Blackboard Advisory Committee: Status Report, summer 2010
JQ Johnson, August 2010

Blackboard usage
Usage during summer 2010 was quite similar to that in 2009, with a growth in number of coursesites of 7.8% year to year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>users</th>
<th>coursesites</th>
<th>enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sum 09</td>
<td>6523</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>16089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sum 10</td>
<td>6792</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>15933</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is typical, summer usage was much lighter than that during the other quarters.

Taking stock of the year as a whole, Blackboard usage grew slightly during the 2009-10 academic year, exhibiting a 3.4% growth in the number of coursesites (courses using blackboard). Total student enrollments in Blackboard coursesites grew by 7%, reflecting a slight increase in the average course size. At this point a very large percentage of UO courses already use Blackboard, so we expect only small further growth in usage in coming years, likely driven by overall increase in the size of the student population.

Comparing this year and last

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of CRN coursesites (terms 01 through 07)</td>
<td>6189</td>
<td>6405</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of student coursesite enrollments (total, terms 01-07)</td>
<td>221656</td>
<td>237263</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web server total pages (millions) (Sept 1-Aug 31)</td>
<td>139.9</td>
<td>289.6</td>
<td>107%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web server total hits (millions) (Sept 1-Aug 31)</td>
<td>604.2</td>
<td>1032.7</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web server total data (GB) (Sept 1-Aug 31)</td>
<td>12729</td>
<td>22594</td>
<td>77.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of blackboard logins (Sept 1-Aug 31)</td>
<td>3586419</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note in particular the number of Blackboard logins. During 2009-10, average number of logins per day was approximately 10,000. Summer is the lightest load period; during the first 2 weeks of August we had approximately 4000 logins per day, and expect even lighter usage for the next 2 weeks. In busy periods of fall, winter, and spring terms the heaviest usage occurs Sunday thru Thursday, often with 20,000 logins per day.
For more details on traffic, see https://blackboard.uoregon.edu/local/awstats/awstats.pl (available only from on-campus).

**Significant summer events**

**Downtime August 8**
The most significant event this summer was system downtime on Sunday, August 8. We were alerted to the problems when students started calling the Library Systems hotline Sunday morning; Library Systems in turn notified Tim, who contacted Information Services, and eventually learned that IS was aware of a problem and was working on fixing it. Downtime lasted from approximately 4am until 2pm, and at 10 hours represented the longest unscheduled outage that the Blackboard system at UO has experienced since 2003. The problem turned out to be due to a failure of one of the two UO domain name servers, which in turn resulted in inability of the Blackboard application servers to communicate with the database servers or authentication (LDAP) system. The length of the outage was mostly due to a bad guess on the part of Network Services, who initially believed that the problem was with their Radius authentication servers rather than with the DNS.

We learned several lessons from this outage. Among them:

- We have changed the configurations on our application servers to make them more resilient to DNS failures.
- We had a communications problem. The library hotline was overloaded with redundant reports and students calling to find out when Blackboard would be back in service. As a result, we have changed our description of how to report problems; once we are made aware of a problem we will no longer advertise the Library Systems hotline, and have changed our messages to encourage our users not to call for status updates but instead to consult the Blackboard News blog.
- Information Services has updated their automated system monitoring to better detect situations where Blackboard is down. Previously they had just been monitoring the Blackboard web server, which is usually still up and returns an “oops” web page even if the rest of the Blackboard system is down.
- We have confirmed that we have a mechanism for getting in touch with appropriate people in Information Services if we need to report an after-hours problem. Information Services is working on improving their on-call response system to deal with situations where their primary on-call person is unavailable, and to ring down to other IS staff as necessary.

**Tim BBWorld and bug squad participation**
Tim Boshart participated in the annual BBWorld conference, which this year took place in Orlando, Florida.

Tim also was active this summer as a member of the Blackboard Bug Squad, a group of senior systems administrators from higher ed institutions who assess problem reports filed with Blackboard, Inc. and help assign priorities for software fixes.

