

**GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES FOR
DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF ELEARNING IN
THE VCCS**

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

DEFINING ELEARNING

Online – 95-100% of the course content is online either through synchronous or asynchronous delivery.

Hybrid – The combination of face-to-face and electronic delivery where 51-100% of the course content is electronically delivered. The electronic delivery can be either asynchronous or synchronous.

Synchronous – Same time, any place. Courses are delivered at one scheduled time, but students and instructors may be in different locations.

Asynchronous -- Any time, any place. Courses can be online, print based, video or CD/DVD delivery. The student does not need to be in the same location as the instructor or fellow classmates or be available for instruction at the same time.

Web-Enhanced -- Any in-person (face-to-face) course that supports instruction with the use of Internet technology.

Internet Delivered Web-based courses – Courses delivered completely online through a course management system such as Blackboard, a eConference instrument such as Adobe Connect (Breeze), Centra, or Elluminate, or another product.

Interactive Classroom Video (Live Two-Way Audio/Video) – Courses delivered via video to two or more sites. Students may be at a different location than the instructor.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) – An agreement between more than one entity detailing the structure, strategies and delivering of an eLearning course or program. Sample MOUs can be found in Appendix B.

GOALS OF ELEARNING

Overall, the goals of eLearning are:

- To maximize accessibility to courses and programs by removing the barriers of location and time.
- Maintain flexibility, convenience and quality of course content delivered via eLearning.
- To advise, support and coordinate professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.
- To provide additional access to academic and student services.
- To promote the utilization of existing and emerging technologies to enhance the

teaching and learning experience.

ELEARNING MODALITIES IN THE VCCS

The guiding principles of the VCCS eLearning Management Model are:

- That the model should reflect what is in the best interest of the student.
- That it should keep administrative bureaucracy and paperwork to an absolute minimum.
- That it should provide participating incentives for both the receiving and delivering institutions.
- That it should recognize student choice and student access as fundamental.
- That it should take into account the diversity of eLearning options.

PROGRAM/COURSE DELIVERY GUIDELINES

Students may register at the participating college of their choice for courses with a prefix not in their major. For courses with a prefix in their major, students should register at the campus/college that hosts the curriculum, i.e., the delivering college. Students receiving federal financial aid must register at the campus/college that houses the "eligible program" (curriculum) in order to remain eligible for financial aid.

For a list of currently used eLearning collaboration models, refer to Appendix A.

It is recommended that the delivering college receives 100 percent FTES credit for courses with a prefix in the student's major. General education courses and other non-major components of a curriculum may be offered by receiving colleges, with appropriate FTES distributions as for synchronous or asynchronous courses. Cooperating colleges may alter FTES distributions if agreed upon in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

It is recommended that the delivering college receives 100 percent of the tuition revenue for courses with a prefix in the student's major. General education courses and other non-major components of a curriculum may be offered by receiving colleges, with appropriate tuition revenue distributions as for synchronous or asynchronous courses. Cooperating colleges may alter tuition revenue distributions if agreed upon in a MOU.

Faculty costs (for courses with a prefix in the student's major) should be the sole responsibility of the delivering college unless a difference is agreed upon through a MOU. General education courses and other non-major components of a curriculum may be offered by receiving colleges, with appropriate cost sharing distributions as for synchronous or asynchronous courses.

Costs for course instructional materials (other than those purchased by students) should be the sole responsibility of the delivering college. Cooperating colleges may alter instructional materials cost sharing distributions, if agreed upon in a Memorandum of Understanding.

The delivering college (curriculum host college) is the college of record for graduation of the student.

Sample MOUs can be found in Appendix B.

FORMS

- Standard Distance Education MOU:
<http://system.vccs.edu/vccsit/Archive/VDENAdmin/mouapp.pdf>
- VCCS Distance Learning Faculty Credential Certification:
<http://system.vccs.edu/vccsit/Archive/VDENAdmin/faccred.PDF>

MODES OF DELIVERY STANDARDS

All colleges will assure that faculty have the appropriate training in pedagogy and technical requirements to deliver quality instruction using any of the technologies listed below:

Interactive Classroom Video Delivery Standards

A typical classroom size is 25-30 students using a minimum of two-way audio and video technology. All classrooms will be equipped with a large display for student viewing, a computer for instruction, a document camera, DVD player, and phone/fax for support.

Helpdesk phone numbers for video support will be posted prominently in the classroom and support staff will be available to provide assistance when necessary.

Each video classroom will be equipped with a fax machine and speakerphone. These will be used to contact students at remote sites in case of technical problems and to hold audio classes as a backup.

