Guide to
BLACKBOARD
LEARN
Updates

KU
THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS
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INTRODUCTION

In 2011, Bold Aspirations charged the university to energize the education environment by strengthening the pipeline to and through KU. The strategic plan states that, “As new students get started at KU, technologies can alert faculty members and staff to students whose progress can benefit from immediate intervention.”

To meet this goal, we’ve partnered to provide technology solutions that meet the academic needs of students, faculty, staff and advisors. During the past year, we piloted the use of an early alert program in KU classrooms and interviewed peer universities to develop best practices for our university. We worked with advisors to develop a technology and process for uploading advising assignments online so that students can easily locate resources.

We piloted a separate but related service that allows students to schedule appointments online with instructors, advisors and staff members. Finally, we’ve overhauled the lifecycle of courses within KU’s learning management system, Blackboard Learn, to provide a more consistent experience for both students and instructors.

It is our pleasure to present to you the following guide to the Blackboard Learn updates. It starts with a high-level view and project timeline of the four tools that help provide student feedback to ultimately help students persist at KU. Then, it is followed by a more in-depth look at the updates that are being made to both the system and the way we use learning management at KU.

Sara Rosen
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Bob Lim
Chief Information Officer
HELPING STUDENTS PERSIST AT KU

The update of KU’s learning management system to the new Blackboard Learn creates a simpler and more consistent Blackboard experience for both instructors and students. Its use gives students access to course materials and real-time information about their grades from anywhere at any time.

MySuccess Early Warning complements the Blackboard Grade Center to give instructors the ability to communicate feedback to students on course performance. It also provides a new channel for instructors to signal to advisors when an intervention may be beneficial to a student.

Online Advisor Assignments and MySuccess Appointment Scheduler close the feedback loop by making it possible for students to conveniently locate their advisor or other campus resources online and schedule an appointment.
**TIMELINE**

**FEB.**
March 14, 2013 — Summer and fall 2013 timetables are released.

**MARCH**
March 23, 2013 — Deadline for submitting Advisor Assignments for soft launch.
March 24, 2013 — Advisor Assignments soft launch. Students will be able to view their assigned advisor in the Kyou Portal and Enroll & Pay.

**APRIL**
April 1, 2013 — Blackboard Learn course shells are automatically created for all summer courses. Faculty can access summer 2013 Blackboard Learn course shells.

**MAY**
April 1, 2013 — Staff can use MySuccess Connect Appointment Scheduler for back-office scheduling.

**JUNE**
May 19, 2013 — Blackboard Learn debuts new login page and KU theme.
June 4, 2013 — Summer classes begin.

**JULY**
June 4, 2013 — Faculty have the option to use MySuccess Early Warning.

**AUG.**
June 4, 2013 — Faculty, Advisors and Student have the option to use MySuccess Connect Appointment Scheduler.
July 27, 2013 — The Blackboard Learn system will be updated to Service Pack 12.
July 30, 2013 — Faculty can access fall 2013 Blackboard Learn course shells.

**OCT.**
August 26, 2013 — Fall classes begin.

**NOV.**
Early Nov, 2013 — Blackboard Learn course shells are automatically created for all spring courses.

**MARCH**
April, 2014 — Summer and fall 2014 timetables are released. Blackboard Learn course shells are automatically created for all summer courses. Faculty can access summer 2014 Blackboard Learn course shells.
THE LIFECYCLE OF A BLACKBOARD COURSE

The lifecycle of a Blackboard course begins when the Registrar releases the Schedule of Classes for a term to the public. At that time, a Blackboard course shell is automatically created for every course that exists in Enroll & Pay. (Note: The initial creation of course shells for summer and fall 2013 will be staggered.)

Once the schedule is published and the course shells are created, instructors can use the course merge tool to manage classes with multiple sections and begin to move or copy content into their course. After the course content is finalized, the instructor activates the course, making it visible to students.

