

Project Closeout Report

Presented to the IT Committee October 24, 2019

Project Name: Blackboard

Institution: North Dakota University System

Business Unit/Program Area: Core Technology Services

Project Sponsor: Darin King

Project Manager: Angela O'Leary

Objectives		
Project Objectives	Measurements	
	Met/ Not Met	Description
<u>Objective 1.1:</u> Form a governance structure for the new LMS.	Met	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Members have been identified and represent the makeup of the multiple campuses. Organizational charter has been developed including such things as providing long- term strategic direction and decision making, meeting quarterly to review performance of the LMS and addressing any issues/feedback from the campuses.
<u>Objective 1.2:</u> Implement a single instance Blackboard LMS.	Met	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> CTS support system is ready to accept operational duties listed below. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CTS is the single point of contact and acts as the liaison between campuses and vendor. Prior to "Go Live" of 3 eCollege campuses CTS has defined support structure and has been communicated to campuses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process for campuses to communicate support issues to CTS Division of Responsibilities Support Tiers (I, II, III, IV) Security Roles and Access Prior to "Go Live" of 3 eCollege campuses the knowledge base contains troubleshooting for top 5 common issues. Within the first 6 months 20% of all issues reported have been converted into knowledge base articles (organized by date and searchable by topic). In the first 3 months, the 3 eCollege campuses are set up on the new LMS and ready for migration of courses. Within 1 year all campuses are set up on the new LMS <p>*Setup is defined as configuration NOT go live</p>
<u>Objective 1.3:</u> Courses are ready to be taught at the Moodle campuses (DCB, DSU, MaSU, WSC).	Met	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Migrate (export/import stage) the courses of the Moodle campuses (DCB, DSU, MaSU, WSC) to the single instance Blackboard LMS. At the time of "Go Live" 100% of the current semester's courses will be migrated, 50% of the following semester's courses will be migrated to ensure 100% migration at the start

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		of the next semester. x (number/percent) of total courses offered by the campus are in Blackboard.
Objective 1.4: Courses are ready to be taught at the Blackboard campuses (UND, NDSU, MiSU, VSC).	Met	1. At the time of "Go Live" 100% of the current semester's courses will be migrated, 50% of the following semester's courses will be migrated to ensure 100% migration at the start of the next semester. x (number/percent) of total courses offered by the campus are in Blackboard.
Objective 1.5: Trainers are equipped to lead and train the campus faculty.	Met	1. How many questions came out of objective 1.6 that had to be referred to Blackboard? Average response on training survey is adequate or better across the survey.
Objective 1.6: Train the campus faculty.	Met	1. Average response on training survey is adequate or better across the survey.
Objective 1.7: System administration training is complete at the campus level facilitated by Blackboard.	Met	1. Average response on training survey is adequate or better across the survey.
Objective 2.1: Courses are ready to be taught at the 3 eCollege campuses (BSC, LRSC, NDSCS) in the single instance Blackboard SaaS.	Met	1. 100% of the courses must be migrated off the old system by February 2018. 2. 100% of Summer 2017 courses are ready for delivery at the time of "Go Live" and 50% of Fall 2017 courses are ready for delivery in the single instance LMS. x (number/percent) of total courses offered by the campus are in Blackboard.
Objective 3.1: Leverage increased buying power by moving all campuses to a single system thus reducing costs.	Met	1. Cost savings estimation of around \$2.4M over 5-year term. Will monitor to ensure projected cost savings are met.

Schedule Objectives					
Met/ Not Met	Original Baseline Schedule (in Months)	Final Baseline Schedule (in Months)	Actual Schedule (in Months)	Variance to Original Baseline	Variance to Final Baseline
Met	20 months	32 months	32 months	63% Behind	0.0% on schedule

NDUS experienced outages with the first in August 2017 followed by another in December 2017. As a result, a lack of confidence developed among the remaining six campuses completing their migration to SaaS and five campuses left remaining to go live. At this point, it was decided to pause the project and work with the remaining five campuses and let them decide when they would be comfortable with their go live, impacting the project schedule. During the time the project was on hold, CTS had several meetings with the Blackboard project team and executives to address the outages and concerns. Blackboard recognized the seriousness of the issue and arrived onsite to visit with CTS and tour the state to visit with several campuses. They addressed system issues and validated SaaS had been reconfigured to perform with greater stability for all eleven campuses on a single instance.

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Once Blackboard addressed and resolved the infrastructure changes and the system was stable to continue with the project, rebaselining allowed for a reasonable schedule and completed on time. Without rebaselining, the original schedule of the project would put the project behind by 63%. Allowing CTS to rebaseline, the project closed out on schedule.

