Every semester I distribute a document to all faculty concerning recent and coming changes as well as links to Blackboard Support. If you would like to see a subject covered please let me know. Robert Harris

Blackboard Bulletin, Summer 2018

Two imminent enhancements

✓ Ally – Accessibility in Education

This tool runs an audit of course materials, flagging non-compliant PDFs, graphics, videos etc. When faculty click on the flags Ally will generate a range of more accessible alternatives than the original and will make these available to all students in the course.

Video: Ally, making course content accessible

Students who need accommodations may fail to present the appropriate documentation supplied by the Accessibility Resource Center. Others who don’t qualify for accommodations still benefit from their presence. Ally will help students grow into productive graduates.

Ally will debut at the start of the Summer session. Faculty have the choice to use the tool but are not required. Students will not see the Ally audit flags. Documentation is available in the Bb/Faculty IT Wiki page, accessible through the Faculty Support link located across the top of the Blackboard interface.

✓ Transferring Course Content

Some faculty may remember that Bb support slowed to a crawl during a two-week span just before and after the start of the Fall semester. The primary reason for this was that all technologists were overwhelmed with thousands of course content transfer requests. The small staff of instructional technologists have taken on roles associated with instructional technology, leaving less time for mechanical tasks easily performed by faculty. As a result we have to do as nearly every other university in the world has done: require faculty to manage their own intellectual content. Starting July 1, 2018 all faculty will handle course transfers themselves. Transfer requests prior to that date will receive instructions so they can get a head start.

Documentation
Transfer course content – Center for Teaching with Technology
Transfer course content – Blackboard Corp.
Problems created by the new version of Blackboard

The university was forced to upgrade our version of Blackboard in order to accommodate the new inline assignment editor. The change was made at a time when the least coursework was being done: the end of the Winter session. Both improvements and some snafus resulted from the change.

✓ Proportionate screen width
The new version of Blackboard locked window width at 1400 pixels but we re-coded the Bb window to change size with the browser window.

✓ Reordering items in content area
Many people are accustomed to reordering items – assignments, essays, etc. – via drag-and-drop. That method now works only intermittently and the Blackboard Corp. helpdesk told us this was a “known problem to be resolved in an upcoming release.” However there has always been a keyboard accessible reordering option; find documentation by selecting Faculty Support link from across the top of the Bb interface.

✓ Student names in course statistics
Student names are not appearing in the course statistics tool. Blackboard Corp. helpdesk has informed us this was a “known problem” with an unknown resolution date.

Standard Practices

✓ Faculty are responsible for
  o Copying course content within and between semesters
  o Activating course shells for student use

✓ Students are added to courses immediately prior to the start of any semester. Faculty can communicate with students prior to their addition to course shells by using the email course tool on WPConnect.

✓ Request course merges through the Help Desk =>
  Request type Blackboard =>
    Sub-request Merge Course Shell

Support

✓ WPUNJ IT Wiki: http://itwiki.wpunj.edu