



Blackboard Student Survey Report Winter 2006

Background

The Center for Teaching & Learning's Courseware Faculty Advisory Board (CFAB) was interested in obtaining feedback from students about how Blackboard is being used to support learning at the University of Denver. With support from the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment, a Blackboard Student Survey was designed.

Methodology

The survey was distributed in January 2006 via an email announcement which included a link to the online survey. The email was sent to 7,947 DU students who had at least one instructor using Blackboard in courses during Fall 2005 or Winter 2006 terms and 1821 students completed the survey. Students were offered an opportunity to enter their name in a drawing for a \$100 gift certificate from the DU Bookstore as an incentive for completing the survey. The survey included both multiple choice and open-ended questions. The majority of survey questions were asked in a multiple choice format that could easily be quantified. Refer to Appendix 1 for a copy of the email announcement.

Demographics

In general, the percentage of students who completed the survey corresponded to the percentage of students within the various colleges, schools or divisions. We received a higher percentage of responses from students in the Daniels College of Business (DCB) and the Arts & Humanities division.

We expected a larger response rate from DCB because the business school mandates Blackboard usage in all business courses. The response rates from Sturm College of Law and University College students were low because both colleges have other course management systems available to their instructors. The Social Sciences response rate was also slightly lower compared to the total number of students within that division. The majority of students (57%) who completed the survey identified their official status at DU as full-time undergraduate students

and 29% of the respondents were full-time graduate students. The remaining 13% identified themselves as either part-time undergraduate or graduate students.

Table 1

College, School, or Division	% of Survey Responses	% of Total Students at DU
Arts and Humanities	12.4%	7.5%
University College	1.7	8.2
Daniels College of Business	35.5	27.3
Education	9.0	7.5
Natural Science and Mathematics	7.2	5.6
Social Science	5.6	10.0
Engineering and Computer Science	1.9	2.6
Social Work	4.8	3.6
Women's College	3.4	2.9
International Studies	2.7	2.0
Graduate School of International Studies	4.0	3.3
Psychology	0.1	1.8
Law	3.6	12.3
Undecided	3.5	3.8

Computer Information

The majority of students who completed the survey use the Windows operating system (88%) and 9% of the students use the MAC OS. The Internet Explorer web browser is the primary browser the majority of students (73%) use to access Blackboard. Approximately 13% of the students reported using Firefox as their primary browser.

Results

Usage

Blackboard is used primarily as a web-based supplement to traditional face-to-face courses at DU. The majority of instructors use Blackboard by choice with the exception of the business school where use of Blackboard is required. Approximately 51% of students who completed the survey reported that 75% or more of their courses use Blackboard each term. Forty-six percent reported that 50% or less of their courses use Blackboard each term.

Blackboard has a wide array of tools and features which instructors may choose to utilize in their courses. We asked students which areas are used in a majority of their courses as well as which areas of Blackboard they find most useful in their courses. Students were provided a list of the common areas in Blackboard and were instructed to select as many as applied.

Table 2 compares the responses to “which areas are used in the majority of courses” to the responses to “which areas the students find most useful.”

Table 2

Q6. Which areas of Blackboard are used in the majority of your Blackboard courses at DU?

Areas Used	Area of Blackboard	Areas find most useful Respondents
70.8%	Announcements	55.8%
70.4	Post Syllabus	51.2
58.9	Post Content	50.1
51.2	Gradebook	55.4
43.4	Discussion Board	28.2
40.0	Email	37.2
40.4	Digital Dropbox	31.7
29.4	Faculty Information	21.1
27.7	Quizzes/Survey	19.8

Table 2 (continued)

Areas Used	Area of Blackboard	Areas find most useful Respondents
22.1	External Web Links	12.7
20.3	Assignment Manager	16.3
13.2	Group Tools	9.6
4.6	Collaboration (Chat)	4.6
1.8	Glossary	3.0
1.6	Teams LX (Wiki)	0.8

Satisfaction with Blackboard

Overall, students at DU reported satisfaction with Blackboard. The vast majority of students (98%) found Blackboard very easy or easy to use. Less than 3% of the students reported that Blackboard was difficult or very difficult to use. Approximately 90% of students rated their overall experience with Blackboard as excellent or good. Less than 2% of students who responded to the survey rated their experience with Blackboard as poor.

