

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF A BLACKBOARD® ORIENTATION COURSE FOR  
FACE-TO-FACE STUDENTS TAKING ONLINE COURSES AT WASHINGTON STATE  
UNIVERSITY EVERETT

BY

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APPLIED PROJECT

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated whether degree-completion students who regularly take face-to-face courses at Washington State University Everett could benefit from a Blackboard® online orientation course prior to their first credited online course. Research included results from student satisfaction surveys and focus groups. It was determined through both quantitative and qualitative data that students who opt into an online orientation course have the potential for increased satisfaction and success with online coursework throughout their degree-completion experience. Once this determination was made, a fully-functioning Blackboard® orientation course was designed and developed. The course has been tested by faculty and is ready for Fall 2017 deployment as a voluntary online orientation for any student already admitted to WSU Everett.

## INTRODUCTION

According to the Web-Based Education Commission, "The question is no longer *if* the Internet can transform learning in powerful ways." Online learning environments are becoming more prevalent, and as the demand and availability of online courses increases so too does the complex combination of skills needed by students to succeed in these environments. Expectations for preparedness are high; in addition to proficiency and comfort with technology, online students need to work independently, manage time efficiently, write effectively to communicate via message board, email and text, and establish online relationships with peers and instructors.

Online learning has started a time of rapid evolution for undergraduate education. Greater access means more opportunity to update skills, finish a degree, or start a new one. These outcomes could lead to increased employment opportunities and an overall furthering of the economy. But these exponential increases in course offerings and student enrollment require an equal level of preparedness to succeed in teaching and learning, and adjusting to the demands of online learning environments can be overwhelming. Many undergraduate students have what are considered the basic skills to be successful in an online course (Keramidas, 2012; Dray, et. al, 2011; Hung, et. al, 2010; Blake, 2009), however these skills may not translate immediately due to "added perceived complexity" (Pillay, Irving, and Tones 2007), or lack of experience and proficiency within an online learning environment (Chametzky, 2016).

### *Statement of the Problem*

During a call with the Director of Learning Innovation at Washington State University, I learned that their on-campus degree-completion students who take some online courses as part of their degree-completion progress are frequently “less satisfied” and “less successful” with online classes than those students who take their courses 100% online. “Success” was defined by continued online enrollment, a satisfactory online course evaluation survey, or a passing grade in the course (R. Vandevord, personal communication, Feb. 8, 2016). “Satisfaction” can be defined in myriad ways, however, and “dissatisfaction” can be caused by anything from anxiety to lack of motivation (Chametzky, 2016), from a dearth of technical support to inadequate online student orientation (Fetzner, 2013). Students who are less satisfied with their courses are less likely to succeed in them, less likely to take additional online classes and more likely to drop out before completing their degree.

WSU’s presence in Everett and is part of the university’s land-grant mission to provide higher education in underserved communities in Washington State. Of the WSU degree-completion students in Everett, 33% are the first in their family to attend college, 26.7% are ethnic minorities, 10% are military veterans, and 4% are international students.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, as of Fall 2013, 10.5 million undergraduate students attended 4-year institutions, and more than 2 million took at least one online course as part of their course of study (Straumsheim, 2014; National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Of the students at WSU NPSE, 100% of the

degree-completion student population takes at least one online course to complete their course of study.

### *Rationale of the Study*

Online learning environments are not always as intuitive as students imagine they should be, and those who take the time to familiarize themselves with the technology they need for their courses have a better chance of not falling behind. Some online orientations give students a sense of the time commitment and mindset they will need to excel at online learning, which many believe is actually more challenging than studying at a brick-and-mortar institution.

### *Statement of Purpose*

Unfortunately, online courses are often offered as an afterthought to supplement brick-and-mortar degree programs, failing to acknowledge the additional critical thinking, technological and communication skills, coupled with motivation, time-management and “self-administration tools” needed to be a successful online student (English, 2014).

Offering an online orientation program customized to needs of the hybrid, degree-completion student will familiarize the unique student population at WSU Everett with the online learning environment, the learning process and the style and variety of assignments they may come across throughout the online experience.

Currently, no online orientation is offered that caters specifically to the face-to-face student. While some argue that degree-completion students join our program with online course experience, these students still may not have experience with WSU's online learning environment. Further, higher level coursework requires higher levels of preparedness, time management and critical thinking skills; providing students with concrete strategies to help navigate their new hybrid learning experience can improve success, satisfaction and retention rates. Finally, this new course will fit well within WSU's mission to advance, extend and apply knowledge.

## **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### *Distinguishing between different learning environments and course formats*

It is important to make a distinction between educational delivery models discussed throughout this project, including "face-to-face," "online" and "hybrid" learning environments. Categorizing each of these areas varies; for this project, the approach is as follows:

**Face-to-face learning:** "Traditional" classes where instructors and students meet in a classroom environment. Instruction includes courses in which zero to 29 percent of the content is delivered online (Allen & Seaman, 2011).

**Online learning:** Learning that takes place partially or entirely (80 to 100%) over the Internet. "Online courses" as a format excludes "purely print-based correspondence education, broadcast television or radio, video conferencing, video

cassettes, and stand-alone educational software programs." In other words, "online learning" should not be confused with "distance learning" (Allen & Seaman, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

**Hybrid learning:** Students who combine face-to-face instruction and online instruction to complete their degree programs. Typically, "hybrid students" will spend 20% to 50% of their total course time online (Allen & Seaman, 2011).

### *Prevalence of Online Education*

Technology is increasingly embedded in the lives of student and helps them to connect and engage more each year (The National Survey of Student Engagement, 2015). Students own more Internet-capable devices than ever (ECAR, Undergraduate Students and IT, 2015) that can be used to connect to their surroundings and higher education learning institutions throughout the U.S. are increasing their use of online platforms as a medium of the delivery of instruction (Ryan, et. al., 2016). Flexible access to content is attractive to students (Bower & Hardy, 2004) and for administrators, propagation of online instructional content is highly cost-efficient (Crawford et al., 2014). About half (49%) of students who participated in the 2015 EDUCAUSE survey have taken a course in the past year that was offered completely online (ECAR, Undergraduate Students and IT, 2015). The North American Council for Online Learning predicts that hybrid learning will ultimately be more prevalent than either face-to-face instruction or online-only instruction (Watson, 2008).

### *Challenges for the Hybrid Student*

A study conducted through Columbia University discovered that, despite students feeling that online courses afford them more flexibility and convenience, few students are interested in taking 100% of their courses online (Jaggars, 2014). According to the NSSE, “just because technology can be a bridge to connect and engage students doesn’t mean that the bridge itself facilitates meaningful connections, connectedness, or engagement (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2015).” While students can transform any learning environment into an online-friendly environment through the appropriation of their own technology (Biddix, Chung & Park, 2015), an Internet-based course often requires the use of a proprietary Learning Management System (LMS) to integrate collaborative and interactive learning activities. Students in face-to-face courses, while regularly using technology to enhance their experience in and out of the classroom environment, may not be required to use their institution’s LMS for collaborative activities. Traditional social software, personalized networks and knowledge are typically not integrated into the institution’s learning management system, posing a challenge to the hybrid student as they switch from one type of learning environment to another (Du, et al., 2012).

### *Common Barriers to Online Course Completion*

Lack of success in an online course could lead to academic discouragement, and with no intervention can ultimately result in complete withdrawal from a higher

education program (Fetzner, 2013). Some studies have indicated that carrying a large course load (full-time), lack of experience in higher education in general, lack of experience with online courses, busy lives outside of school, lack of maturity, and lack of interaction and collaboration can all negatively impact a student's chances for successfully completing an online course (Abramenka, 2015; Moore, Bartkovich, Fetzner, Ison, 2002). Financial, health and cultural issues are also confronted with barriers to completion (Spellman, 2007; Funk, 2005).