**Staffing news: JQ back at work**
As we noted in the spring status report, JQ was on extended sick leave for all of spring term. I returned to work on an intermittent schedule at the beginning of July, and am presently expecting that I will be working more than half time for the foreseeable future (near full time in July, but probably less time during August and September).
BB purchase of Elluminate and Wimba

The higher education technology news was somewhat abuzz in late July when Blackboard, Inc. announced their acquisition of two companies that provide web conferencing software, Elluminate and Wimba. The expectation is that these tools, especially Elluminate, will become a new Blackboard product line, and that Blackboard Learn (the system we run) will evolve to create better integration with the web conferencing products.

One result of this announcement is that we have been evaluating web conferencing systems. Currently the UO does not make heavy use of such systems, and to the extent that we do use a wide variety of platforms including Elluminate, Cisco webex, Tandberge H.323 video conferencing, Skype, and numerous other tools. We are investigating whether there is interest in a more consistent solution, perhaps including purchase of a campus-wide or Blackboard-specific Elluminate license.

Several new Blackboard building blocks

Tim has added a number of “building blocks,” i.e. Blackboard extensions, to the system recently. Many are experimental. Some, for example Quota Usage and Self and Peer Assessment, provide user-visible tools. Others such as Advanced System Reporting and Tracking provide backend tools for the system administrator. The Advanced Reporting tool is particularly noteworthy since it is brand new and will eventually provide us with statistical data on which tools within the Blackboard system are most widely deployed in coursesites and most heavily used by students.

The current set of building blocks installed and enabled includes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Block</th>
<th>Provider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advanced System Tracking and Reporting</td>
<td>Seneca College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amiga 4-way Flashcom Interface</td>
<td>UO YLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackboard Mobile Web Services Building Block</td>
<td>Blackboard Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackboard Scholar</td>
<td>Blackboard Inc</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blackboard Sync</td>
<td>Blackboard Inc</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course Modulator</td>
<td>Blackboard Developers Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Package Import Extensions</td>
<td>Blackboard Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document Unpackager</td>
<td>Joliet Junior College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EZproxy</td>
<td>Useful Utilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google Scholar</td>
<td>Blackboard Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Learning System Gateway</td>
<td>Blackboard Inc</td>
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<tr>
<td>MERLOT Search</td>
<td>MERLOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Standards Content Player</td>
<td>Blackboard Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSCELOT Podcaster - Learn 9</td>
<td>Learning Objects, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panopto CourseCast Connector</td>
<td>Panopto, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quota Usage</td>
<td>University of York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSS Content</td>
<td>University of Cincinnati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SafeAssign</td>
<td>Blackboard Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self and Peer Assessment</td>
<td>Blackboard Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seneca Who's Online</td>
<td>Seneca College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign-up Tool</td>
<td>Durham University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voiceboards Flashcom Interface</td>
<td>UO YLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WebAssign</td>
<td>WebAssign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wimba Pronto</td>
<td>Wimba</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unfortunately, some building blocks that we would like to see are not yet available. For example, the building block that implements a connector between Blackboard and a Moodle coursesite is presently
under development at Iowa State University, and has not yet been released in a version that runs on Blackboard 9.x.

**New videos as part of our FAQ pages**

Nargas Oskui and her CMET Consulting team continue to be the primary point of contact for faculty with Blackboard questions or training needs. Recently they have been working on improving our online documentation, and have developed a set of video tutorials detailing procedures that we describe in our FAQ pages (http://libweb.uoregon.edu/scis/blackboard/faq/).

**Campus visit by Ben Choi**

We had an interesting set of meetings with our new Blackboard account exec, Ben Choi, on Aug 19. The first session, which was structured to bring together UO staff involved in projects that either use or could use a Blackboard (non-BB Learn) product, was particularly well attended and interesting. My observations from that session were that (a) there are currently two units on campus that license Blackboard Connect (a cell text message based notification system), and that there might be interest in extending one of those systems to provide faculty with the ability to send text messages to students in their classes, (b) that several groups on campus have developed and are about to deploy iPhone apps for providing campus information, but none of them are using the Blackboard tools, none seem interested in deploying Android-based applications, and some of them don’t communicate very much with each other.