Budget Objectives					
Met/ Not Met	Original Baseline Budget	Final Baseline Budget	Actual Costs	Variance to Original Baseline	Variance to Final Baseline
Met	\$2,369,980.00	\$ 3,243,135.61	\$ 3,163,998.12	2.2% under	2.2% under

Blackboard provided an annual renewable innovation funds to be used for developments, enhancements, etc. over the course of 3 years. The first year, the innovation fund balance was \$547,000.00 followed by an annual \$50,000.00 for the next two years for a total of management reserve of \$647,000.00. During the close out phase of the project, the balance of year 3 innovation funds remained at \$50,000.00. The operational team and campuses have until the end of September 2019 to utilize these funds. The project remained under budget because campuses chose to have training delivered remotely by Blackboard instead of onsite, therefore creating a cost savings for travel.

Major Scope Changes	
End User Help Desk for eCollege campuses	Blackboard Innovation funds were used to pay for the first year of this service while the three eCollege campuses paid for the second year. (\$39,500). In February 2019, the eCollege campuses chose to discontinue this service for NDUS. CTS will be providing support for all eleven campuses.
Direct Data Access (DDA)	Blackboard Innovation funds were used to pay for DDA training for CTS and campus end users who were interested in building out reports (\$16,000). Blackboard conducted DDA training both onsite and remotely. This allows campuses and CTS staff to write reports against a real-time copy of Blackboard data, providing value in accurate and near real-time information.
B2 Customization	Blackboard Innovation funds were used to certify and enhance VCSU and NDSU created B2s (Bb Snow, Bb Manager and Bb for SaaS created for their local deployments) as well as develop supporting materials necessary for these to be maintained. (\$216,000)
Custom Basic LTI modification to redesign permissions to the configuration settings	Blackboard Innovation funds were used to modify the custom Basic LTI to allow Node Administrators to have "view" ONLY and remove "update" access. (\$3,000)
Custom Ally Reporting	Blackboard Innovation funds were used to deploy the Ally product, a tool used to provide course content in an accessible format. (\$47,000)
Certified Trainer Program	Blackboard Innovation funds were used to pay for the certified trainer program for the campuses and a couple of the CTS staff that will have full system admin access. This certification covers managing Bb via the GUI and best practices for managing the environment. (\$23,495)

Lessons Learned
<p>1. The vendor Bb and CTS needed to be a united front when working with the campuses. For example, in the beginning CTS expressed the need for Bb to be a united front with CTS and to support CTS in establishing / repairing relationships with the campuses. Related to Blackboard accounts, CTS did not have a preference if all campuses had access and submitted tickets. However, Bb originally promised campuses this ability and then came back to CTS saying this will not be allowed and that CTS would need to tell the campuses. This reflected poorly on CTS and impacted the autonomy of the campuses.</p>

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2. **Communication within each of the campuses.** For example, assumptions were made that the Campus Project Managers would communicate and disseminate information to the campus project team members and found for some things that was not the case. In the future, we need to emphasize the role and responsibilities of a campus PM and ensure they are sharing information. Another example, CTS would like to have had more opportunity to provide input for the Academic Technology Planning (ATP) agenda and as a result, topics were missed like the Non-Term based courses at some of the campuses.
3. **Reporting Needs.** When discussing reporting, campuses assumed what was reported out of another LMS could be reported out of Blackboard. However, the discussion was only held a high level and never dove into those details. For example, a campus needed specific information for accreditation purposes and the Bb LMS as delivered could not provide the data. The teams should have discussed terminology for example, such as what “Student Course Activity” meant for campuses and for Bb. Depending who you ask, this term could have many meanings.
4. **Defining Project closeout.**
During the closing phase of the project, a couple of campuses did not agree to close out the project, instead wanted the project to remain open until the startup of fall term and conduct load testing. It was explained that load testing was not part of the project and if issues arise, they would be part of the operational support of the application.

Success Stories

1. The North Dakota University System (CTS and the campuses) were selected for the Blackboard Catalyst award in the category of “leading education technology company for teaching, learning and student engagement”. When CTS submitted the application for the award, a video was put together that provided testimony from both a student and faculty perspective of what their life was like before the Blackboard project and after. Before the campuses came together in a single instance of Blackboard, both students and faculty that were either taking classes or teaching at multiple NDUS campuses had to log into separate instances of a Learning Management System (LMS). Once the project completed and all 11 campuses were on a single LMS instance, the faculty member and student describe in the video explained how nice it is to log into one system and see all their course work from the various campuses they are associated to.
2. Having campuses on a single LMS instance has provided negotiation power with Blackboard and alleviate some cost on the campuses. For example, the purchase of Ally, an accessibility tool for students, allowing them to access course material in different formats. CTS purchased the product and the campuses were able to benefit from this cost savings.
3. Several individuals and campus teams who didn’t support the project in the beginning, did eventually and see the value of SaaS.
4. The creation of the North Dakota Blackboard User Group (ND BUG) is pulling the NDUS Bb Campus Admins together into a useful group. While this happened to a smaller degree in the past, the new group contains all eleven campuses working together as a support system and “think tank”.
5. Resources to complete the project varied from campus to campus. For many, it was additional work, dedication and commitment for the project to be successful on their own campus and in general. Everyone stepped up to the plate to get the work done. For example, a few campuses had turnover during the project and yet, when they hired new staff, they were able to bring them up to speed on the project along with their other duties to make the project successful.