Online courses may not be taking traditional attendance or demand a great deal of accountability from students, but they can't avoid class participation, either. Abramenka places a great deal of emphasis on the fact that in addition to collaboration and interaction, students revealed that a major barrier to online education is a willingness to present their work for other students to see and assess (2015). While some may feel participating online is less intimidating (and potentially less work) than in a traditional classroom, an examination of socialization and relationship development in online courses reminds us "attendance in online classes is only evident if students actively participate in classroom discussions" (National Communication Association [NCA], 2008).

Shea & Bidjerano suggest putting systems in place that aim to "predict and head off student difficulties before they lead to drop-out" (2014). Preparing students for the online learning environment in advance of enrolling in their first online course is one way to do this. Wojciechowski & Palmer (2005) determined that students enrolling in a specific online business class who are older, have better GPAs and

college entrance exam scores, have few previous course withdrawals *and who agree to participate in a class orientation session*, are more likely to be successful in the class.

### *Student Readiness in Online Education*

Self-assessment surveys are commonplace for online programs (e.g., Penn State, SUNY, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, and University of Illinois) to help prospective students learn through a series of questions whether they are prepared for an online course of study (Watkins, Leigh & Triner, 2004). Even though these surveys use data that is established regarding characteristics of successful online learners (Michinov, Brunot, LeBohec, Juhel & Delaval, 2011; Hung, Chou, Chen, & Own, 2010), it is unknown whether those who take the surveys are discouraged to enroll due to a negative self-assessment result, or if they are encouraged to further prepare for a successful online learning experience.

Student surveys conducted over three nonconsecutive school years found that undergraduates who were unsuccessful in online courses (defined by a grade of "F" or "W") reported that they "did not know what to expect in their online course, were not sure where to go for help and didn't realize the time commitment and organizational skills needed to succeed" (Fetzner, 2013). These same students suggested when asked to give future online students advice, which they should attend the online student orientation available at the college (Fetzner, 2013).

Xu & Smith Jaggars' (2011) data, gleaned from a study of 54,000 students in 34 Washington State Community Colleges, suggests that students who enrolled in online

courses during the first few terms were more likely to drop out of school in subsequent terms. Even those better prepared academically were more likely to fail or withdraw from online courses than students who took face-to-face classes. A student who does not succeed in the first online course attempt is less likely to enroll in an online class in the future (Shea & Bidjerano, 2014; Xu & Smith Jaggars, 2011). Further analysis of the data concluded that over time, completion rates of online courses improve dramatically, suggesting that students who take multiple online courses over the course of a number of semesters are more successful as they gain more experience with the format and environment (Xu & Smith Jaggars, 2011).

### *Summary*

It has been argued that students today are “digital natives,” entering college with a breadth of knowledge in digital technologies that should make online learning a natural progression from face-to-face learning (Prensky, 2001). Why then, are about 30% of the students in undergraduate online courses struggling in the online environment (Keramidas, 2012)? The flexibility of online learning is appealing to many, but it is important for students to consider the level of motivation and independence needed to succeed in an online environment, as well as how the lack of face-to-face interaction can affect motivation and lead to feelings of loneliness (Moskal, Dziuban & Hartman, 2013; Blake, 2009).

Literature suggests that all first-year online students can be considered "at-risk" until they achieve financial and emotional support, and also obtain the skills necessary

to succeed (Funk, 2005). Many undergraduate students have what are considered the core competencies to be successful in an online course (Keramidas, 2012; Dray, et. al, 2011; Hung, et. al, 2010; Blake, 2009), however these skills may not translate immediately due to "added perceived complexity" (Pillay, Irving, and Tones 2007), or lack of experience and proficiency within an online learning environment (Chametzky, 2016).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### *Review of Learning Theories*

Strong online learning environments are created through the convergence of established learning theories. Blending social constructivism, connectivism and transformative theories allow for the interaction, organization and self-examination necessary for students to be complete participants in the learning experience (Tsao, J., Takahashi, K., Olusesu, J. & Jain, S., 2006; Draper, S., 2003; & Education 2020, 2017).

For nearly two generations, social constructivism has been emphasizing collaboration, theorizing that successful learning is dependent upon interactions with others in their educational community (Vygotsky, 1978). Knowledge, according to social constructivism, is an active process that takes place by expanding the existing network of understanding through associative problem solving (McCleod, 2014; Draper, 2013).

Connectivism, a “learning theory for the digital age” (Education 2020, 2017) builds on social constructionism in that it suggests learning is an active process that is heavily influenced by networks. George Siemens explains that knowledge is growing exponentially; connectivism takes into consideration that learning is a continual process which requires making the connection between the knowledge and finding the knowledge (Siemens, 2004). Nurturing and maintaining our connections is crucial to the learning process, as is being certain that knowledge we procure is current and correct. It is important to remember that today’s student is considered the “job-hopping” generation: using the network is an area of comfort; many will move into a variety of different, possibly unrelated fields over the course of their lifetime (Adkins, 2016).

Nicknamed the “adult constructivist theory,” (Wicks, n.d.) transformative learning theory concentrates on metacognition, requiring the student to assume responsibility for her knowledge and to take a reflective, self-corrective approach. Similar to the other theories explored here, transformative theory reflects on the collaborative, dynamic practice of learning and knowledge acquisition (Mezirow, p.198).

### *Technology, Online Learning and Learning Theory*

Ultimately, the goal is to harness what students know through the use of the tools they already have to further their learning. Thriving as a student in a new online learning environment is less complicated when the network to build upon existing

knowledge is unavailable. Building community through forums and discussion boards, establishing a collaborative environment within digital classrooms and encouraging a reflective, self-corrective approach to learning will help aid the shift of from the traditional face-to-face environment to an online environment.

## **HYPOTHESIS**

If WSU Everett degree-completion students in the Strategic Communication program are provided with a custom online orientation program, then the success rate and subsequent satisfaction rate with online classes within this population will improve.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF MATERIALS**

### *Overview of Blackboard Course*

Many undergraduate students have the basic skills to be successful in an online learning environment (Keramidas, 2012; Dray, et. al, 2011; Hung, et. al, 2010; Blake, 2009) but it is clear that interventions such as learning modules or online orientations would help ensure students can put their skills into practice upon course entry. At WSU, Blackboard® is the learning management system used for faculty to deliver online courses. The orientation course designed for degree-completion students at WSU will familiarize this unique student population with the Blackboard® online learning environment, the learning process the style and variety of assignments they may come across throughout the online experience. Similar to studies conducted by Lynch (2001) and Bozarth, Chapman, & LaMonica (2004), specific learning objectives were established based on previous student survey data, focus groups and recommendations from faculty, along with consideration of the literature.

### *Review of course delivery*

The orientation course is for students interested in learning more about the Blackboard environment and what online learning entails. The learning modules include topics such as computer requirements, navigating the LMS, how to be a successful online student, important online student services, communicating in the LMS and submitting assignments in the LMS. The course is designed to be completed

prior to students taking their first online course; however, it will be optional and the content accessible at any time while a student is registered at the University. Once a student is accepted to a program and provided a student ID number, s/he will have access to course content through the University website. The course is self-paced, free and open to all WSU students.

#### *Review of key elements of future evaluation*

To ensure the effectiveness of the orientation course, quantitative and qualitative student feedback from the Online Student Orientation Evaluation, Online Help Desk tickets and gathering feedback from faculty and staff will all be employed as evaluation methods.

## **METHODS**

The question guiding this research was whether a custom online orientation course could benefit the unique student population of the WSU Everett Strategic Communication degree-completion program.

Data related to the current feelings about online learning for communication degree-completion students was collected and analyzed through collecting previous course evaluation surveys and conducting focus groups of current students.

Initially, survey data from twelve Summer 2016 online course evaluations were collected and organized by separating the overall course and instructor ratings from

the online course environment ratings. These assessments are a useful tool for collecting quantitative student input on their learning experiences in their courses.

