Blackboard 5
Consulting Services

May 2000
BACKGROUND

Over the last several years, many academic institutions and other organizations have embraced the Internet as a way to both enhance face-to-face instruction and deliver distance learning. Now used in more than 3,300 educational institutions and organizations in every state and 100 countries, Blackboard’s award-winning course management system has evolved into a complete platform – Blackboard 5.

Developed in response to the increased demand for advanced software that can power an entire online campus, Blackboard 5 is a comprehensive and flexible e-Learning software platform that delivers a course management system, customizable institution-wide portals, online communities, and an advanced architecture that allows for Web-based integration with multiple administrative systems. Blackboard 5 meets the growing needs of academic institutions and organizations by providing a seamless migration path from online courses, to courses and communities, to entire online campuses centered around the core activities of teaching and learning.

IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

Since enterprise-level systems may require additional expertise during implementation, Blackboard offers consulting services that go far beyond our standard help desk to assist customers with installing, integrating, configuring, and customizing Blackboard 5 for their institution.

PROJECT TEAMS

An assigned Blackboard project team will provide custom implementation solutions, working closely with the customer’s project team and the Blackboard client relationship manager. The collective team will address the unique technical requirements of each implementation. The scope of each project is based on each customer’s particular combination of cost, schedule, complexity, and risk requirements.

A typical Blackboard project team could include a project manager responsible for defining, documenting, and executing a custom implementation plan for Blackboard 5, plus a senior consultant and/or a consultant. The project manager also works with the customer to define the scope of the implementation in the client’s unique environment, and is responsible for status reporting, project communication, and risk management.

Blackboard project teams are developed in conjunction with the client to best meet his/her needs. A team of Blackboard experts will be assembled with the client’s input based on the scope and complexity of the project to most efficiently and effectively complete the task within an established budget.
**BLACKBOARD’S EXPERTISE**

Blackboard consultants are familiar with major enterprise systems and, using current knowledge and lessons learned from previous implementations, can design and manage your institution’s implementation to make the best use of each system’s capabilities. Based on your requirements, Blackboard can offer every level of assistance, from basic project planning and design to nearly complete management of the entire project. Our experience provides assurance that your project will be completed on time and on budget, and that potential problems are avoided before the software is deployed, not after deployment.

Although Blackboard is a young company, our consultants are among the top performers in their fields. Most have at least 7 years’ prior experience in areas that include small and large scale project design and management, software engineering, and Web consulting. Our consulting team includes alumni from the biggest names in the private sector, government contracting, education, and publishing - including Lockheed Martin, the National Science Foundation, Booz-Allen & Hamilton, AMS, and McGraw-Hill.

**CONSULTING SERVICES**

Blackboard has created several standard service packages, based on the typical needs of our customers. These packages break the process down by hours against typical implementation scenarios, and range from a starter package to a complete mission-critical implementation.

However, it is likely that a customer’s unique implementation requirements may not fit into a predefined package. To meet their distinct needs, customers can use these service packages as guides to begin planning their own implementations, and adjust the set of services provided to meet their financial goals and cover the associated costs of the project team members. They can also purchase additional services on a time-and-materials basis.

Packages do not include hardware, commercial software, support, or travel costs.
SERVICE PACKAGES

The **Standard** package serves an initial standalone installation of Blackboard 5 with up-front time dedicated to planning the rest of your project.

Implementation Schedule:

- Detailed project planning – 1 day
- Installation – 2 days
- User interface design and implementation – 5 days
- Data integration planning – 2 days

**Total – 10 days**

The **Mid-Tier** package integrates Blackboard 5 into the customer’s Student Information Systems (SIS) and/or Human Resource Management Systems (HRMS). The first step is a stand-alone, customized Blackboard 5 system for “pilot testing” followed by an integrated system with automatic data import from a SIS.

Implementation Schedule:

- Detailed project planning – 3 days
- Installation – 2.5 days (includes installation of a stand alone system and development & integration system)
- User interface design and implementation – 6 days
- Snapshot data integration planning – 22 days

**Total – 33.5 days**

The **Top-Tier** package allows for complete SIS/HRMS integration, tying into end-user authentication systems and building organization-wide agreement on decisions.

Implementation Schedule:

- Detailed project planning – 5 days
- Installation – 2.5 days (includes installation of a stand alone system and development & integration system)
- User interface design and implementation – 6 days
- Snapshot data integration planning – 27 days
- Snapshot data integration programming – 6 days
- End user authentication and single-logon integration – 10 days

**Total – 56.5 days**
SERVICE DESCRIPTIONS

This section describes the services that are part of the above recommended packages. They can be customized to meet each customer’s unique needs.

Initial project planning is provided free of charge to help the customer choose the right technical services package. It includes high-level discussions on customer needs and strategy for achieving customer goals.

Detailed project planning involves discussing, planning and documenting the scope of the installation. This stage includes preparing for several meetings – an initial Blackboard/customer meeting, an in-person conference, and a follow-up. The goal of this meeting is to make specific decisions concerning the installation, product options, customization, user interface tailoring and design, integration, rollout, and faculty impact. This process also includes assessing administrative impact, student impact, support, testing, timeframes, approval processes, communications, organizational and individual responsibilities, and deliverables.

Installation itself involves additional customer-specific preparation by providing detailed specification and configuration support to IT personnel on servers, network, and disk based on workload characteristics, performance and availability requirements.

Other steps in the Installation process include:
- On-site installation or on-site installation support if customer prefers to perform installation for commercial products and Blackboard 5
- Configuration of Blackboard 5 and related products
- Basic system review
- Systems management training, including how to operate Blackboard 5, determining system health, preventing failures, detecting failures, recovering from failures, backup and recovery
- Follow-up report on installation

User interface design and implementation services create the specific look and feel, tailoring and customization of Blackboard 5 for each customer.

The process involves an initial product tailoring and user interface design session. Blackboard will then tailor the product, develop user interface extensions and components, and review the changes with the customer via telephone, email, or extranet.

Snapshot data integration planning creates monitored processes for importing new and changed users (students & faculty), as well as course section information,
enrollment data, instructor assignments, and organization data. It also provides mechanisms for providing final grades back to student information systems.

Parts of the planning process include:

- Defining requirements and data mappings through facilitated interviews
- Analyzing and documenting the results
- Designing snapshot generation tools, controller technology, and systems management tools with the customer
- Developing with the customers the operating procedures for instructors, academic administration, and system administrators
- Jointly define test strategy and test cases
- Support test execution
- Assist in deployment planning for the integrated system

Snapshot data integration programming of selected integration components typically includes process control technology, workflow support, and automated systems management.

End user authentication and single-logon integration involves defining the requirements, design, and/or programming of software to tie Blackboard 5 to an external authentication system. If appropriate, this stage also includes additional requirements definition, design, and/or programming to create a single-login capability, so users can log on to Blackboard 5 and to multiple customer systems at the same time.

Other steps in this stage of the process include:

- Jointly define test strategy and test cases
- Support test execution
- Assist in deployment planning for the integrated system

Content import defines the requirements, design, and/or programming of tools to import course content like documents and tests into Blackboard 5.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

From planning to completion, Blackboard’s Consulting Services teams will work with your IT administrators and other outside consultants to integrate Blackboard 5 with your existing administrative systems, and make this online teaching and learning environment a vital part of your institution.
For more information regarding Blackboard’s products and services, please contact us at 1.800.424.9299 or visit www.blackboard.com