AGENDA

1) Regional Learning Presentation – Roger Stanford | Jennifer Brave

2) Standard Blackboard Shell Project – Brandee Ortery | Pat Mielke

3) Policy Review – Amy Thornton
   A) D0200 Accreditation
Standard Blackboard Shell Position Paper

**Philosophy:** Student success is at the core of Western’s mission. In fact, Western’s values statement focuses on “providing excellence in student learning, based on the diverse needs of each student.” To support student success, Western will provide a standard online environment consistent with researched best practices in online learning. Western’s values statement also emphasizes “a foundation of integrity, teamwork and respect.” To honor that foundation, Western will create a standard online environment rooted in both faculty expertise and student input.

The standard Blackboard shell aligns directly with the Academic 2020 Pillar 1 focused on Intentional Instructional Design and Delivery, and the following Pillar 1 outcome: “Students experience a consistent and quality experience with Blackboard course and program interaction.” The strategy within this outcome is to “[a]pply a standard Blackboard course shell to all courses utilizing Blackboard.” The standard shell also aligns with Western’s Vision 2020 retention area of focus. The related strategic goal for retention is to “[i]ncrease academic success of students.” The related key result is to “[i]ncrease C or better course completion by 1% through 2020.”

**Basic Assumptions**

1. Research into best practices supports the use of a standard Blackboard (learning management system) course shell. The foundational work of researcher Karen Swan asserts that “a student who has difficulty navigating folders . . . may completely miss vital course content or instructions. At the very least, students who must devote significant mental resources to interface interaction will have fewer resources to devote to learning” (19). Current best practice guidelines affirm Swan’s conclusions; for example, one writer for an international education journal asserts that a well-organized course design offers “sufficient time for . . . engaging in learning activities, as well as for completing course assignments” (Çakiroğlu). Inconsistent course design is highly likely to decrease the availability of “sufficient time.”

2. When each online course presence has a different menu and a different system of organization, students must devote additional time to navigate each course. Many Western students have limited study time due to issues including work obligations, family responsibilities, and individual struggles (“Student Panel”). Navigating multiple non-standard course menus takes valuable time from learning course competencies and creates a barrier for some students.

**History and Timeline**

- In the fall of 2015, a cross-divisional faculty learning team met to discuss the use and design of a standard course shell. Working sessions and focus groups with additional faculty, staff, and students continued throughout the fall, resulting in a pilot standard course shell design.
- In the fall of 2016, online expansion project courses and professional development courses piloted the standard shell. Feedback was collected from students and faculty, resulting in revisions to the standard course shell design.
- In the spring of 2017, 45 instructors across divisions are taking part in an expanded pilot of the new course design. Feedback from faculty and students will be collected and considered.
- In the fall of 2017, all instructors with a Blackboard presence will use the standard course shell. Instructional videos, written documents, and open labs will be available to assist instructors with the transition.
- Feedback from students and instructors will continue to be collected and used through Summer 2017.

**Conclusion:** Implementation of a college-wide standard Blackboard shell in the fall of 2017 aligns with Western’s mission, vision, and values and will significantly support student success.

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Updated: April 5, 2017
Works Consulted


“Student Panel: Session for Instruction and Student Services.” College Day, 16 Sep. 2014, Lunda Center, Western Technical College, La Crosse, WI.

D0200 ACCREDITATION

The College shall maintain the educational standards required to maintain its accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and other appropriate program accreditation/approval processes.

Revised March 7, 2017
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Revised June 20, 1989
Adopted January 23, 1980
Wisconsin Statute 38.14(5)