The number one reason students reported that they like Blackboard is because it provides 24/7 access to course materials and improved communication with instructors.

Table 3

I like Blackboard because:	
It provides 24/7 access to class materials	80.2%
It improves communication with the instructor	59.7
It improves communication with fellow students	34.8
It facilitates learning	28.6
It facilitates collaboration on group projects	20.0
It helps me learn how to use technology	9.1
Other	6.9
Not applicable because I don't like Blackboard	3.5

Many students reported that they like Blackboard because it allows them to keep track of their grades.

A small percentage of students, (3.5%), reported that they do not like Blackboard. Below are some of the reasons listed:

- Can't find things in Blackboard
- It is always down
- It is very rarely kept up-to-date
- Waste of time
- I don't like to spend time online
- It is unorganized and confusing

Most students (82%) reported that they prefer courses that use Blackboard or other web-based tools to courses that do not provide online components. Approximately 10% of students do not prefer courses that used Blackboard or other web-based tools. Responses were divided equally in response to the question about whether they would be concerned if DU switched to another courseware platform.

The board was very impressed, and a little overwhelmed, with the number of students who took the time to provide specific comments to the open-ended questions. The next section provides summaries of the responses and major themes gleaned from the open-ended questions.

Q12. What are some benefits of courses that use Blackboard?

Many of the themes gleaned from the responses to the benefits of Blackboard were similar to the reasons students said they like Blackboard. The number one benefit is that Blackboard provides easy access to course materials. This was also the number one response to why students said they liked Blackboard.

The major themes were:

- 24/7 and ease of access to course materials
- Better communication
- Access to grades
- Improves class discussions
- Clarify and view assignments

Table 4 provides a summary of selected comments organized by theme.

Table 4 Benefits of courses that use Blackboard Themes & Selected Quotes
<p>24/7 and ease of access to course materials</p> <p>“Sometimes I just can’t put my hands on something, and it helps to know it’s up on my course’s blackboard. It’s a great organizational tool.”</p> <p>“Easy access to course materials whenever you need them, no matter where you are.”</p> <p>“VERY CONVENIENT. Also, it is useful even if you forget your materials around campus. You can just go to a computer station around campus and access it. SAVES ALOT OF TIME!”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Better communication</p> <p>“The teacher and student communication is much better compared to instructors who do not use Blackboard.”</p> <p>“It’s easier to communicate with classmates. I don’t have to figure out their email addresses and/or last names.”</p> <p>“It is so easy to communicate with group members.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Access to grades</p> <p>“I can track what my grades are without having to constantly ask the teacher or what the assignments are.”</p> <p>“...I also love when teachers post our grades to Blackboard.”</p> <p>“I love the online grades. I wish all instructors were required to use this feature throughout the quarter.”</p>

Table 4 - Benefits, cont.

Improves class discussions

“Discussion boards encourage communication among students and an outlet for students to express views.”

“It promotes discussion out side of the classroom.”

Clarify and view assignments

“I have a better knowledge of what is going on, stay up on assignments, and the courses that use blackboard seem to be more organized and structured.”

“Being able to see my assignments and know exactly when they are due. I like being able to turn in my assignments and get the confirmation that it went through.”

Q13. What are some drawbacks of courses that use Blackboard?

We wanted to learn what some of the faults and limitations of courses that use Blackboard were from the student perspective. Many of the drawbacks identified by the students were related to how instructors use Blackboard. Several students suggested that all instructors be required to use Blackboard.

