NETWORKED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (NLe)
Boundless horizons.

All across the globe, leading institutions are harnessing the Internet to breakdown barriers and multiply learning opportunities.

Blackboard helps these institutions realize the full power of the Internet for education. Our vision is limitless in its possibilities— to enable educational institutions to create true Networked Learning Environments™ in which any student, instructor or researcher can access any learning resource at any time from any place.

In a marketplace characterized by fragmented products for independent educational tasks, the Blackboard Academic Suite™ is the one proven solution designed to encompass all the interdependent elements that make a Networked Learning Environment. All with a common look and feel that makes your online environment as familiar as your offline campus.

What is a Networked Learning Environment?

A Networked Learning Environment (NLE) exists when any student or teacher can view instructional content, collaborate with educators, evaluate academic performance and access learning resources at any time to achieve their educational objectives.

A NLE exists at many levels within an institution and beyond, including networks of classes, departments, institutions and consortia, as well as repositories of content and learning objects.

Yes, a NLE applies new technology to a very old concept—that learning is much more than classes and grades. It is the interaction between learners, educators and a vast community of people in libraries, neighborhoods, other schools, research labs, museums, corporations and anywhere else where information is collected, knowledge is created and resources are stored. The power of the Internet is that it removes the old limits of time and proximity that once restricted this community. The power of the Blackboard Academic Suite provides the critical enabling technologies to power a Networked Learning Environment.
Opening Academic Opportunities

One of the first steps in e-Learning was putting courses online. Blackboard was there at the beginning, co-developing the first industry-wide IMS course standards and creating the first broadly adopted enterprise online learning platform. Seven years later, with more than 12 million users worldwide, Blackboard® software is still the most popular and proven learning solution in the world. The Blackboard software environment supports more than 12 languages including languages that require multi-byte character sets.

If online courses are your goal today, no solution is more powerful or easier to use than Blackboard. Beyond courses, the Blackboard Academic Suite is the only fully integrated, open architected solution that will equip your institution to embrace the unlimited educational possibilities of the Networked Learning Environment.
Anytime, Anywhere Access
In a NLE, not just the student and teacher, but everything about the learning experience can be distributed and connected. The Blackboard Academic Suite provides a wealth of tools that enable learning communities to bring course material online and access it anywhere and from any device—the Internet, wireless PDAs and more.

Instructor Efficiency
The technology-based productivity gains that have revolutionized other sectors of the economy have at last reached education. Teachers’ most-time consuming tasks are streamlined and enhanced by the Blackboard Academic Suite. Announcements, email and messaging features provide quick and convenient communication with one student or an entire class.

Evaluation and Outcomes Management
Institutions are under increasing pressure to have consistent evaluation methods and to document performance. From student admission to tracking, remediation and accreditation, student performance is measured in multiple ways. Blackboard’s e-Portfolios are particularly valuable for institutions, providing online repositories for demonstrating academic achievement.

Student-Centered Learning
Perhaps the most exciting promise of the NLE is its ability to put the individual student at the center of a more expansive learning process. Pedagogically, that means techniques like support for alternate learning styles, individualized programs and adaptive release of content and activities. It also means better integration with all aspects of student life. Not only is learning improved, so is recruitment, retention and alumni communication.

Access to High-Quality Content
As educational institutions strive to produce, share, and teach using the best content, managing this content is becoming an increasing challenge. Blackboard’s content management and collaboration features enable instructors to more easily create and integrate content into the curriculum, share content with colleagues and find learning objects created by others. And with our open architecture, students and faculty can incorporate the wide world of standards-based learning materials created by content companies and educators at other schools.

