

BlackBoard @ R. H. Smith
Student/Faculty Evaluation Report

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Prepared by:

Sunil Hazari, Ed.D

shazari@rhsmith.umd.edu

Executive Summary

This report is an evaluation of the Blackboard Course tool that was implemented in the Robert H. Smith School of Business during Fall 2002 semester. Web course tools such as Blackboard and WebCT have gained popularity for creating course materials that students can access remotely. Technology enhanced learning as an adjunct to classroom teaching has shown to benefit students by creating virtual community of learners and providing an area for student dialog outside the classroom.

The purpose of this report was to identify issues, advantages, disadvantages, problems and impact that the Blackboard course tool is having on faculty and students in the School. Web-based surveys were used to collect data. Forty-three faculty and 296 students responded to the survey that was administered between October 9 and October 18, 2002. Satisfaction with technical and pedagogical aspects of the tool were addressed in the survey. Findings of this survey should be of interest to faculty and administrators to determine value being offered by this web course tool and results of investments in technology.

Results of the survey found that:

- Faculty and student satisfaction with Blackboard is high
- Blackboard is mainly being used as a convenience tool to distribute course materials
- Faculty training is needed that goes beyond tool use and incorporates pedagogical issues
- Portal use should be further encouraged in the School

Introduction

Universities across the country are making large investments in technology tools to enhance learning and facilitate teaching. Some examples of these technology tools are course development programs, wireless access, personal digital assistants, and campus portals. Use of Web course development tools can piggy-back on huge investments higher education institutions have made in not only installing the hardware and software, but also planning the network infrastructure to link offices, libraries, classroom, and student dormitories for local, wide area, and Internet connectivity. With sound pedagogical design, web based instruction can create meaningful learning environments by engaging students in active application of knowledge, concepts and giving them an opportunity to control pace and monitor learning which will help them grow and evolve as the course progresses.

The new generation of Web course development tools provide features that allow instructors to adapt components according to learning outcomes of the course. Use of such tools can promote collaborative learning, enhance critical thinking skills, and give students equal opportunity to participate in classroom discussions. It is important to assess the quality of service, technical as well as pedagogical issues that contribute to success (or failure) of such projects. Since 1998, faculty in the Smith School of Business have been using a Lotus Notes based course tool to make course materials available to students. This tool had been used in 1000+ course section during the past four years. Since Fall 2002, the Blackboard course environment that is part of the R. H. Smith Portal project was made available to faculty and students in the Smith School. Blackboard is an enterprise software platform that encompasses course management, student tools, external resources and online campus communities. It includes additional features not found in the previously used Lotus Notes Course Tool. Some of these features are automatic registration of students within the course environment, web input of course materials, calendaring, online quizzes, gradebook, course statistics, digital dropbox, chat etc. The user interface is web-based, very easy to use and benefits students and instructors in offering course material and administrative environment in a easy-to-navigate seamless environment. Student Blackboard course materials was also accessible via the R. H. Smith Portal.

ROI in education must be measured to get an indication of value being provided by significant investments in technology. In the past, a study that focused on perceptions and behaviors of students and faculty toward the Notes course tool in the Smith School was conducted. Results showed a positive response from students and faculty towards the use of technology tools to supplement teaching/learning. Additional details on outcomes and the study itself that were obtained from the survey are available from

<http://betj.ggu.edu/sp2000/#implementation> . The purpose of this new survey was to get similar feedback from Smith School faculty and students on the use of the new Blackboard System (and to a certain degree the R. H. Smith portal that provided a gateway to the course tool). A 10-item web based survey was made available to Faculty and Students. See Appendix A and B for the survey instruments. The survey included closed-ended as well as opportunities for providing open-ended comments on important issues of relevance that may have been missed in the survey.

Results obtained from data collected are presented in this evaluation report. The survey did have some limitations. Response rate was not very high so the generalizability of the findings are limited. However, despite the low response rate, open-ended comments provided by the students and faculty provided insight on several issues that need to be addressed to make this tool an integral part of the Smith School strategy to provide faculty technology tools and environment for effective communication with students, as well as prepare students to be good communicators and users of information systems in the Netcentric economy.

Survey Data Demographics

Number of Undergraduate courses using Blackboard: 93
Number of Undergraduate course **sections** using Blackboard: 223
(Multiple course sections may or may not use same Blackboard coursespace)

Number of Graduate Courses using Blackboard: 97
Number of Graduate course **sections** using Blackboard: 163
(Multiple course sections may or may not use same Blackboard coursespace)

Total number of Blackboard Courses: 386

Number of Faculty using Blackboard: 147
Number of Students registered in Blackboard: 4000 (approx.)

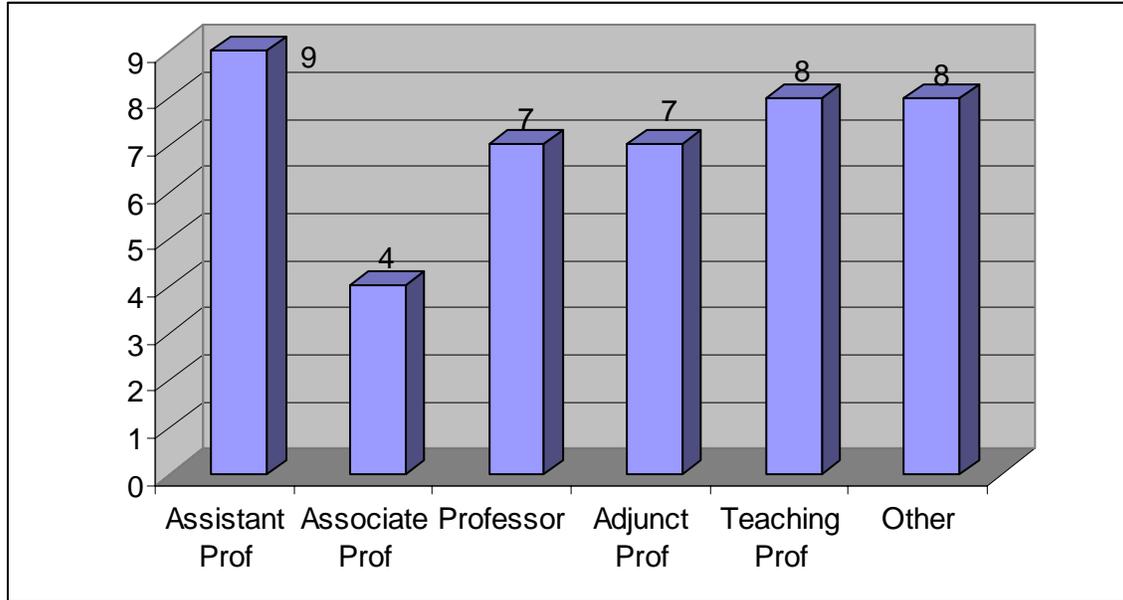
Number of faculty in the Smith School:	
Full-time	115
Part-time	60
TOTAL	175

Number of Faculty responding to the survey: 43

Number of Students responding to the survey:	
Undergraduate	217
Graduate (Full-time)	46
Graduate (Part-time)	33
TOTAL	296

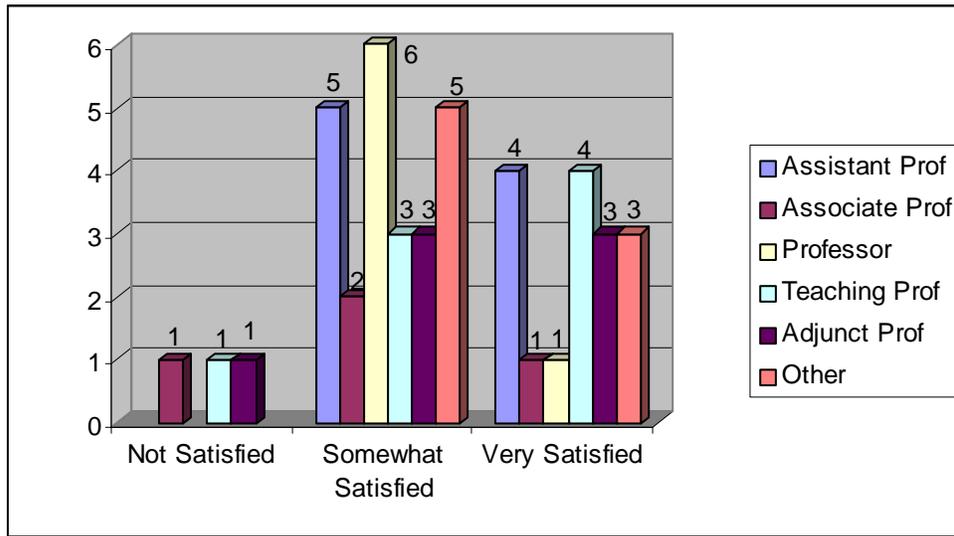
FACULTY DATA

#1 : What is your Faculty Classification?



Forty-three faculty responded to the Blackboard evaluation survey. This is 29% of total number of faculty using the Blackboard system during Fall semester. The relatively small percent of responses using self-selected respondents limits the findings of this survey but the responses do give an indication of problems, issues, suggestions provided by faculty respondents.