An instruction sheet will be housed in each interactive video classroom describing step-by-step instructions as to how to turn on and shut down the equipment, and trouble-shoot common site problems.

Each site will continue, at a minimum, a parts maintenance contract in case of a malfunction.

All faculty delivering via video conference will plan for alternate delivery in case of technical problems such as continuing the class by speakerphone, taping the class, or assigning make-up class work via fax, phone, e-mail, or Blackboard.

eConferencing Delivery Standards

There is no typical classroom; however, a computer classroom or a classroom equipped with laptop computers would work. Each student, wherever their location, needs access to a computer that meets the standards for the eConferencing software used for delivery. In addition, headphones, microphones, and/or headphone microphones need to be used for two-way audio. Typical software used throughout the VCCS for eConferencing includes Centra, Elluminate, Wimba, and Adobe Connect (Breeze) conferencing systems.

Students enrolling in eConferencing courses need to contact their local college for support if they need to use college equipment or services for the course.

Online Delivery Standards

All online courses are developed and delivered through a content management system and they must adhere to the college's quality assurance guidelines. "When examinations are employed (paper, online, demonstrations of competency, etc.), they take place in circumstances that include firm student identification. The institution otherwise seeks to assure the integrity of student work."

(<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/commandap.pdf>, Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.)

Proctored activities for a completely asynchronous course may be required on a college by college basis.

Hybrid Delivery Standards

Hybrid delivery follows the online delivery standards in that material delivered asynchronously is delivered via the current VCCS course management system and adheres to the college's quality assurance guidelines. Proctored activities may be required on a college by college basis.

Course Coding Reference

For course coding procedures for the VCCS Student Information System, refer to Appendix C.

SUPPORT SERVICES

All participants in programs and courses delivered via distance learning must have equal access to educational support services.

Testing & Assessment

Placement Testing & Advising

Home campuses are responsible for providing information about placement testing, placement counseling, and course and program advising. For collaborative eLearning programs, the MOU should specify who makes placement decisions for students at the receiving college.

Course Testing

The arrangements for the proctoring of course assessment are generally the responsibility of the delivering college. The agreement among the Virginia Community Colleges is that proctored testing is a shared resource and each college supports any student request for testing services from other Virginia Community Colleges as though they were their own students. Students without access to either the delivering or receiving college may arrange proctoring through the delivering college with another entity. A sample proctor form may

be adapted for a particular college when students request proctoring at another institution. The link below is to a sample form for one of the VCCS colleges:

http://www.rcc.vccs.edu/distancelearning/documents/ProctorRequestForm_001.doc

Technical Support

Help Desk

Colleges should clearly identify how and where to access technical support.

Faculty and Staff

Through the college technology plan developed yearly, a replacement cycle of technology equipment is developed to ensure that faculty have the computer equipment and instructional technology equipment to teach their students. In addition, each college through its annual technology plan sets aside funds to support instructional design and help desk services. For more information, contact your college's Information Technology Office.

Students

Through the college technology plan developed yearly, a replacement cycle of technology equipment is developed to ensure that students have the equipment necessary to support their educational program and goals for today and tomorrow. In addition, each college through its annual technology plan sets aside funds for help desk services.

Technical Support Standards

Colleges will clearly identify the minimum technical requirements for students to participate in any eLearning course.

All VCCS college employees will use VCCS or college-supported email. All students must use VCCS email as their standard for course and college email communication as noted in the following VCCS policy.

<http://www.vccs.edu/Portals/0/ContentAreas/PolicyManual/Sec6.pdf>

Library and other Learning Resources

Online access to library resources from either the delivering or receiving college is the ideal. Supplemental course materials for eLearning courses will be provided by the course instructor electronically unless other arrangements are made. Instructors must follow copyright and fair use guidelines related to both print and non-print course materials as noted in the following VCCS policy:

<http://myfuture.vccs.edu/Portals/0/ContentAreas/PolicyManual/sec12.pdf>

Special needs for materials in collaborative eLearning courses and programs will be outlined and agreed upon through the MOU process.

Books and other Learning Materials

Arrangements for student purchase of books and other learning materials for collaborative eLearning courses and programs will be outlined in the MOU.

Admissions

Admissions & Records

A student's primary institution (determined the same as for a traditional student) is responsible for providing application processing, domicile determinations, transfer credit and transcript evaluations, registration services, and graduation evaluations. The VCCS is responsible for providing Student Information System (SIS) services to colleges.

Financial Aid

The guidelines for federal financial aid apply to all students, including those enrolled in eLearning courses. Students who desire financial aid should consult with their financial aid office. Financial Aid Consortia arrangements and agreements may be written for individual students. Campuses assume joint responsibility for monitoring individual students under consortia arrangements and agreements.