When the semester is over, the instructor no longer has to download course data. Blackboard course information including enrollments, course work and course content will be retained for five years past the end of the term.
SIMPLIFIED BLACKBOARD COURSE CREATION

BEFORE SUMMER 2013

To use Blackboard for their course for the first time, instructors had to request that a course be created from KU IT. Then, each term, instructors reused Blackboard course shells.

STARTING WITH SUMMER 2013 COURSES

Course shells will automatically be created in Blackboard for every section that exists within Enroll & Pay. Instructors wanting to use Blackboard with their course will simply make the course available within Blackboard. By default, Blackboard courses are unavailable to students until made available by the instructor.

All classes offered to students within Enroll & Pay will have a Blackboard shell. Student enrollments, instructor assignments, teaching assistant assignments, added and dropped sections will be automatically updated in Blackboard based on information from Enroll & Pay within 24 hours of a change.

WHY THIS HELPS

This alleviates the responsibility of matching Enroll & Pay class enrollments to a Blackboard course by keeping enrollments up to date automatically, providing Blackboard course names that are consistent with Enroll & Pay and allowing students with incomplete coursework to access course materials beyond the end of a term. These benefits are further explained on later pages.
ENHANCED CAPABILITIES FOR MANAGING COURSE CONTENT: MERGING, MOVING AND COPYING

BEFORE SUMMER 2013

Instructors had to request for course content to be copied from one course to another or reuse the same course shell.

STARTING WITH SUMMER 2013 COURSES

Instructors can copy course content from one course to another as they wish without requesting IT assistance. In addition, the instructor can combine enrollments from multiple Blackboard courses by using a simple course merging process to manage the enrollments and content for multiple sections of a course with a single Blackboard “parent” shell.

WHY THIS HELPS

The tool to copy course content gives instructors a convenient and easy method to create content and then use it in several courses. It also allows the instructor the ability to preserve courses from previous terms, which is helpful for accreditation, while still being able to use the content they have developed.

Course merge helps instructors teaching several sections of the same course by creating one spot where content is uploaded and student communications across many sections can occur, instead of having to duplicate work course by course.

With these self-service options, instructors are able to administer their Blackboard courses without the need for IT support.
CREATION OF PRACTICE OR “SCRATCH” COURSES

BEFORE SUMMER 2013

Practice or “scratch” courses were unavailable.

STARTING WITH SUMMER 2013 COURSES

Instructors can request a “scratch” or practice course to develop content and experiment with Blackboard tools.

WHY THIS HELPS

An instructor may wish to develop course content well before a class is offered or experiment with Blackboard functionality without impacting his or her students. In this case, the instructor can request a “scratch course” at blackboard.ku.edu/practice. This course will not be connected to Enroll & Pay, so instructors can feel free to experiment with new teaching methods. Content can then be copied or moved to an actual Blackboard course created by Enroll & Pay at a later time if desired.
MORE INSTRUCTOR CONTROL OF COURSE VISIBILITY

BEFORE SUMMER 2013

Because instructors were forced to wait until end of the previous term to prepare or reuse a course for the next term, they had limited time to prepare content. The content was visible to students once the rosters were matched.

STARTING WITH SUMMER 2013 COURSES

Since course shells are created prior to the term, instructors will have access to Blackboard courses when the schedule of classes is released and will choose when to “go live” with their course by making it available to their students.

As a default, all automatically generated course shells are unavailable to students until manually made available by the instructor. In other words, until the instructor makes the course available, students enrolled in Blackboard courses will not see the courses listed in their Blackboard course list.

WHY THIS HELPS

Because the Blackboard courses are created earlier in the term, the instructor has more time to create and prepare content. Instructors can control at a course level when students can see each course and its content by "turning on" the course’s overall availability to students.
UP-TO-DATE COURSE INFORMATION

BEFORE SUMMER 2013

Because instructors had the option to reuse Blackboard course shells, enrollment and coursework information had to be removed so that the course could be prepared for the next term. Among other issues, this made it difficult to retrieve information for students needing to finish incomplete coursework. Course content and student coursework for students with incomplete status required special assistance and handling.