**Common recent support issues**

In addition to the usual set of issues that users report via the trouble ticketing system, one problem that is becoming increasingly acute has been complaints from faculty members about apparent serious bugs in the Blackboard system. For example, some faculty reported that they were unable to create content because each time they tried Blackboard would force them to log out and back in. The actual cause of the problem is an incompatibility between Blackboard and the more recent version of Safari (v 5.0). Safari (like Google Chrome which we do not support) caches web pages very aggressively in an effort to improve performance. Unfortunately, this causes problems in blackboard since pages are now cached inappropriately and result in users getting an old version of, for example, Course Documents. We don’t have a good response for the problem given heavy use of Safari on the UO campus. Currently, we recommend that all faculty Mac users install Firefox and use it for Blackboard. If that isn’t a feasible option then we recommend using the Safari “clear cache” option frequently. Blackboard Inc. is working on supporting Safari and Chrome, but we don’t expect to have a version of the software that resolves these issues until our upgrade to Blackboard 9.1 in late December.

With the start of fall semester in the Law School and the arrival of new users to the rest of campus, we are seeing the usual run of new-user problems. For example, we have numerous faculty who have forgotten to (or how to) make their Blackboard sites available. We also have a growing number of new users who do not understand the distinction between their DuckWeb PAC, their UO numeric ID, and their Duck ID, or who contact our trouble ticket system rather than Information Services to report problems with their Duck ID.

**Plans for next term**

**Upgrade schedule**

We are planning to be down most of Saturday, Sept 11, for installation of Blackboard 9.0 service pack 4. Note that this is a change from our previously announced schedule (Aug 14 or 21). Coordination with Information Services and their Banner downtime schedule required the delay. The Sept 11 date is our regularly scheduled monthly Saturday downtime date and so has been announced as a possible date for downtime for several months.
We plan to be down December 21-22 for upgrade to Blackboard 9.1.

For more details see http://libweb.uoregon.edu/scis/blackboard/schedule.html.

**Workshops late September**

SCIS, CMET Consulting, and the Teaching Effectiveness Program are collaborating on an extensive set of workshops for faculty during the two weeks before the start of fall term. A list of the public workshops appears on the TEP website at http://tep.uoregon.edu/workshops/events/year10-11/teach_train10.html#tech_trainings. In addition, we are offering a few workshops for particular departments, e.g. AEI and Romance Languages.

**Hardware reconfiguration: load balancing**

Sometime in early fall we expect to reconfigure the Blackboard application servers. Currently, if someone tries to connect to blackboard.uoregon.edu the user’s browser arbitrarily picks one of our two application servers (bb1 or bb2) and uses it for the session (until their DNS entry times out). Although this does a good job of balancing the load between application servers, it does not provide us with as much management control as would be desirable. After reconfiguration, “blackboard.uoregon.edu” will point to the Information Services load balancers, and the load balancers will distribute load to the Blackboard application servers. Coupled with internal changes that allow migration of user sessions from one app server to the other, the result will be that we will be able to move users transparently between application servers. If one server goes down the other server will be able to pick up the load. If we need to reboot one application server we will be able to do so without users noticing, since the load balancers will temporarily reroute traffic from the rebooted server. We expect that the result of the change will be overall increased availability of the Blackboard system.

**Faculty survey**

We are currently designing a survey of faculty users and their overall use and satisfaction with the Blackboard system. We expect to administer the survey to all faculty using Blackboard fall term, sending out the survey at the beginning of November with the expectation that it will be completed before Thanksgiving.

If all goes well, we expect to pilot the survey on summer term blackboard faculty next week. Before that fairly large pilot we would like to run a smaller pilot using the Blackboard Advisory Committee members as our test group.

**Questions for the future**

**Blackboard and other instructional tools**

An important question that was made particularly salient by the discussion with our Blackboard account exec last week is the relationship of BB Learn to other instructional tools on campus, especially Mobile, Blackboard Connect, Elluminate etc. Blackboard currently offers a suite of tools plus tight integration with several non-Blackboard instructional tools such as the library e-Reserve system, Webassign, i>Clicker classroom clickers, and the Yamada Language Center Amiga and voiceboards tools. Integration is much weaker with other tools such as the math WeWorK homework grading system, the new IS Wordpress MU system, the Blackboard Connect phone notification system managed by the Office of Communications, and the various web conferencing systems in use around campus. Are there opportunities for greater integration, or at least greater synergies between tools? As a concrete example, several faculty members have expressed an interest in being able to send course announcements from Blackboard as cell phone text messages. Doing so might be feasible using Blackboard Connect.