The major drawbacks are listed below:

- Professors don't know how to use it or use it ineffectively or professor lack of knowledge
- Not all professors use it
- Inconsistent use of Blackboard by instructors
- Not used to its potential
- Instructors rely on it too much
- Students must continually check Bb/easy to miss things
- Problems with technology/access issues
- Requires Internet access
- Have to print everything yourself/prefer hard copies

Table 5 provides a summary of selected comments organized by theme.

Table 5

Drawbacks of courses that use Blackboard

Themes & Selected Quotes

Professors don't know how to use it or use it ineffectively or professor lack of knowledge

“Faculty that don't know how to use it!”

“The professor may not know how to use it efficiently.”

Not all professors use it

“I haven't incurred any, except when some teachers DON'T use it!”

“I wish more classes would use it.”

Inconsistent use of Blackboard by instructors

“Also, some professors seem to be a little inconsistent where they post materials making it more of a search.”

“Often the professor will start off using Blackboard enthusiastically and slowly stop posting assignments, grades, etc. You expect a continued level of Blackboard use from professors and slowly it declines.”

Not used to its potential

“Teachers don't use it to its full potential.”

“The only drawback is when it is only used for a few things. I like it better when most or all areas of it are used rather than just say, the syllabus area.”

Instructors rely on it too much or over use it

“Can be overused, just for the sake of using technology.”

“May become too dependent on BB, courses should only be complimented by BB, never reliant.”

Table 5 - Drawbacks, cont.

Students must continually check Bb/easy to miss things

“Expectation that students will check Blackboard often, such as if a new assignment is posted. Professor needs to be sure to notify students when this is done.”

“If I don’t check it a couple of times each day there is a chance I might fall behind. It blurs the lines between classes and personal time.”

Problems with Technology/Access Issues

“If Blackboard is down, you can’t access the materials.”

“It does not always work.”

Requires Internet Access

“You have to have an Internet connection to use it.”

“You cannot complete assignments if your Internet is not working.”

Have to print everything yourself/ prefer hard copies

“Having to print materials out.”

“If a teacher uses Blackboard, they usually don’t hand out hard copies, which I like.”

- Improve email feature
- Require that all professors use the online gradebook and keep grades up-to-date
- Mandate that all professors use Blackboard
- Improved login/access process
- Course display listing/remove old courses
- Remove unused menu items/more efficient organization of course menu

Q15. Please list any tools or features that you would like to see in Blackboard.

Specific tools or features that students would like to see in Blackboard include:

- Improved email tool
- Notification system when new content is added
- Pictures
- Mandate gradebook
- Course Calendar
- Chat/Instant messenger tool
- Integration with other DU Systems – library reserves, webmail, calendars
- All instructors should be required to use it
- Search tool
- Improved Design/Color Scheme
- Access to class roster

Some of the suggested tools and features that students requested or want to see changed are already available in Blackboard, but how to access the features may not be obvious to students. For example, students can view the class roster by clicking on the Communication link on the course menu and then clicking on Course Roster to view a list of students in the class.

Q 14. If you could change one feature in Blackboard, what would that be? Why?

We wanted feedback from the students about specific features that they would like to change in Blackboard as well as tools or features that they would like to see in Blackboard. The most common features students wanted to change include:

- Instructor or email alerts when new content has been added to a Bb class
- Simplify Digital Dropbox
- Improve Discussion Board Interface

Students stated over and over throughout the survey that Bb should have a notification system that lets them know when new content is posted to Blackboard. The university released a new tool for Blackboard called “**What’s New?**” Students and instructors can click on the What’s New link to find out what’s new in their Blackboard courses today or this week.

Finally, some of the tools and features that students said they would like to see or change in Blackboard are at the discretion of individual instructors. In addition to using Blackboard in the first place, instructors may make changes to the color scheme, update the course menu, use the gradebook, integrate student pictures, and send email notifications to their students when they add new content to their Blackboard courses. Some of the other tools and features such as a **Search** tool and seamless integration with other DU systems within Blackboard will be available soon.

