

## Blackboard at Duke – Summary Report

August 2007

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### Highlights for AY2006-07

- 80% of regular rank Arts and Sciences faculty use Blackboard (activated at least one Blackboard course site in past 2 years).
- 1520 active courses in Spring 2007, a 13% increase from Spring 2006. [Figure 1]
- 780 gigabytes - 250% increase in cumulative disk space comparing Spring 2007 vs. Spring 2006. [Figure 2]
- 55% of all course sites created were activated, in Spring 2007.
- Integration with the Lectopia system for automated lecture and event capture
- Blackboard 6.3 upgrade which included enhancements to the Gradebook, multi-language support, and other features detailed below

Figure 1. Active Blackboard Course Sites by Semester

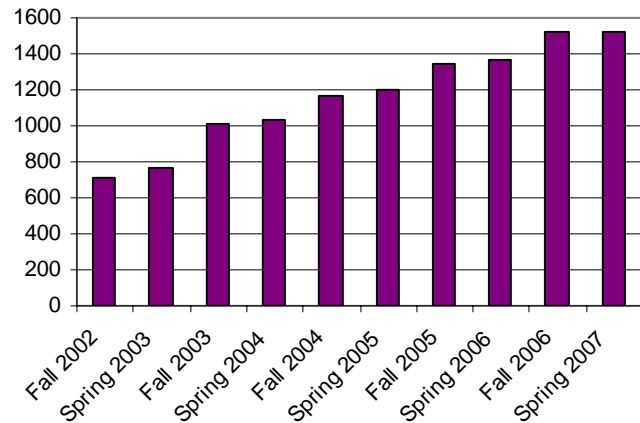
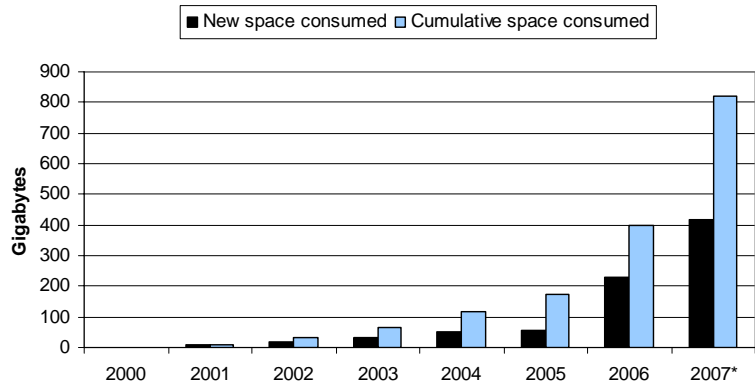


Figure 2. Blackboard disk space usage



### Plans for AY2007 - 2008

Some significant activities have already been completed this summer in preparation for 2007-08:

- Blog and wiki tools in Blackboard were upgraded to provide improved layout, a more robust editor, and integrated search capabilities. Also, the Blog tool now includes an RSS feed capability.
- A demo environment for Blackboard 7.x is now available.
- Bug fix to Export Official Grades tool
- A team to explore alternatives to Brownstone EDU has been formed.

Other plans for 2007-08 include:

- Reference librarians piloting greater integration of Library resources with Blackboard.
- Improving system efficiency and addressing storage needs through the implementation of a course retention policy and voluntary course deletion process
- Piloting new tools including web-based recording with Wimba and mobile messaging (mobile messaging pilot on hold)
- Improved Blackboard support web site, <http://blackboard.duke.edu>

Additional details can be found below on activities for 2006-07 (pg. 2) and plans for 2007-08 (pg. 3).

## Details of 2006-07 activities

### Blackboard 6.3 Upgrade

The upgrade to Blackboard version 6.3 included a number of enhancements and improvements as detailed below:

- Enhanced Course Menu and Map to improve navigation for instructors and students
- Smarter Gradebook Calculations
- Better Assessment Features including new question types and the ability to export assessment data
- Multi-language support for Romance languages
- Adaptive release and Review Status to enable customized learning paths and monitoring of student progress
- Syllabus Builder tool
- Improved integration with e-reserves to better comply with legal requirements.