What tools should we be exploring, and what tools seem likely to offer the best cost/benefit ration?
Blackboard Idea Exchange
Blackboard Inc. has developed a mini-community of client advisors who help us make good decisions about what to build and how. They are looking for faculty members at client institutions who would be interested in participating in this group. Are members of the Advisory Committee interested? Should we solicit involvement from a wider group of faculty, and if so how? See http://www.blackboard.com/Communities/Idea-Exchange.aspx

Next year’s Advisory Committee
As noted in the spring status report, the Dean of Libraries needs advice on configuration and charter for the Blackboard Advisory Committee for next year. Should the committee continue in more or less its current form? Alternatively, would a different sort of committee be more useful to the campus? Do we need to have turnover in membership to prevent stagnation? Are the size of the group, the mix of teaching faculty with support personnel, and the frequency of meetings, optimal? Should there be a closer tie between this committee and the University Library Committee? What issues are best brought to the committee, and should the committee be thought of as an “advisory” or policy-setting group?

In the spring status report, one suggestion I offered was that we identify a teaching faculty member on the committee who would be willing to serve as the chair of the committee. That committee chair would then schedule meetings and determine the directions and role of the committee during the year.
Weekly Status Reports
Attached are detailed weekly status reports for summer 2010.

From: Tim Boshart <tboshart@uoregon.edu>
Date: May 27, 2010 8:56:40 PM PDT
Subject: Blackboard reports for the weeks of May 17 and May 24

The past two weeks have been very busy. There have been a total of 52 requests so far in the RT queue.

Several important events have happened. The problems of students not being able to access WebAssign was resolved. It turns out that WebAssign had made some changes to their system that caused the authentication problems. They have now been fixed and there hasn't been any more reports of problems.

Also last week there were two new problems. The first was a new problem that has been discovered with the latest version of Safari when submitting more than one assignment to the assignments feature when the instructor allows more than one submission. Some Safari users are able to successfully submit the first time but when they try to submit again they get a "Cannot upload file error". I have not been able to reproduce the problem with other browsers.

Then on Wednesday (5/19) around 8:40pm the bb2 server ran low on disk space. This caused problems with students who were trying to upload assignments. When they tried to upload they would get an "Out of disk space" error if they were using that server. Once old log files were removed they were able to upload without a problem. IS has now set up Nagios to monitor disk space and will send an alert when space gets low so this should not occur again.

On May 22, the bbtask background task server crashed with a kernel panic at around 10:30pm. It also had a kernel panic on 5/25 at 6:10pm and bb1 crashed with a kernel panic on May 26 at 9:50am. It appears that the system-info task was running at the time the kernel panics occurred. Since this isn't a required process it has been disabled on all servers while IS works with RedHat to determine the cause of the problem.

I also spent some time attending some online meetings for the Blackboard 9.1 upgrade cohort. Last week we discussed setting up test servers and running pilot projects. This week we heard from three schools who have already upgraded to 9.1 and how the upgrades went. Next week we will be looking at training materials available from Blackboard for 9.1 and training plans from other schools. Nargas will be joining me for this meeting.

I also attended the last online meeting for the 9.1 Service Pack 2 Bug Squad. I found out that 9.1 SP 1 will be available the second week of June and 9.1 SP 2 and 9.0 SP 4 will be available in August.

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[no status report for the week of June 1]

From: Tim Boshart <tboshart@uoregon.edu>
Date: June 11, 2010 3:31:23 PM PDT
Subject: Blackboard report week of June 7-11

This week there were a total of 23 tickets to RT. Most were about end of term issues.
Since there were fewer support tickets than usual for the end of the term I was able to spend more time working on other issues such as the problem with large log files from Tomcat. One of the big reasons for the log files turns out to be a problem with the Notifications System. Courses that were created don't have entries in the COURSES_APPLICATION table for blogs and journals. When the update notifications program runs or a student enters a course that has the "What's New" tool on the course homepage and they are enrolled in a course that is missing those entries a large number of errors and thread dumps are written to some of the log files.

Blackboard is working on a permanent fix to this problem but to solve the issue in the short term I wrote a script that scans for course sites without those entries and adds them for courses that are missing them. I have finished testing it on bbtest and will run it next week on the production servers. This should help slow down the growth of the log files.

