Blackboard Policy for Archiving Courses – Proposed Fall 2014

Background

The online learning management system production environment is hosted at <https://bb.uis.edu> using the software named Blackboard Learn System (Blackboard). Course shells for the next semester are created in Blackboard at least two weeks after the midterm examination of the current semester to enable instructors to develop their courses for the next semester. All courses that are available in Banner will have their course shells created in Blackboard. There are about 1000 courses created per semester in Blackboard.

Old courses are accessible through the archive server, <http://bbarchives.uis.edu> , where courses are retrievable on demand by instructors who were assigned to teach the course.

Currently, the archive server hosts courses from Summer semester of 2006 to Spring semester of 2012 with about 12,683 courses, uses two terabyte (2TB) of disk space, and runs on two servers with a total of 16 GB of memory.

We are maintaining courses that are too old to be in our system.

Other Schools’ Practices and UIS Office of Records and Registration

To determine what would be the most reasonable retention period to maintain old courses, we compared our practices with other institutions that offer similar online teaching. Some schools retain their old courses which are available online from one to two years only. After that period, they purge the old courses outright or archive them to a file for another two years before permanently purging them. In some schools, they hold instructors responsible to back up their own courses. Please see Appendix 1: Summary of Practices of Other Institutions in Archiving Courses.

Our current practice of maintaining old courses is too generous - we have old courses as far back as 2006, or about eight years, which is more than the holding period of other institutions.  
  
Another factor to consider in retaining online courses is the requirement of the Office of Records and Registration. The Office of Records and Registration follows the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) recommended retention and disposal policy. The AACRAO recommends that Blackboard account be kept for one year only which we very well cover. AACRAO goes on to recommend that after a year the information be archived for a reasonable amount of time. Therefore, a three-year archival period (or something similar) would be in compliance with AACRAO guidelines.

Advantages of Purging Course After Three Years

UIS will stand to save costs for lesser storage requirements, energy, maintenance, and reducing our carbon footprints if we purge courses older than three years.

Recommendation

Our recommendation is to retain courses to be accessible by faculty through online for three years only, and purge courses older than three years.

Faculty have 2 options for preserving their course content beyond three years: the use of GOLD courses or the archiving feature in Blackboard.

GOLD Courses: Many faculty already take advantage of GOLD courses, which serve as templates for their courses. GOLD courses are not taught from nor are students enrolled in GOLD courses; they are merely a course shell where faculty can keep updated content that can easily be copied to live courses as needed. Faculty may contact COLRS to request the creation of GOLD courses.

Archiving: Faculty may export their course at any time by going to Packages and Utilities, and then choosing Export/Archive Course. This creates a zip file that contains all the content for the course. The zip file can then be re-imported into Blackboard at a later time, if needed. Zip files can be saved on Box, or other cloud-storage services, for long-term storage.

Additionally, there will be a limit of 30MB for individual files uploaded to Blackboard. Files of larger size may be uploaded to Box, Google Drive, or OneDrive and linked in Blackboard. Video files should be uploaded to Kaltura and embedded in Blackboard.

This policy would go into effect beginning the Summer of 2015. So as of Fall 2015, the courses available in Blackboard will be Fall 2012, Spring 2013, Summer 2013, Fall 2013, Spring 2014, Summer 2014, Fall 2014, Spring 2015, and Summer 2015. Each semester, we will delete the oldest semester from Blackboard; faculty will receive a reminder prior to the deletion including instructions for how to update GOLD courses and the archival process.

