The latest version of *Blackboard*, version 6.3 (deployed on campus July 1, 2005), offers several enhancements for instructors. This document outlines some of these. Please use this in conjunction with our more comprehensive *Using Blackboard at Dominican: A Faculty Guide*.

**Course Menu Changes**

An immediate change you will notice with *Blackboard*'s side menu is that the space allocated to it may be widened or narrowed by clicking on the border of the browser frame. This feature replaces the arrow icon used in the previous version of *Blackboard* to "collapse" the menu:

Another change can be seen in the screenshot above towards the bottom: commonly used **Tools** are grouped together. A bigger change is below that, however. You may need to scroll down to see it, depending upon your screen resolution:
The **Detail View** link will allow you (and your students) to display the course menu as more of a course map, in that every area is represented by a folder that can be expanded or collapsed. All of your content in your course is accessible from this menu down to the individual item level:

Expand all folders/collapse all folders.

Click on the + icon to expand the folder, or the - icon to collapse it. Note that in this example, the **Course Documents** content area has three folders within it: **Shakespeare Material**, **Hardy Material**, and **Faulkner Material**. We expanded the **Shakespeare Material** folder to reveal the two items within it.

**Disabling the Detail View**

This detail view will be enabled on all new courses by default. If you do not wish to have your course menu display in this view, head to the Control Panel and click on **Course Design** within the **Course Options** area, and then **Manage Menu Display Options**. You will see the following screen:

If you *uncheck* the **Allow use of both views** checkbox, you will suppress the ability of the user to change views. Note that you can also select whether you want the default view of your menu to be the Detail View or the Quick View. (Quick View is the original view.)

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*Blackboard 6.3 Enhancements*
Gradebook

The major difference you will find in all new courses in Blackboard (those not copied over from previous semesters) appear in the columns labeled Running Total and Weighted Running Total. The latter is particularly significant if you weight your gradebook items by percentage. You (and your students) will see what their weighted percentage is for all completed items, rather than just the total percentage overall for the course. As an example, see the screenshot below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Last, First)</th>
<th>Reflection Paper</th>
<th>Mid-Term Exam</th>
<th>Final Exam</th>
<th>Running Total</th>
<th>Running Weighted Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bedeney, Boris</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown, Charlie</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahl, Barbie</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this class, the Final Exam is worth 50% of the final grade, but has not been taken yet. In previous versions of Blackboard, a student who had a perfect score for other gradebook items thus far (such as Barbie Dahl in the example above), would have shown a Weighted Total of 50%. With the Running Weighted Total, however, it indicates she is doing 100% work. This helps you answer students' "How am I doing so far?"-type of questions. The student will see this as well. Here is Barbie's view of the gradebook from the student perspective:

![View Grades](image.png)

For existing courses that have been copied over for a new semester, you can change the settings in your gradebook to reflect Running Total and Running Weighted Total by clicking directly on the column heading for your existing Total and Weighted Total. Here we show clicking on the existing Weighted Total column:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Last, First)</th>
<th>Take-Home Test</th>
<th>Mid-Term Exam</th>
<th>Final Exam</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Weighted Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the following screen, click the Item Information link:
Item Options: Weighted Total

- Item Detail
  View detailed statistics for the Gradebook item.

- Item Information
  Modify the name, description, availability, and other properties of the Gradebook item.

Finally, at the following screen, click the Yes button next to Exempt items that have not been graded. Click the Submit button at the bottom of this screen, and your gradebook will now say Weighted Running Total:

Repeat this same process for the Total column to make it say Running Total.

Student Perspective of Weighted Grades

From the student's view, they will see their weighted running total now, too--assuming you have not disabled their view of the gradebook:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection Paper</td>
<td>7/6/05 3:42 PM</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>39.33</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Exam</td>
<td>7/6/05 3:43 PM</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>86.67</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>7/5/05</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>133</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running Weighted Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>88.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Plan Ahead!
One drawback to the weighted running total is unless all of the gradebook entries and their weights are placed online ahead of time, this weighted running total will mean little!
Test/Survey Manager