Like any other source of data, course evaluations have limitations. Based on Likert categories, course evaluation data are applied to convey “greater than” or “less than” relationships and differences between these values are not necessarily constant (Office of Teaching and Learning, 2015). In the case of these particular evaluations, the “N/A” option offered may be mistaken by some as a “neutral” rating rather than “not applicable,” which could skew the data. Therefore, these evaluations, while valuable, are only one among many other sources of information to help determine satisfaction rates among students.

In addition to collecting the course evaluation data, I conducted focus groups, because structured discussions of specific topics among small groups of undergraduate students can help deepen understanding of their use of technology in education and aid in idea development. The sociological and psychological perspectives are critical pieces of the online learning equation, and this kind of student involvement can lead to a strong sense of engagement in problem-solving. In addition to information gathered from direct answers to questions, observing participant expressions, body language and listening for social queues in language expression are ways to explore feelings, perceptions and motivations of students as they relate to online learning environments.

I recruited participants by posting flyers around campus and sending an email blast to the students subscribed to the WSU NPSE Integrated Strategic

Communication email list (figure 2). Faculty agreed to provide extra credit points to those students who participated. I also visited classes to aid recruitment efforts, discuss the project with students and answer questions. Ultimately, two focus groups were scheduled, one with four students (two male and two female) and one with seven students (three male and four female). I facilitated both focus groups in a private conference room on campus, and technology allowed for recording of both sessions in full.

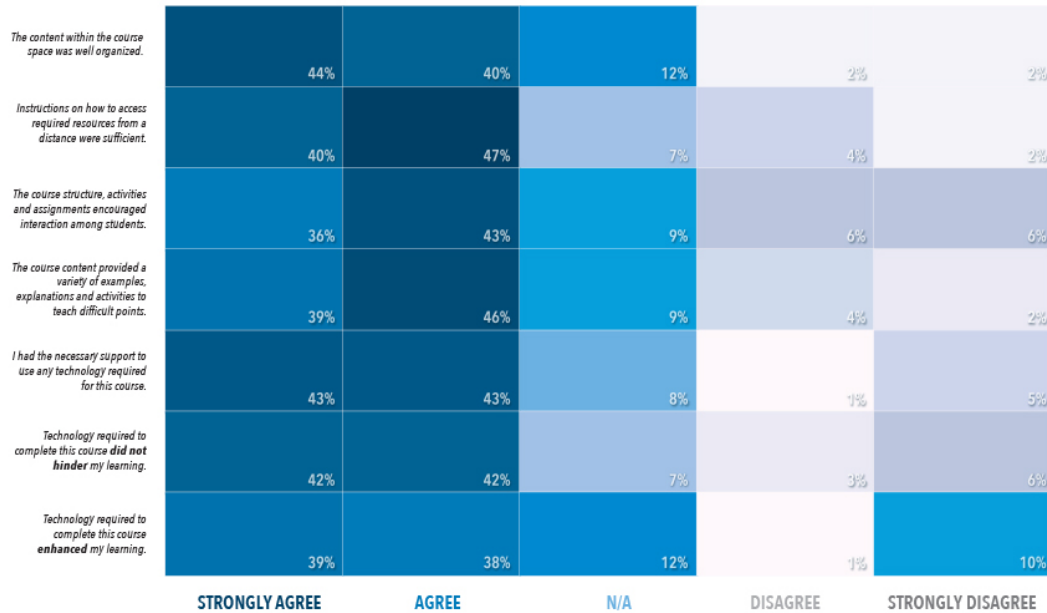
A student was trained to serve as the moderator for these focus groups. An attentive and respectful guide, our moderator had all of the characteristics needed to bring out the best in our groups: energetic, open-minded, enthusiastic, clear communicator, alert, able to manage a small group dynamic, recognize threats to productive group discussion.

All participants completed a consent form and an anonymous pre-focus group questionnaire. They discussed ten questions throughout the 90-minute sessions (Appendix A). Following the discussions, transcripts were prepared and analyzed for common themes in responses.

## **RESULTS**

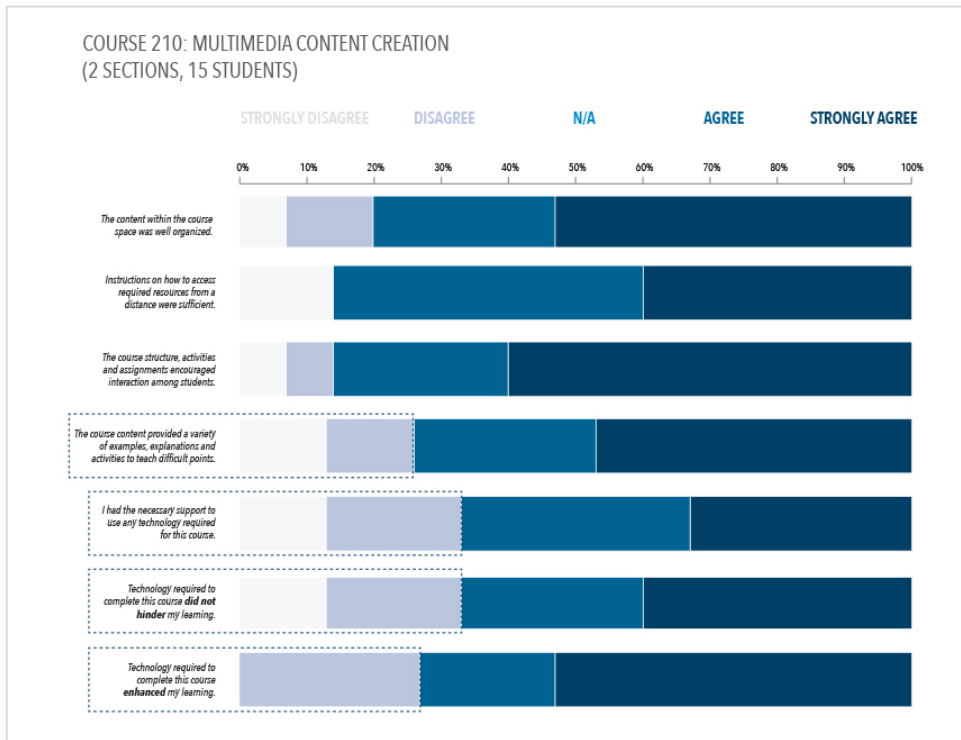
Data indicate that students who take online courses as part of their degree completion programs are fairly satisfied with their experiences overall. On average, survey data show between 77% and 87% of participants “agree” or “strongly agree” with the seven evaluation statements (figure 1), and focus groups indicated students

enjoy online learning in general, for example, fitting the “learning experience to my schedule.”

