



Blackboard Advisory Group Minutes: 02-21-2008

Perkins Library (Breedlove), 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Attending: Brandi Tuttle, Elizabeth Berney, Alex Beutel (guest), Wayne Miller, Steve Grambow, Lenore Ramm (note taker), Neal Caidin (convener).

1. Blackboard Upgrade

We are in the planning phase. There is no date scheduled for upgrade, but procuring the hardware is key. The upgrade requires a multi-byte character database conversion, which will involve a long downtime. 7.3 is the target version, but 8.0 includes a rewrite of gradebook that provides the user with an experience similar to working on a spreadsheet. We need to assess whether 8.0 will be stable enough given the timeline.

2. Peoplesoft Gradebook

This plugin allows you to export a column of grades from a course site's gradebook in a format that is suitable for uploading to STORM. There is a bug that occurs when exporting the running weighted total column. We are rolling a fix out to production in a matter of weeks.

3. Blackboard Only Accounts

We will be changing to the Shibboleth authentication system. At this time, likely in conjunction with the Blackboard upgrade, we will have to change how we manage Blackboard-only (non-Net id) accounts. We will communicate our plans to users potentially affected by this change. CIT is working with OIT to figure out how to move away from Bb-only accounts and provide an alternate way to accommodate people who need access to Blackboard but don't have Duke NetID's.

4. Wimba Voice Tools

We are currently running a pilot of these tools in production and the license may be extended. Voice tools provide on-line recordings, e-mails, discussion boards, etc. More information is on the CIT website. One of the challenges of Blackboard is that it doesn't have good reporting tools, which makes assessing the use of the system difficult.

5. Course Retention Policy

We've received positive responses, because it's a flexible policy with a four year window and instructors have the option of retaining their sites. The policy affects Fall 2007 courses and beyond and we will start deleting those sites in 2012.

6. Redesigning Course Request Process

We are going to add a simple way to identify when courses are ACES courses to add validation and pre-populate fields. We are thinking of removing the copy course field and the fields for adding staff, since it is actually simple to do these things through Blackboard itself. We will also make it simpler and easier to request an organization site.

7. Text Messaging

The Blackboard Advisory Group looked at ClearTxt earlier last year. The shooting at Virginia Tech created a sense of urgency when developing an emergency mobile communications plan. OIT is in the process of selecting a vendor. The chosen vendor may or may not have a plugin for Blackboard. There is a short list of three vendors, with no timeline. ClearTxt is not one of them. A decision is expected sometime in 2008.

8. Alex Beutel Demo of JoyNotes

Alex demoed his web application, which provides a repository of user submitted class notes using Macromedia Flash Paper technology. The group made suggestions and talked about issues such as accuracy, privacy, expiration and trust.