Missouri University of Science & Technology - Rolla

How to Effectively Use Blackboard

Teaching and Learning Technology Conference
Missouri S&T 4/25/2008

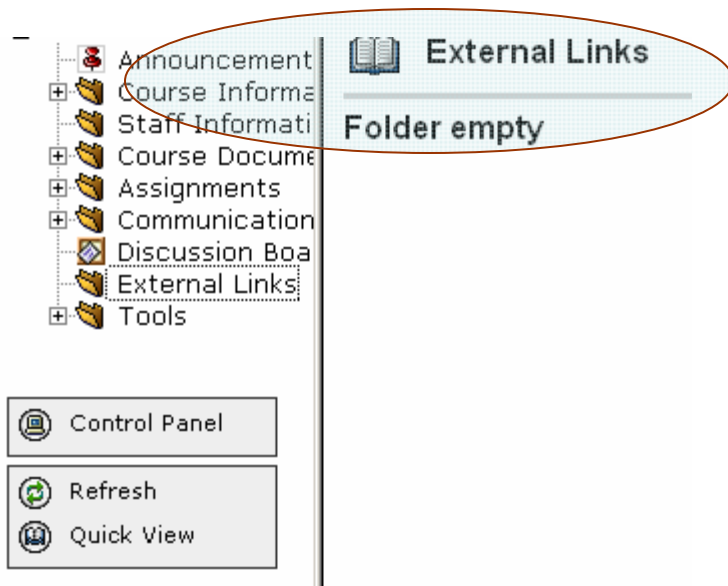**Dan Cernusca**, Ph.D.
Instructional Design Specialist

Organize Your BB Navigation Tabs

Instructional [Design] Benefits

    - Keep instructional materials organized

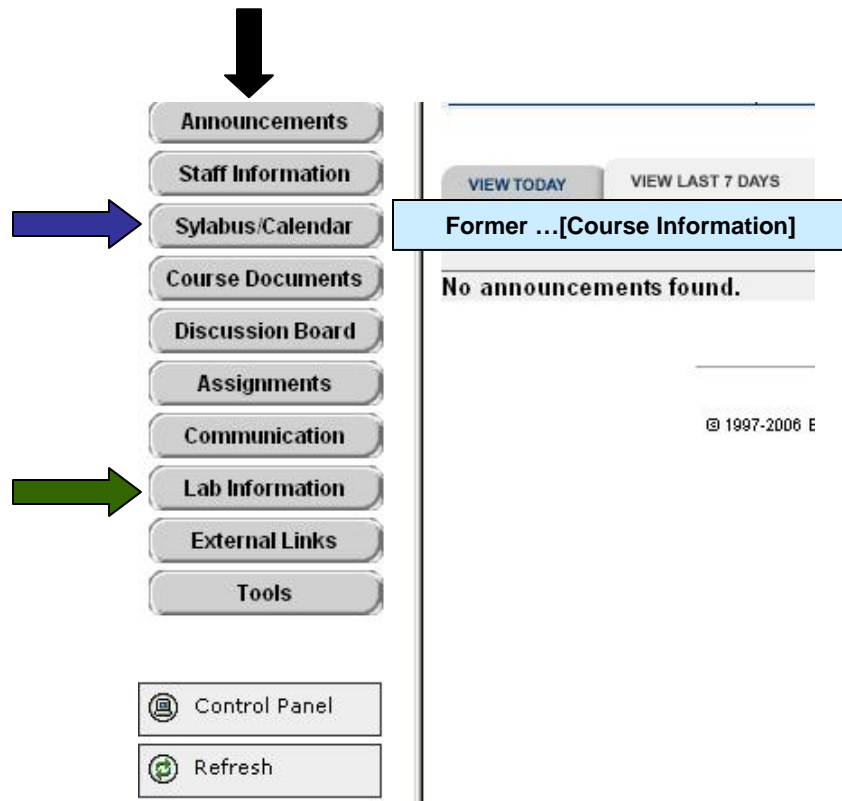   - Avoid redundancy

    - Communicate clear and concise

Delete navigation tabs that are not used in the course

- ensures an easier navigation

- conveys the importance of information
  within the existing navigation tabs

BB Navigation Tabs - continuing

Announcements
Staff Information
Sylabus/Calendar
Course Documents
Discussion Board
Assignments
Communication
Lab Information
External Links
Tools

Control Panel
Refresh

VIEW TODAY   VIEW LAST 7 DAYS

Former …[Course Information]

No announcements found.