The bb1 server crashed twice on Monday, June 7 with kernel panics again. The first time was at 10:25am and the second time at 8:15pm. Both times the server automatically rebooted. IS sent the core dump files to RedHat for analysis and also removed the virtual CD-ROM drives during the Tuesday Morning database reboot time. Brandon also noticed some NFS locking errors. He modified the firewall rules to make sure that NFS isn't being blocked for the storage servers. Hopefully these steps will resolve the kernel panic problems.

Next week I will be taking Wednesday and Friday off as furlough days.

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From: Tim Boshart <tboshart@uoregon.edu>
Date: June 25, 2010 2:16:38 PM PDT
Subject: Blackboard report weeks of June 14-18 and 21-25

There were 94 tickets file in RT in the past two weeks, with the majority of them coming this past week. Most of the requests were from new users who had just created their DuckID's and weren't able to log into Blackboard. The next largest group of requests were for eReserve link requests.

We had several more kernel panics on the bbtask server. They occurred on June 15 at 10:19pm, June 17 at 1:59am, June 22 at 2:20am and 4:30pm and on June 21 at 12:20am. In each case bb1 and bb2 were unaffected and no user sessions were interrupted. The most that would have happened would have been that if someone had submitted a course copy at the time it would have been delayed until the server rebooted. IS has since removed the virtual CD-ROM drive from the server and we haven't had any more kernel panics on that server since then.

IS has also received the new processors for the database servers. They are installing them on the two backup servers today. During the next database reboot time they will be shutting down the main server and letting it fail over to the backup servers. After they install the new processors on the main server they will bring it back up as the main server during the following week database server reboot. This will give our database server more processing capacity.

Last week I completed the fix for the log file issues for the notifications. Since then the log files related to the notification files have been about 10% of the size they were the week before. This should help keep the root file systems from running out of room because of disk space.

On Wednesday Blackboard released a security update. They found a flaw in the test taking system where if an instructor set the test for only one
attempt and didn't set force completion, a student could take the test and then use the browser back button to go back and take the test again. If the instructor had it set to show the correct answers right away the student would be able to see the correct answers and then go back and take a test again. The instructor would be able to see the extra attempts in the grade center so it would be easy to catch anyone exploiting this.

The fix was in the form of a java class file and only required a restart to install. After testing the fix on the test server I installed the new files on the production servers and they became active when Blackboard restarted during the log file restarts.

One good thing has come from the 9.1 Cohort meetings that I have been attending online every Monday. Blackboard is developing a self-paced training course for students on how to use Blackboard. They will be giving it to members of the Cohort at no cost. I will be receiving the contract sometime in the next few weeks. The only restrictions are that we cannot give it to other schools or make it available to anyone outside the UO. We can modify it and use it any way we want to. After I get the course files I will evaluate it to see how we want to make use of it.

I have also been spending time this week helping to train two new CMET Consulting students in using and supporting Blackboard.

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From: Tim Boshart <tbo沙特@uoregon.edu>
Date: July 2, 2010 3:49:22 PM PDT
Subject: Blackboard report week of June 28-July 2

This week the number of new tickets dropped to only 24. The largest number were from AEI students trying to get their accounts set up.

There was a new patch put out by Blackboard this week. The certificate used to sign the WebEQ portion of the Visual Text Box editor is expiring soon and they released an update. It is a set of jar files and only needs a Tomcat restart after installation. I have already tested it on the test server and will install the files on the production servers before leaving for the weekend. They will take effect when Blackboard is restarted during log rotation.

I also received word from Blackboard that Bb 9.0 Service Pack 4 will be released by the middle of the month. This is mostly bug fixes with the only enhancements being the ability to turn off email notifications for courses that have been made available and the ability to set the From: address for the announcement notifications. Currently they come from the Administrator’s email address resulting in a lot of bounce messages and replies from students thinking that they are emailing their instructors.

Since there are some scheduling conflicts with a Banner upgrade in August I will be installing this on September 11.

I have a meeting scheduled with several people from IS on July 20 to discuss several upgrade issues such as coordinating the Bb 9.0 SP 4 upgrade along with the 9.1 upgrade in December. We will also discuss and schedule other changes such as switching from DNS round robin to the F5 load balancers.