All campuses are responsible for providing financial aid counseling. The college granting the financial aid is responsible for application processing services, award disbursement services, refund processing services, and monitoring satisfactory academic progress.

Orientation

Colleges should ensure that students receive adequate orientation to eLearning, specific course procedures and to the skills necessary to be successful in the course(s) for which they are enrolled. Students should also be advised where to get help and the types of academic and technical assistance that is available.

Distance Learning Evaluation

Course Evaluations and Assessment

All instruction and content should be evaluated in the same way as traditional classroom instruction. In addition, colleges may develop evaluation plans and assessment instruments to be completed by faculty and students each semester for evaluation of the delivery of eLearning courses. Evaluations can include assessments of communication between instructor and students, the availability of library and learning resources and other educational support services, and the delivery system.

Colleges are responsible for developing and implementing eLearning plans to assess student outcomes, the comparability of courses and programs with on-campus counterparts, the technical quality of course delivery and support, instructional effectiveness, and faculty and student satisfaction.

Faculty Evaluations

All faculty, regardless of instructional method, will follow their college's procedures for faculty evaluation.

PLANNING, DEVELOPING, AND DELIVERING ELEARNING COURSES

Examples of procedures for the planning, developing, and delivering of eLearning courses can be found at <http://system.vccs.edu/itde/ned.html>.

FACULTY RESOURCES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

BEST PRACTICES IN FACULTY ORIENTATIONS FOR ONLINE INSTRUCTION

Examples of how some VCCS colleges prepare their faculty for online instruction can be found at <http://system.vccs.edu/itde/ned.html>.

BLACKBOARD FUNCTIONS & FEATURES

THE INSTRUCTOR CONTROL PANEL

Content Areas

This area provides the tools necessary to add text, files, and information to the course. Course Content Areas are used to organize information that is posted in the course. Content Areas correspond to the links in the course menu. Content areas may be titled Course Information, Course Documents, Assignments, and External Links. Content Areas can be customized by changing these titles or creating new areas. To customize, access Manage Course Menu in the control panel. Documents, PowerPoint presentations, movie clips, pictures, URL's , etc. can be added to any Content Area.

Content Area functions

- To add a document, text, or images click Item
- To add a folder to store content items click Folder
- To add a link to a webpage, click External Link
- To add a link which will guide students to a different area of the blackboard course, click Course Link.
- To add an online Test, click Test.

Other tools maybe added to the Content Area by clicking the +Select dropdown menu in the upper right.

Course Tools - This area contains the communication tools for Instructors to send email, create tasks, and work with groups. This area also contains Building Blocks.

Course Options - This area contains security and customization options for management of course components.

User Management - This area provides tools for the Instructor to manage users and enrollments.

Assessment - This area provides tools for creating tests and surveys, recording grades, and tracking user activity.

Support - This area offers support contacts and online documentation.

Customizing the Menu & Tools

Blackboard empowers instructors to customize the appearance of their course menu in a variety of ways. Instructors can manage the course menu by accessing the “Manage Course Menu” option in the control panel. In this area, instructors can add, remove and modify all of the items in the course menu.

A best practice for instructors is to simplify the menu as much as possible. If you do not use a tool or content area, remove it from the menu options. Often students will enter an unused content area and assume something is supposed to be there. Their second assumption is that their computer or the college network is preventing them from seeing the material. Instructors should also rename items to match their references. If Course Information is referred to as a Course Outline, change the menu item to read Course Outline. Simple modifications to the menu can make course navigation more intuitive for students.

The same idea applies to tools. If you do not use a tool like the Virtual Classroom or Discussion Board, remove it from the menu or the tools area in Manage Tools.

Anything you remove or alter in the menu or tools area can be restored if you later decide to use it in your course.

Benefits of changing the names on the course menu

You can change the names on the course menu to better reflect their contents. Instead of “Assignments,” you may want to call the section “Book reviews” if you are teaching a literature course or “Experiments” if you are teaching a Chemistry course.

Benefits of adding tools or external links to the menu

Students may spend much of their time looking at specific websites for your course. You can make a direct link to the site on the navigation menu, so your students can have faster access to certain websites. For example, a public health class could have a direct link to the National Institute of Health website on the front page of the course. Adding frequently used tools to the navigation menu will also make it easier for your students to access them.