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Use improved graphical presentation:
- better visual cues

When appropriate change the tab text:
- better link of content to tab title

When needed add specific tabs:
- quicker navigation for students

Importance:

- fully online courses (especially if only asynchronous) – <u>Critical</u>

- on-campus courses – <u>Beneficial</u>, especially for introverted/shy students

Use Time-Releasing Feature

When appropriate, <u>prepare </u>ahead your documents …BUT

<u>release</u> them only *when* and *as long* as needed!

...only 3 clicks away - *Control panel/ Content Areas: Course Documents/Modify*

Time-Releasing Feature - continuing

Instructional [Design] Benefits

- Provide self-regulating cues to students

- Avoid information overload

Probability to be applicable

- Fully online asynchronous courses - <u>Very High</u>
    - delayed feedback; course materials are guiding students' learning
- Fully online synchronous courses - <u>High</u>
    - some quick feedback possible; course materials deployed mainly for offline view and review;
- On-campus courses – <u>Moderate to Low</u>
    - course materials reviewed based on quick classroom feedback and deployed usually for exam reviews;

Use "Staff Information" and "Student Homepage" Sections

Instructional [Design] Benefits

- Stimulate the development of an active learning community;
- Gives instructors the opportunity to set the "tone" of the course;
- Engages students in a first easy-to-manage task in blackboard (BB)

Reasons to do it
- Both staff and student homepages use BB templates already in place;
- Helps instructors get a first grasp of their students' diversity;
- Helps students build a sense of the course learning community;

Importance
- Online asynchronous courses – <u>Critical</u>
  - community building is precursor of an effective online learning;
  - an active community is based on instructor's ability to build trust;
- Online synchronous & on-campus courses – <u>Very Beneficial</u>
  - set up the stage for a strong classroom community;
  - especially helpful for incoming freshmen and introverted students;

Use Discussion Board Forums

Instructional [Design] Benefits
- An unified platform for *student-student* and *student-instructor* interactions;
- Encourages sharing among students;
- Effective tool to support active learning activities;
- Supports learning outside formal classroom;

Common types of Forums
- Generic discussion boards
  - Questions related to problems with technology/Blackboard;
  - Generic issues about course;
- Content-specific or project-specific discussion boards
  - readings-oriented forums;
  - brainstorming & discovery-focused forums;

Importance
- Online asynchronous courses – <u>Critical</u>
  - this is the main type of activity to stimulate and monitor student engagement;
- Online synchronous & on-campus courses –<u>Beneficial</u>
  - additional tool to support active learning strategies beyond lectures and labs;

Basic strategies for effective content/project forum activity

- Make content/project-specific forums part of course grading;
    - develop and post a scoring rubric for this activity;
- Start each forum with a clear and concise thread;
- Post clear requirements for discussions
    - set clear starting and ending times for each forum;
    - how many original threads; how many replies to other's threads;
    - what a meaningful thread is (examples if available);
- Monitor discussions and post periodical comments:
    - emphasize very well stated threads and/or replies;
    - summarize ideas that worth students' further attention in the forum;
    - when needed post threads to revitalize discussions;
- For large courses, split the class in groups of 20-40 students
    - create the same discussion board forum for each group;
    - once the group forums end, create a summarizing forum for the whole class and ask each group to post a summary of their discussions;
    - allocate one more day for the whole class to post on this synthesis forum;

Use Group Activities

Instructional [Design] Benefits
- Scaffold/support collaborative activities;
- Build team-work skills using online collaboration tools;

Basic strategies for effective group activities
- Clearly describe the requirements for collaborative work;
- Monitor online group activity;
- Use e-mail to "stimulate" inactive groups/group members;
- Allocate a significant percentage of grade for peer-evaluation;
- Post scoring rubrics both for final artifact and for peer evaluation;

Probability to be applicable
- Fully online asynchronous courses - High
    - it is the main tool that allows group-work monitoring;
- Fully online synchronous courses - Moderate to High
    - when group-work is used BB offers a low-cost/more convenient alternative to synchronous group-work tools (e.g. Webex, Wimba);
- On-campus courses – Low
    - extends team-work beyond face-to-face group meetings;