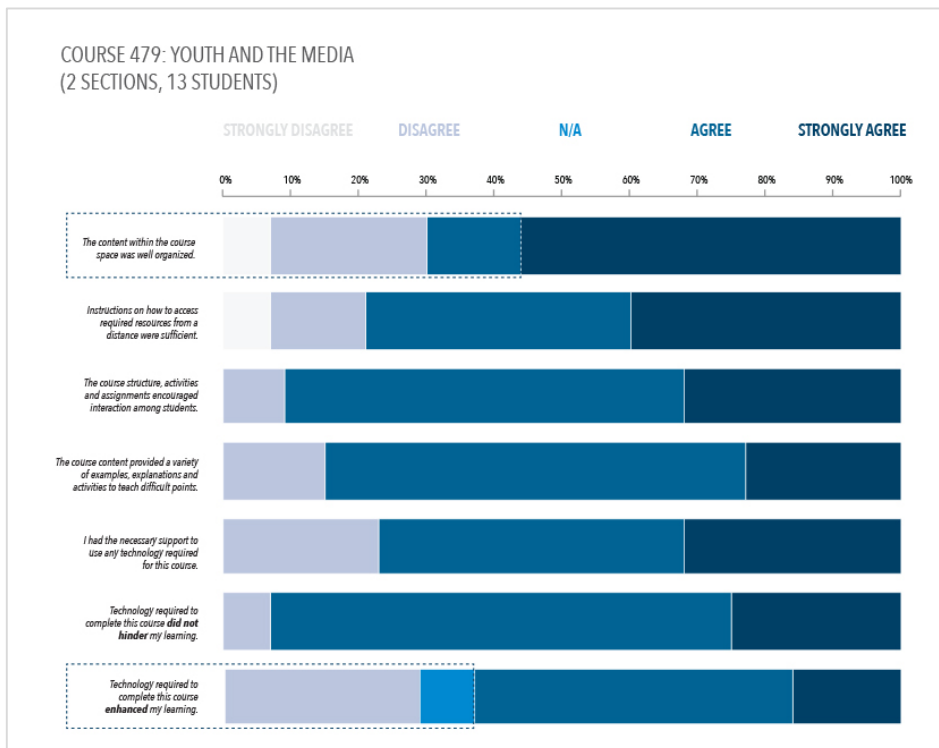


**Figure 1. Heatmap of survey findings**

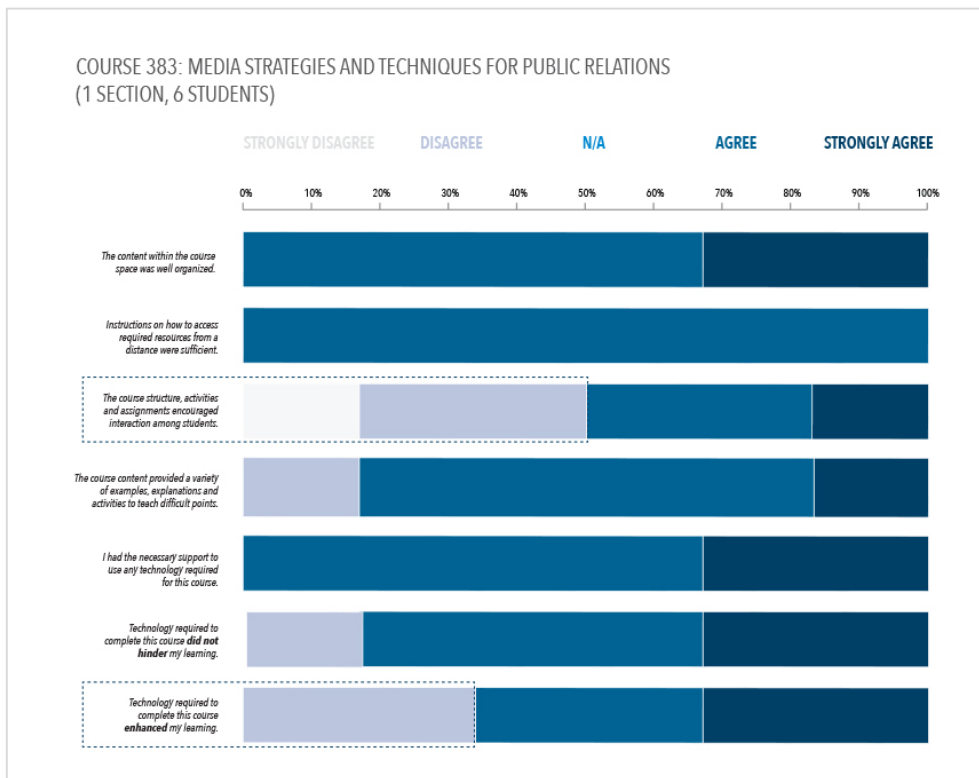
When we dig deeper, looking at each survey statement in each class, we see improvements can be made in the following areas: content organization, peer-to-peer interaction, the ability to learn complex concepts and support with technology (figure 2-4).



**Figure 2.** This course is historically complex; the pattern of 25% to 35% dissatisfaction rates in four categories suggests this course could use some improvement in the online space.



**Figure 3.** Content organization and technology requirements are areas needing review in this course.



**Figure 4. Peer-to-peer interaction and technology requirements are areas needing review in this course.**

Throughout the two focus groups, ten questions focused on undergraduate student use of online learning environments, specifically how well groups of face-to-face degree-completion students feel they are prepared to succeed in online classes as part of their undergraduate studies at WSU Everett. Transcripts were pulled from video recordings and data coded with MaxQDA. Four common themes emerged as areas of insight: course organization, communication with faculty, getting effective assistance through online discussions and prioritizing coursework. As shown in figure 5 and 6, “support” is the greatest area of interest among participants, followed closely by

“organization” of the online environment as it applies to course content and navigability.

Color	Code	Coded segments of documents	% Coded segments of documents
●	Organization	14	19.18
●	Communication	3	4.11
●	Communication\Communication with Faculty	14	19.18
●	Communication\Communication with Peers	2	2.74
●	Support	8	10.96
●	Support\face-to-face support	10	13.70
●	Support\online support	11	15.07
●	Prioritizing	11	15.07

Figure 5. Focus group transcript code variables and color legend

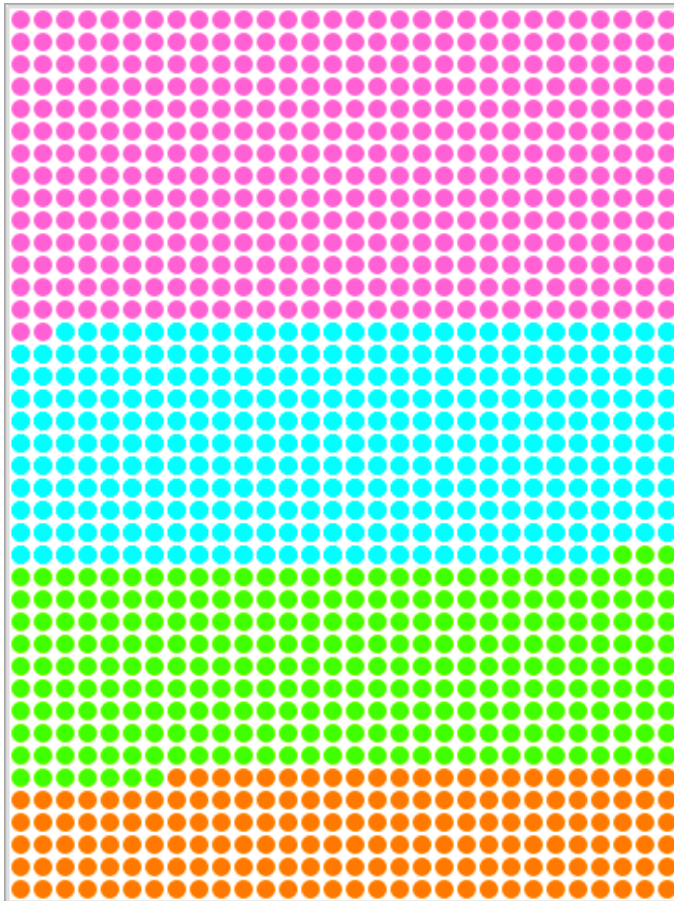


Figure 6. Focus group transcript document portrait/heat map

## **DISCUSSION**

### *Overview*

The personalization, immediate feedback and ability to serve up content when and how students are ready for it makes online learning extraordinary (Lenz, 2011). We must remember, though, that student readiness for online learning is not limited to having a computer and access to the Internet. Proficiency with the online learning environment, along with academic, emotional and financial preparedness all contribute to a successful online student experience.

When considering the data from the survey and focus groups, then comparing the results to the literature, WSU Everett degree-completion students in the Strategic Communication program would likely benefit from a custom online orientation program. Working with the Department of Innovation and WSU Global, I developed an online orientation course in Blackboard that covers student readiness, course navigation, discussion boards, assignments in Blackboard, taking tests in Blackboard and finding technical support. Throughout the course content, there are video tutorials, images and information that ranges from technical to theoretical, from simple "how-to's" in areas such as assignment uploads, to what qualities and approaches to coursework will lead to the greatest success as an online student (Appendix B, Blackboard Course Screenshots).