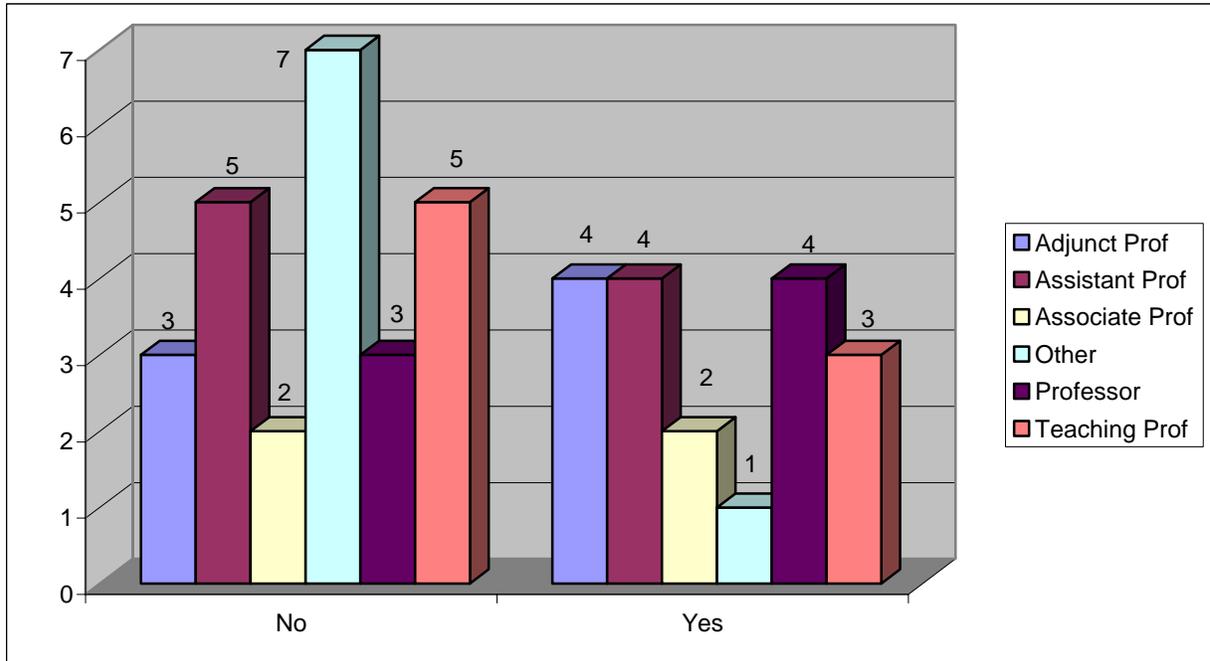
#2 How satisfied are you with the Blackboard System at R. H. Smith?



Seven percent of faculty were Not Satisfied, 56% were Somewhat satisfied and 38% were Very Satisfied with the Blackboard system.

Considering this is the first semester of Blackboard availability to faculty, some problems associated with such a large deployment can be expected. With only 7% of faculty being dissatisfied with the system, it can be hypothesized that some elements (such as technology, feature set, training) must be identified to understand where the dissatisfaction occurs. Follow-up discussion with faculty using focus groups could pinpoint specific issues that need to be looked at carefully to raise satisfaction of faculty to 100%.

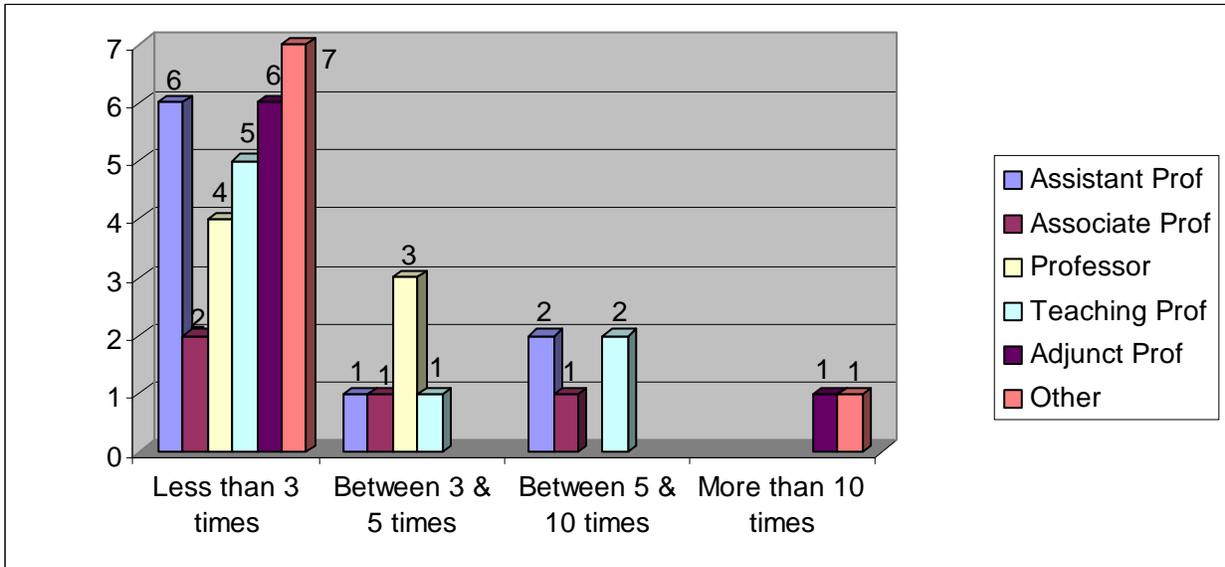
#3. When you first used the Blackboard system, did you have problems setting your ldap/university id password that is required to login to the system?



From the above graph, it can be seen that 58% of faculty did not have problems setting the university password while 42% did have problems.

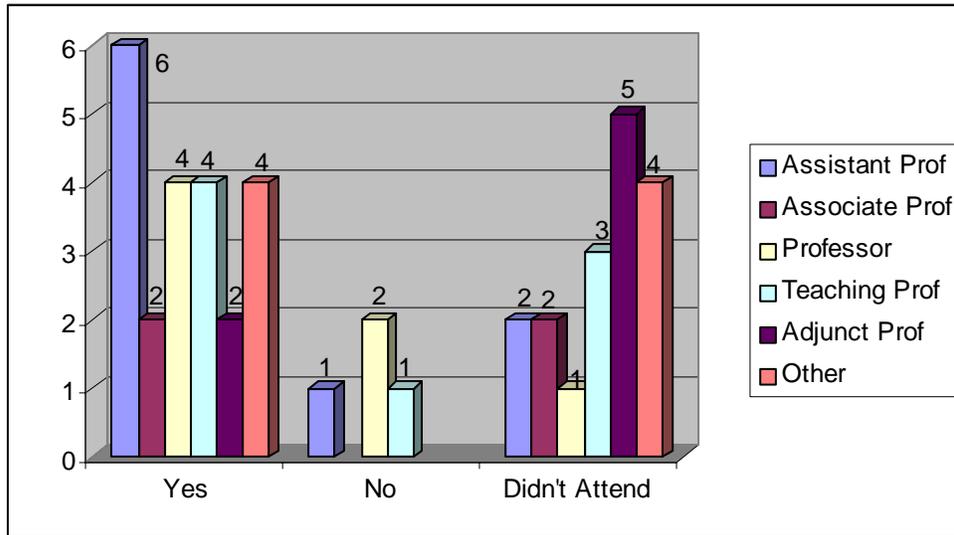
Logging in to the system for the first time was a major change for faculty since Blackboard uses login information derived from the university ldap system for authentication. This process required faculty and students to find their directory name and set their password if they had not done so for the first time. A major portion of the tech support calls to Blackboard staff were login problems which have now been resolved since by putting up web pages that explain the login process in detail. It can be foreseen that login problems may occur if a student changes information (such as SS# for international students, or last name) that may cause Blackboard login to be changed. Information on this should be added to the student faq page.

#4. Since the beginning of this semester, how often have you experienced Blackboard login Problems?



As explained above, the Blackboard login depends on the university ldap servers to be operational. Since the start of the semester, there were occasional problems with ldap servers going down over the weekend. It can be seen from the above graph that these problems happened occasionally with 70% of faculty having login problems less than times, 14% having problems between three and five times, 12% having problems between five and ten times and 5% having problems more than ten times.

#5 Were you satisfied with the Faculty Training provided in Learning Blackboard?

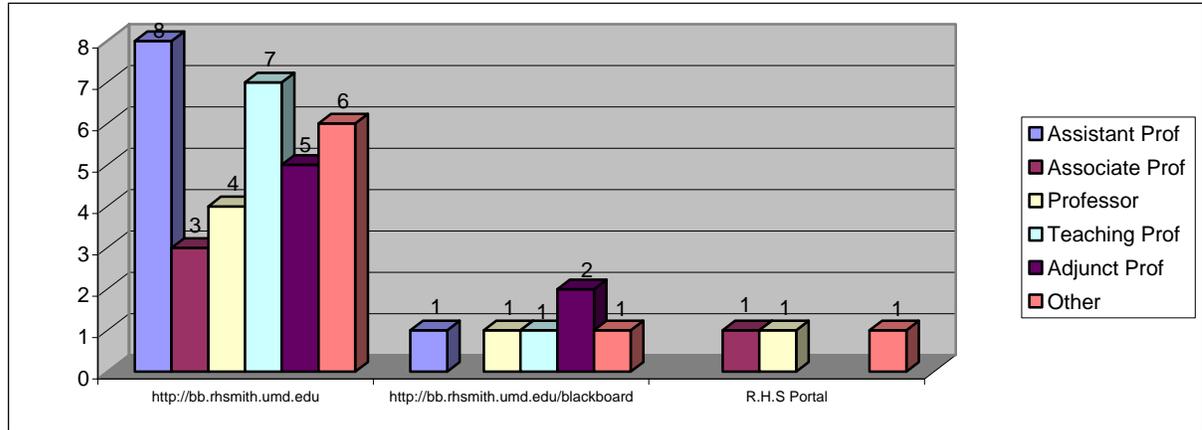


Multiple sections of Blackboard Training were offered to faculty before Fall semester started. These training sessions were optional and faculty who attended were explained features of the Blackboard system and provided a comparison with previously used Lotus Notes systems. Faculty were shown how to add announcements, course materials, create and manage groups, create surveys etc. and given information on additional information available.

