

BEST PRACTICES

WHAT THE STUDENTS ARE SAYING

This Best Practices highlights some of the comments received from students across the state of Utah about their experience with Blackboard. This survey was conducted by Weber State University and involved multiple colleges, including Utah State University. These student comments can be used to help you improve your teaching with Blackboard.

WHAT COULD HAVE MADE THIS COURSE BETTER?

- Course Organization: "The class site was hard to navigate." "Too much information repeated in too many places."
- Deadlines: "Have all assignments and due dates listed in Blackboard." "Deadlines/important dates listed on the course calendar."
- Grades: "More feedback on my tests." "More homework assignments graded automatically in Blackboard." "Having the teacher utilize the grade book section of Blackboard."
- Interaction: "An online chat room for students to communicate and talk about related course material." "Better discussion/interaction." "An instructor who reads emails and responds quickly."
- Materials Online: "I would have liked to see notes from the instructor available in Blackboard on points to ponder from the reading material." "More information available online." "More supplemental materials, like PowerPoint slides or tutorials."
- Multimedia: "More interactives, like video links are helpful in making a course better." "Use video streamed lectures or additional multimedia."
- Visual Appeal: "A cleaner layout on the class website." "I would have liked some visuals in my Blackboard course."

- Blackboard Orientation: It would be nice if instructions were given prior to the course starting, going over how to use this format."

THE SOLUTIONS

Each suggestion can be solved with simple Blackboard tools and FACT services.

- Course Organization: FACT's Instructional Designers can help you clean up your course navigation and content. A student becomes easily discouraged when content is hard to find or they do not know where to begin.
- Deadlines: Assignment and test due dates can be displayed and updated using the Blackboard calendar tool. This provides a common place for students to frequently check for changed test dates or an updated lecture schedule.
- Grades: The Blackboard grade book lets your students view their up-to-date grades at any time. Your students will always know if they are missing assignments and where they stand in the class. Assignments and exams submitted in Blackboard are easy to grade and keep track of electronically.
- Interaction: The Blackboard discussion board, chatroom, and email tool can increase student interaction outside of the classroom. These tools are easily added in Blackboard. The chat tool also allows you to have "virtual office hours."

- Materials Online: Your class materials (study guides, assignments, class notes, PowerPoint handouts, etc) can be put into Blackboard in PDF or HTML format. The FACT lab has the software and scanners necessary to make any document accessible in Blackboard.

- Multimedia: Video clips, audio sound bytes, etc. can be integrated into Blackboard with the help of our multimedia creation lab. Contact our Multimedia Specialist to set up an appointment to discuss your needs.

- Visual Appeal: Visual appeal can be increased in your Blackboard course with the use of custom designed banners, icons, graphics, and colors. Students easily tire of each course looking like the default Blackboard setup. The FACT graphic designers can help you design an effective look and feel for your Blackboard course.

- Blackboard Orientation: If you feel comfortable doing so, orient your students in Blackboard on the first day of class. Have them submit a practice assignment and take a practice exam so that they are familiar with the tools before actually being graded on those items. If needed, feel free to contact us to visit your classroom and explain to your students how to use the Blackboard interface and course system.