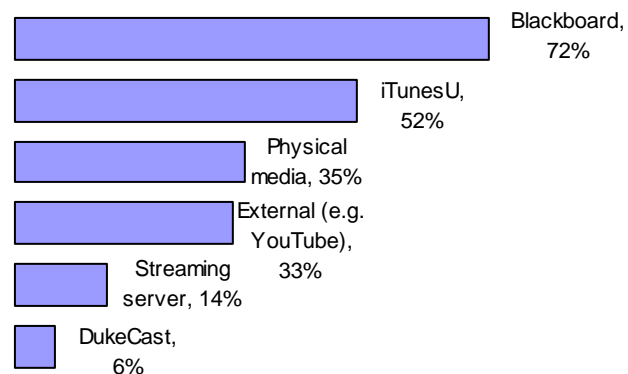
### Blackboard Support

From July 2006 – June 2007, 3228 Blackboard-related help requests came to the OIT Help Desk, about 9 tickets a day. About 2/3 of the requests are handled at the OIT Help Desk and about 1/3 are escalated to CIT. Password resets are treated as Net Id issues, not Blackboard issues, and therefore are not included in these numbers. Most of the types of questions are basic functionality questions like how to upload documents or use the gradebook, etc.

### Use of Blackboard and other systems for multimedia

As part of ongoing efforts to better understand Blackboard usage, and in conjunction with the Duke Digital Initiative evaluation for 2006-07, CIT surveyed all instructors using iPods in Spring 2007 about their means for sharing multimedia files with their students. Of 65 respondents (90% overall response rate), most instructors reported using multiple systems to share content, with Blackboard in use by nearly three-quarters of this heavy multimedia user group. [Figure 3]

**Figure 3. Multimedia distribution systems used by iPod instructors**



### Blackboard and Open Source

An Open Source group for learning tools and extensions to Learning Management Systems, called OSCELOT, has formed, and is in the process of incorporating as a non-profit organization. The group's vision is to make tools that interoperate using standards, to not be tied into any one particular environment or technology offering. Although that is the vision, most current offerings are extensions to Blackboard or WebCT. Some of the more promising nascent open source projects hosted on OSCELOT's gForge repository are:

- Gradebook publisher.
- Open Podcasting Project
- MDID building block to integrate with the MDID application

Duke's LMS (Learning Management System) Program Manager, Neal Caidin, has a leading role in this organization. We are staying closely involved in monitoring the group's activities.

## **Details of 2007-08 plans**

### ***System upgrades, explorations and pilots***

- Brownstone EDU replacement - Exploring alternatives to Brownstone EDU in close consultation with faculty from Economics and Engineering, the biggest users of EDU's features. This exploration is necessary because of the uncertain future of EDU and the importance of its functionality to several faculty in programs which impact potentially hundreds of students.
- Blackboard 7.x upgrade - Investigation of upgrade with the likely implementation in 2008
- Mobile messaging pilot – On Hold. Pilot of an academic mobile messaging system to enable students and faculty to opt-in for course-related information from Blackboard.
- Wimba voice tools pilot, integrated into Blackboard.
- Elluminate and iTunes U explore possible integration into Blackboard. Other campus tools considered for integration as necessary.
- Implement a building block for improved administrative efficiency with respect to students who dropped a course and need to be re-added to the Blackboard site (but not re-enrolled) per instructor request.
- Non- Blackboard tools - Monitoring the landscape of academic tools and their relationship with learning systems, including web 2.0 tools, virtual worlds, open source projects, and commercial offerings.

### ***Policy changes, reviews, and other system management issues***

- Improved Blackboard support web site, <http://blackboard.duke.edu>
- Large file size support - Continued and potentially expanded support for large file sizes in response to changing assignment expectations.
- Retention, technical architecture, and other strategies considered to manage system growth and provide better support to users.
- Implementation of a 4 year retention policy for Blackboard courses, beginning with courses created for Fall 2007. Benefits include better performance, increased opportunity to explore new functionality, and decreased risk upgrading the Blackboard software. Under this CIT-proposed policy, newly created courses in Fall 2007 would be removed from the system after the end of Fall 2011, Fall 2008 courses would be removed from the system at the end of Fall 2012, etc.
- Implementation of a Voluntary course deletion process which makes it easier for an instructor to delete unused Blackboard course sites. Instructors can determine which courses are appropriate to delete. This process has been vetted by faculty representatives, the Blackboard Advisory Group, the Registrar's office, and the University Archivist.
- Explore strategies for managing old content in pre-2004 courses when migrating to the latest Blackboard version. The likely value of these older courses is reduced over time and the migration process cannot continue to guarantee the integrity of older materials.