Of the 147 faculty using the Blackboard system, more than 70% had attended the Blackboard classes. But from the above graph it can be seen that 40% of respondents to the survey had not attended training session. Of the faculty who attended training 85% were satisfied with the Faculty Training and 15% were dissatisfied.

Continuing training on other Blackboard features is being provided on a one-on-one basis rather than formal classroom sessions (as done in the weeks prior to Blackboard launch). This is because of lack of availability of training rooms, and limited timeslots available to conduct training.

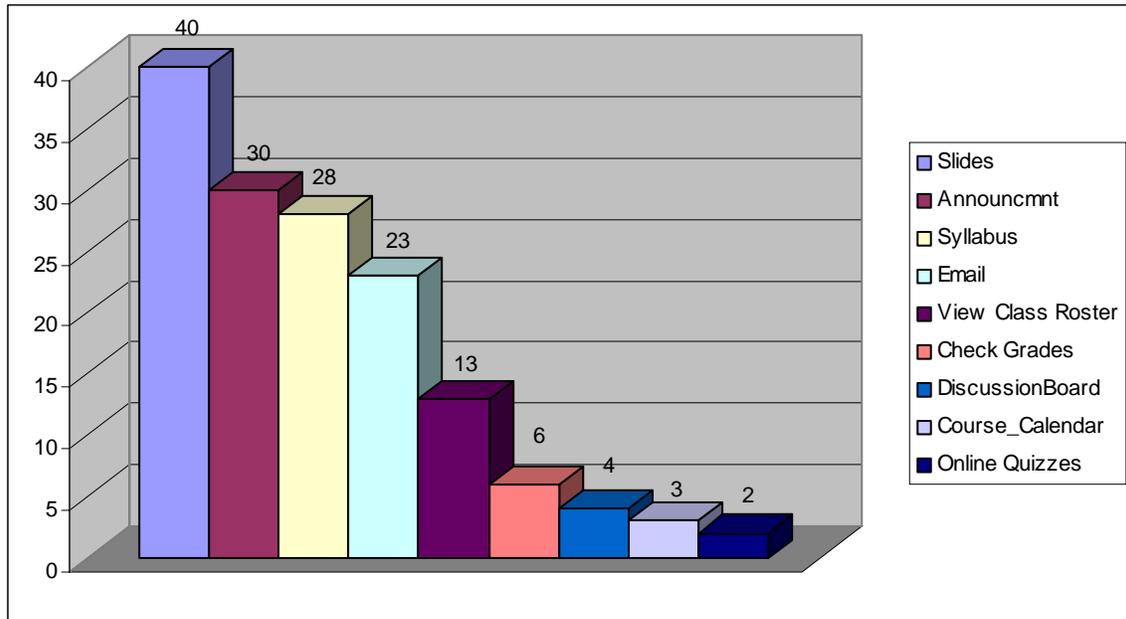
#6 From what page do you access the blackboard System?



Access to Blackboard is provided from multiple web sites. The direct login page to Blackboard is <http://bb.rhsmith.umd.edu> . This page URL was initially given to faculty, but with login issues associated with Blackboard, it was realized that additional information needed to be provided to faculty and students to facilitate blackboard login and minimize help desk calls. A new page, <http://www.rhsmith.umd.edu/blackboard> was setup that includes the following: Login tips, login page, instructor faq, student faq, link for faculty to request courses, assistance in finding university id for students and faculty, and additional updated announcements (such as system outages). This page consolidates various aspects related to Blackboard on a single page. The page also provides a link to the R. H. Smith Portal from which students and faculty can also access Blackboard portal.

From the above graph, it can be seen that 79% of faculty entered Blackboard system using the main login page, 14% entered blackboard using the link <http://www.rhsmith.umd.edu/blackboard> and only 7% entered Blackboard from the Portal. The low response for Portal entry could be because faculty links may not have been setup by them to see Blackboard courses or lack of use of the Portal itself. It is suggested that future training sessions address use of Blackboard through the portal.

#7. What features of the Blackboard system have been most useful to you?

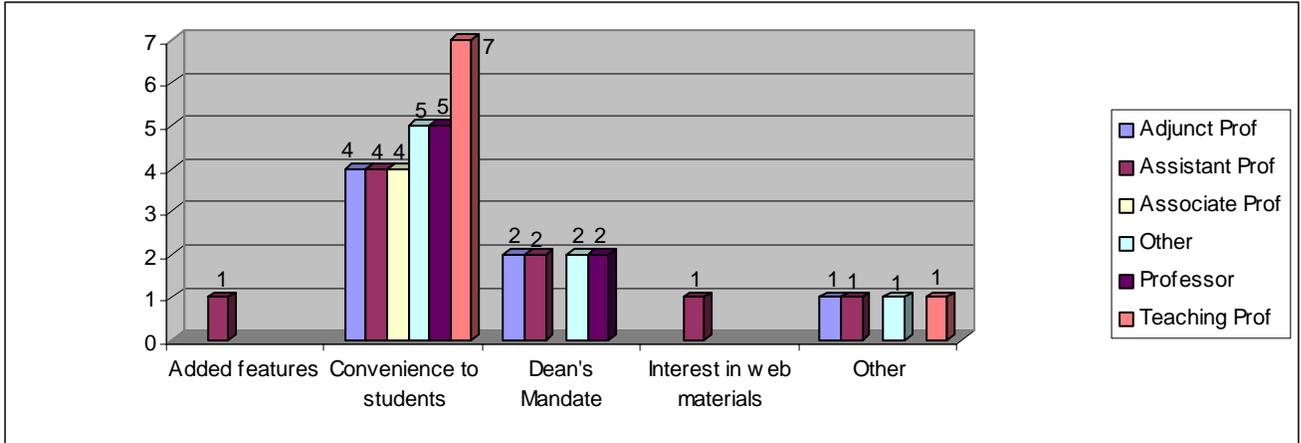


Course Tools such as Blackboard and WebCT include two types of course components: Static and Interactive. Examples of static components are slides, announcements, syllabus, etc. (i.e. content that does not change and is used primarily for downloading/printing purposes). Interactive components are discussion board postings, live chat, quizzes etc. that participants use to interact with the medium.

As shown in the above graph, 27% of faculty indicated they used Blackboard primary for the purpose of distributing course materials such as Powerpoint Slides, posting Announcements (20%), placing Syllabus online (19%), send e-mail to the class (15%). Discussion board which is the most commonly used interactive components of Blackboard was considered an important feature by only 3% of the faculty.

Discussion on use of Blackboard that go beyond the convenience features can be arranged so faculty can learn from each other and view best practices that have worked in graduate or undergraduate courses. A seminar, 'Effective Online Learning' that is more of a roundtable discussion (rather than a hands-on lab session) to explore online pedagogy using Blackboard is planned for Spring semester since faculty would be familiar with the mechanics of using Blackboard, and be more receptive to ideas that improve teaching/learning.

#8 What was your PRIMARY motivation for using the Blackboard System?

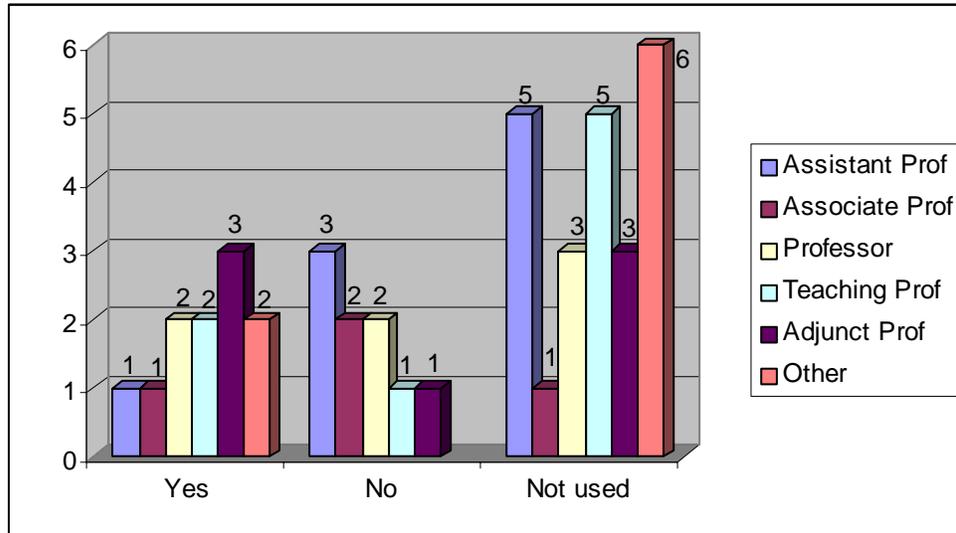


Most faculty (67%) were motivated to use Blackboard since they believed it offered convenience to students in downloading syllabus online, accessing course information such as class notes, schedule, discussions etc. Some faculty (19%) indicated they were using Blackboard due to the Dean's mandate. Only 2% of faculty indicated Blackboard use because of interest in teaching online. This shows most faculty are more comfortable with face-to-face classroom teaching than an intrinsic motivation of using the online environment for teaching.