Starting in the Fall of 2017, this course will be offered prior to the start of the semester. Sessions will not be mandatory but highly recommended. According to a

study of individual student characteristics, participation in an online orientation course was a greater indicator of student success in online courses than class attendance, reading scores or prior online courses taken. In fact, using online orientation participation was second only to student GPA when gauging student success in the online learning environment (Wojciechowski & Palmer, 2005).

The Blackboard Orientation course for WSU degree completion students postulates that undergraduates already have the basic technological skills necessary for a successful experience in an online course (Keramidas, 2012; Dray, et. al, 2011; Hung, et. al, 2010; Blake, 2009). Course content and flow do take into consideration, though, as the literature states, that these skills don't immediately translate to the online learning environment, due to lack of experience, proficiency or emotional readiness (Pillay, Irving, & Tones 2007; Chametzky, 2016).

Further, the course emphasizes active learning processes, metacognition, self-correction and reflection, as well as learning how to interact with others in a digital environment (Draper, 2013; Adkins, 2016; Mezirow, p.198). The content and style of the course environment also recognize the motivation to learn of this unique student population (Hartnet, 2016). Face-to-face students who take online courses as part of their degree-completion have a greater chance of success in their online courses when they have a community to rely on for information and are guided in building upon their pre-existing network of information (McCleod, 2014).

### *Limitations of this project and research*

The course is built, tested by WSU Global, WSU North Puget Sound at Everett faculty and ready to deploy. However it has not been tested by the student population studied. It is also important to note that research was limited to a sample of communication students and survey results from communication courses; it would be beneficial to see how results compare with other disciplines such as engineering and hospitality business management.

### *Future research and project evolution*

There are many areas of research that would be of interest related to this research and the corresponding applied project, some of which include:

- Measure and compare student satisfaction studies from other majors of study;
- Conduct a baseline online course readiness survey with students at WSU NPSE prior to Fall 2017 deployment and compare to results of the same survey after the orientation course is taken, and again after online courses are taken;
- Conduct user experience surveys to make improvements to the Blackboard orientation course; and
- Create a Blackboard course design orientation for faculty.

## *Conclusions*

The purpose of this project is to build a course that will orient face-to-face students to the online environment and prepare them for the unique learning experience of the virtual classroom. In addition to aiding preparation for the technological demands of higher education, the Blackboard orientation course will support students at all technological levels with challenges such as unique Blackboard functionality, online course time-management, prioritization and troubleshooting.

Offering this orientation course as a free option to face-to-face students prior to their first credited online class can help break down barriers of perceived complexity (Pillay, Irving, & Tones 2007), allow students to claim responsibility for their own learning and may even help bridge the gap between students and faculty should the readiness assessment prompt a call to a student advisor.

Finally, taking advantage of a free orientation course could be beneficial to students long after the course has ended; they will complete the course with practical skills that can be put to immediate use in both the online and face-to-face classroom.

## **METACOGNITIVE ANALYSIS**

I read a story recently, about a doctor and his patient. The patient, an 88-year-old man with renal failure and congestive heart failure, was having conflicts with treatment. The patient refused dialysis treatment to remove fluids, and alternative treatments left his heart and kidney function in conflict with one another. There was no way to treat one without compromising the other.

During a visit to his doctor, the terminally ill patient was asked, "What would you like to accomplish with your medical care? How can I assist you?" The patient replied, "I just don't want to fall down anymore. Falling down is awful." When the doctor empowered his patient by taking the patient's needs and desires into consideration, all of a sudden treatment became evident and straightforward.

Often it seems that with our students we tell them what they need or should have to make their educational experience whole. I learned throughout this research process that my students did not expect to take individual courses online in their degree-completion programs and were unprepared for the online environment. While students knew they would need to "fill in some classes" online, the course topics often took them by surprise. Further, most of my students did not have experience with the Blackboard environment, so jumping into a course in this new environment added a layer of complexity that confused some and frustrated many.

When I first suggested an orientation to Blackboard, it was proposed by faculty that the content is built within an already required Introduction to Communication

mini-course. Practical and technically relevant, it was argued, this material should be required by students as part of their introductory course of study.

Requiring an orientation to Blackboard did not sit right with me, nor was it consistent with the feedback I received from students. Instruction does not automatically lead to learning. How could we require students to pay for credits they may not need? Also, doesn't the requirement add a layer of stress to the learning process? Is it necessary to make this orientation a requirement? Like the physician assuming he knows what his patient's treatment goals are, it would be foolish for me to assume that every student has the same academic goals and learning style. Some students prefer a lecture environment while others are more independent learners, easily adapting to a virtual classroom. Some have taken online courses, some in Blackboard, some in other online learning environments. Creating a separate Blackboard orientation course that empowers the student to learn what they need to learn at their own pace, with the option to return to the content at any time, may allow for greater overall success with their online courses in the future.

The Blackboard orientation course could be used as a blending learning supplement during face-to-face meetings with students who are having difficulty managing online coursework (Conole & Alevizou, 2010). Using this course for learning and teaching has the potential to facilitate improvements in the quality of student learning and online classroom experience, in addition to professional development and pedagogical practices.

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## APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

### Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to speak with us today. I want you to know that we think everything you have to say is important and we are here to learn from you. I am working on a project to include student voices and experiences in discussions that university leaders, faculty and staff are having at WSU about how we can do a better job of helping students succeed in our online courses. Our discussion should take an hour to an hour and a half. We know you have a lot going on and we really appreciate your willingness to share your thoughts and experiences with us. There are no right or wrong answers—we are interested in knowing more about your perspectives and ideas. We are recording the conversation so that we can be absolutely certain that we are capturing all of your ideas, exactly as you present them. We won't quote you—we just want to make sure we're hearing you accurately.

The information you give us today will be shared with people at all of our campuses to help improve online learning experiences. We will not use your name. We hope that you can feel comfortable to speak freely about your experiences and we ask that everyone be respectful of what everyone else has to say.

I want to make sure before we begin that I've defined one term that we're using a lot during this conversation.

***Online Learning Environment:*** an asynchronous environment where you don't have to log on to the computer at exactly the same time as your instructor or classmates in order to attend class. When you take an online class in an **online learning environment**, you will have specific deadlines to meet for reading assignments and learning activities.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we start?

### Warm-up

Please go around, introduce yourselves, and just tell us a little bit about what you are studying here at WSU Everett and how you got here.

### Getting into the issues

***Q1. How did you decide to come to WSU Everett to complete your undergraduate degree?***

- Did you know other people going here?
- Do you know people who chose to go other places? Why?
- Did you think about going somewhere else?

- Did anyone, like a family member, high school guidance counselor or college adviser, tell you about the opportunities here at WSU Everett?

**Q2. Could you describe the first time you visited an online learning environment at WSU Everett? Was it before you became a student at WSU Everett or after you enrolled in classes?**

- Was it a positive experience or not so much? (Give people time to chat, listen for stories about the website, technology use, Blackboard, online class expectations.)
- How many people received a formal orientation to Blackboard?
- What could have made that first experience better?

**Q3. How are things going so far? Pretty well, pretty rough, somewhere in between? Are online classes different than what you expected?**

- Have you been able to register easily for the classes you want?
- Did you know how to navigate an online class before you came here? Was your grade about what you expected it to be? Are the classes more or less challenging than you expected?
- Have you talked to an adviser or counselor about online learning? Describe that experience--was it helpful or not?

## Readiness

**Q4. Now that you're here, do you feel like you arrived here ready to succeed in the program you selected? Why or why not? Did you know before you enrolled that you would need to take online courses in addition to face-to-face courses to complete your degree?** (Let students talk. Ask simple probes like "Can you say more about that?" or "Did others have a similar experience?")