Appendix 1: Summary of Practices of Other Institutions in Archiving Courses

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| Purdue | After 2 yrs, College|Dept|Program must archive the courses and retain them for at least one year after course completion date.  IT retains new courses online for 2 years, moves them to Archive for 2 years; then deletes them, unless an exception for Special Course Development is made. A request can be made to pull a course from Archive. |
| Western University | College|Dept|Program responsible for archiving and retaining courses for at least one year after course completion date. |
| North Dakota State University | 28 days after final grades loaded, courses are unavailable to students. Grade books are downloaded and retained for current yr plus six years, then deleted. In case of “incomplete” instructors can give access to students. Three semesters after start of new course, remaining student work will be removed.  After courses made unavailable, instructor content is exported & preserved for current yr plus 3 years.  Guests: Instructors can add Guests, but they cannot access Grade Book. They can access areas allowed by Instructor. |
| Babson | BB course sites available within BB for 2.5 yrs from end of term; then archived and removed from BB System. Archived courses available for restoration for 2 yrs, then deleted. |
| UIC | BB courses active for current semester + 1 year.  Guests: Colleges|Dept.|Program Director|Coordinators must request CSO Accounts for guests. |
| UIUC | No retention policy in place for BB.  Guests: not affiliated with UIUC: Name & e-mail address required to generate login & password. This would be done at Instructor’s request. |
| Suffolk University | 18-month retention of BB courses; then, they are archived, capturing course content and user info. Faculty are notified at end of each term of the archiving schedule, so they can save a course to their desktop computer (recommended for course content) or Archive it at the end of each term (recommended, includes course content, student information (grades/discussion board). |
| University of Central Florida | Instructor can request Guest to access BB. Guest may be expunged due to inactivity or failure to follow UCF Golden Rule Policies. Instructor must fill out form, stating reason for Guest access, SSN, and Instructor is “UCF Sponsor” and responsible for Guest actions. |
| Seton Hall University | BB available to Faculty & Students for one semester prior to the course running and three semesters after the course has completed. (The example given is less ambiguous: i.e. if created in FA08, deleted in SP10.) Instructors can back up their materials outside of BB. |
| Alabama A & M | BB courses offered in SU11 are deleted by FA12. Faculty can Archive a course locally. Course quota for a BB is 250 mb for course materials. “Blackboard has always advised that users link audio/video files to other storage systems rather than upload them to Blackboard.” |
| Eastern Connecticut State University | ”The Blackboard Section purge process will be executed biannually every January and June. Both online and on-ground section content are impacted by this policy. Blackboard Section content will be available in the production system for faculty use for a duration of two years. Section data more than two years old, calculated by the start of the current semester, will be removed from…production and archived. Faculty will be sent a reminder…no less than 30 days prior to the [purge date].” Notification provides faculty time to export Grade Book and other pertinent section data prior to purge. “Note: Exempt from this policy are manually created sections which may have been requested as part of course development or special projects.”  Guest Policy: I spoke with Mike Polumbo (860-465-5057) on 9/20/2013. The Guest Policy is not posted: Faculty owns their courses and can let anyone in, so long as ITS has written (e-mail, so IT staff are covered) approval. Guests must have an account at the University. IT can create an account so the guest can be added to BB. “It would be the responsibility of faculty who request the guest account to address any concerns about who they have requested to enter their course.” |

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| Northern Illinois University | Former courses cannot be removed by faculty, though faculty can delete course shells. They are left in place for minimum 13 months (grade appeals). Older courses are periodically deleted by System Administrator after the 13-month period.  Guest Policy: There is a statement that faculty can add guests to the course, but there is no direction on how to do this or what account is required. |
| University of Central Florida | Document posted with Blackboard Retention is encrypted.  Guest Policy: Guest access should not be provided to students. The faculty/staff member requesting access for a guest must fill out a form and state why individual needs access. (Form requires last 4 digits of SSN). Faculty/staff is responsible for guest’s actions within blackboard. “CDL” (I assume equivalent to ITS at UIS) will generate the guest ID and provide access to the course, but access will be revoked if guest is inactive in the course. |
| University of San Francisco | Retention: There is a 2 GB limit on course size. All courses offered during the term will have Blackboard sites. Courses remain on the server for 2 years. Special courses not used for teaching will be retained for an indefinite time. Courses are not archived. Faculty may either request a copy of their courses (<http://www.usfca.edu/its/learning/online/request>) or copy the content of own courses. (Courses are closed to students six weeks after the end of the course. Instructors can grant access to the course after that time as necessary.) Instructors are responsible for backing up their courses and encouraged to periodically print their grade center and to print it and retain it at the end of the term.  Guest Policy: Faculty & Staff can request temporary guest access by requesting an account for the guest, who must be actively working with faculty/staff, performing activities covered in the Blackboard contract. |