

## **Blackboard Provides Clean Slate for Teaching & Learning**

### **President's Annual Report – March 2004**

**By Luanne Fose, Ph.D.**  
**Instructional Designer, ITS Technology & Learning Services**

During the 2003-2004 academic year, Technology and Learning Services (TLS) initiated the Blackboard Courseware Development Project (BCDP) to enhance teaching and learning and increase faculty success in the implementation of technology in the classroom at Cal Poly. The project goal was to assist a select group of new faculty in enhancing course content in a Blackboard course of their choice. Criteria for faculty selection was based upon newness to the university (i.e., faculty hired Fall 2001 and after) and willingness to participate in the program, which required specific delivery dates for content delivery and active participation in the ITS "Learn By Mousing" faculty summer workshops.

Three courses from this project will be spotlighted in this article: Dr. Kristine Jankovitz's Kinesiology 250 – "Healthy Living" course, Vicki May and Pamalee Brady's Architecture 321 "Timber Structural Systems" course, and Claudia Cremasco's Italian 101, 102, and 103 "Beginning Italian" courses.

Dr. Kristine Jankovitz approached TLS with the problems of managing a huge lecture course, KINE 250 – a general education course with an enrollment of approximately 200 students every quarter. Dr. Jankovitz desired to enhance her course content, focusing on making it more pedagogically sound and more accessible to all her students. Blackboard provided a central depository for her students to access files and articles that had been scanned and formatted as PDFs. Every lecture was posted before the class meetings in PowerPoint outline format. Students were responsible for printing the outlines and bringing them to class to take notes. This approach saved the Kinesiology Department a considerable amount of money in printing costs and encouraged the students to be more responsible for their education. Dr. Jankovitz provided a number of survey links to help students determine their own personal learning styles and in response to their discoveries, she attempted to meet their learning style needs by providing course content in a variety of media. Students took several online quizzes as preparation for in-class exams and utilized Blackboard's Digital Drop Box for turning in assignments, which kept Dr. Jankovitz's email account from overflowing with hundreds of attachments.

Dr. Vicki May and Pamalee Brady participated in the BCDP for the purpose of co-teaching a hybrid version of their course "Timber Structural Systems." In the tradition of hybrid courses, 1-2 class meetings were held on campus each week while the rest of the course was conducted online. Ms. Brady lectured at the on-campus class meetings while Dr. May facilitated as a distance co-teacher from an out-of-state location. Since both instructors were already quite familiar with distance learning techniques, TLS primarily assisted by serving in a consultation capacity and by creating a Flash animation. The Flash animation visually illustrated three-dimensional architectural structures through an interactive learning environment that the students could manipulate in a variety of ways.

Claudia Cremasco, lecturer in Italian at Cal Poly, participated in the Blackboard Courseware Development Project to receive assistance with three of her Italian courses: ITAL 101, 102 and 103. These courses encompass the sequence of Italian courses for beginners and require a language drill laboratory as well. TLS assisted Ms. Cremasco in converting Italian analog movie and news clips into digital QuickTime movies that students could view in Blackboard at anytime and as many times as they desired via a streaming server. Quizzes were then conducted in Blackboard to assess the students' comprehension of the video content. Italian karaoke files and MP3 audio files were created from Italian songs along with a variety of games and puzzles to enforce active learning of Italian vocabulary and customs. Flash animations that included audio, graphics, and text were also created from several Italian fairy tales. Reflecting upon the success of this endeavor, Ms. Cremasco commented: "Learning Blackboard has been a very important experience for me. It has provided me with the opportunity to create a site where the students can be exposed to the Italian language through authentic material and where they can review material used in class often within a limited time frame. I found it really useful for keeping track of my students' work and progress and for providing immediate feedback to my students. Comparing the results of this year's final exam with those of last year, I saw a considerable improvement in the overall performance of the class."

Pre- and post-surveys were administered to both students and instructors to assess the success of the program. The following table displays the results of the Student Post Survey:

Blackboard Courseware Development Project Student Post Survey		
Survey Question	Response	
What is your academic status?	Freshman	7.50%
	Sophomore	18.00%
	Junior	32.07%
	Senior	43.18%
	Other	0.00%
The web pages for this course were convenient to use.	Agree	63.96%
	Somewhat Agree	32.46%
	Disagree	3.57%
	No Response	0.00%
I liked having course materials, such as the grading scheme and syllabus, on the web.	Agree	78.43%
	Somewhat Agree	21.57%
	Disagree	0.00%
	No Response	0.00%
I preferred submitting assignments electronically in this course.	Agree	10.50%
	Somewhat Agree	57.43%
	Disagree	32.07%
	No Response	0.00%
Taking this course with Blackboard's supplemental content was more effective than I thought it would be.	Agree	49.71%
	Somewhat Agree	35.46%
	Disagree	14.07%
	No Response	0.00%
I felt that the web content added to the course experience and provided additional educational information that assisted with my understanding of the materials.	Agree	61.71%
	Somewhat Agree	21.39%
	Disagree	10.89%
	No Response	0.00%
Did the 24 hour/7 days a week access of Blackboard have an impact upon your study and learning for this course?	Yes	74.68%
	No	25.32%
Did you find having course materials and the multiple features (chat, discussion, email, file exchange, groups, etc.) of Blackboard preferable to using an instructor's web page outside of Blackboard?	Yes	67.54%
	No	32.46%
I found that this Blackboard course provided much more educational value and ease of use than other Blackboard courses I have used.	Agree	46.14%
	Somewhat Agree	28.89%
	Disagree	21.21%
	No Response	3.75%
I would recommend this Blackboard class to other students.	Agree	60.96%
	Somewhat Agree	28.71%
	Disagree	11.07%
	No Response	0.00%

Overall, TLS was very pleased with the results of the BCDP. Anecdotal evidence suggests a higher level of self-confidence and self-sufficiency among the faculty participants. Many of the participants are now serving as recruiters and mentors for others who desire to find more effective ways to improve teaching and learning through technological implementation in the university classroom.

With the restructuring of TLS at Cal Poly this year, there is a focused attempt to carry on with lessons learned during this project. TLS invites faculty to visit our new location in Building 14, Room 102 and schedule a consultation to assess pedagogical methods that will help create a better teaching and learning experience for both Cal Poly students and faculty.