Adding & Dropping Students, Instructors, & TAs

Depending on individual college policy, instructors may have the ability to add and drop users in their Bb courses using the “Enroll User” and “Remove Users from Course” option in the control panel. All that is required is the user’s username, email or last name to search for their account. Special care should always be taken to verify their user information before adding or dropping a user in a course. Users dropped from a course will lose all associated files and grades contained in the course. These items cannot be retrieved if an error is made.

If a student’s access to a course needs to be removed but their coursework needs to be preserved, that student should be made unavailable via the “List/Modify Users” panel rather than removing them from the course.

Once a new user is added, the instructor may use the “List/ Modify Users” option in the control panel to modify the user’s role in the course. When a user is added to a course the default role is student. The instructor can change this role to an instructor, course builder, grader, guest, or teaching assistant. To get more information on the course permissions assigned to each role, consult the Bb User’s Guide.

ADDING CONTENT TO A COURSE

Adding a folder

The Add Folders tool lets you create folders that organize and sort your course content. Folders make it easier to find documents by grouping similar items together. You can organize your materials in two main ways: content based and chronological order. Once a folder has been created, documents can be moved into it. Also, folders can be added within other folders.

Adding an item (or attaching a document)

The Add Items tool lets you add content to your course site. You can upload files in their original format, so when students click on these links, they will download the files onto their computer. You can also add HTML or web-supported files (such as .jpps, .gifs, .swfs, or .movs) that your students can view directly within Blackboard.

All files should have a three or four letter file extension (such as .doc or .html) that designates its file type. File names should not contain spaces or special characters, except for the underscore (_) and only one period before the file extension (such as HomeWorkOne.doc).

You can upload just about any file type to Blackboard. However, the type of document that you upload affects how your students can view it. If you upload documents that you have created and saved in specific software programs such as Word or Excel, your students must have that particular software installed on their computer to view the documents.

For example, if you upload a PowerPoint document, your students will have to download and open the file in PowerPoint or the PowerPoint viewer. However, if you save and upload your files as HTML (.html), your students can view the documents within Blackboard.

Using Graphics on Blackboard

In general, use .gif format for graphics that have few colors, graphics that contain text or type, or graphics that have large areas of a single color. Use .jpg format for graphics that have many colors and lots of fine detail, such as photos. You should not use .bmp graphics with Blackboard. These files are very large and are slow to load, especially for modem users. Many scanners create .bmp files on their default settings, so check this setting if you scan photos or images. Blackboard also uploads all graphics in their original size. Make sure you have appropriately sized your graphics for your course site.

Adding an External Link

The Add URL tool lets you place links to outside websites in any of the content areas. Placing external links on Blackboard lets you direct your students to relevant websites and saves them time from searching the Internet.

Opening an External Link in a new window

There are two main reasons to open a website in a new window: copyright concerns and ease of navigation. Copyright scholars frown upon "framing." Framing is opening a website within the framework of another website. Many websites do not mind being framed. Educational institutions usually have more leeway than commercial organizations. You should ask permission before framing a website. To be safe, open the website in a new window. Opening a website in a new window also lets your students move back and forth between websites without losing their place.

Assignments

The Add Assignment tool lets you create an assignment for your students to complete. It automatically creates an item in your Gradebook so you do not have to. When your students finish and upload their assignment, the Gradebook will update the students' completion status and will have a link to their uploaded file. You can then download, view, and grade the assignment directly from the Gradebook and give your students detailed feedback about their assignment.

Announcements

The Announcements tool lets you post time-sensitive information such as deadlines, changes, corrections, clarifications, and schedules. By default, your students will see this page first when they enter your Blackboard course, so it is a useful place to post important information.

Changing announcement order

You can change the order of announcements, but you cannot change the order the same way you do with folders and items. You can change the order by modifying an announcement. The last modified announcement should appear at the top.

Adaptive Release

Adaptive Release provides controls for the course instructor to release content to users based on rules created by the instructor. Rules may be based on dates for release, group membership, gradebook items, and review status.

Adaptive Release: Creates basic rules for an item. Only one rule per item can be created

Adaptive Release, Advanced: Create advanced rules for an item. Multiple rules from basic adaptive release may be used for each item.

Adaptive Release Example

Create an assignment. Next, access the assignment through the appropriate control panel content area. Select adaptive release or adaptive release advanced and create your rule(s). This screen also provides controls to enable and disable the review status for this item as well as a user progress utility, a statistics tracking utility, and an option to enter metadata for this item.

Assessments

The assessments area within Blackboard (Bb) allows instructors to create and post tests, quizzes and surveys. Assessment creation can be achieved in several different ways: Test Manager, Survey Manager, Pool Manager or importing questions with the use of a third-party software application.