For those who use online tests or surveys, there are no fewer than ten additional question types in this version of Blackboard. The new question types are: Calculated Questions, Numeric Response Questions, File Response Questions, Hot Spot Questions, Multiple Fill-in-the-Blank Questions, Jumbled Sentence Questions, Opinion Scale/Likert Questions, Short Response Questions, Either/Or Questions, and Quiz Bowl Questions. Rather than go into detail for each one, our suggestion is you consult the online manual in Blackboard for details on each type of question. In the Control Panel, click the Manual link. The online manual will open in its own browser window. From there, click the Contents tab on the left, and then go to Chapter 12 - Assessment. Open the folder, and you will see each question type has a screen of information covering the topic:

Randomized Multiple Choice Questions

Another new feature is the ability to randomize the order of the answers in multiple choice questions on each assessment attempt. This way, each student may have a slightly different order of appearance for the answers. To do this, when you create your multiple choice question, note that under Options, there is a checkbox to Show Answers in Random Order.
No Drop-Down Menus for Names in Content Areas

This next change just means a bit more typing--which some may not view as much of an enhancement at all! Whenever you click the Add Item icon ( ) in a Content Area of the Control Panel (Course Information, Course Documents, etc.), there is no longer the ability to select one of Blackboard's "pre-packaged" names from a drop down menu. Instead, just type in whatever you want to call your content:

Syllabus Builder

Since so many of you already have your syllabi in Word format and can just add it in that format by attaching it to an item in Blackboard, this may seem like more work than anything else. Nevertheless, the new Syllabus Builder in Blackboard will allow you to create a "web-friendly" syllabus that every user of Blackboard will be able to see on the screen without the necessity of downloading it or having Word.

To access this tool, from any Content Area in Blackboard, select Syllabus from the Select: drop-down menu over on the far right, and then click the Go button next to it:
This will lead to the following screen. Leave the selection at the default of **Create a new syllabus**. (The second option, **Use existing file**, is just like adding any other document attachment—which begs the question of why you’d even bother even using it here). Type in a name for your syllabus and proceed by clicking the **Submit** button at the bottom of the screen:

![Add Syllabus](image)

This leads to the following long screen (only the top half is shown below). This screen features text boxes similar to other areas in *Blackboard*. Using the "Word-like" buttons above the text box, you can create relatively elaborate documents. Don't forget that you can cut and paste from existing *Word* documents and retain most of your formatting within these boxes. (Unfortunately, any of you Macintosh users and/or *Netscape* users out there will not be seeing these buttons—it only works on *Windows*-based PCs using *Internet Explorer* as the browser):

![Syllabus Builder](image)

There are three of these main "areas" to fill out on this screen. The areas are populated with the names **Description**, **Learning Objectives**, and **Required Materials**, but you can type in your own names if you’d like to.
Once you have filled out the text boxes, continue scrolling to the bottom of the screen, and you will have choices to set your heading colors and general appearance of the page:

![Syllabus Design](image)

After you have made your choices, click **Submit** and your syllabus will be posted. Here is an example of the student view:

![Course Documents](image)

As is the case with all other postings in Blackboard, you can always go back and **Modify** these pages later.
Sending Email

As many faculty know from their own experience, Blackboard has sometimes been hit-or-miss when it comes to sending email to students through the Control Panel's very handy **Send Email** link. Much of this stems from students typing in incorrect email addresses when they create their user accounts in Blackboard, or the student's (or their ISP's) firewalls blocking mail.

Unfortunately, one "enhancement" in this latest version of Blackboard may exacerbate this situation. The **Create New Account** screen for students no longer requires an email address. Check the screenshot below:

![Create New Account](image)

Whereas the **Email** field used to have an asterisk next to it to indicate it was required, this is no longer the case. Our student documentation will continue to stress that students should fill this out with a *Dominican* email address, but you should be aware that new users can get by without doing this. If a student should later want to add an Email address after the fact, this is easily accomplished after logging into Blackboard by clicking the **Personal Information** link on the far left of the **My Institution** page, in the **Tools** area:

![Tools](image)

As always, feel free to contact Ken Black, Director of Teaching and Learning Technology and Faculty Development, at kblack@dom.edu or (708) 524-6512 if you have question on any of these changes.

*Blackboard 6.3 Enhancements*