BB Committee Meeting Notes, 5 Nov 07

The Blackboard Committee met on 5 November. Attendees included Deborah Bauer, Herb Chereck, Kassia Dellabough, Pedro Garcia-Caro, Michael Hennessy, Mark Horney, Mary Ann Hyatt, JQ Johnson, Skipper Mcfarlane, Michael Pangburn, Richard Troxel, Robert Voelker-Morris, Tim Boshart, Tim Ketchum, Nargas Oskui, Susan Hilton (visiting).

JQ provided a status update. Some additions to the draft status document of 2 Nov included:

- JQ corrected several typos in his earlier draft, e.g. updated Rick Troxel’s department to reflect the 21st Century.
- Due to database software problems the system was down for about 2 hours on 5 Nov, the first substantial downtime of 2007.
- We are planning a 6 month pilot project/trial evaluating Elluminate, a web conferencing system for Blackboard particularly useful for distance ed courses.
- Susan Hilton provided an updated/more realistic schedule for blackboard database upgrades. She reports that the probability that a database upgrade can be accomplished over winter break is now essentially zero.

A version of the status update with some typos corrected is available at http://libweb.uoregon.edu/cet/blackboard/advisory.html.

Some of the action items from the meeting included:

- We agreed that we will convene a small group to identify classes of users and types of use who may not have adequate blackboard access under the new IdM system. Volunteers included JQ Johnson, Rick Troxel, Mark Horney, and (tentatively volunteered in absentia by Skip Mcfarlane) Sandra Gladney. One or two additional members would be very valuable; if you are willing to volunteer please send email to JQ. We will try to meet with Russ Tomlin or Ken Doxsee to discuss our conclusions.
- Given the now-high probability that it will not be possible to upgrade the blackboard database server during winter break, we likely will not be taking very much downtime during winter break. We do plan to take a small amount of downtime for other upgrades, most likely Dec 21.
- We agreed that it was reasonable to consider a database upgrade during winter term. However, such an upgrade would require adequate warning for faculty whose courses require system availability, and would depend heavily on how long Information Services believes the upgrade will take. Susan Hilton indicated that she would provide additional information about schedule possibilities by the end of the month. Meanwhile, JQ will discuss with his dean and if she approves will announce the possibility of a 1/2 to 2 day downtime during winter term at a to-be-determined date. This would represent a significant change from our traditional procedures, in which faculty have had several months notice of any downtime. Our fallback appears to be an upgrade during spring break. No significant weekday downtime during the term will be scheduled without further consultation of the committee. If it is believed that the upgrade can be accomplished in less
than a day and IS is ready by then, one possible window of opportunity is morning of Feb 9, 2008.

- JQ promised to send copies of the document “Non-Tenure Track Faculty (NTTF): University of Oregon Document on Policies, Procedures, and Practices September 21, 2007” to anyone who would like to see it.

- We discussed Learning Objects Campus Pack and agreed that (a) use of blogs and wikis is very important to several areas of campus (b) the LO system has some advantages and disadvantages. Perhaps most notably, a wiki created within the system by default has the same lifetime as a coursesite i.e. is unavailable after the end of a term, but can take advantage of Blackboard access controls. On balance, the consensus seemed to be that moving forward on Campus Pack was desirable. Absent a commitment from Information Services to set up a system that would allow all students to have blogs/wikis, we will explore the possibility of a 1 year experimental license for Campus Pack. Next steps include setting it up on a test server so that committee members can evaluate it, exploring funding sources, and discussing the possibility of other UO-supported blog/wiki tools with Don Harris and Helen Chu.

- JQ noted that we will be conducting a small pilot project using Elluminate in spring and summer terms. Committee members who are interested in participating or know of someone who would be interested, particularly during spring term, should contact JQ.

- Next in-person meeting of the full committee will be scheduled for early February.