Blackboard 5

Why Adopt Level Two

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)

This white paper provides an overview of features, functionality, and issues to consider for institutions that are interested in upgrading to, or licensing Blackboard 5 Level Two, Course & Portal Manager.

Level Two of Blackboard 5 adds a powerful set of features and functionality to Blackboard’s course management system (Level One) by providing a customizable institution-wide portal environment that provides a personalized gateway to the Internet.

If you are interested in learning more about Blackboard 5 Levels One and Three or to view a comprehensive product line overview, please refer to the Blackboard 5 Orientation Center available on the Web at: http://company.blackboard.com/orientation.

TOP REASONS TO LICENSE LEVEL TWO OF BLACKBOARD 5

- Create a powerful online campus environment that facilitates learning by integrating courses, communities, academic resources, and seamless integration with the Web
- Foster a stronger sense of community and affiliation among students, faculty, staff, and alumni
- Optional e-Commerce functionality that allows for institutional sponsorships and partnerships
- Enterprise Database Support
- Ability to upgrade to additional functionality with seamless course and content portability

Questions to Consider When Selecting an e-Learning Partner

e-Learning, developed and delivered properly, is a vital endeavor that requires a long term commitment and a deep infrastructure. When considering among the many vendors in our industry, we encourage prospective customers to “test-drive” different platforms in order to determine the best fit for their institution. The following questions should merit careful consideration when considering a long-term investment in an e-Learning platform.

1. Does the platform offer an integrated e-Learning solution including course management, portal environment, and integration with multiple administrative systems?
Level Two of Blackboard 5 provides a seamless migration path to Level Three that integrates our robust course and portal manager with an advanced architecture that allows for Web-based integration with multiple institutional administrative systems, advanced security, extended APIs and even greater customization of business processes for online teaching and learning.

---

**LEVEL TWO OF BLACKBOARD 5: PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PHILOSOPHY**

Although e-Learning is a relatively recent phenomena, the marketplace is becoming increasingly sophisticated and most organizations require an e-Learning solution that can be adopted in growth stages and incorporates several key components:

- Course management and learning via the Internet
- Academic Web Resources
- A customizable institutional Web portal environment
- Internet-enabled social communities

While there are many companies that offer products and services in one of these major categories, none offers a comprehensive end-to-end academic solution that includes courses, communities, academic resources, and advanced integration with administrative systems. In this sense, Blackboard 5 is both evolutionary and groundbreaking.

Formal and informal market research, including in depth interviews with students, administrators, faculty, as well as collaborative consulting engagements with product advisory committee’s and lead-users have determined Blackboard’s product strategy. From this process, Blackboard has developed the Blackboard 5 e-Learning platform. Level Two of Blackboard 5 is built around our course management system and integrates course management with a tailored institutional Web portal environment and online institutional communities. Level Two of Blackboard 5 is anchored in three product development pillars:

- Reinforce teaching and learning as the hub of a successful e-Learning platform
- Offer unparalleled flexibility and breadth of options from which to customize the Web portal environment
- Provide an optional e-Commerce function that allows for institutional sponsorship and partnership opportunities
TEACHING AND LEARNING AT THE HUB OF THE PLATFORM

Blackboard’s mission is simple – to provide a software platform and services that will improve quality and increase access to teaching and learning by harnessing the power of the Internet. Beginning with the “My Institution” gateway interface, teaching and learning is the core of the Blackboard 5 platform. Level Two of Blackboard 5 features a portal home page that aggregates the following features and functionality in an “at-a-glance” format. The interface includes, but is not limited to:

- Courses, course catalog listing
- Institutional announcements, calendar and tasks
- Campus organizations and institutional services with community discussion boards and virtual chat
- Course grades, academic Web resources
- Web-based email, address book

To reinforce the focus on teaching and learning, Blackboard’s course management system is deployed in both the Course and Community sections. Whether using a course Web site or navigating through a campus or institutional organization activity, users will find a highly intuitive, consistent, and familiar platform for teaching and learning.
UNPARALLELED FLEXIBILITY THROUGHOUT THE WEB PORTAL ENVIRONMENT

Level Two of Blackboard 5 offers a virtually unlimited menu of options from which to customize and tailor the Web portal environment. The “My Institution” home page features a tabbed interface with one-click access to the primary engines of the platform (Courses, Community, Services, Academic Web Resources). The most significant functionality in Level Two of Blackboard 5 is the ability for each user to customize both the content and layout of their home page by selecting from an expansive menu of portal modules.