STARTING WITH SUMMER 2013 COURSES

Enrollment information and student coursework will be retained along with course work in every Blackboard course for five years. Since enrollments are kept, students can access prior course materials to resolve an incomplete.

WHY THIS HELPS

Instructors retain access to prior course work and performance or a longer period of time, which allows for analysis of student achievement.
CONSISTENT COURSE NAMES IN BLACKBOARD

BEFORE SUMMER 2013

Courses were not organized by term. The names of these courses in Blackboard sometimes did not correspond with the course name found in KU’s enrollment management system, Enroll & Pay.

STARTING WITH SUMMER 2013 COURSES

Blackboard courses will be assigned a Blackboard course name based on Enroll & Pay information. The Blackboard course name will consist of:

- **Term**: A short description of the term such as 2012Fall
- **Subject**: The four-character department offering the course such as BIOL for Biology
- **Catalog Number**: The three-digit number indicating the level of the course (examples are 100, 121, 200)
- **Description**: The name of the course as it appears in Enroll & Pay such as “Principles of Biology”
- **Topic**: A course that has multiple sections offered during a term that have a different topic for each section
- **Class Component or Class type**: Each class is of a type such as lecture, lab, field study, discussion group

An example is “2013Spring-EECS 128 Foundations of information Technology LEC.”

WHY THIS HELPS

Instructors will now have a repository of courses that they have taught in the last five years and can organize them within Blackboard by their unique name. Students will see a consistent course name across multiple KU systems.
ELIMINATION OF MANUAL ROSTER MATCHING

BEFORE SUMMER 2013

Instructors had to manually match students to each of their courses using the manual course roster-matching tool. Blackboard rosters could be accidently matched to the incorrect Blackboard course, which required intervention by KU IT to correct.

STARTING WITH SUMMER 2013 COURSES

Student enrollments will be managed and updated automatically based on Enroll & Pay information. Student enrollments, instructor assignments, teaching assistant assignments, added and dropped sections will be automatically updated in Blackboard based on information from Enroll & Pay within 24 hours of an Enroll & Pay change.

WHY THIS HELPS

Instructors will no longer have to match rosters to their Blackboard courses at the start of each term. Although Blackboard use is still optional for instructors, students will have a more simplified experience.
NEW CHANNELS TO COMMUNICATE WITH STUDENTS

BEFORE SUMMER 2013

Instructors had to select individual students or place students in groups within the grade center to send email messages about course performance.

STARTING WITH SUMMER 2013 COURSES

Beginning in June 2013, instructors using Blackboard will be able to use MySuccess, at their discretion, to communicate with students. Within MySuccess, instructors can “zoom in” to their Blackboard gradebook to select students based on their graded assignment performance. The instructor can raise a “flag” or award “kudos” and provide an additional personal message to the student. MySuccess then sends a notification to the student.

Depending on the student’s preferences, he or she is notified of the flag or kudos through email, Facebook or text. In the case of a flag, the student’s advisor is also notified and can follow up with the student if necessary.

WHY THIS HELPS

The system provides a new channel of communication to connect instructors, advisors and students. It gives students the ability to quickly get assistance early in their course and work on improving their performance earlier in the term. Advisors also are able to track the interactions they have with a student, to get a more holistic picture of the student’s academic performance.
COMMUNITY COURSES

BEFORE SUMMER 2013

Student organizations and KU departments were not able to use Blackboard for non-KU content. This created the need for “community courses.”

STARTING WITH SUMMER 2013 COURSES

A community course is a Blackboard course that is not connected to the University’s schedule of classes. It can be used to meet a variety of presentation needs.

WHY THIS HELPS

Student organizations and KU departments can use Blackboard for more robust presentations, remote instruction, non-KU community offerings or employee training. To request a course, contact Blackboard Support at blackboardsupport@ku.edu or 785-864-2600.