Many universities are rethinking how they may recognize innovative teaching approaches using technology for faculty recognition, promotion and tenure consideration.

[See <http://chronicle.com/colloquy/live/transcripts/2000/04/20000427maitland.htm> for discussion on teaching, technology, and tenure]

9. Has the R. H. Smith Portal Been useful to you?

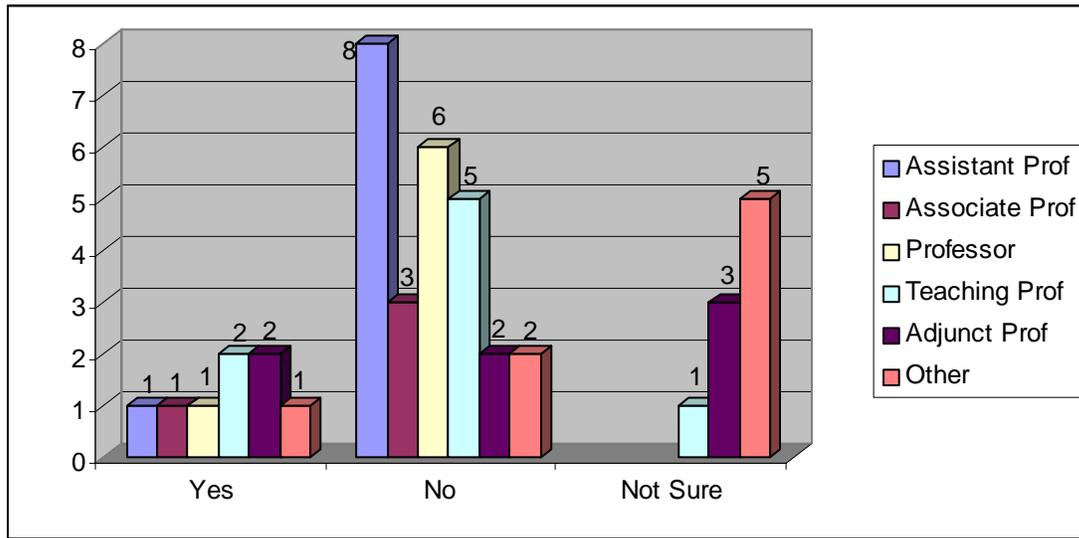


The newly-launched R. H. Smith Portal includes the ability to incorporate Blackboard course and announcements on the Portal page. Use of the portal can have advantages, such as seeing activities related to the School consolidated on one page.

The above graph shows that 53% of the respondents had Not used the portal, and only 26% of the faculty using the portal had found it to be useful. Portals in today's environment offer convenience and use that can benefit administrative and academic use. There is a need to make the Portal an essential and useful component to faculty.

As stated earlier, although the response rate to this survey was not high, the data clearly shows that the R. H. S. Portal must be marketed further to faculty (such as in a faculty assembly) and focus groups of faculty be sought to get feedback on elements that will be useful. Portals have shown to create value for the organization by aggregating and distributing information which can be useful for faculty, staff, students and administrators, therefore should be pushed for maximum diffusion in the School.

#10. Do you believe that use of this system has changed how you teach?



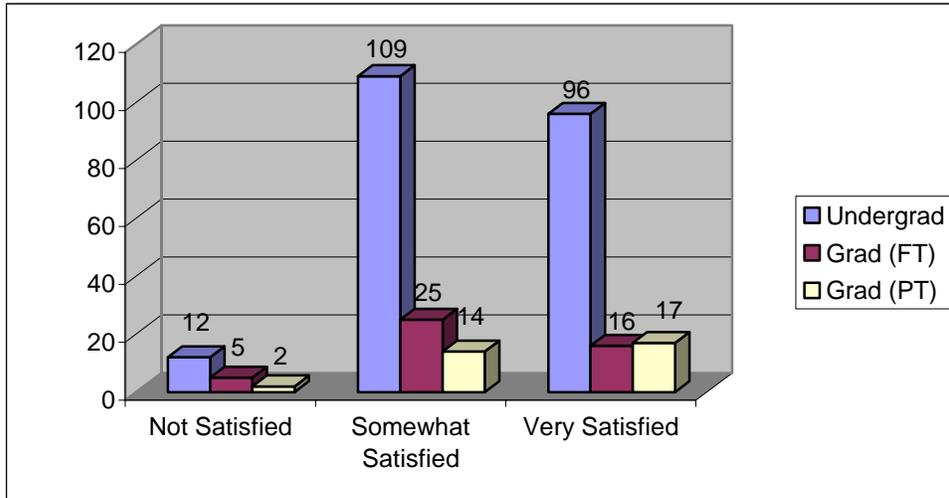
Online teaching tools offer advantages that provide flexibility and additional capabilities for displaying and distributing course materials that may not be possible in a regular face-to-face classroom session. Examples of such tools are the use of simulation, discussion in which students can interact with the course materials, instructor, or other students in a virtual environment.

From the above graph it can be seen that 60% of faculty believed the use of Blackboard system had NOT changed how they teach, and only 19% found that they were teaching differently from the past. Some faculty (21%) were not sure if the use of Blackboard had made any difference in their teaching styles.

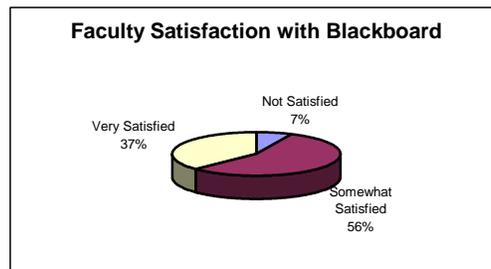
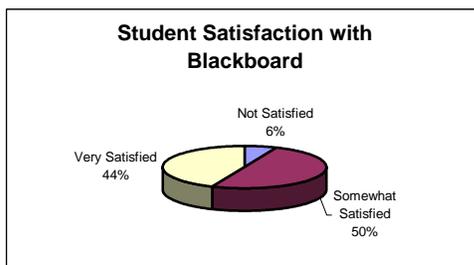
The online teaching environment is fairly new and it may be inferred that faculty could benefit from learning about online pedagogy by attending seminars that can demonstrate efficacy of the online teaching environment. Further insight into faculty use of the online environment is planned after the Online Teaching seminars have been offered.

STUDENT DATA

#2 How satisfied are you with the Blackboard system at R. H. Smith.

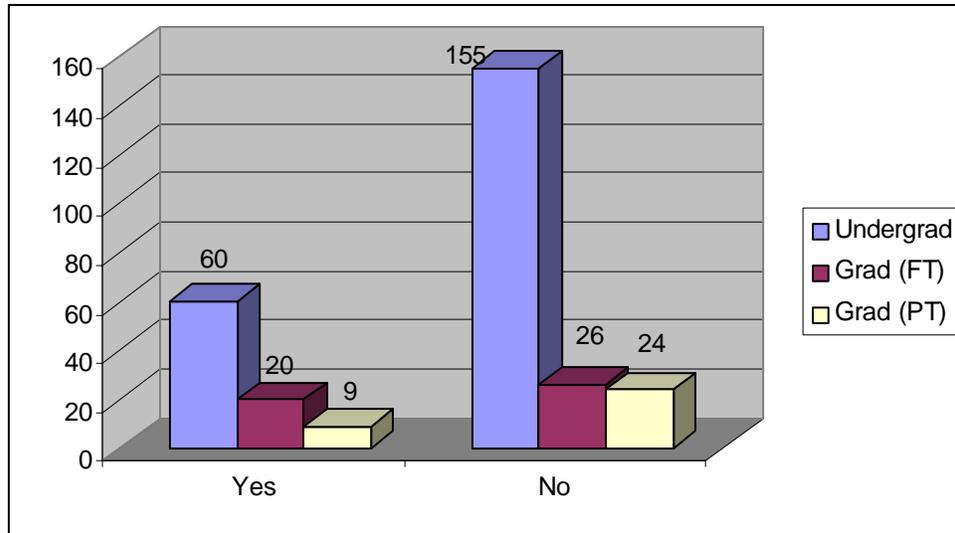


From the above graph it can be seen that 44% of students were Very Satisfied, and 50% of students were Somewhat Satisfied with Blackboard. Only 6% of students appeared to be Not Satisfied with Blackboard.



Comparing Faculty and Student Satisfaction rates, it can be seen that the numbers are consistent which indicates that for the most part, Blackboard is meeting expectation of faculty and students in the Smith School.