Institutional and Campus Community Portal Modules
- Courses
- Institutional Announcements
- Calendar
- Tasks

Web Portal Modules
Access to hundreds of information providers
- Top News by Reuters
- Weather
- Census Maps
- Business News
- Entertainment News
- Sports Scores
- Stock Quotes
- Horoscopes
- Multiple Search Engines
- Travel
- Yellow Pages
- Maps
And many more…

Customizable Modules
Level Two of Blackboard 5 provides a suite of customizable HTML/URL modules that provide links, announcements, and other audience-specific information for the following segments of your institutional community:
- Students
- Administrators
- Instructors
- Guests
- Staff
- Alumni
- Prospective students

For example, the alumni module may be featured prominently for alumni, and contain information, links, and announcements that are audience-specific such as information about upcoming reunions and class notes. Similarly, prospective students may view a module with information and links to the admissions office and application materials.

Level Two of Blackboard 5 provides an intuitive, highly customizable interface that includes Web portal, audience-specific, and institutional portal modules.
OPTIONAL E-COMMERCE FUNCTIONALITY
The Enterprise Administration tab allows administrators to customize the entire Blackboard 5 platform including:

- Portal Areas
- System Tools
- Enterprise Tools
- System Options
- Course & Community Management
- User Management
- e-Commerce

The e-Commerce function provides administrators and institutions the option to upload either internal or external sponsorships and advertisements. The management of this function is at the discretion of the administrator and institution – and sponsorships may be either revenue generating or non-revenue generating. Similar to the entire Blackboard 5 platform, the focus is on flexibility and ease-of-use.

Each of the major tabbed-interfaces has a primary and secondary sponsorship banner that may be either enabled or disabled, including:

- Primary site sponsor (upper-right placement on all pages)
- My Institution area sponsor
- Course area sponsor
- Community Area Sponsor
- Services area sponsor

The content of these available banner placements may include institutional sponsors such as the bookstore, cafeteria or one of the many local organizations and campus organizations; or it may include external placements such as the local pizza parlor or a larger corporate sponsor or advertiser.

Course e-Commerce Management
In addition to the sponsorship-based e-Commerce model, Level Two of Blackboard 5 supports optional course e-Commerce management that includes data fields that allow institutions to set prices and charge fees for course enrollment. This is a particularly appealing option for those institutions that are actively seeking to market courses to new learners.
**ADDITIONAL FEATURES AND FUNCTIONALITY IN LEVEL TWO OF BLACKBOARD 5**

**ENTERPRISE DATABASE SUPPORT**
Level Two includes support for enterprise-grade relational databases such as Microsoft SQL server and Oracle8i.

- Support tens of thousands of users across an institution or system of institutions
- Manage large volumes of transactions efficiently and effectively

**WEB-BASED EMAIL SYSTEM**
Blackboard’s email system offers access to both institutional and remote mailbox options by linking with institutional or remote POP3 and IMAPI functionality.

- Compose messages to anyone with a valid email address
- Set preferences for viewing, sending, and receiving mail
- Sort messages by four different headings
- Move selected items to the mailbox of your choice
- Aggregate multiple mailboxes into one view
- Multiple send/receive/reply options

**EXTENDED OPTIONS FOR GRAPHICAL CUSTOMIZATION**
Blackboard 5 allows administrators to create a customized institutional portal to create tailored institutional branding throughout the platform.

- Add institutional logos to various screens within the platform
- Modify background colors and button styles to match institutional branding
- Change names of top-level navigational tabs
LEVEL TWO OF BLACKBOARD 5: REQUIREMENTS

BLACKBOARD UNIX ADMINISTRATOR

Technical Requirements
- Strong knowledge/experience with Linux/Solaris
- Experience with Apache Web server
- Experience with MySQL or other database application
- Recommended: Dedicated System/Database Administrator

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 Microsoft Internet Information Server
- Experience with Microsoft SQL Server 7
- Knowledge of how to backup databases and file systems
- Plus: MSCE certification
- Recommended: Dedicated System/Database Administrator

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, Oracle8i*
- Red Hat Linux: MySQL and Apache, Oracle8i*
- Windows NT: SQL Server 7 with SP 1* or Oracle8i*, IIS 4**
- Windows 20000: SQL Server 7 with SP1* or Oracle8i*, IIS 5**
  * Supported, but not bundled with the application
  ** Included as part of the operating system

Note: A two machine configuration is recommended:
- Application Server (machine #1)
- Database Server (machine #2)
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Blackboard 5 platform provides institutions with a phased approach to incrementally adopt e-Learning solutions and embrace change at their pace depending on their particular needs. Blackboard 5 provides a clear roadmap for e-Learning beginning with course management and evolving to include Web portals, communities, and integration with back-office systems. By placing teaching and learning at the hub of the platform, Level Two of Blackboard 5 provides institutions with a robust system through which teachers and learners can collaborate within and beyond the traditional course environment.

For more information about Blackboard 5 or for a product demonstration, please contact a Blackboard sales representative at 1-800-424-9299 ext. 4, or visit the Blackboard 5 Orientation Center on the Web at 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