- Before you took your online courses, did you have teachers/counselors/family members/others who talked to you about what to expect? If yes, was that helpful? If not, would you have liked to have that?
- If your little brother or sister in high school were thinking about taking an online class, what advice would you give them to help set them up for success?

**Q5. Some students need to brush up on some of the basics before they are prepared to fully and successfully participate in an online learning environment. There is technology that may be new, a lot of reading, time-management skills, and writing to communicate, all needed in ways that are different from a typical face-to-face course.**

- Do you know anyone who has taken an online learning orientation class or seminar (or did you yourself)? If yes, what do people usually think about those classes? Do people think those courses are pretty good here or not so much?

**Q6. Are all new students are required to take a new student orientation class? How many of you already took this class? How many are taking it now?**

- What did you think of the orientation class? Was it useful or not? How so?
- Did the orientation class include information about online communities or online classes?
- How could it have been better?

### Digging Deeper

**Q7. Do you know anyone who has had to stop taking an online course or drop out of the program completely before finishing a class or program specifically because of the online learning component?**

- Why do you think that happens?

**Q8. Have you sought out extra help or tutoring with an online class? Was it a good experience or not? How did you learn about those opportunities?**

- Have you ever felt like you needed extra help but didn't know how to find it?
- In general, do you think there are a lot of good resources, like tutoring and other kinds of help, here for students?
- Do people use all the services available? Why or why not? What prevents people from taking advantage of the resources here? (Listen for lack of awareness, feeling intimidated, feeling like resources are inadequate, etc.)

### Closing

**Q9. There are a number of ideas leaders have here about how to help more students succeed and we want to know what you think about them. What do you think about a self-assessment survey, followed by a pre-enrollment seminar made available face-to-face and online to students taking online classes?**

Ok, to close here, let's go around once and hear from everyone on a "final thoughts" question:

**Q10. If there was one (or two) things that WSU Everett could be doing differently or better to help more students prepare to take and succeed in online classes, what would that be?**

Thank you very much for your time. I learned so much from this conversation and will pass on the information to people who can make changes to improve students' experiences.

## APPENDIX B: BLACKBOARD® ORIENTATION COURSE SCREENSHOTS

Welcome and Start Here

**Welcome and Start Here**

**Welcome to Blackboard!**

Hello! Welcome to Blackboard. You just made the easiest commute to the classroom in, well, ever.

It's important to understand, though, that taking a class online is not just about logging in. Discipline, motivation and regular interaction with your instructor and peers are vital in order for you to succeed in your online classes.

Overall, it's a pretty straightforward virtual classroom layout. There are a few things you'll want to know about before you take your first credited course in this online space so you won't need to learn a new system and new course material at the same time. In this orientation, you'll learn how to:

- **Navigate a course:** Where to find the different icons and links that make up the navigation of a Blackboard course;
- **Use Discussion boards:** Understand what the Discussion Board is and how to use it;
- **Manage Assignments:** What the Assignments link includes and how to upload an Assignment to the Blackboard system;
- **Take Tests in Blackboard:** What tests in Blackboard look like, how tests are managed, what kind of test questions you may encounter and how to take a test in Blackboard; and
- **Find the Help Desk:** Where to go for additional help when you need it.

This orientation is set up in a series of Lessons, each including a video tutorial and supporting written instructions. Within the Lessons, you will have opportunities to practice things you learn.

**Whenever you are ready, navigate to Lesson 1 by clicking on "Lesson 1: Are You Ready For An Online Class?" on the left-hand side of the page.**

**Lessons**

- Lesson 1: Are You Ready For An Online Class?
- Lesson 2: Navigating Blackboard
- Lesson 3: Assignments in Blackboard

© 1997-2017 Blackboard Inc. All Rights Reserved. U.S. Patent No. 7,493,396 and 7,558,853. Additional Patents Pending.  
 Accessibility information | Installation details

**Begin: Online Readiness Self-Assessment**

Cancel Begin

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Description	<p><b>Are you ready to take your online course?</b></p> <p>Learning through an online class requires different skills than learning in a face-to-face class. It's important to know what you're getting into and to understand the kind of commitment that's necessary for success in online learning. You can get a good idea of your readiness for online learning by taking the following quiz.</p>
Instructions	<p>Read each statement carefully. Select <i>Yes</i> if you agree or <i>No</i> if you disagree. When you are finished, you will see guidelines for interpreting your score.</p>
Force Completion	<p>Once started, this test must be completed in one sitting. Do not leave the test before clicking <b>Save and Submit</b>.</p>
Click <b>Begin</b> to start: Online Readiness Self-Assessment. Click <b>Cancel</b> to go back.	

Click **Begin** to start. Click **Cancel** to quit.

Cancel Begin

**Response**

**Feedback: Interpreting the Results**

A total score of 0-17 is a strong indication that you will likely face more challenges than may be desired in an online class. If you are still interested in being an online student, you should understand some of the challenges and what you need to do to overcome them. Online learning is a lot more challenging than it may seem. Speak with your academic advisor to discuss ways to work on preparing for the online learning environment.

Questions that are weighted "3" and "4" address crucial study skills needed for an online class. The most successful online students will have received all of the points available for these questions (regardless of what their total score happens to be).

Questions weighted "1" and "2" are also important for an online class, but many of the topics they address are things that don't automatically block a student's academic success in the class or are technical skills that can be learned once the class begins.

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## Take Test: Online Readiness Self-Assessment

### Test Information

#### Description: Are you ready to take your online course?

Learning through an online class requires different skills than learning in a face-to-face class. It's important to know what you're getting into and to understand the kind of commitment that's necessary for success in online learning. You can get a good idea of your readiness for online learning by taking the following quiz.

#### Instructions

Read each statement carefully. Select Yes if you agree or No if you disagree. When you are finished, you will see guidelines for interpreting your score.

Multiple Attempts Not allowed. This test can only be taken once.

Force Completion Once started, this test must be completed in one sitting. Do not leave the test before clicking **Save and Submit**.

Question Completion Status:

Save All Answers

Save and Submit

#### QUESTION 1

I am comfortable and proficient at creating, saving, locating, and opening different types of files on a computer.

- Yes  
 No

1 points Save Answer

#### QUESTION 2

I have reliable access to a high-speed Internet connection (DSL, cable, dorm, etc)

- Yes  
 No

2 points Save Answer

#### QUESTION 3

I know how to check my official wsu.edu email account and I access it regularly to check for new messages.

- Yes  
 No

1 points Save Answer

#### QUESTION 4

I have access to a webcam and microphone for simple multimedia participation.

- Yes  
 No

2 points Save Answer

#### QUESTION 5

I have no problem retaining information if I read it.

- Yes  
 No

2 points Save Answer

#### QUESTION 6

I am comfortable using online discussion forums.

- Yes  
 No

1 points Save Answer

#### QUESTION 7

I am usually able to stay on task and avoid distractions (texting, Facebook) while studying.

- Yes  
 No

3 points Save Answer

#### QUESTION 8

I am very good at planning and managing my time so that my work is on time and complete.

- Yes  
 No

4 points Save Answer

#### QUESTION 9

Setting aside a regular 5-8 hours per week to devote to an online class is possible for me.

- Yes  
 No

3 points Save Answer

#### QUESTION 10

I have little or no trouble expressing myself in writing using formal grammar and spelling.

- Yes  
 No

3 points Save Answer

#### QUESTION 11

I am comfortable learning through individual reading and study.

- Yes  
 No

3 points Save Answer

#### QUESTION 12

I can learn from a variety of formats (lectures, videos, podcasts, online discussion/conferencing).

- Yes  
 No

2 points Save Answer

#### QUESTION 13

I know how to login to Blackboard and I am familiar with using the most common tools.

- Yes  
 No

1 points Save Answer

#### QUESTION 14

I have my own relatively new computer (2-3 years old) onto which I can install any additional software necessary for the course.