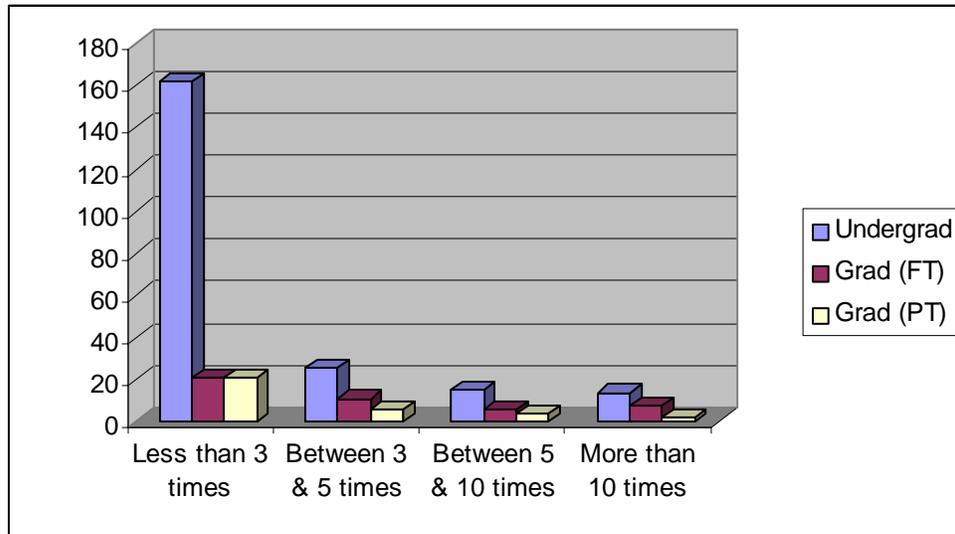
#3 When you first used the Blackboard system, did you have problems setting your ldap/university id password that is required to login to the system.



Considering the login system was much different than what students had used in the past (as explained earlier in the faculty section), 70% of students who responded did not have problems logging in to the Blackboard system. Comparing this to faculty data (#3 in previous section), it appears that fewer students compared to faculty had problems with login.

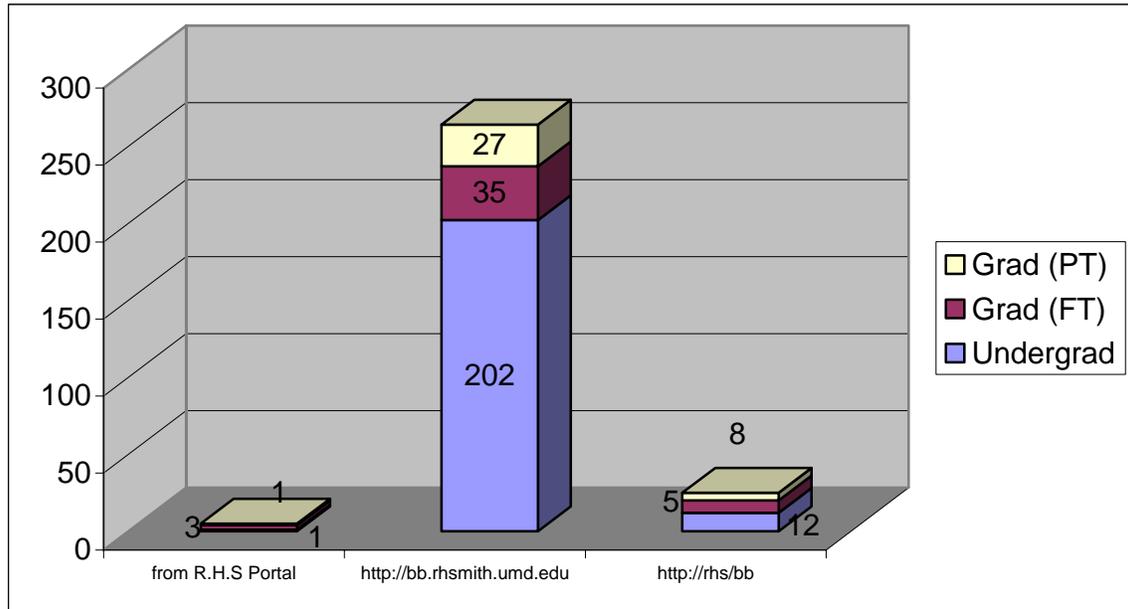
Going forward, at the beginning of each academic year, it would be important to make students aware of issues related to university id, setting password, and troubleshooting login problems. This would make the login process for students work better with fewer issues to deal with, when accessing course materials.

#4 Since the beginning of this semester, how often have you experienced Blackboard login problems?



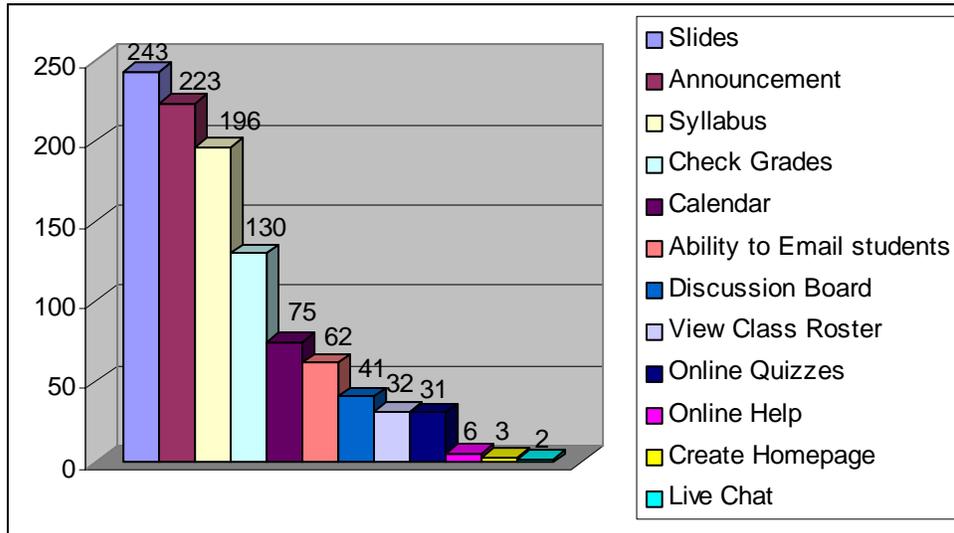
Related to occasional glitches in the ldap login process controlled by the university (which now appears to have been rectified), 69% of students had problems less than 3 times, 15% between 3 and 5 times, 15% between 5 and 10 times, and 8% more than 10 times.

#5: From what web page do you access the Blackboard system.



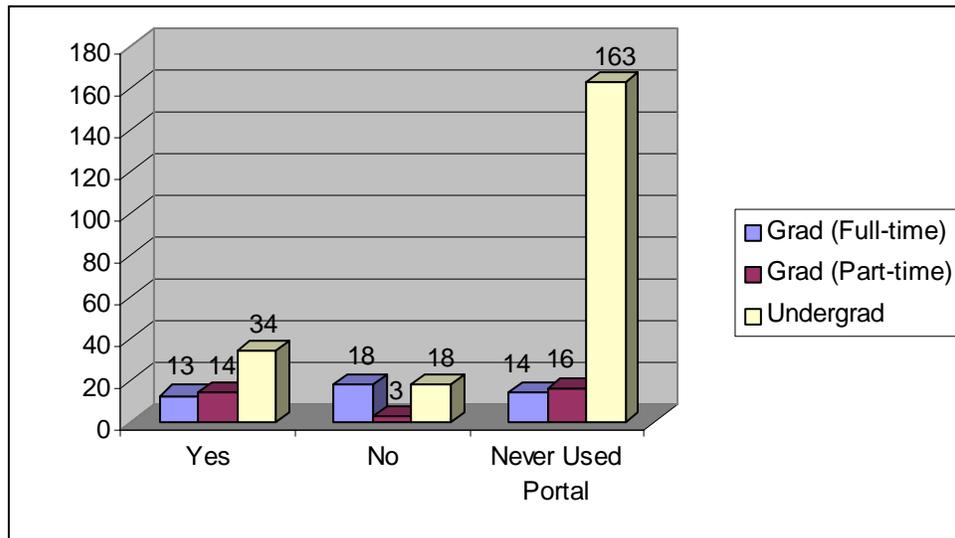
For students, a large majority (68%) entered the Blackboard system using the URL <http://bb.rhsmith.umd.edu>. Only 2% used the Portal to login to Blackboard. Since the portal offers many advantages and would serve as a medium to distribute announcements to students, Portal use should be encouraged for students by making them aware of advantages offered by the R. H. Smith Portal. This can be done in Technology Orientation sessions or in workshops, or demonstrated in classrooms by course instructors.

#6 What features of Blackboard have been most useful to you?



