issues? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The concept of group work regardless of the medium was universally seen as of little or no value to the groups. The process, the results and the student attitudes were all seen as not very useful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group work was not used by the majority of the respondents. Those who use group work are satisfied with blackboard for posting student work. 	<p>~ Investigate and disseminate ways that group work is successfully integrated in classrooms</p>
<p>Survey question: How effective is NEIU's library in helping create digital content for blackboard (online reserves, PDFs etc.)?</p> <p>More than 50% of the survey respondents do not know that the library is a resource for helping to create digital information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did you know that this was available? What ideas do you have for letting people know about this service? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clear majority of the participants knew of, used and was very satisfied with the Library's PDF service, but needed clarification of the online reserves as included in this question. Once this was explained, they also were satisfied with this element of the Library's services. Feedback from the group about how to better advertise the services touched on methods already in place such as Unplugged, the website etc., all of which were seen as valuable and used resources. <p>Digital production services such as the Library's PDF conversion and online reserves, Media Services and related services will be accessed more often as our users become more familiar with online digital materials and begin to incorporate them into their curriculum.</p>	<p>The Library's PDF services were highly appreciated by those faculty who knew about them.</p> <p>Based on the responses, Craig Althage was particularly mentioned and is very much valued and appreciated.</p>	<p>~ Continue to do more in getting the word out that the library has this service, especially to new, part-time instructors on all campuses</p>
<p>Survey question: How effective is Blackboard as a tool to create and deliver practice tests for students?</p> <p>Over 55% of the survey respondents do not use Blackboard for providing testing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you use testing in your class? Have you used digital testing? If so, what was your experience? What were the successful outcomes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Half of the participants didn't use Blackboard for testing. Reasons cited ranged from authentication, difficulty in navigation during test production and time for production vs. return on investment. Prior negative student experiences were reported Most users who have used this feature liked the idea but wanted a more reliable method. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating assessments in Blackboard is a sophisticated, multi step process, and would be considered an advanced topic in a workshop. Perhaps some negative student reactions are due to faculty experiment on their own 	<p>~ Let Blackboard continue to evolve and work towards a more sophisticated user base.</p> <p>~ Evaluate software for testing that can be used within Blackboard</p>

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<p>New question developed for the focus groups based upon addition comments from survey participants</p>	<p>Would you be interested in any of the following items, and if so, for what purposes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scanned documents ▪ Library for converting to PDF ▪ PDF writer on your computer ▪ Learn how to change the buttons on Bb to accommodate organizational style ▪ Learn how to use the linking function in Bb 	<p>There was no consensus on what the participants wanted but many people wanted some of everything.</p>	<p>Faculty have varied and diverse interests and needs.</p>	<p>~ Continue with providing short-time, limited-skill focused workshops</p>
<p>New question developed for the focus groups based upon additional comments from survey participants</p>	<p>Would you be interested in any of the following help formats, and if so, what should they focus on?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech sessions • Pedagogy sessions • News Bites • Short Bulletin of "Enhancing your Teaching with Learning Technologies" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was no consensus on what the participants wanted. • Suggestions ranged from one or another agreeing to each format for workshops and communication • In no order; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Birds of a feather/Brown bag settings for exchanging ideas. ▪ Tip of the month ▪ Bulletins ▪ Email/Listserv ▪ Round table peer teaching ▪ Linking within course. ▪ Best practices for hybrid courses. ▪ Desktop housekeeping • Archiving materials online in a searchable format and access to PDF software did interest several participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our faculty get help when they need it in a variety of forms. • Faculty encounter many problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hardware setup frustrations. ▪ Frustration with help desk ▪ Sessions on what makes Blackboard not work. (FAQ). ▪ Better communication from other service areas. ▪ Incentives, DAK, money etc. ▪ Online evaluations permitted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Make sure there is help available for faculty assistance and learning on an as needed basis. ~ Make sure the 'help desk' is available for immediate hardware support. ~ Continue to make materials public in multiple formats.

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<p>New question developed for the focus groups based upon additional comments from survey participants</p>	<p>Has your use of Blackboard changed your teaching?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants reported that they see parts of Blackboard as extension of class. They find it helpful with organization, student contact, time on task, maintaining student contact during the week, giving student access to documents, and extending class time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blackboard was helpful in arranging and coordinating resources. Its use encouraged revision and redesign each time a course is re-delivered. • Blackboard interface is user friendly, and changes in course layout and navigation are easy as the faculty command of the software increases. 	<p>~ Showcase effective use of technology to transform teaching using a range of media from print to web.</p>
<p>New question developed for the focus groups based upon additional comments from survey participants</p>	<p>Do you need anything added to Blackboard that might increase your use?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People want paper • You can't highlight your screen (easily). • A lot of people study offline, away from computers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments related to pedagogy issues or general use of learning technologies. 	<p>~ The Library and the CTL should take a leadership role in developing communication avenues between campus service areas and clients.</p> <p>~ Needs, goals and limitations should be made known to all interested parties, and are best addressed as a group of all those concerned with teaching and learning at the University</p> <p>~ Possible topics for workshops might center around how to use MS Word to mark papers, provide feedback etc</p>

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