Instructional [Design] Benefits

- Makes students aware of diversity of informational sources;

- Allows instructors to easily maintain an up-to-date course content;

- Encourages students to find links to additional materials;

Strategies for effective use of external links

- When appropriate, create folders to group links by topic/chapter;

- For each link post a short description of its usefulness for the course;

- Double check that the URL for the link is correct and active;

- Create a "scavenger hunt" forum where students can post links they found useful for the course; ask them to provide short descriptions;
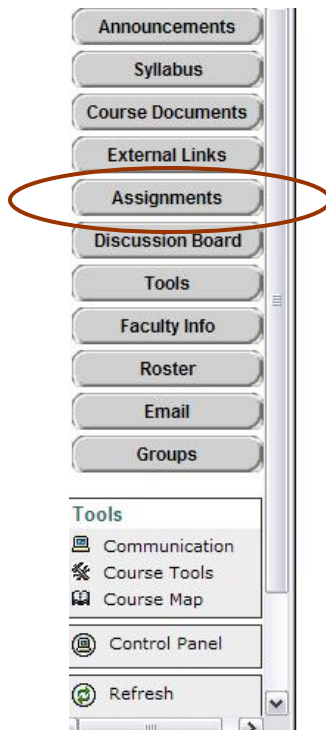
Usefulness
- Depends less on the type of course (online/on-campus) and more on the nature of the course and its associated instructional activities;

Assignments instead of Dropbox

Detailed description of the task

WebQuest Evaluation - 18 points
Due July 16

For this activity, you will work with your learning team. *Remember that you are accountable for being a responsible team member. That includes actively participating in team activities. Communicate early with your team members -- get to know each other and do your part! If you have problems with a team member who is not participating adequately, please email me privately.*

A. For background knowledge , you should first individually work through the WebQuest About WebQuests at http://webquest.sdsu.edu/materials.htm to gain an understanding of the different areas to consider when developing a WebQuest.

B. Next, **locate a WebQuest that NEEDS IMPROVEMENT** and evaluate it using the WebQuest Rubric at http://webquest.sdsu.edu/webquestrubric.html. In the team's report (see below), be sure to address the reasoning behind your evaluation. What, specifically, is good or bad about the WebQuest and why?

Team Tasks: (use the group discussion board to work on these tasks)

1. *WebQuest rubric;*
2. *WebQuest report;*

Individual Task: (4 points individually allocated for the contribution to the team work as assesed by all team members).

♦ Team Effort Evaluation

Please review the **WebQuest Evaluation Scoring Criteria**. A detailed presentation of this assignment that includes the scoring criteria is available in both the file attached in the body of this assignment and in the overview of all graded activities folder on top of this section.

>> View/Complete Assignment: WebQuest Evaluation - 18 points

Link to submission interface

Instructional [Design] Benefits

    - Unified place for task description and assignment submission;

    - When assignment created a gradebook associated item is attached;

    - Allows students to post comments when needed;

    - Allows instructor to provide individualized feedback when appropriate;

Probability to be applicable

    - <u>High</u> for online and on-site courses with project/case-based activities
        - typically online courses have more project/case-based activities that
        complement multiple-choices assessments;

Use Anonymous Survey Tool

Instructional [Design] Benefits

- Gather real-time, formative feedback from your students;

- Use feedback to adjust current instructional strategies when needed;

- Test the effectiveness of newly implemented instructional strategies;

Thinks to keep in mind

- Survey tool has a similar interface with the quiz-generating tool;
- Survey tool is anonymous:
  - you will know if a student completed the survey but there is no link between the actual answers and student name;
- Questions in the survey need to be clear and very specific;
- Create opportunities for constructive criticism/suggestions;
- Use a combination of close-ended (e.g. Likert) and open-ended questions;
- Once you compiled the results present a summary to students and include future actions/changes based on these results when appropriate;

Conclusions

Blackboard can help instructors

- Improve overall communication with and between students;

- Provide self-regulating cues and avoid information overload;

- Stimulate the development of an active learning community;

- Support active learning in and outside the formal classroom;

- Scaffold/support collaborative activities;

- Maintain an up-to-date course content;

- Provide quick individualized feedback on assignments;

Contact Information

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