Setting up your course in Blackboard

As we prepare for the fall semester, many will be setting up course shells in Blackboard (Bb). You may not have used Bb much in the past, but with the uncertainty of how COVID-19 will affect in-person classes, Bb can be a reliable tool to help you prepare. A Bb course shell is automatically created for each course scheduled in the upcoming semester. As an instructor, you will see the courses you are teaching after logging into Blackboard. Your students will automatically be enrolled into these course shells prior to the start of the semester.

COPY YOUR COURSE CONTENT

If you have set up a Bb course shell in a previous semester and would like to use what you've built for this new semester, you can copy it into your newer course shell. For instance, if you taught your class in the spring and would like to copy it into your fall course shell and make minor adjustments for the new semester, use the Copy Course Content tool. You will find it in your course menu under Course Management > Packages and Utilities > Course Copy. If you are not comfortable with this process, please attend a virtual training and open lab or use our form to request assistance with your course copy.

STACK YOUR COURSES

If you are teaching multiple sections of the same course in the same semester, you will notice that separate course shells are automatically generated in Bb for each section. You may find it easier to stack these shells. This can be an advantage in situations where you might be teaching a 400/600-level course or if you are teaching a course that is cross-listed. These are both situations where students at different levels or from different degree programs need to be in the same cohort. You can stack your own courses, but if you're not comfortable with the process, please request assistance using our form.

ORGANIZE YOUR COURSE

Easy access and clear consistency are keys to a well organized course, whether you are starting from scratch or updating a course you have previously taught online. Below are strategies for organizing your course.

1 Make your syllabus and course schedule easy to find and add them to the main menu in your course.

2 Review your syllabus to ensure it reflects the most recent Faculty Senate updates. Note that there is a syllabus template available in Google Drive for UAF courses. To use it, click New > Google Document > From a Template.

Select the syllabus template to save a copy to your Drive, then customize it for your class.

3 Double-check dates in your course schedule and refer to our recent Teaching Tip on course schedules for additional ideas on how to clearly communicate important dates.

Read our recent Teaching Tip on course organization for more helpful ideas for organizing your course.

SET DUE DATES

Double-check that all of your assignments, quizzes and anything else that gets graded has a due date in the Bb Grade Center. This is a particularly important detail to check if you have copied your course from a previous semester. You can see and set due dates all in a single screen by going to Course Management > Course Tools > Grade Center Due Dates.

REFRESH YOUR COURSE INTRODUCTION

Whether you have crafted your course introduction as narrative text or in a video, giving it a refresh helps to add your presence to the course and helps students make a connection with you as the instructor. There are other ways to incorporate instructor presence into your course, but your introduction can be part of a student's first impression of your course and of you!

TEST YOUR COURSE WITH THE STUDENT PREVIEW

Once you've set up your course, ensure students see what you want them to see. Use the Enter Student Preview tool. Entering the Student Preview allows you to see most of your course as a student will see it. Use it to test course content such as your syllabus, course calendar and content you add to your module folders. It will also allow you to confirm item availability if there are parts of your course you will make available later in the semester. Finally, use it to check your quizzes and tests. When you are ready to use this tool, look for the icon that looks like an eyeball, located in the area of the upper-right corner of your course shell. We have a short tutorial on using the Student Preview.

MAKE YOUR COURSE AVAILABLE

You're all finished building your course in Bb! The last step before the first day of class is to make your Bb course available to students. This process is not automated. It is up to you to make your course available so that your students will be able to see it in their course list when they log into Bb. You can reference this short tutorial on how to flip the switch if you haven't done it before.