Narges, Robert Voelker-Morris and I also setup a meeting with CASIT for next Thursday. They have started offering Blackboard training to AEI instructors. We will be letting them know what services are available from TEP and CMET Consulting and offering them help with training.

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From: Tim Boshart <tboshart@uoregon.edu>
Date: July 23, 2010 3:24:13 PM PDT
Subject: Blackboard status report week of July 19, 2010

This was a relatively slow week in help requests. Only 19 tickets were submitted through RT. Most of my time this week was spent catching up from BbWorld last week and in moving my office into the Library Systems area.

Duncan and I also had a planning meeting with IS on the upgrades and maintenance that is planned for the rest of the year. Blackboard 9 SP 4 will be installed on Sept 11 and Blackboard 9.1 will be installed December 21-22. As part of the preparation I have installed Bb 9 SP 4 on the test server. After the upgrade I will work with IS to do a sync of the data to get the latest data on bbtest so I can begin the first test upgrade to 9.1. After that I will be testing 9.1 and working with CMET Consulting and other groups to prepare training and support for the upgrade.

I have also installed the latest Project ASTRO and iClicker building blocks on the test server to begin testing to see if we want to install them on the production servers.

This weekend there will be a SafeAssign outage from 3pm Sunday until 3am Monday morning. During this time they will be correcting several problems with SafeAssign, the most important being the bug that keeps anyone who uploaded a SafeAssignment as a student from using SafeAssign as an instructor without having Blackboard make a change to their status in their database. This has affected us several times. Sometime next week they will release a new building block that will fix several other issues.

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From: Tim Boshart <tboshart@uoregon.edu>
Date: August 2, 2010 2:47:39 PM PDT
Subject: Blackboard report week of July 26-30

As usual for this time of year it was a slow week for RT help requests with only 12 tickets opened.

Much of the week was spent testing 9.0 SP 4 which will be installed in September. I found one major bug that prevented setting the notifications settings to turn off notifications for courses that have been made available and setting the "From" address for announcement notifications. After reporting the problem to Blackboard I did some further investigations and found that the cause was a missing entry in one of the database tables. Blackboard has since confirmed the problem and that adding the missing entry fixes the problem.

On Monday was the last regularly scheduled 9.1 Upgrade Cohort meeting. One of the items in the meeting was that Shadow Mountain was making their 9.1 instructor training course available. I have obtained a copy of it and installed it on our development server. It is setup as a 4
week course and contains a number of tutorials and instructional videos. Nargas now has access to it and is looking through the materials to see what is useful for us.

Wednesday was the start of the next Bug Squad for 9.1 SP 4 that looks at open issues in Blackboard and prioritizes what should be the first ones to be fixed for the next Service Pack. I have been going through the list of open items to see what would affect the UO. This service pack will probably be the one that gets installed in December when we upgrade to 9.1.

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[no status report for the week of Aug 2]

From: Tim Boshart <tboshart@uoregon.edu>
Date: August 12, 2010 4:12:26 PM PDT
Subject: Blackboard report week of Aug 9-13, 2010

The biggest event this past week was the downtime on Sunday, Aug 8 that started around 4:00am and lasted until around 2:15pm. The outage was caused by a DNS server outage. During this time Blackboard was unable to reach the Oracle, LDAP and mail servers. At first Network Services thought it was a Radius server problem and only discovered the DNS problems later.

Duncan reported the problem to me a little before 9:00am and I then called the IS Systems hotline and left a message. I also called Stephany Freeman who got in touch with Network Services and found that they were already working on the problem.

A few other failures contributed to the problem. When a message is left on the IS Systems hotline a message is sent to the on-call person. In this case they were out of range so the text message didn't get through and for some reason was not re-sent when he was back in range. IS is looking into setup a way that if a message is not responded to after 1/2 hour it will be forwarded to the next person on the list.

I have also been working with IS to setup hosts files with IP addresses of the critical servers such as Oracle and LDAP so if there is a further DNS problem Blackboard will continue to operate.

Ticket requests continue to be slow as is usual for this time of year. There were 11 requests so far this week.

I will be taking Friday off as another furlough day this week.

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