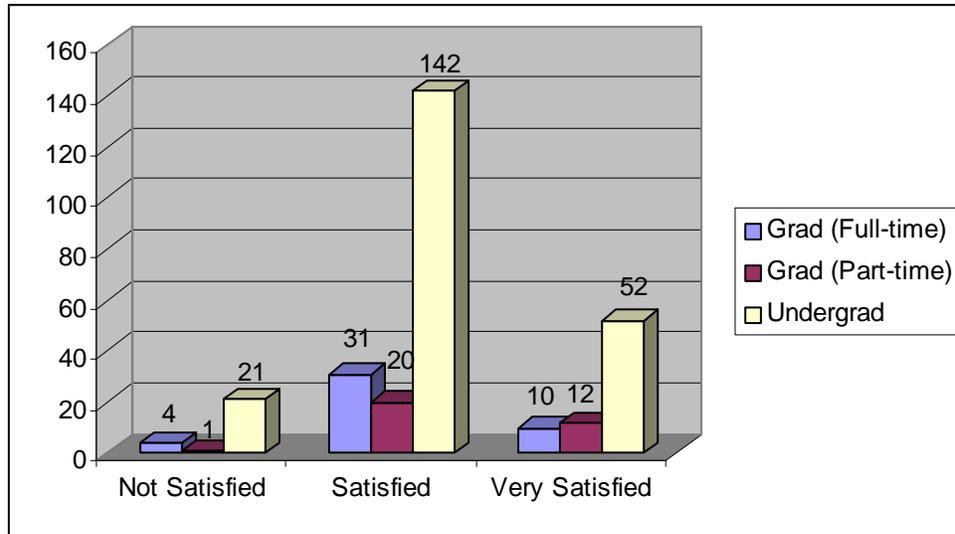
The data is consistent with that shown earlier in the corresponding faculty question. From all the features, 23% of students ranked availability of Slides and course materials to be the #1 most important feature, followed by Announcement (21%), and Syllabus (18%). The Discussion board which is an important interactive feature ranked high by 4% of the students. As more faculty use the Blackboard system, use of the discussion groups should grow although convenience of accessing static materials will continue to remain high in classes that primarily have face-to-face meetings as primary mode of contact.

#7 Has the R. H. Smith Portal been useful to you?



Only 21% of students indicated that the R. H. Smith Portal was useful to them. A large majority of students (66%) had never used the portal and 13% of students felt the Portal was not useful. This data indicates additional Portal education and awareness sessions will be beneficial to faculty and students to demonstrate benefits and use as it pertains to their academic experience in the Smith school.

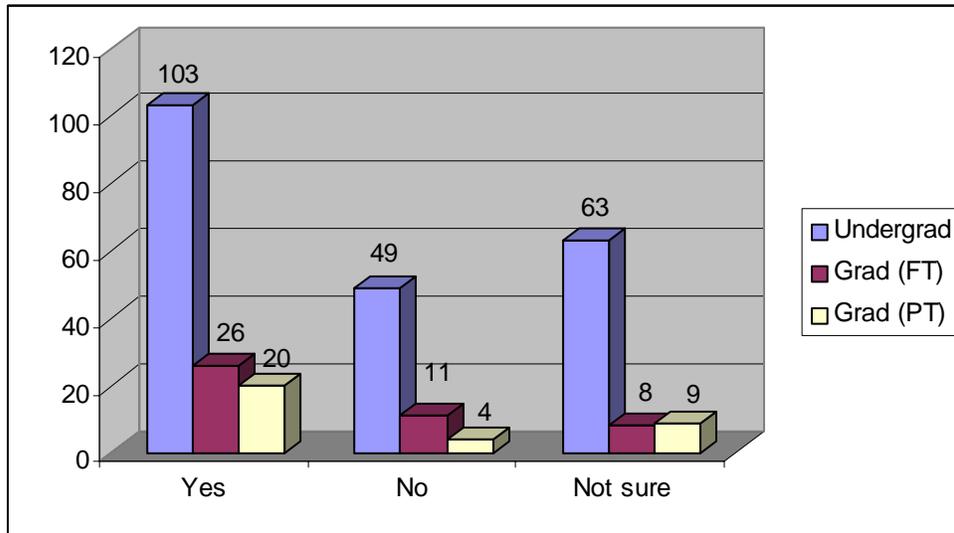
#8 Have you been satisfied with the way your course instructor has used the Blackboard System.



Most faculty are using Blackboard as a tool of convenience to distribute syllabus, announcements and course materials. Of the students who responded to the survey 25% were Very Satisfied, 66% were satisfied, and only 9% of students were Not satisfied.

The survey was conducted during Week 6 after Blackboard was first made available to all faculty. It is expected with further use of Blackboard by faculty and students, they will become aware of its capabilities (as well as limitations), and student satisfaction will further increase.

#9 Do you believe that use of this system by your course instructor has contributed to improving your learning in courses.



From the students who answered the survey, 51% felt that use of the Blackboard system has contributed to improving learning outcomes, 22% felt it had not, and 27% were not sure. As mentioned earlier, faculty currently use Blackboard to offer features for the convenience of students. With additional seminars and awareness of how online course tools can be used to improve teaching and learning, faculty can be shown how Blackboard can be used at a level that can directly affect learning outcomes.

Additional Analysis

To gain further insight data collected, it was important to find out if there were statistical differences between faculty and student data. The following hypotheses were formulated:

Ho: The pattern of satisfaction with Blackboard system is the same for faculty and students

Ha: The pattern of satisfaction with Blackboard system depends on role (faculty or student) in the School.

The Pearson chi-square test statistics p-value was found to be 0.732 which indicates there is no significant difference at 5% level i.e. the pattern of satisfaction is the same for students and faculty.

Similar analysis was carried out to determine if there were differences in student and faculty attitudes towards the Portal.

Ho: The pattern of satisfaction with R. H. Smith portal is the same for faculty and students

Ha: The pattern of satisfaction with the R. H. Smith portal depends on role (faculty or student) in the School

The Pearson chi-square test statistics p-value was found to be 0.00 which indicates there is a significant difference between faculty and student satisfaction with the portal.

Std. Residuals	Faculty	Students
No	-3.31	1.27
Not used	5.35	-2.05
Yes	0.59	-0.23

The table of standardized residual (shown above) shows the nature of relationship. It can be seen that Faculty/Not used has a very high residual (5.35) indicating the observed value does not closely agree with expected value calculated on the basis of null hypothesis. Faculty have not used the portal more than what would be predicted by the null hypothesis, and students have not used the portal less often than would be calculated on the basis of the null hypothesis. This underscores the need for additional efforts to better encourage Smith faculty and students to use the portal.

Faculty open-ended comments

The bb system is useful if it stayed up. I gave a quiz and had the system fail multiple times as the students were taking it. After, 90 emails and 20 phone calls, I was able to have the quiz completed. Not much of a time saver in retrospect. The students reported that help was unavailable when it was needed.

More instruction needed. Possibly offer small classes to explore specific system features.

I haven't had a chance to use the system much this semester, but I hope to use it more next semester.

too many confirmation steps when i add or change something. Things posted should be listed in order of oldest to newest - every time i put up a new file i have to change the order so it is listed first.

Getting the portal working properly is the biggest complaint that I have. It would also be nice to learn how to use the gradebook on blackboard. I have tried to use it and it seems to me that I have to assign each test/quiz/homework a particular percent of

The old system seemed to have a better facility for handling file attachments. I have found that it is easier just to e-mail these to students over Lotus notes.

I was content with the Lotus system that we had last year. I don't see much benefit from the change.

Lack of availability for both myself and the students has made it very hard to use the system as intended. The previous system was more dependable and allowed me to interact with my students better.

When posting course documents the default seems to be that they are not accessible by the students. That seems to defeat the purpose. I know the instructor can override the default, but sometimes I forget, and then the students are unhappy. Also having to set the disappear date is a pain.

Many students did not receive an email that I sent using the Blackboard system.

My students have had difficulty using the digital drop box, and it's caused problems (i.e., they can't post things by the due date). It would help to provide instructions for them on how to submit such information.

All-in-all I am satisfied with the first semester experience and I anticipate that it will become better and better as my own familiarity and comfort levels increase.

Thank you for letting us use Blackboard. I am a part-timer, so Lotus Notes were not available for me. I felt really bad that I could not do more for the students before. They want everything in writing all the time!!!

I believe a calendar and scheduler function would be an added benefit.

It is hard to me to attach the material to announcement section.

I am not sure the Black Board is an improvement over the old Lotus system or over just maintaining a website myself in Front Page. The interface is slow to respond and tedious to work through, but this is inherent, to a degree, with a web-based interface versus a more traditional application interface. Many of the features just are useful to my teaching style and the features that it has are not that much better than simpler approaches. For example, I used to maintain my own e-mail distribution list in Lotus Notes, which was faster to create an e-mail. The main difference now is that the e-mail address must come from the University's system. As long as students maintain their University e-mail addresses, the list should be up to date, but many students don't do this.

I answered 'not sure' to #10 because of the way the question was worded. Use of online course web sites has changed my teaching, but not blackboard specifically. I think blackboard is a great improvement over the school's lotus notes web sites.

major motivations for adoption were timeliness and flexibility.

overall, quite good...but, system sometimes seems to be down on weekends still too many problems getting new students email address on to system...for first 4 weeks of semester, student email address updates need to be done more than once a week...

bb system is VAST improvement over Lotus notes course mgmt, a replacement that was long overdue. Ability to post notes and syllabus has changed how I teach, which began with Lotus...since I don't have to worry about students getting handouts or missing info - they have no excuse for getting it in a timely way. I have not used all the elements of the bb system, I expect it has far more useful properties for those who teach online vs. class lecture. I found the menu's however, for those elements I use, to be far more flexible and easy to use than Lotus and was able to get going with only the downloaded manual and common sense. The only downside: cannot attach files from my Mac, only PC.

I never could see the need for another portal, since my only concern is with making class materials on line. I find BB is visually boring, and prefer to get news, info, etc. from better sites, e.g. CNN. My intuition is that the system was prompted by TR concerns, not those of users, but maybe that's just being uncharitable. However, I don't remember anyone soliciting faculty input.

