

LMS/Ed Tech Survey Committee Report

Executive Summary

Background:

In May 2018, a meeting was held comprising CSCU faculty and staff to discuss Blackboard issues, ideas, and needs, following significant reported disaffection within the CSCU community. In that meeting, Blackboard representatives gave an informational presentation. Faculty raised serious concerns about Blackboard's ability to respond to faculty concerns, Blackboard's focus in higher education LMS market, as well as the methodology employed when deploying new services/options in the LMS. As a result, a committee of faculty, staff, and system office Blackboard administrators was established to create a faculty focused survey to discern functionality and satisfaction with our LMS and identify concerns and issues. Additionally, the committee received a briefing on pertinent contract related considerations as well as the RFP processes and options to help us make informed and timely decisions.

Data & Findings:

This report reflects the findings of the survey. The survey was not intended to be a scientific study or analysis. Rather, the objective was to better understand faculty attitudes related to Blackboard (Bb) as an LMS and other educational technologies. A subcommittee led by faculty interpreted the results. Data was organized and interpreted from many different perspectives to understand what the data revealed.

Survey:

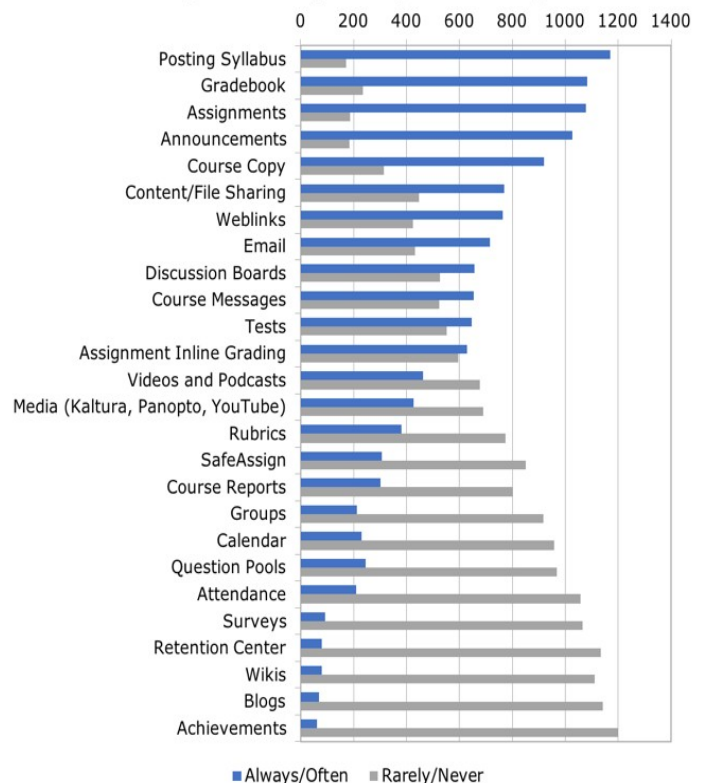
The survey was sent to faculty at all 17 CSCU institutions, the four state universities, the 12 community colleges and Charter Oak State College; an estimated 7,147 faculty. 2,180 responded to the survey, a response rate of 31%.

- 57% of respondents were from Community Colleges, 37% State Universities, 6% Charter Oak.
- 43% were part-time instructors, 37% full-time instructors, 20% not disclosed.
- 10.5% have never used an LMS of any kind, 77.5% currently use Bb. The remainder (12%) do not currently use Bb, but have some current or past LMS experience.

Users of Blackboard:

Of the respondents using Bb, a majority (1,200) have used it for an on-ground class; about half (630) for an on-line class, and about a quarter (326) for a hybrid class. Features used predominantly include: syllabus posting, the gradebook, assignment posting and submission, announcements, course copy, sharing files and weblinks, email, the discussion board and messages. Tests are used about 50% of the time. Numerous other features are rarely or never used; these include blogs, wikis, surveys, groups, the calendar and test question pools. See **Fig 1**.