The Test Manager enables instructors to create a test by entering new questions using the Test Canvas or importing questions from a question pool. The Test Manager supports many different question types and can generate tests questions randomly from a question pool. Blackboard will also grade tests that offer a finite answer scheme such as a multiple choice or fill in the blank.

Importing Test Questions

Test questions can be imported from publisher provided test banks and existing tests used in the traditional classroom setting. However this does require the use of a third-party software product such as ExamView or Respondus.

ExamView is used by most textbook publishers and allows an instructor to export a compressed file of the question pool. The instructor is often required to save the file to their computer and then import the file into Bb using the Pool Manager.

Respondus allows instructors to create tests from scratch or import questions from existing tests that are in electronic format such as a Microsoft Word document. Users are required to reformat existing tests adhering to strict format guidelines. Despite the tedium of reformatting your text documents, this method is often much quicker than creating new tests within Respondus or Blackboard. Another convenience feature is Respondus' ability to deploy tests directly to Bb. After the initial setup of the software, instructors can publish tests directly to Blackboard, set the test options and make the test available to students.

Best Practices for deploying online assessments

Instructors should always test drive their assessments before making them available to students. This will give the instructor an opportunity to uncover any typographical errors, problems with passwords, or any ambiguity that may confuse students.

Allow students to take a practice test. Many students (especially older students), may have little or no experience taking a test online. A simple practice test can alleviate student anxiety and provide a valuable learning experience for students. Allow multiple attempts and a variety of question types to assist students in familiarizing themselves with the medium.

Educate students about common problems with online testing and the appropriate action that should be taken. Problems do occur with online testing, everything from a dropped Internet connections and blocked firewalls to simply human error (ie: click the wrong button).

Anti Cheating Strategies

There will always be students attempting to cheat on exams regardless of the delivery methods. However there are some practices instructors can initiate to make cheating more difficult:

- Use question pools and randomize the question selection. This will allow instructors to make each student's test at least slightly different from the next. The greater the number of questions in the pool, the more randomization that can occur.
- Make the test available for a short time-period. There are two ways instructors can achieve this effect. They can place a time limit on how long students will have to complete the test within the Test Options area of Bb, such as 1 hour. They may also control the amount of time students have to access the test by limiting the dates of availability.
- Present one question at a time. Any item presented on a computer screen can be copied and printed including your tests. One way to deter this from occurring is to present one question at a time and prohibit backtracking. This allows a student to see only one question on the screen at a time and they are not allowed to navigate back to a previous question once it's answered.
- Use a lock-down browser. Currently the VCCS plans to use the Respondus LockDown Browser to secure online tests. This software is administered at an enterprise level and will keep students from copying and/or printing tests, switching windows, accessing other URLs and blocks other applications from running. This option will require that students go to a testing center in order to take their tests.
- Require a proctor. Instructors can require students to take the tests in a proctored environment. This can usually be setup with another school, library or testing center. Proctors are provided with password access to your test and specific instruction regarding what a student may do or use during the assessment.

GRADEBOOK

One of the greatest benefits offered by Blackboard to both instructors and students comes in its Gradebook functionality. Instructors can keep their Gradebook online and post grades for students to see anytime. This can cut down on the number of phone calls, emails and office visits by students inquiring about their grades.

Items like multiple choice tests that grade themselves in Bb will automatically populate the appropriate column with grades. Other items such as discussion boards and assignments will automatically create Gradebook columns at the time the item is created and allow for easy access for instructors to input grades.

The Gradebook can be setup to accommodate any type of grading scheme and/or scale. It also allows for weighting grades and will automatically average grades based on your criteria. This can save valuable time at the end of the term and eliminates the need for creating a custom spreadsheet.

The Gradebook can also be exported to an Excel file for an instructor's records.

DISCUSSION BOARD

The Discussion Board is an asynchronous communication tool that allows students and instructors to participate in online discussions without requiring all class participants to be online at the same time. Conversations are grouped in threads that contain a main posting and all related replies.

Instructors can use the discussion board in Blackboard to:

- continue class discussions outside of class.
- promote an online community.
- develop team or individual student facilitated discussions.
- post and discuss case studies.
- post student papers for peer evaluation and critique.
- post homework questions.
- provide a public forum for students to post questions.
- provide a forum for a guest Speaker Q & A.
- create an online social forum for the course.

OTHER COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Communication Tools in Blackboard enhance interaction between students and instructors. The group communication tools promote collaborative learning and cooperation among students.

E-mail

An e-mail distribution list is automatically created within each Blackboard course. Instructors and students can send an e-mail to individuals who participate in the course from the Send E-mail page.