A couple of things I want to share. 1. I did not receive any formal training and I am not familiar with half of the options. 2. I was not able to modify my email list- and it happens so that some of the students have listed addresses that they do not really use.--> if this is made modifiable, it might help us include students in the email list. 3. This relates to 1- more training opportunities might be necessary. Thanks.

Great, easy-to-use-and-understand interface, very convenient. I began using it because of the Dean's requirement, but I really like the options it gives to me and my students. Thanks for the mandate!

Problems with student e-mail addresses. Sometimes they are not updated and messages get bounced back. Instructors are not able to change e-mail addresses

I'm not fully taking advantage of Blackboard yet--but it is very user friendly. I notice that some of my students access it all the time--others have never accessed it. I don't get any messages from the school (not students) for me on it. All communication is from me. Not sure if I am suppose to see messages to me--but there seems to be a place for that. I love that it saves copying time and paper and that files are easy to upload to it.

I like Blackboard, because now I am able to post materials on the course web page from home (not possible with Lotus Notes); also the automatic features (generate class roster, email list, etc.) are nice, but it is imperative that students themselves make sure that their email information is correct on the LDAP system. In the beginning of the semester, about 60% of the emails were invalid (this has changed after I specifically gave instructions to them on how to change it, but I suspect that there are still two or three invalid emails - sometimes messages bounce back). There **has** to be a mechanism for assuring that, particularly for new students - we have a nice system, but it is of no value if a simple thing like that doesn't work.

It would be helpful to provide undergraduate students with a tutorial and written instructions to make sure they can sign in and navigate bb. Note that many of them log in from off-campus sites and, consequently, they do not have the security settings for their machines configured to enable them to interact with the bb site. Some seniors still do not have WAM accounts or knowledge of the log-in procedures to use the electronic research materials available through UM-College Park Library. I appreciate the time you and your staff spent with me and with my class at the beginning of the semester.

This is an excellent system and I look forward to using it next semester and beyond. Best regards.

Summary of faculty open-ended comments:

Common themes that emerged from open-ended faculty comments:

- Reliability of system access
 - Email problems (tied to ldap system)
 - Training issues
 - Blackboard Features
-

Student open-ended comments

two issues - one the email function does not always work & I think some professors have unrealistic expectations for the system - items are often posted hours before class - students should be check email regularly, not blackboard. If items are posted at the last minute, an email should be sent to alert students.

sometimes it doesn't let me log in when my ID and password are correct.

Blackboard is a 'must check' resource. Since we must check it, the more things we can get on there the better. There are a lot of things that get sent to us by e-mail that might be good to get on blackboard also (OCM stuff?). E-mail tends to get buried very quickly nowadays. RSmith portal stuff would keep all the pertinent stuff in an easy-to-find spot.

Online discussion board is a great tool for learning and swapping information amongst peers - all classes should have this forum as part of the learning experience.

I have two professors using Blackboard at the moment--one is using it much more effectively than the other. My greatest frustrations to date have been with accessing Blackboard, not with the system itself. On multiple occasions, I have been unable to log in successfully. Usually the problem is resolved by the next day, but this is simply unacceptable. (I haven't had the problem in at least two weeks, though. So if something was changed/fixed, THANK YOU!) With Blackboard itself, I sometimes feel like I have to click through many tabs just to see if any new information has been posted. That part of it seems inefficient. (I'd like an 'at-a-glance' capability that would show me anything new--discussions, lecture notes, etc.--that had been posted since I last logged in.)

In BMGT230, I haven't noticed any significant differences between blackboard and a course webpage. Some of the other features may be useful in other classes, but basically, we've just used it to post grades, homeworks, etc. BB is actually slightly more difficult to use just for that (more stuff to click through, the annoyance of logging on). Not bad, would be better if more features were utilized.

My professors hardly use the blackboard to communicate with the students. Infact one of them keeps complaining about how hard it is for him to upload the power point slides. Others don't even bother. I think that it would be helpful to educate everyone(both teachers and students) a little bit more on how to use this system.

IT rules...

I think it is a very useful system, and saves A LOT of class time by offering a reference point between students and teachers. An improvement might be to incorporate all aspects of a student, classes, financial aid, club membership info., etc., to promote ownership and utility.

I think the grades section should be used more frequently. 1 out of 5 of my course instructors have utilized this feature. when new announcements and updates are posted to blackboard, it would be helpful to be notified.

I enjoy the fact that i can log onto to ONE system and have access to resources from ALL my classes. Nothing bad to say about the blackboard system. Cheers.

It would be helpful if instructors posted even more information on blackboard and that it was better organized. That is more a matter of professor training however, and not system configuration.

The 'My Grades' section of Blackboard is very inconvenient. Instead of having the section on the main site, it should be separately integrated into the each of the courses a student is currently registered for. This, in turn would allow for a more user-friendly system.

Please continue to centralize all of the Smith information sites. I have at least 6 different logins just for school related sites, it's quite annoying.

it is difficult to remove items from the task list.

The link from the portal to the blackboard doesn't function correctly. This would be an excellent added feature.

I would like to see the videos that my teachers shows in class either through Blackboard, WebCT, or in a lab. I would like to study with more audiovisuals materials (poor example, videos or CDs with interactive study guides). Can you do something about it?

yay 4 blackboard

Webct always crashed windows for me. However, blackboard has been very stable and easier to use

I believe bb is not being used at its full capacity...maybe not even half. Instructors need more experience/training to get more out of it.

Some instructors should unify the use of blackboard

I think the Teaching Assistants should post our grades online. However, if each TA has 100 students, I could understand how that may be time consuming. But it should be attempted for at least the major exams.

It's great until it goes down and you can't get important information.

I hate when the professor uses Excel to post grades and assignments instead of wordpad. I have a hard time downloading Excel and retrieving info from the Excel format.

None of my teachers put grades up on blackboard, so it hasn't really helped me too much.

One comment on the blackboard: Whenever an announcement is posted, the system could send a copy of the announcement through emails. Though this will 'flood' the mailbox, as some may call it, it serves two purposes : a) Notify the students that a new announcement is posted (Some people in our class missed some announcements for the Communications Mastery Program as there were frequent announcements posted almost everyday sometime in between) b) Serve as an archive/repository where all the messages could be referred. Thanks, -j.

It's very similar to webct.

Why can't we have access to syllabus for other courses? This will help us get more understanding about the other courses, which may generate interest to take the course in the next semester.

i think the grading feature should be listed under the particular course instead of on the main screen

I really liked it when I first started using it 2 semesters ago, especially because my professor took advantage of all the features. It's just very annoying when Blackboard goes down on the weekend when I do most of my studying. Also, it would be nice if my current professors used more features on Blackboard, but I understand that may be difficult, given their activities. Overall, I think Blackboard is good to have, though it has some quirks.

I have trouble printing documents in blackboard that are not in pdf format. For instance anything printed in word or any other type of program. In addition, printing announcements off the blackboard doesn't work well either.

I'm also a TA...Providing a 250 pg manual on how to use BB in pdf format is silly-it's impossible to look through and takes forever to load. Couldn't you have some printed up? The other help, in the form of people, at the Smith School isn't very helpful either.

I found WebCT to be better and easier to use.

Blackboard fails routinely, and seemingly during peak demand times. Professors often forget to provide announcements that they posted

homework to the site. I will buy my own printer soon, because each PowerPoint presentation is posted here, instead of being included in a reader.

System reliability could cause serious problem as many students on team projects rely heavily on the system.

I think it would be helpful to send all students an information sheet about the Blackboard System. For example, answering frequently asked questions. The sheet should include info about: What exactly is blackboard, how to use it, what features it has, what you can and cannot do through blackboard, how to login, and more. In the beginning, I knew many students, including myself, that were having many problems using blackboard and exactly what it was all about. In addition, in the beginning, many students did not know who they should contact if they needed additional help.

This is a good way for students to get information from their professors.

Blackboard has gone above and beyond all of my expectations. It sets the bar for class web pages.

Half the time I try to access blackboard from the portal it says I am not enrolled in any bb courses. I have to log out and log back into blackboard. Also, the system is so SLOW, I have a cable modem and I still can't believe how long it takes to log into systems like portal and blackboard.

I think the most important thing that should go on the website would be student grades but they have never been posted.

Easy to get notes.

the portal still have a problem with the classes I am taking....It still says I am not taking any classes (from the portal only)

Overall, Blackboard has been a useful tool for students. Just hope more instructors take advantage of it and use it to its full extent.

It seems that instructors are slow on learning how to use the blackboard...i like the Grades feature, but none of my courses use it. I think the announcements part of the website is kind of confusing and hard to check...i think it has too many features that many people don't use. It's annoying to have to check it all the time. I preferred WebCT.

I think the system is great, when it works. I really wish the announcement feature on the portal would function - that could be very helpful. I don't think BB has improved my learning, but it does help facilitate the gathering of info and requirements necessary to participate in my courses.

Some times it takes a long time to load this is annoying. I have classes in the engineering college also its annoying to have to log in to their BB also. One BB that incompused all your classes would be more efficient for me.

Not all professors will post grades on Blackboard. Bummer. The best aspect is the ability to download course notes. This is better than Lotus Notes because I don't have to wait for the professor to send out the password. I had to switch Browsers from Netscape to Explorer because one professor set up the Lotus Notes password to be 20 characters long. Netscape didn't save the password like Explorer.

