Blackboard 5
Why Adopt Level One

June 2000
**OVERVIEW**

Blackboard 5™ is a server software platform that provides a powerful environment for online teaching and learning, Internet-enabled communities, and advanced integration with multiple administrative systems. Blackboard 5 can be licensed at varying levels, depending on your needs:

- Level One: Course Manager
- Level Two: Course & Portal Manager
- Level Three: Advanced Course & Portal Manager
- Commercial License: (Highly customizable platform designed for commercial education providers)

If you are currently licensing Blackboard CourseInfo™ 3.0 or 4.0, this white paper will provide an overview of features, functionality, and issues to consider for upgrading to Level One of Blackboard 5, the Course Manager. For a comprehensive product line overview, please refer to the Blackboard 5 Orientation Center available at [http://company.blackboard.com/orientation](http://company.blackboard.com/orientation)

Developed in collaboration with faculty members at Cornell University, Blackboard’s software platform currently powers online teaching and learning environments at more than 3,300 colleges, universities, K-12 schools, and other organizations in every state and in more than 100 countries. Level One of Blackboard 5 is an improved version of our award-winning course management system, and will be the base-level upgrade for customers who are currently licensing Blackboard CourseInfo 3.0 and 4.0. This upgrade will be available as part of your existing licensing agreement.

**TOP REASONS TO UPGRADE TO BLACKBOARD 5**

- New, modular architecture for superior scalability and performance
- New features and functionality to customize the course environment and develop tailored institutional branding
- An enhanced, highly intuitive user interface that builds upon Blackboard’s established reputation for ease-of-use
- Enhanced tools and features in administrative and pedagogical flexibility
- Upgrade to additional functionality with seamless course and content portability

Additionally, Level One of Blackboard 5 provides a seamless migration path to Level Two and Three, which integrates our robust course engine with customizable institution-wide portals, online communities, and an advanced architecture that allows for Web-based integration with institutional administrative systems. The entire platform adheres to the latest IMS standards for e-Learning.
BLACKBOARD 5 – PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FOCUS

Blackboard’s product development philosophy embraces both internal innovation and extensive feedback from our customers and partners. Our formal and informal market research has included in depth interviews with students, administrators, and faculty, as well as collaborative consulting engagements with product advisory committee’s and lead-users. Blackboard’s development process is user-driven and anchored in three product development pillars:

- Pedagogical Flexibility
- Ease-of-use
- Scalability

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FOCUS: PEDAGOGICAL FLEXIBILITY

Blackboard 5 includes several new features designed to support multiple teaching and learning styles. Examples of these feature enhancements include:

- **Customizable Navigational Buttons:** Instructors can now change the names of navigational buttons on the left-hand side of the course Web site. For example, under the course settings area, instructors may designate subject headers from a menu of options, as well as determine whether the box is enabled or disabled.

- **Consistency:** For institution-wide consistency, administrators may require certain button names while leaving others to the discretion of each instructor.

- **Enrollment/Course Availability:** New features have been added to enhance enrollment options, including timed self-enrollment, where students are allowed to enroll in courses on pre-determined dates. Instructors or administrators may also set dates or time limits for user access to course information and completion of assessments.

- **Student Document Storage:** Within the course environment, students may now securely store course-specific files and documents.
• **Course Content:** Blackboard 5 includes support for “Course Cartridges” that include course content by leading publishers such as Pearson, McGraw-Hill, Thompson Publishing, and Academic Publishing. Course Cartridges will be available from publisher Web sites in August 2000, and will allow instructors to easily populate the course environment with curriculum-specific content. Instructors will be able to customize the course cartridges to meet their particular needs.

• **Powerful Academic Resources:** Blackboard 5 provides a link to a value-added academic resource center that allows instructors and students to access discipline-specific information resources. The Resource Center is an online repository for academic research designed to enhance and enrich the learning experience. Organized by the visitor’s role and academic subject, the service includes more than 200 subject-specific resource sites, with news feeds, journal articles, textbook-specific digital content, and course tools such as dictionaries, periodicals, and more.

**PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FOCUS: EASE OF USE**
Blackboard 5 builds upon our established reputation for ease of use by making the platform even easier to use for faculty, administrators, and students.

• **Graphical Interface and Navigation:** Blackboard 5 features a new tabbed interface that allows for seamless and intuitive navigation between major areas of the product such as “My Institution”, “Courses”, and “Academic Web Resources.” The “My Institution” interface includes a modular “at-a-glance” interface that integrates courses, tasks, and announcements on one page.

• **Enhanced Content Control and Tracking:** Blackboard 5 provides better tools to create and control your content including simplified content creation, improved multimedia handling, and support for multiple file attachments.
• **System Administration and Configuration:** System administrators have more control than ever before to design, manage, and maintain their installation through the administrator control panel. System-wide settings, defaults, and overrides enable the administrator to customize their environment to suit their needs. Improved tools allow administrators to easily manage hundreds of courses and thousands of users.

**PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FOCUS: SCALABILITY**
From its inception, Blackboard 5 was built to scale - and can power entire institutions and systems within institutions.

• **Flexible Architecture:** Developed for basic and enterprise level implementation, Blackboard 5 can be customized and integrated into a variety of IT environments. Blackboard 5 is available for Windows NT, Windows 2000, Solaris, and Linux operating systems, and supports Web servers and databases including Microsoft SQL server, mysql, Apache, and Microsoft IIS.

• **Mission Critical Implementation:** Blackboard 5’s advanced oriented design and architecture was designed to power Blackboard.com, our own e-Learning site that currently supports more than 30,000 courses and 250,000 users in a high availability implementation.

• **Maximize Existing IT Investments:** Blackboard 5’s modular architecture provides the flexibility to scale individual parts of the platform over time. To accommodate for varying usage levels among parts of the product, the application engines can be deployed on separate hardware systems, allowing for better system management and performance.

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**BLACKBOARD 5 LEVEL ONE: REQUIREMENTS**

**BLACKBOARD UNIX ADMINISTRATOR**

*Technical Requirements*

• Strong knowledge/experience with Linux/Solaris
• Experience with Apache Web server
• Experience with MySQL, or other database application

*Other Skills*

• Experience running mission critical 24/7 application
BLACKBOARD WINDOWS NT/2000 ADMINISTRATOR

**Technical Requirements**
- Strong knowledge/experience with Windows NT/Windows 2000
- Experience with the Internet Information Server
- Experience with Microsoft SQL Server 7
- Knowledge of how to backup databases and file systems
- Plus: MSCE certification

**Other Skills**
- Experience running mission critical 24/7 application

**SUPPORTED PLATFORMS**
- Solaris: 2.6 or 7
- Red Hat Linux: 5.x, 6.1, or 6.2
- Windows NT with SP 4 or higher
- Windows 2000 Server, Advanced Server, Datacenter Server

**SUPPORTED DATABASES AND WEB SERVERS**
- Solaris: MySQL and Apache
- Red Hat Linux: MySQL and Apache
- Windows NT: SQL Server 7 with SP 1, IIS 4
- Windows 20000: SQL Server 7 with SP1, IIS 5

For more information about supported platforms, technical information, and hardware guidelines, please refer to documentation available at the Blackboard 5 Orientation Center at [http://company.blackboard.com/orientation](http://company.blackboard.com/orientation)

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**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

e-Learning is a new and exciting venture for many institutions. By upgrading to Blackboard 5, your institution will be at the forefront of this exciting and dynamic evolution. Blackboard 5 features a seamless migration path with three distinct licensing options that allow you to implement e-Learning solutions at your own pace.

Level One of Blackboard 5 provides a significantly improved version of our course management platform centered around our core product development pillars that include ease-of-use, scalability, and pedagogical flexibility.

For more information concerning Level One of Blackboard 5 or Levels Two and Three, please contact a Blackboard sales representative at 1-800-424-9299 ext. 4, or visit the Blackboard 5 Orientation Center at [http://company.blackboard.com/orientation](http://company.blackboard.com/orientation)
For more information regarding Blackboard’s products and services, please contact us at 1.800.424.9299 or visit www.blackboard.com