Collaboration Tools

The collaboration tools in Blackboard provide a synchronous communication area that enable users to participate in online collaborations with instructor and students. The collaboration area includes a Virtual Classroom and a Chat tool.

Group Pages

Creating Groups for a course can give an added dimension to student interaction and course discussions, as well as give students tools to collaborate online on cooperative learning projects. Blackboard groups have their own self-contained e-mail, discussion groups, collaboration and file exchange area.

CONTENT SYSTEM

The Blackboard Content System gives instructors the ability to store, access and share files and folders within Blackboard. For instructors with Blackboard course sites, the Blackboard Content System provides seamless integration for management of class materials.

For example, an instructor can save a single copy of a class document on the Content System and simply link to it from multiple Blackboard course sites, and optionally, give access to the document to individual colleagues. Since there is only one instance of each source document, edits only need to be done once and without any re-uploading; all links automatically open the updated version.

INSTRUCTIONAL SOFTWARE

CLASSTOP

ClassTop is a client-side software application designed to help instructors more easily organize and manage course content and communication within Blackboard. Instructors can download their existing course content into ClassTop and drag and drop new content from their computer into Blackboard.

ClassTop allows the instructor to:

- Add new files, folders and links by dragging and dropping files and addresses
- Rename and set options for files, folders, and links
- Mass delete files, folders and links
- Move content from one course to another by dragging the files

- Add and manage announcements
- Use ClassAlerts to send Announcements to your students' email or cell phones.
- Work off-line

IMPATICA

Impatica for PowerPoint makes it easy to add narrated PowerPoint presentations to Blackboard. Impatica converts the PowerPoint file into a compressed format that is optimized for streaming over the Internet. The Impatica file is typically 95% smaller than the PowerPoint HTML files. It supports most of the features of PowerPoint, including text, graphics, transitions, animation effects and, of course, narration.

A download link for Impatica and installation instructions can be found in Blackboard on the Teach tab. A user's manual can also be found there.

RESPONDUS

Respondus allows instructors to create tests from scratch or import questions from existing tests that are in electronic format such as a Microsoft Word document. Users are required to reformat existing tests adhering to strict format guidelines. Despite the tedium of reformatting your text documents, this method is often much quicker than creating new tests within Respondus or Bb. Another convenience feature is Respondus' ability to deploy tests directly to Bb. After you initial setup of the software, instructors can publish tests directly to Bb, set the test options and make the test available to students.

SOFTCHALK

Softchalk is software that makes creating interactive web pages easy by adding formatting, images, and styles to web pages using basic text editing. It is an accessible tool for creating engaging learning materials including in-line comprehension quiz questions, text annotations, and activities. Activities that Softchalk can create include matching, flash cards, ordering, crosswords, seek a word, and drag and drop. Softchalk files can easily be uploaded into Blackboard.

STUDYMATE

StudyMate is a tool similar to SoftChalk for creating interactive web pages quickly and easily using a Flash based format. This tool will also let you create activities for use on iPods, Sony Playstation Portable (PSP) and other small screen devices. The VCCS has a temporary system license and you can download the software from the Teach tab in Blackboard. This software may replace SoftChalk when the results of the pilot are assessed.

WIMBA

Web-based voice tools facilitate and promote vocal instruction, collaboration, coaching, and assessment. Increase the interaction and student engagement level of any online class by allowing faculty and students to easily embed vocal interactions into any Blackboard course.

BLACKBOARD BEST PRACTICES

ARCHIVING COURSES

Your system administrator should have access to archives of your course, but it is always a good idea to archive a copy for yourself, especially if you are about to make major changes to the course.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EXPORT AND ARCHIVE

Export allows you to choose which parts of your course you wish to save (i.e. Course Documents or Tests). This saves only the content, not student data. To save student data, you must use the archive option.

RESTORING AN ARCHIVE

If you need to restore an archived course for any reason, please contact your System Administrator.

BACKING UP THE GRADEBOOK

If you use the Gradebook in your course, it is important that you keep a back-up copy. Blackboard allows you to download your gradebook as an Excel or CSV file for easy back-up.

ENCOURAGING INTERACTIVITY

A major challenge for online instructors is the need to create engaging and interactive lessons. Following are several suggestions for engaging students and promoting participation among students.

Problem-Based Learning

Group requirements for completion of a project that requires cooperative learning. Blackboard components that may be used include the Groups feature, the Discussion Board, Email, and the Assignment feature.

Interactive Courseware

Interactive courseware such as factory simulators, police defense simulators, and flight simulators can be used as a means to not only reinforce learning, it can also be used as a tool to engage students.

Online/Small Group Discussions

Include a participation grade for discussion board postings.