- Yes  
 No

3 points Save Answer

#### QUESTION 15

If I can't figure out something, I am comfortable asking my classmates or the instructor for help via email, discussion board, or chat.

- Yes  
 No

4 points Save Answer

Click Save and Submit to save and submit. Click Save All Answers to save all answers.

Save All Answers

Save and Submit

Table of Contents

Page 1 of 2

- Global Navigation
- Course Navigation

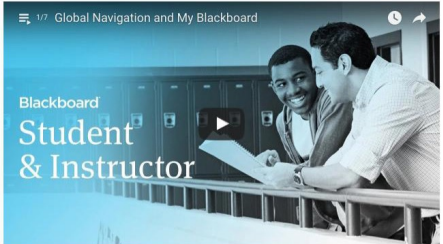
## Global Navigation

Page 1 of 2

Nice to see you again! It won't come as much of a surprise to hear that you've been navigating Blackboard since you logged in. You're nearly an expert!

Here in Lesson 2, we're going to spend some time looking around the Blackboard virtual learning environment, to get familiar with the global navigation and the course navigation.

**Video: Global Navigation and My Blackboard**



Now that you've learned about the global navigation menu and My Blackboard, spend a little time looking around. You can access My Blackboard and the global navigation menu at the top of any page; just click the arrow next to your name. When you're ready, navigate back to this course in the Global Navigation (the link will be under "Recently Visited") and meet us back in Lesson 2: Course Navigation.




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- Global Navigation
- Course Navigation

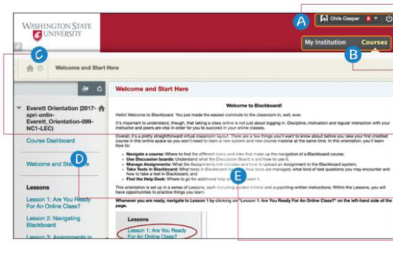
## Course Navigation

Page 2 of 2

Courses are similar to one another in that they have many of the same elements, but it's important to remember that instructors have the ability to personalize courses by arranging links in the menu and controlling what displays in the content area. Think of your courses like websites: you expect them to all have a menu, content, maybe some images and video, potentially the ability to interact by uploading files and participating in community forums. Not all websites look exactly the same or function exactly the same. It's the same thing in Blackboard.

Your best weapon is to pay close attention. Take the time with each online course to read the course menu carefully and thoroughly. Links may be named differently by different instructors ("Lesson 1" may read "Week 1") and some links may not be included in some menus at all (for example, this course does not have a syllabus but most courses do).

Take a look at the image below for an example of a course layout (click on image to enlarge):



**Page Header:** The area at the top of the screen that contains the tabs, your name, access to the global navigation menu and My Blackboard, and Logout. The page header elements remain the same regardless of where you are in Blackboard Learn.

**Table:** Blackboard Learn has two common tabs, the My Institution tab and the Courses tab. My Institution tab collects information from all the courses you are enrolled in, and the Courses tab contains a list of the courses you are enrolled in.

**Course-to-course navigation:** Use this feature to access all courses you are enrolled in. Access the contextual menu next to the course icon to go to another course. Next to the course icon, use the orientation bar to access previous pages you visited recently.

**Course menu:** The access point for all course content. Instructors determine which links are available here.

**Content frames:** The larger area of the screen next to the course menu that displays the selected content area, text, module page, or materials. Instructors choose the page that appears here when you enter a course.

**Quick Tip: get from one course to another quickly with the Course-to-Course Navigation tool**

From one of your courses, you can conveniently access all of the other courses you're enrolled in.

Select the Course-to-Course Navigation icon (A) to access the menu and select another course title. If the same page you're currently viewing in the course exists in the next course, that is where you'll land. The most recently visited course is listed first. For example, if you're viewing the announcements page in one course and select another course in the menu, you're taken to that course's announcements page.

When you're ready to move on, head over to Lesson 3: Assignments in Blackboard by clicking the link in the menu on the left.

Everett Orientation (2017-  
spring)-  
Everett\_Orientation-099-  
NC1-LEC)

Course Dashboard

Welcome and Start Here

**Lessons**

Lesson 1: Are You Ready For An Online Class?

Lesson 2: Navigating Blackboard

Lesson 3: Assignments in Blackboard

Lesson 4: Online Class Discussions

Lesson 5: Blackboard Tests

Lesson 6: Conclusion

**Class Discussions**

Assignments

Assessments

**My Grades**

Learning Modules

Course Tools

**Bb Help**

## Recap: Submitting Assignments

Page 3 of 4

**Remember: when you finish your assignment, you must click the "Submit" button. If you don't, your instructor won't receive your completed assignment.**

Upload Assignment: Week 1 Study Guide Questions

**ASSIGNMENT INFORMATION**

Due Date: **Wednesday, October 5, 2016** 3:03 PM

Points Possible: **30**

[View Rubric](#)

Add two potential questions that could appear on the Week 1 test. Include the answers. I will compile all submissions for the class to use as a study guide. You're allowed one attempt.

**ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION**

Text Submission [Write Submission](#)

**Attach Files** [Browse My Computer](#) [Browse Content Collection](#)

Attached File

File Name	Link Title	Do not attach
study_guide_spooner.doc	study_guide_spooner.doc	<input type="checkbox"/>

**ADD COMMENTS**

Comments

Add comments that only your instructor sees.

Character count: 46

- Access the assignment.
- On the **Upload Assignment** page, review the instructions, due date, points possible, and download any files provided by your instructor. If your instructor has added a rubric for grading, you can view it.
- Select **Write Submission** to expand the area where you can type your submission. You can use the functions in the editor to format the text. You have creative control over how your content appears and the flexibility to change the order and appearance.
- Select **Browse My Computer** to upload a file from your computer.
  - OR-
  - Drag files from your computer to the "hot spot" in the **Attach Files** area. If you upload the wrong file, simply select **Do not attach** in the folder's row to remove it. You can then drag the correct file and submit.

You can use the file name or provide another name for the file.
- Optionally, type **Comments** about your submission.

Ready to practice? **Move on to the next section and complete a practice assignment.** (Remember, you can access your assignment within this lesson -OR- by clicking the "Assignments" link in the course menu to the left.)

Everett Orientation (2017-  
spring)-  
Everett\_Orientation-099-  
NC1-LEC)

Course Dashboard

Welcome and Start Here

**Lessons**

Lesson 1: Are You Ready For An Online Class?

Lesson 2: Navigating Blackboard

Lesson 3: Assignments in Blackboard

Lesson 4: Online Class Discussions

Lesson 5: Blackboard Tests

Lesson 6: Conclusion

**Class Discussions**

Assignments

Assessments

**My Grades**

Learning Modules

Course Tools

**Bb Help**

## Upload Assignment: Practice Assignment

Page 4 of 4

**ASSIGNMENT INFORMATION**

Points Possible: **10**

- Open** a new Word (or similar) document.
- Type:** "This is my practice assignment."
- Save** your document in one of the following formats: .doc, .docx, .rtf, or .pdf.
- Under "Assignment Submission" click **"Browse My Computer"**.
- Locate** your document and **upload** it.
- In the Comments box, type:** "My assignment is attached."
- Click Submit.**
- You will see a **confirmation** that acknowledges your assignment was submitted.

**ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION**

Text Submission [Write Submission](#)

Attach File [Browse My Computer](#) [Browse Content Collection](#)

**ADD COMMENTS**

Comments

Character count: 0

*When finished, make sure to click **Submit**.  
Optionally, click **Save as Draft** to save changes and continue working later, or click **Cancel** to quit without saving changes.*

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Having Conversations on Blackboard

Discussion Board

Discussion Board

If this item does not open automatically you can [open Discussion Board here](#)

Page 2 of 2

Click to Launch

A few pointers as you start using the Discussion Board:

- Remember, communicating online is different than communicating in person. You can't see facial expressions, nor can you hear vocal cues. Your written words are all you have to convey your message and to understand what other people are saying.
- One of the great things about online discussion boards is the time you have to think before you type. Provide thorough and thoughtful responses and treat others and their points of view with respect.
- Use proper grammar, spelling and complete sentences. To that end, stay away from shortcuts. Using text language like "ttyl" and "c u l8r" diminish your credibility. Oh, and ALL CAPITALS = yelling.

