



Blackboard Advisory Group Minutes: 10-17-2007

Art Building (University Writing Program), 10:15– 11:15 p.m.

Attending: Wayne Miller, Evan Levine, Emily Daly, Jean Ferguson, Denise Comer, Holly Ryan, Joe Harris, Steven Weinburg, Lenore Ramm (note taker), Neal Caidin (convener).

1. Course Retention Policy

Attendees reviewed a draft of the Course Retention Policy. Up to this point, all course sites have been kept since Blackboard was first installed and courses starting with Fall of 2007 will be deleted four years later. For example, course sites created this fall will be removed in Fall of 2011. Courses existing prior to Fall 2007 will be dealt with separately and we welcome feedback on these course sites. UNC has a tool called Bfree, which allows easy access to the contents of an archived course site file.

Feedback included:

- Periodically send e-mail to instructors indicating which course sites are scheduled to be deleted and allow them to reply and opt out of deletion. This may introduce complications if either e-mail is not received. Regardless of the method, a clause should be added to the policy stating that the instructor can specify courses that should not be deleted.
- Accessing courses older than four years can be useful for instructors when they are writing recommendation letters for former students who took those courses.
- Some courses are taught every five to six years.
- The implication is that the policy encourages instructors to store their own course sites after the four year period, but some instructors make a concerted effort not keep anything significant on their hard drives.
- Would be convenient to have a button for requesting the removal of a course directly within Blackboard in the “My Courses” module.
- Students should be encouraged to save work when they graduate. NetIDs expire a year after graduation. Evan Levine, said he would look into ensuring that this is included in students’ graduation letters.

2. Wimba Tools

The Wimba Voice Tools pilot begins October 29th. This new building block provides audio input, including voice discussion boards. Instructors wishing to participate must request access to the new tools by agreeing to the terms and filling out a web form. More information can be found here: http://cit.duke.edu/help/ddi/0708_wimba.html

3. Blackboard Upgrade

We are planning to upgrade to Blackboard 7.3. between the Spring and Summer terms. This involves a major technical infrastructure change and it’s possible that we could have a one week outage as part of the upgrade process. A couple of attendees requested accounts on a new demo server, which is running Blackboard 7.3.

4. General Feedback from Faculty

The faculty attending the meeting had the following feedback:

- Having to use a dropdown menu for creating Assignments is confusing and it’s easy to accidentally create an Item instead.
- Grade scales are limited and don’t work well for “A/B” grades. These won’t work for exporting for STORM.
- Several are using the wiki in Blackboard, including as a way to schedule appointments. It’s easy to forget to make the wikis available to students.
- It would be great to integrate Doodle scheduler with Blackboard.
- It would be nice to have a default group of students, for using the file exchange.
- Would like to have a permanent announcement within a course site. This functionality is already available.
- Should have a wiki and/or mailing list available to all instructors for discussing the use of the Blackboard system.
- There was some confusion about providing feedback to students using the Assignment tool, but this was alleviated by the group discussion.