



Significant Changes, Fixes, and Improvements in Blackboard 9

Coming to CWU: Summer 2009

- The Blackboard 9 interface uses web 2.0 features that allow users to drag-and-drop items that appear on the screen, select drop-down menus, and even access contextual help.
- Blackboard 9 offers support for content reordering and style sheets, significantly increasing Blackboard's accessibility.

New course home page

- Each course opens to a course home page that contains modules such as "My Announcements," "What's New," and "To Do." This automatically-updated home page provides students with information on what has changed in the course since the student last visited, what items require the students' attention, and what items are past due or are due in the near future.
- Instructors can modify the home page, add/remove/reposition the home page modules, or even select a different course entry point [the first page students see when entering the course].

Improved course management workflow

- Blackboard's course content creation and editing tools [e.g., upload a file, create an assignment, post a link to an external website] are now embedded throughout the course and no longer require instructors to access a separate Control Panel. Instead, instructors can click on the Edit Mode switch in the top right corner of any Blackboard course page.
- All options in the Control Panel are now available from the main course menu. Instructors no longer need to navigate to a separate area of the course to access these options.
- Instructors have direct access to edit and organize their Course Menu and can, in Edit Mode, even drag-and-drop the Menu's items to change their order.
- Course Menu items that do not contain any content are automatically hidden from the students' view but are always visible to the instructors in Edit Mode. Once content is added to a Course Menu item [e.g., once a syllabus is uploaded to Syllabus or once content is added to Content], Blackboard automatically makes that Menu item visible to students.
- Course Tools and Communications Tools have been combined into a single Tools area that appears within the default Course Menu. This provides instructors easier control over the tools that they want to enable and disable.

Inline confirmations

- Instead of displaying a separate receipt page every time a user successfully does something in Blackboard, Blackboard 9's confirmations display on the same page in which the user was working.

New private blog and journal creation tools

- Blackboard 9 has built in private Blog and Journal tools that let students create and share ideas with their instructors or other students enrolled in a particular class. **To respect the privacy of the students' work, Blackboard 9's blogs and journals are private and cannot be**

viewed outside of the course in which they are created.

- Individual journals allow students in a course to record their course experiences and what they are learning. These thoughts can be a private communication between a student and the instructor or shared with everyone in the course. The author or the instructor can then add comments.
- Group journals allow groups of students to reflect collaboratively and comment on their fellow group members' findings. To maintain privacy, group members may add journal entries anonymously.
- Individual blogs provide each student in a course with his or her own area to share thoughts and work with others in the course and to receive comments and feedback on entries.
- Course blogs allow all users in a course to share their thoughts and work in one common area that everyone in the course can read and add comments.
- Group blogs allow groups of students in a course to collaboratively post thoughts and comments on each others' work while everyone else in the course can view and comment on the group's entries.

Automatic update notification

- Students and instructors will be automatically notified via a nightly email digest if practically anything changes or is updated in a course.

Easier group creation

- Instructors can now create any number of groups at once.
- Students can randomly be assigned to groups, manually assigned by the instructor, or asked to sign-up for a group themselves.
- Students can create their own self-enrollment groups, although instructors have the option of modifying or restricting access to these student-created groups.

Minor Updates and Improvements

Announcements

- Instructors can now change the display order of their announcements.

Assignments

- Instructors can now choose to deploy Assignments to all students individually or to groups of students. This allows instructors to assign a single grade to all of the students in a group and also to override that group grade and assign a student a different grade.
- Instructors can allow students to submit multiple attempts for the same assignment. Each attempt can be graded and commented on individually.
- Instructors have the ability to give specific students an additional attempt at an assignment in order to accommodate extenuating circumstances.

Calendar

- Instructors can now add a start time and stop time for each Calendar event.

Tests, Surveys, and Questions

- Instructors can reorder questions in a test or survey using the new drag- and-drop feature.

Tools

- Blackboard's Electric Blackboard tool has been renamed the "Journals" tool and offers many more features than the old Electric Blackboard did.
- Blackboard's Student Homepages tool has been replaced by the new Blog tool that lets students better express their thoughts and reflect on learning within a course.