Fig 1: Tool Use (Total responses = 1200)



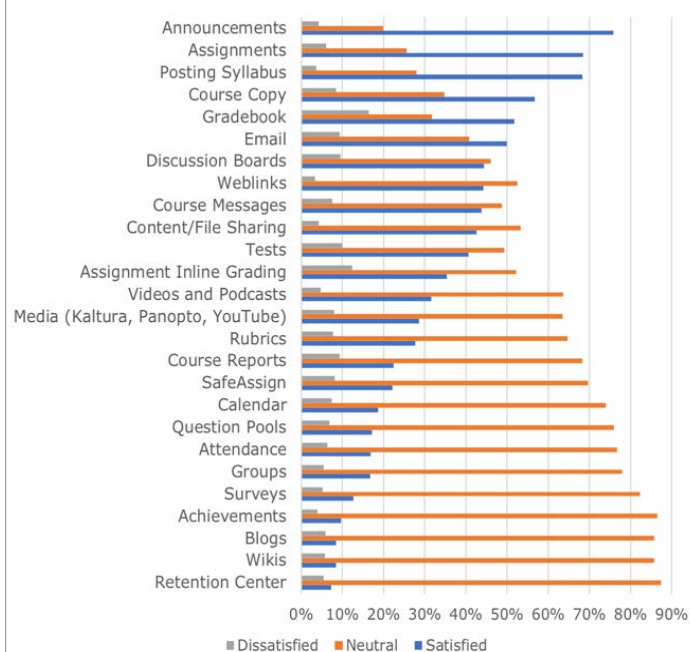
Sentiments about tools used:

Expectedly, respondents report being satisfied with the tools used more frequently: announcements, assignments and syllabus posting. More surprising, however, some of those highly used tools also lead disaffected sentiment: e.g. gradebook, inline grading. The majority of respondents are "neutral" towards most tools, which may reflect the non-use of many tools in the system. See **Fig 2**.

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Fig 2: Satisfaction with BB Tools



A diverse range of factors would reportedly encourage increased use of, but the perception of “greater ease of use” led other factors, including: more faculty training, more features and tools, system reliability, and student training. Respondents believe training is essential (“required”) for efficient use of the system.

When asked in open-ended questions to opine on Bb, faculty gave both positive and negative sentiments. Positive issues raised: effectiveness (for task), local training, and general positive responses, e.g. “I like Blackboard.” Negative issues raised included: usability, the mobile app, grading and in-line grading specifically, training, as well as infrastructure related problems.

Respondents appear to support a universal LMS for all faculty and students, and that an LMS is the “best way” to organize course materials and communicate with students. Though when asked specifically to opine on choice alternatives, on aggregate, survey respondents overall did not reflect an overwhelming desire to “get rid” of Bb or “keep Bb”. Views were mixed. Rather, some respondents indicated a readiness/ willingness to adapt to any solution (39%); stay with Bb (36%), stay with Bb with major enhancements (19%). Others supported investigating an alternative (27%), pilot something new (18%), prefer open source solution (16%), or less expensive alternatives (11%). Broadly interpreted,

there is a near 50-50 split between “keep Bb” and “examine other options”. However, these differences in opinion do vary by faculty type (part/full-time); universities, colleges, and Charter Oak; and when proxied for intensive users of the LMS vs. less intensive users of the LMS.

Actual usage statistics:

The survey use data reflected above is supported by actual system usage statistics across the system. Actual usage statistics were reviewed for some validation.

Committee members shared the belief that an LMS is an important information system in formal education settings, and therefore that a 50% passing grade for any LMS does not suffice. The committee developed the following recommendations.

Recommendations:

1. Contract Renewal:

The committee recommends the Blackboard contract be renewed for a 1-year term with conditions. Note, this does not imply there is an expectation for a resolution within a year, but the term is a signal of the intention to execute recommendation 2 below.

2. RFP:

The committee recommends an RFP be established to explore the LMS market and determine if there is an option that can better meet faculty and students’ needs.

3. Increased Training and Support:

The committee recommends enhanced training and support for faculty and students. This is based on survey results.

4. Promotion of Basic LMS Best Practices*:

The committee recommends the implementation of LMS best practices on campuses to promote consistent, student-friendly user experiences that will enhance ease of use for our students.

*Committee members representing different perspectives from faculty to course designers and IT support and had numerous discussions about some comments in the data and their interpretation. There was a strong sentiment that the encouragement of basic LMS best practices would improve the user experiences of both faculty and students.