Q16. Please nominate an instructor(s) at DU whose use of Blackboard enhanced your learning. Please include specific ways the instructor used Blackboard to improve your learning.

Students nominated 266 unique instructors whose use of Blackboard enhanced their learning. Many instructors received multiple nominations. For example, 44 instructors were nominated by at least five students and 26 of those instructors were nominated by 10 or more students. Table 6 presents selected quotes about ways instructors used Blackboard to improve student learning.

<p>Table 6</p> <p>Specific ways nominated instructor used Blackboard to improve your learning</p> <p>Selected Quotes</p> <p>“He uses quizzes effectively and timely updates his blackboard site.”</p> <p>“She had class notes posted with missing information so that when she lectured you weren’t scrambling to write everything down, but only fill in the details.”</p> <p>“We post discussion ideas on the discussion board throughout the quarter and it is very helpful and convenient.”</p>
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Table 6 - Nominated instructors cont.

“he does everything on Blackboard, and studying and getting assignments from blackboard is so efficient. We take quizzes from blackboard. It’s been an amazing tool. I am a better student because of blackboard!!!”
 “We engaged in constant online discussion and quizzes were given online. The discussions in particular were effective.”

“We had communication in advance of every class to keep us up to date on deadlines, etc. It helped us share ideas on the discussion board, without having to spend class time.”

“She also posted comments on the discussions in class, and our assignments. It was easy, because everything was in one place, and it made it feel like she was really involved with the students outside of class.”

“He used Discussion Boards and on-line quizzes extensively. It allowed us to gather our thoughts outside of class and to come more prepared to class in the following sessions.”

“always posted the slideshows from our class periods which allowed us to pay attention to what the instructor was talking about during class, and not have to worry about writing everything down, because it was posted online.”

“She uses blackboard to post grades after each assignment, uses it for announcements, and most importantly for discussion board which allows each classmate post their thoughts on a question or subject that I think is essential for learning as it makes students expand their learning and thoughts, and shares it with the class.”

“She mandated that we post reflections on what we had read prior to class. This action improved the quality of the in class discussion.”

Conclusions

The majority of students who responded to the survey were positive about the Blackboard course management system. Students find Blackboard easy to use and rate their overall experience with Blackboard as excellent or good. One of the major drawbacks reported by students is the fact that not all instructors use Blackboard. Students prefer courses that include online components and many students feel that Blackboard should be mandated. The number one reason students like Blackboard is because it provides easy access to course materials.

Students provided excellent feedback about how Blackboard is used at DU and provided thoughtful suggestions about ways it may be improved. Students nominated many instructors whose use of Blackboard improved their learning and provided specific comments of how DU instructors are effectively teaching with Blackboard.

The results of the survey will assist us in the development of strategies for improving faculty and student use of the Blackboard course management system. The university is sharing the findings of the survey with instructors, students, administrators, and technical support staff so we can work together to improve Blackboard usage at the University of Denver.

Appendix I Bb Student Survey – Email Message

Subject: Win a \$100 DU Bookstore Certificate from DU Blackboard

Greetings,

The Center for Teaching & Learning and the DU Courseware Faculty Advisory Board are interested in learning how Blackboard is being used to support learning at the University of Denver. We have developed a short Blackboard student survey and ask that you take a few minutes to complete the survey. Your feedback will provide instructors with insight on how Blackboard is being used to support teaching & learning at DU. This is also your opportunity to recognize instructors who you feel are using Blackboard effectively.

Click on the link below to take the survey now:

<http://www.du.edu/assessment/ctl/>

To thank you for completing this survey, we are offering you the opportunity to enter your name for a drawing for a \$100 gift certificate from the DU Bookstore.

The survey will only be available until February 3rd and the drawing for the \$100 gift certificate will be held the following day. Your responses to the survey questions will be confidential.

Thank you very much for your time!