

Blackboard Survey Project

Fall, 2004

- **Background:**

The use of the internet and web for teaching and learning at Northeastern began in the library in the late 1980's and was given a boost in the early 1990's with the advent of the Netscape GUI browser. Training and support was offered to the faculty and saw some success. In spite of this however, over the ensuing years the learning curve for use of the web for our faculty proved frustrating and restrictive. It was during the late 1990's that two companies, Web CT and Course Info (soon to be Blackboard) offered free hosting for academic sites to generate interest in their programs. The prevailing wisdom suggested that we take advantage of these opportunities to look into this new CMS approach to the use of the web.

The formal study of Course Management Systems began with a two year pilot study of Web CT with (then) ETLT working with Dr. Edmund Hunt and a cohort of faculty users. This was followed by a two year pilot of Blackboard working with another faculty cohort.

The entire faculty was then asked for their feedback on the two systems with the vote suggesting that Blackboard was the better of the two for our (NEIU's) needs.

Once the details of licensing and outsourcing had been arranged our staff was given training in the administration and use of the product. The first year of Blackboard use on campus was viewed as a roll out and development period, with Year 2003 being the first full Academic Year with training and support in place.

- **Goals:**

The goal of the Blackboard Assessment Project is to determine the general impact of Blackboard on course delivery during its first years of usage:

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

- **Outcomes:**

To generate:

- a. ideas for further direction in training in technology use for faculty;
- b. ideas for further direction in training in pedagogic use of certain features;
- c. ideas for public relations (e.g. Effective Practices);
- d. data to cross check against a student survey (or the need for one) to be delivered in the future with similar goals.

- **Overview of the Procedures:**

Two staff members at Center for Teaching and Learning, Paul Heydenburg and Jane Peller in concert with Edmund Hansen, Angeles Eames, and Brad Baker, put together a questionnaire of 18 multiple choice questions and two open-ended questions. This survey was sent out to a list of all faculty and staff who have requested Blackboard sites during the last two years. The product used was SurveyGold (www.SurveyGold.com)

The survey was available to the respondents for two weeks toward the end of September, 2004. A total of sixty-seven (67) faculty members out of approximately 250 full and part-time NEIU faculty who have blackboard faculty accounts completed the survey. A CTL Bulletin was sent out to all University members across campus on Nov. 15th with the preliminary results.

There were 13 questions presented to the focus group participants. Ten of the focus group questions were chosen because they explored results from the Blackboard survey that were the most divergent. Three additional questions were added to help gather opinions about how to expand on CTL services. Focused group participants were chosen using the following criteria:

1. survey response
2. technical skills level (low, medium, advanced skills)
3. representative of the three colleges and University support staff
4. involvement with CTL

In the second phase of the project, Paul Heydenburg and Jane Peller conducted focus-group interviews to supplement the mostly quantitative data with more in-depth opinions. There were 4 focus group meetings in which a total of 13 faculty and staff participated.

- **Findings:**

- Infrastructure and support critical to adoption**

In order for Blackboard to be effective as a teaching and learning tool the University needs to have in place the appropriate hardware and server systems for functioning. The University also must have support staff that are able to assist faculty with questions, concerns, and problems related to operating Blackboard and developing instructional materials.

- One medium does not address all needs**

Even though Blackboard was found to be highly effective and appropriate for our faculty's needs for a course management system, Blackboard does not meet all the needs for all of the faculty all of the time. The Web, List-serves and E-mail should continue to be supported by the University.

- Alternative curriculum needed for use of emerging technology**

Blackboard has given faculty the opportunity to re-think how to present material given emerging technology.

Use of technology, and specifically Blackboard has altered how our faculty teach

Faculty consistently expressed that they were developing alternative ways to teach material, grade papers, disseminate information, organize course material and post grades.

- **Results:** All results and reports are available on the CTL website at www.neiu.edu/~ctl. The documents included are:
 - Summary Chart: Focus Groups' Feedback on blackboard Survey Findings
 - Copy of Blackboard Survey Instrument
 - Nov. 15th CTL Bulletin on Blackboard Survey Results.