Self-Directed Learning Activities

Have students create questions for group and class discussions. Have students research and suggest topics for online discussions. Have students contribute potential exam topics and questions.

ANNOUNCEMENTS VS. EMAIL VS. DISCUSSION BOARD

When to use Announcements

- Assignment deadline reminders
- Special events that relate to the class
- Announcing changes in class schedule, meeting cancelations
- Assessment reminders

When to use Email

- One-on-one communication with students
- As a follow-up to posting a critical announcement
- Collecting and returning assignments

When to use the Discussion Board

- Ice-breaker
- Course participation
- Peer support

COURSE CARTRIDGES

Course Cartridges are pre-packaged course materials, ready to use in Blackboard. They contain a variety of materials that can include slides, documents, multimedia files, links to related websites, test banks, and quizzes, all of professional editorial quality. The cartridge materials often correlate to a textbook or eBook, although some cartridges are meant to be used stand-alone. All Cartridge materials can be customized once they've been downloaded to your specific course site.

In the Blackboard Cartridge Catalog (<http://www.blackboard.com/extend/ccart/>), each publisher has provided a general description of each cartridge. In many cases, the publisher has also included information about demos, trials, and information on how to obtain a Download Key. Publisher contact information is included for each cartridge. You can also work through your school's publisher representatives.

Please note that if you use a course cartridge, it is very important that the correct books are ordered for your students. Some cartridges require the students to have an access key in

order to access the course material. Keys are usually purchased with a new book, though your bookstore can opt to sell keys separately.

Cartridge material generally does not copy from one semester to another, so you may need to request a new cartridge each time you offer the course. You also may need to have multiple download keys if you are teaching multiple sections.

COPYRIGHT AND FAIR USE LAWS AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Faculty who use the Web for educational purposes should understand the implications of "Fair Use" provisions in U.S. copyright law for online course materials. In order to take advantage of "Fair Use", the college must have their copyright policies posted publicly.

The TEACH Act defines how accredited, nonprofit educational institutions may use copyright protected materials in distance education courses without obtaining permission from the copyright owner. The section on the TEACH Act Best Practices Using Blackboard on the ALA website describes the TEACH Act and provides both interpretation and guidelines on posting materials on online course sites.

In short, this may include:

- restricting access to copyright materials to students officially enrolled in the course
- limiting access to copyright materials to the duration of the course
- informing students that the creation of more than one copy of course materials under copyright is prohibited, without express permission from copyright holder.

Further information about copyright law, Fair Use guidelines, and educational technology, is available at the following sites:

- U.S. Copyright Law: § 107. Fair Use (<http://www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.html>)
- "Copyright in Cyberspace: Introduction" Prof. Stacey L. Dogan (Northeastern University School of Law) (<http://www.cyberspacelaw.org/dogan/index.html>)
- "Summary of U.S. Copyright Office Report on Distance Education" by Kenneth D. Crews 1995-2001 The Trustees of Indiana University (<http://www.copyright.iupui.edu/>)

MODELS FOR ELECTRONIC ADVISING AND ONLINE OFFICE HOURS

These models are college specific. Please see your campus officials for more information.

ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

All colleges are required to be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). All college web sites should also be in compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Many of the recommendations for this project are based on the guidelines developed in the Beyond the Administrative Core: Creating Web-based Student Services for Online Learners Project (<http://www.wiche.edu/telecom/projects/laap>). This project was funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The project partners were Kansas State University, Kapi'olani Community College, Regis University, and SCT. One of the key deliverables from this project is a set of guidelines that came developed from the efforts of these institutions in planning, developing, implementing, and testing different online student services.

One of the featured examples in the project report is Penn State's eLion Academic Advising demo site (http://eliondemo.oas.psu.edu/student/demo_student_page.html. Click the Late Drop link in the left column and follow the pages.)

eLion is a portal environment for Penn State students to access many of the student services online. Because most student services sites are secure and require password access, the Penn State demo is one of the most comprehensive and accessible demo sites for student resources. Notable items are:

- a link to an interactive tool to help student match up their interests to available programs at Penn State.
- an interactive tool that helps students predict GPA based on grades they expect to earn
- a link to exploring majors that contains answers to general questions about selecting majors, links to various advising resources including Career Services
- a link to the Advising Handbook
- a link to an online module - Educational Planning for the First year Student

The Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (WCET) compiled information from this guide into a user-friendly presentation that addresses the key areas critical to effective delivery of e- student services. (<http://www.wiche.edu/telecom/resources/publications/guide/guide.htm>) Although not linked to active pages, this resource has screen shots of models of e-student services activities from various colleges and universities.

