

Submission to the

CSU Center for Distributed Learning
2002/2003 TIGERS Grant Report

Training and Support Materials for Blackboard Version 6.0

Category

Package

Grant Team and Supervisors

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Project Description

This TIGERS grant team, consisting of a multi-campus group of Blackboard System Administrators and Trainers, created standardized training materials for version 6.0 of Blackboard, which were made available to all CSU campuses. The materials cover three main areas: Tutorials, What's New, and FAQ's for both faculty and students. The cost of the grant was minimal in relation to the combined savings for the 18 campuses. Not only is this project fiscally responsible, but it would also foster communication and community between campuses, an added, and highly beneficial outcome.

Project Timeline

The timeline was contingent upon the release date of Version 6, and also upon access to a Beta copy of software. In May the team was given limited supervised access to a beta version for only a few days. Weeks later we were able to access Version 6, but access was sporadic. There was confusion regarding passwords, which preview site we were to access, etc., but eventually all team members had access to a test site. These delays set the timeline for the project back two months.

Assessment and Design - June

- Obtained limited access to a beta 6.0 site from Blackboard
- Reviewed the changes in the software and began listing items to address
- Met in person (Cal Poly SLO) and created UI documents, defined tasks, communication methods, timelines and responsibilities

Production - June - October

- Work on delegated tasks
- Reviewed and communicate biweekly via conference calls and as needed through Fresno's Bb course group tools (share files and check work).

Completion - November

- Project website designed and developed
- Met at CSU Long Beach to review and approve final documents
- Uploaded all final documents to website
- Uploaded completed site onto CATS MERLOT (cats.merlot.org) for distribution

Team Work

Three of the project team members had already established a working relationship over the previous year. One additional team member from CSU Hayward was asked to participate because of the quality and quantity of their Blackboard training materials. This was a great team: everyone had unique qualities and skills to contribute. We all were very experienced with the software and everyone got along great. Added benefits of the project include the professional and personal relationships that were developed.

Lessons Learned

The most difficult part of this project was certainly gaining access to the software. There are inherent problems when you are creating training on a software program that has yet to be completed. When the grant was initially written, the expected release date of the software was in the middle of May. However, the software was not officially released until October and went through a variety of alterations during the summer. In retrospect, more padding should have been added to the completion date and we should have scheduled more face-to-face meeting time. Other than that, we would not have done anything differently

Budget

The biggest issue with the budget was timing. The grant was awarded in Spring 2002 with a completion date during the next fiscal year. For some universities, money for the current fiscal year has to be spent by June 30 or lost. That was the case at SDSU. We were able to "trade" funds with another project for the following fiscal year, but it would have been much easier if the grant money was split into two payments - one for each fiscal year.

We underestimated the amount of money that would be needed for travel (just slightly) due to increases in hotel costs, however slightly underestimated the costs for student assistants. Overall, we did very well on budget.

Conclusion

Overall this was a very successful project for the participants. We established great professional and personal relationships, we created a quality project that we would have had difficulty creating on our own, and also created something that could be used by many, many other people. We will presenting at the National Blackboard Conference in Baltimore, in February, 2003, which is an excellent way to wrap up the project.