The Blackboard Academic Suite enables our users to:

The Blackboard Academic Suite enables instructors to create and manage course content, utilize world class publisher content, evaluate performance and communicate with students. Here are just a few of the most powerful Blackboard Learning System™ capabilities:

**Learn.**

**Instruction, Communication and Assessment**

The Blackboard Academic Suite enables instructors to create and manage course content, utilize world class publisher content, evaluate performance and communicate with students. Here are just a few of the most powerful Blackboard Learning System™ capabilities:
Content Authoring features include a WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) editing tool that provides a rich text editing interface similar to a word processor.

Adaptive Release means instructors can create custom learning paths by determining when students can access content items, discussions, assessments, assignments or other learning activities.

Syllabus Builder enables instructors to upload an existing syllabus or use the built-in creation functionality to easily design and develop their own syllabus and lesson plans.

Course Cartridges are created by all major education publishers with pre-packaged content and course materials in the Blackboard format. Cartridges include materials such as additional readings, updated information, multimedia and question pools.

Discussion Board enables threaded, asynchronous discussions. Instructors can use multiple forums around different topics and embed these into appropriate content areas.

Assessments and Surveys allow instructors to deliver online, automatically-scored assessments and surveys. They can create assessments from scratch or draw upon personal, institutional, or commercially-available “test banks” of questions. Varied question types (e.g., True/False, Multiple Choice, Calculated) can be used.

Gradebook stores student performance results, including support for custom grading scales, grade weighting, item analysis and multiple gradebook views.

Reporting and Performance Dashboard provides a view of student progress and indicates whether students have reviewed specific content items. It also enables usage data to be viewed for an entire course.
The Blackboard Academic Suite enables educational institutions to connect users to vibrant online academic communities, to deliver targeted content to diverse user groups and to incorporate e-Commerce into the learning experience. Now, institutions can employ a wealth of Blackboard Community System™ features to enhance learning, campus life, outreach and branding, including:
Community Building Tools enable users to collaborate and communicate more effectively. Organization sites allow clubs and interest groups to communicate with members through an online environment similar to the course sites they already know.

Portal Web Services provide a rich set of standards-based web services that can act as a standalone portal or as a feed to multiple institutional portals on and off campus. They also enable a central point of access for academic and administrative activities.

Multi-Institution Branding and Management facilitates separation of multiple institutions, departments or groups on one Blackboard server. Separate schools can now manage and brand their own domains.

Wireless/PDA access to course and community information such as announcements, calendar items and grades is available through Blackboard Unplugged, an optional component from Blackboard Global Services.

Modules and Channels are similar to the content boxes (e.g. Finance, Shop, Jobs) seen in portals like Yahoo!. A Module is a container for content or interactive tools; a Channel uses the RSS content syndication format to deliver regularly-updated headlines and content.

Role-based Information Delivery lets you customize the content received through tabs, modules, channels, tools, courses and organizations based on institution roles. Users can also control and customize both the information delivered and its presentation.

e-Commerce functionality enables institutions to charge for items via a student’s campus one-card or credit card. This includes books, merchandise, courses and organizational membership.

e-Marketplace enables multiple online stores. For example, Chemistry Departments can sell lab supplies while Campus Parking independently sells parking passes.
Instructors and students are creating digital content that can be shared and repurposed in diverse ways. Managing these growing volumes of content is a top challenge today, one that the Blackboard Academic Suite addresses through the features of the Blackboard Content System™, including:
**Content and File Management** allows content and files to be managed and shared without the need for duplication. Features enable collaboration across educational institutions.

**Versioning** allows users to automatically archive and track previous versions of their files. The system creates separate copies after each contributor changes the document, thus providing an automatic backup for overwritten files.

**Disk Space and Bandwidth Management** tools enable System Administrators to control the amount of disk space for individuals, courses, and organizations, as well as set bandwidth limits for users based on institution role (e.g., student, faculty).

**Workflow** activities provide users with the ability to route content to others for review or approval, designating settings such as priority, deadline, and permissions.

**e-Portfolios** enable students and faculty members to assemble and share information online for documenting academic growth, career progression and course preparation.