EduTools , another WCET product, (<http://www.edutools.info/static.jsp?pj=7&page=HOME>) describes commercial products that are technology solutions to support online student services. The descriptions of product features are excellent prompts for consideration of the kinds of features and services desired, whether from a vendor or developed internally.

A guide to developing online student services can be found at <http://www.wiche.edu/telecom/resources/publications/guide/guide.htm>.

MODELS FOR ADVISING ONLINE

Some guiding considerations for advising online are:

- Must be easy to access and easy to use
- Must be accessible any time
- Must be equal to services available on campus
- Must provide opportunity for one-to one advising by telephone or face-to-face if requested
- Should be designed for student to have easy access to own records
- May have an interactive calendar that allows student to immediately link to information, forms related to items dues (example – deadline to apply for graduation linked to graduation application)

Information on current VCCS virtual advising activities is available at http://system.vccs.edu/itde/virtual_advising_centers.html.

You can search for courses and programs available at other VCCS colleges that are not available at your college at <http://courses.vccs.edu>.

Possible online advising activities may be:

- Selection of major/program of study
- Interest and skill inventories for self-assessment
- Transfer information
- Prediction of GPA
- Degree audit/graduation work sheet
- Real-time chats with advisors
- Access to an online catalog

TUTORING SERVICES

Guiding considerations for tutoring services are:

- Tutors available day/evening/weekends
- Access to live person by telephone and real time chat
- Online tutorials, including audio and video demos where needed (i.e., math, accounting)

Possible online tutoring activities may be:

- One-on-one real-time tutoring, including the use of a white board for demonstrations
- On-line tutorials in specific subject areas

- Online study skills, test taking, and time management workshops
- Opportunity to connect with a live person by telephone

VIRTUAL CLUBS AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Possible online virtual club and extracurricular activities may be:

- Club web sites
- Blackboard organizations with online meetings and discussion boards

VIRTUAL CAREER EXPLORATION AND JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS

Colleges can maintain a current local job listing and links to other job data bases.

The forthcoming Virginia Education Wizard will provide comprehensive and individually tailored information on the breadth of education and career options that stem from the offerings of Virginia's Community Colleges by delivering quality information to citizens in areas concerning college admission, advising, programmatic offerings, financial aid, student transfer, and career development.

Possible online career advising activities may be:

- Interest inventories for self-assessment
- Online career exploration resources
- Online job data bank access
- Links to other online job search tools
- Resume writing tutorial
- Announcements of current jobs
- Skills portfolio
- Interview techniques

ONLINE LIBRARY SERVICES

The new MetaLib service is available at <http://metalib.vccs.edu:2048>. This services allows students to search all of the library catalogs available within the VCCS and subscriptions services available outside the VCCS.

Possible online library services may be:

- Catalog search
- Access to online journals
- Easy search and access to digital materials
- Clear directions for accessing library resources online
- The opportunity for one-on-one consultation with reference librarian or library assistant

- Ability to submit research questions via email or telephone
- Online reserves

TESTING SERVICES

Possible online testing services may be:

- Online appointments (the ability to make and cancel appointments online)
- Proctored online testing (?)

ONLINE ORIENTATIONS

Guiding considerations for online orientations are:

- Provide same kind of introduction to the college that is experienced by on-campus students
- Should include opportunities for students to interact with each other

Possible online orientation activities may be:

- SDV100 online
- Virtual campus/college tours

Samples of what colleges in the VCCS are doing for online orientation activities can be found at <http://system.vccs.edu/itde/itde-dl-orientation.htm>.

ONLINE ADMISSIONS, REGISTRATION, DROP, AND WITHDRAWAL

Possible online admissions, registration, drop, and withdrawal activities may be:

- Submitting an application online
- Online placement testing
- Practice placement tests (<http://www.act.org/compass/sample>)
- Frequently asked questions
- Searchable course schedule
- Degree audit
- Online academic calendar

RECRUITMENT AND INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

Possible recruitment information and information for prospective students online may be:

- A virtual campus tour
- A distance learning web site
- An online catalog and complete course schedule
- An online application process

- A tuition and fees explanation

ONLINE BOOKSTORE SERVICES

Possible online bookstore services are:

- Searching for books for courses
- Purchasing textbooks
- Purchasing software and other supplemental materials
- Ordering books by telephone or fax

APPENDIX A – ELEARNING COLLABORATION MODELS

[Inez's spreadsheet covering different program models (including MOUs)]

APPENDIX B – SAMPLE MOUS

APPENDIX C – COURSE CODING IN THE VCCS STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

[insert course coding document when finalized]