Is there a way the weekly maintenance can be done at a time other than Sunday morning? Some of us P/T graduate students can't get to it that often unless it's at work, or home during the weekends.

I like blackboard, but I have never used Portal. I can't get into it and haven't had time to call for help. It's a great system, however, I don't have much to compare it to.

The group file exchange has been the most useful page. It would be great if we as students could set these up ourselves instead of relying on the teacher. We had one teacher do it for one class, but we had a group project in the other class and it would have been helpful if we could have kept the project postings separated.

The system is a good idea but sometimes the teacher has not made use of it in a very timely fashion. Discussion topics are posted 5 days after class, grades show up weeks after they are supposedly due, communication is not timely. There are some teachers like Prof. *** for example who hardly ever used e-mail let alone Blackboard. Also sometimes, especially over the weekends, the system has been down, not allowing access when we most need it. I would like to see more quizzes, or chat sessions, or anything else that would help our learning experience. I do not feel that we are on the leading edge at all. Overall it is a nice start but I sure hope it gets better.

I like Web CT better

Only thing I have found to be a problem is the attached documents posted from excel. I do not have excel so in order to view them I have to use another computer although I can view everything else on my own. Kind of an inconvenience.

Would like a way to see if folder has documents in it without actually opening it. Some courses have many folders listed but nothing really in them and it gets confusing where to look for what information. Would like the ability to email just the professor, not all the professors associated with the course.

Not all my professors (whose classes are available through Black Board) use the Black Board effectively. It only has a syllabus and that's it. I think more professors need to get trained with this program and how to use it and post regular announcements when necessary. Some professors have it down pretty good, but others still need training. I like this software better than WebCT though because it's faster and more friendly user.

It would be very useful to have a group email sent every time a message is posted on the Announcements section or when someone replies to a message thread.

I'll have to learn more about bb. I just haven't gotten the time yet.

All of my classes 'use' the Blackboard system, but only to post answers to homework. And that's the way I like it. It's been so much more efficient when instructors just write things on a chalkboard. Please go back to the Lotus Notes system you used last semester.

webct is a better online tool overall

It's very easy to not actually send a document in the digital drop box. Once you've loaded it you also have to send the document--it's easy to forget.

*** is a great professor

The only item that I don't see listed on the Blackboard that would be informative are current grades for exams/quizzes/homework. I'm not sure if it's because my instructors specifically chose not to use these items.

The real benefit of this system is the ability to provide all the logistical support to a class in a centrally located area. The only complaint is what appears to be extensive down-time on Sundays.

I find this system a lot more user friendly than WebCT, WebCT has a very cluttered interface which to many users might be very intimidating. BB provides a clean, easy to understand layout, even first time users can navigate their way through the system.

I think the instructors should let the student know when they are putting info on blackboard. I find that I have to check it a few times a day just to see what's new and what info I need. This is very time consuming and frustrating checking everyday, every

I used blackboard for one class last semester now four of my classes have it. It helps to have online documents for all classes on the same system.

I think BlackBoard is a great way to utilize technology to improve the whole class system. It's good because teachers can give students information without having to talk about it in class, and distribute individual grades as well. More teachers should use it.

I hope we will still have access through Blackboard to the courses we have previously taken once we have completed the course and have moved on to another course. Otherwise, a lot of the useful information will be lost because it is not posted anywhere but Blackboard.

I think WebCT is much better than blackboard. There are so many different places for the professor to hide things on blackboard that it always takes me so long to find what I'm looking for.

I like the blackboard system. I think it is just like WebCT (what is the difference anyway and why aren't we using WebCT?). It's good that I can get the updated information about BMGT201 because the requirements for this class are always changing.

Some professors use Blackboard to its full potential, and then it is very useful. Other professors don't have very good knowledge of Blackboard and have problems uploading documents onto the website. Other professors don't keep Blackboard updated, yet expect us to visit this site everyday.

The blackboard and portal don't seem to be integrated very well. We get emails from professors telling us to check out their recent posting on the blackboard. I have had no use for the portal. My understanding from Orientation was that they were working on and were almost done with a system that integrated the two. I know there is a link to the bb from the portal. But the bb is where all the helpful information has been posted.

Great

Easy and convenient, more info you can add (ie. homework assignments) the better ...

Email function hard to use. Should give user more privileges, such as create discussion groups.

Ability to check grades would be useful to me, however after 3 quizzes, my professor has still posted no grades.

The teachers were new to the system, so they had to learn along the way. *** used it a lot more than ****, and he helped us set up groups and live discussion boards for our groups, which were extremely helpful.

Summary of student open-ended comments:

Common themes that emerged from open-ended student comments:

- Email problems
 - System Access
 - Differences in levels of use by faculty
 - Blackboard Features (Posting Grades was a major concern)
 - Comparison with WebCT
 - Blackboard Usability
-

Findings

- Faculty and student satisfaction with Blackboard is high. Both faculty and students indicated some features in Blackboard that can be improved (such as UMEG grades)
- Portal use should be further encouraged for students and faculty to utilize advantages of accessing Smith School resources
- Faculty training that goes beyond tool use of Blackboard, and include online pedagogy that further enhances use of course tools should be encouraged.
- Blackboard is mostly being used to distribute static material (Syllabus, slides etc.) to students. Online Discussion groups are not being used by majority of instructors.

Appendix A:
Student Survey



Student Survey
Blackboard Course Tool

Instructions:

This survey is designed to collect information about use of Blackboard course tool that has been deployed recently in the R. H. Smith School of Business. Student responses will help us identify any issues or problems with Blackboard, and provide better service to support teaching and learning. **This survey is anonymous** and should take less than 10 minutes to complete.

1. What is your student classification?

Undergraduate Graduate (Full-time) Graduate (Part-time)

2. How satisfied are you with the Blackboard system at R. H. Smith?

Not Satisfied Somewhat Satisfied Very Satisfied

3. When you first used the Blackboard system, did you have problems setting your ldap/university id password that is required to login to the system?

Yes No

4. Since the beginning of this semester, how often have you

experienced Blackboard login problems?

- Less than 3 times
- Between 3 & 5 times
- Between 5 & 10 times
- More than 10 times

5. From which web page do you access the Blackboard system?

- <http://bb.rhsmith.umd.edu>
- <http://www.rhsmith.umd.edu/blackboard>
- From the R. H. Smith Portal

6. What features in the Blackboard system have been most useful to you? (Select your top 5 choices)

- Syllabus
- Course Information (Powerpoint slides/Excel spreadsheet etc)
- Discussion Board
- Online Quizzes
- Announcement
- Ability to email students/instructor
- Ability to create home page
- Ability to view class roster
- Ability to check grades
- Live chat
- Online Help
- Course Calendar

7. Has the R. H. Smith Portal been useful to you?

- Yes No I have never used the R. H. Smith Portal

8. Have you been satisfied with the way your course instructor has

used the Blackboard system.

Not Satisfied Satisfied Very Satisfied

9. Do you believe that use of this system by your course instructor has contributed to improving your learning in this course?

Yes No Not sure

*** Please provide any other comments/feedback on the R. H. Smith Blackboard system:**



Questions about this survey can be e-mailed to bbhelp@rhsmith.umd.edu

Appendix B:
Faculty Survey



Faculty Survey
Blackboard Course Tool

Instructions:

This survey is designed to collect information about use of Blackboard course tool that has been deployed recently in the R. H. Smith School of Business. Faculty responses will help us identify any issues or problems and provide better service to support teaching and learning. **This survey is anonymous** and should take less than 10 minutes to complete.

1. What is your faculty classification?

- Professor Associate Professor Assistant
Professor Teaching Professor
 Adjunct Professor (Part-time) Other

2. How satisfied are you with the Blackboard system at R. H. Smith?

- Not Satisfied Somewhat Satisfied Very Satisfied

3. When you first used the Blackboard system, did you have problems setting your ldap/university id password that is required to login to the system?

Yes No

4. Since the beginning of this semester, how often have you experienced Blackboard login problems?

- Less than 3 times
- Between 3 & 5 times
- Between 5 & 10 times
- More than 10 times

5. Were you satisfied with the Faculty Training provided in learning Blackboard?

Yes No I did not attend any training sessions

6. From which web page do you access the Blackboard system?

- <http://bb.rhsmith.umd.edu>
- <http://www.rhsmith.umd.edu/blackboard>
- From the R. H. Smith Portal

7. What features in the Blackboard system have been most useful to you? (Select your top 5 choices)

- Syllabus
- Course Information (Readings, PowerPoint slides, Excel spreadsheet etc)
- Discussion Board
- Online Quizzes
- Announcement
- Ability to email students
- Ability to create home page
- Ability to view class roster
- Ability to check grades
- Live chat
- Online Help

Course Calendar

8. What was your PRIMARY motivation for using the Blackboard system?

Interest in developing web-based course materials

It offers convenience to students by having materials available online

It offers added features not possible in face-to-face meetings

Mandate from Dean/Chair

Other

9. Has the R. H. Smith Portal been useful to you?

Yes No I have never used the R H Smith Portal

10. Do you believe that use of this system has changed how you teach?

Yes No Not sure

*** Please provide any other comments/feedback on the R. H. Smith Blackboard system:**