**Collaborative Web-enabled File Storage** includes dedicated file and content storage areas for individual users, courses, organizations, the library and constituent groups within the institution – all leveraging the WebDAV standard.

**Learning Object Catalog** enables a searchable, hierarchical taxonomy to catalog learning objects and resources accessible by individuals inside and outside the institution.

**e-Reserves** are digital versions of copyright-cleared reserve readings that libraries create for faculty and students. Separate e-Reserve folders can be enabled for every course.

Manage, re-use and share content.

Showcase accomplishments using e-Portfolios.
Far More than the Sum of the Parts

The unique power of the Blackboard Academic Suite is that as a unified solution it enhances and maximizes the independent strengths of three best-of-breed applications: the Blackboard Learning System, Blackboard Community System and Blackboard Content System.

Rather than learning to use multiple applications, once students and instructors become familiar with one Blackboard application they are familiar with all Blackboard applications.

As a single platform, the Blackboard Academic Suite saves dramatically on the data and application integration costs that are needed when purchasing standalone solutions. What’s more, maintenance and training costs are significantly lower both for technical staff and system users.

Unlimited Options, Open Systems

Flexible, extensible and open, the architecture underlying the Blackboard Academic Suite is the final piece of the puzzle enabling the Networked Learning Environment. Academic institutions and independent software vendors use the Blackboard Building Blocks® technology to create sharable, re-usable learning applications that can be deployed on the Blackboard Academic Suite platform. This open systems approach makes it easy to conduct community outreach, connect to new constituents, integrate other learning resources and build pathways to new tools and solutions.
The Blackboard Advantage

Blackboard’s client base has led to a thriving community of practice. While software is a powerful tool for learning, we believe that the real engine behind learning is community and the ability to reach and communicate with people. When you partner with Blackboard, you gain access to a vibrant network of users, to exceptional service and support, and to a powerful vision for how to create a Networked Learning Environment at your institution.
The Largest e-Learning Community of Practice

- As part of the Blackboard community, you gain access to a powerful network of institutions facing similar challenges. More than 12 million people at over 2,000 institutions in 35 countries use Blackboard solutions. Blackboard is used by over 45% of U.S. postsecondary institutions that use course management systems.

- Our clients communicate with each other in myriad ways including independent email lists, user groups and Blackboard-sponsored user conferences.

- More than 200 independent developers at educational institutions and software companies take part in the Blackboard Developer Network, plus countless others who develop software solutions with the free Blackboard Building Blocks SDK. There are more than 115 community-developed applications available in the Blackboard Building Blocks catalog.

- All of the major education publishers and content providers have developed more than 2,500 digital course supplements (Course Cartridges®) for Blackboard environments.

Exceptional Service and Support

- With Blackboard, you have a large team to support your success. When you have a technical challenge, your dedicated Technical Support Manager is available to provide solutions. Your dedicated Account Manager’s job is to connect you with the resources within Blackboard and the larger community of practice.

- Blackboard Global Services works with you to maximize value and achieve your e-Learning goals. Our team, comprised of former educators, instructional technologists and system administrators, provides software customization, project management, data integration and user training. In addition, Blackboard ASP Services offers solutions that reduce hardware costs and relieve your team of day-to-day administrative functions.

Blackboard's Vision: Unlimited Educational Possibilities

Learning is about expanding horizons and erasing boundaries.

The Networked Learning Environment expresses the most limitless vision of learning – to be able to reach anyone, anywhere, anytime, and incorporate anything that will advance the learning goal.

Limited products satisfy limited goals; they can’t provide the scope, consistency and unified platform required for a true Networked Learning Environment. At least not without multiplying training costs, integration efforts, business risk and performance uncertainties.

Only the Blackboard Academic Suite is flexible enough to support exactly the environment that’s right for your institution.

To learn more about how Blackboard can help you power your Networked Learning Environment visit our website at:

www.blackboard.com

---