>> When you're finished working within the Discussion Board, you're ready to move on to **Lesson 5**, located in the course menu.

Discussion Board

Forums are made up of individual discussion threads that can be organized around a particular subject. Create Forums to organize discussions. [More Help](#)

Search

Forum	Description	Total Posts	Unread Posts	Total Participants
<b>All About Forums</b>	The main Discussion Board page displays a list of available discussion Forums. A Discussion Board can contain one or more Forums. A Forum is an area where a topic or a group of related topics are discussed. For each Forum, the page displays the total number of posts, the number of unread posts, and the total number of participants.  Click on the Forum Name to enter it so that you can read the posts and make posts of your own. Click the Unread Posts to collect all the unread posts into a sortable format.	2	2	1
<b>Threads Within Forums</b>	Here, in each Forum, you'll find a list of posts called threads. As mentioned in the previous forum, threads can be displayed either in Tree View or List View. To enter a Thread to review related responses, click on the Thread name.	2	2	1
<b>Tips For Good Online Discussions</b>	Constructing your messages well goes a long way to making your online discussions effective.	1	1	1

Displaying 1 to 3 of 3 items [Show All](#) [Edit Paging...](#)

Thread: Two Ways to View a Forum

Select: **All** None

Message Actions Expand All Collapse All

1 Posts in this Thread 0 Unread

13 days ago

**Corrie Wilder** Two Ways to View a Forum

A forum can be viewed in one of two contexts: **List View** or **Tree View**. This choice remains in effect until you change it and it can be changed at any time. These choices are available at the top of the Forum page.

**Forum: Week 1 Discussion: What is Educational Technology?**

Organize Forum Threads on this page and apply settings to several or all threads. Threads are listed in a tabular format. The Threads can be sorted by clicking the column title or the arrow at the top of each column. More Help

Thread Actions	Thread	Author
9/3/12 11:18 PM	Educational Technology Defined	Demo Student
9/3/12 10:34 PM	What is Educational Technology?	Demo Student
9/3/12 10:17 PM	Educational Technology	Demo Student
9/3/12 10:16 PM	Educational technology - V. Tucker	Demo Student
9/3/12 8:11 PM	Week 1 Discussion	Demo Student
9/3/12 5:59 PM	Week 1 Discussion	Demo Student

**Forum: Week 1 Discussion: What is Educational Technology?**

Organize Forum Threads on this page and apply settings to several or all threads. Threads are listed in a tabular format. The Threads can be sorted by clicking the column title or the arrow at the top of each column. More Help

Thread	Author	Status	Date
Educational Technology Defined	Demo Student	Locked	9/3/12 11:18 PM
What is Educational Technology?	Demo Student	Locked	9/3/12 10:34 PM
RE: What is Educational Technology?	Demo Student	Locked	9/3/12 11:05 PM
RE: Educational Technology	Demo Student	Locked	9/3/12 10:17 PM

The **List View** presents the list of posts in the forum, called Threads, in a tabular format. The Threads can be sorted by clicking the karat (▲) at the top of each column.

The **Tree View** presents the first post, or Thread, and all related responses. The initial Thread and related posts can be expanded and collapsed by using the plus (+) and minus (-) icon next to each message.

**Note: Unread Threads and posts are displayed in bold type. Additionally, if a Thread has unread responses, then the entire Thread is displayed in bold when collapsed in Tree View.**

Reply

Select: **All** None

Message Actions Expand All Collapse All

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- Video: How to take a test in Blackboard
- Preventive Maintenance: Avoiding Technical Issues**
- Dos and Don'ts of Blackboard Test-Taking

## Preventive Maintenance: Avoiding Technical Issues

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When taking a test in Blackboard, there would be few things worse than losing saved answers, getting "kicked out" of a Blackboard test you're taking, having your computer freeze/crash while taking a test, or being unable to submit your completed exam/quiz/test. The following are a few tips that can help you avoid technical issues before they arise:

- **Make sure you have a web browser that supports Blackboard.** Here is a link to the supported browsers for WSU's version of Blackboard: [https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/learn/9.1\\_SP\\_14/Student/015\\_Browser\\_Support/010\\_Browser\\_Support\\_SP\\_14](https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/learn/9.1_SP_14/Student/015_Browser_Support/010_Browser_Support_SP_14)
- **Disable all pop-up blockers.** Blackboard tests sometimes appear as pop-up windows, and a pop-up blocker may prevent the test from displaying properly. You may need to turn off pop-up blockers in your browsers and other software such as Google or Yahoo toolbars and virus protection programs.
- **Beware of software updates and virus scans.** If you have programs such as automatic software updates or virus scans set to run at particular times, disable them or do not take your test during a time when those updates are scheduled to occur.
- **Shut down other programs to minimize interruptions.** Some programs on the computer may interfere with Blackboard or may be distracting while taking a timed exam.

Got it? Great! Move on to the next section...

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## Dos and Don'ts of Blackboard Test-Taking

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**DO:**

- **Read the Test instructions!** Note the length of time you have to take the test/quiz, the number of attempts, and any special information provided by your instructor.
- **Save answers frequently.** You will see "Save" buttons throughout the test. Note: saving answers is not the same as submitting the test.
- **Stay active in the test window** – the assessment feature in Blackboard is set to time-out after periods of inactivity. You must do more than just type or click answers to keep the test active. Save the assessment or individual questions every 10 or 15 minutes to reset the activity clock.
- **Take a screen shot or print the submission report** after you successfully save and submit your test. You may need it in the future for verification or technical support.
- **Contact your instructor immediately if you get closed out of an exam while taking it.**

**DON'T:**

- **Open a new browser window or tab, switch between multiple windows or tabs, open other programs, or navigate to any other areas of the course while taking a test.** Depending on the settings your instructor has applied to the test, clicking out of or closing the exam window may lock you out of the exam and lose answers you have entered.
- **Use the browser BACK button or DELETE key on the keyboard.**
- **Use the TAB key to move from question to question.**
- **Use the SCROLL wheel on your mouse.**
- **Double-click or click more than once on test items, buttons, or graphics.**
- **Press the ENTER key on the keyboard.**
- **Rush through the test.** Always wait for your browser's status bar to say "done" whenever you click a button to move to another question or save your answers.
- **Enlarge/maximize or reduce/minimize the browser window during the test or quiz.**
- **Copy/paste from Word.** This can cause problems with the formatting of your answers. Draft answers to essay questions in a text editor such as Notepad and then copy/paste the text into Blackboard Learn.

If you're at all concerned that you'll forget something, this list is just a click away!  
You're just about finished! Click on Lesson 6 in the Course Menu when you're ready.

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## Lesson 6: Conclusion

**Resources**

You made it! Taking the time to work through this orientation can make it easier for you to navigate the online courses you take in the future.

Remember:

- Disable those pop-up blockers;
- Give yourself ample time and space to complete your coursework;
- Participate in online discussions regularly; and
- Stay in close contact with your instructor.

If you run into an issue, there are always resources to turn to! Keep this information handy so you know who to turn to if there's a problem you can't troubleshoot your way through on your own:

**Technical support is available 24/7**

A technical support staff person will attempt to solve your problem or direct your help request to the appropriate person. Staff are NOT able to answer questions about course content or procedures (e.g., assignments, grades). For this, contact your instructor directly.

**Call direct:** 509-335-4320 or 800-222-4978 and select 1 for faculty and technical support.

**Email:** [wsuonline.support@wsu.edu](mailto:wsuonline.support@wsu.edu) and they will respond within 24 hours.