



## CourseInfo update for ITAC

To: ITAC

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### About CourseInfo

CourseInfo by Blackboard, Inc. is a powerful and easy-to-use tool to build course web sites in any subject area. Instructors can point and click to incorporate learning materials from word processors, presentations and audio and video files. Files are maintained in their original format. The CourseInfo software handles all file transfer so faculty have a minimal number of steps in creating online course materials. CourseInfo also provides useful administrative and interactive communication features such as on-line quizzes, threaded discussions, a "digital drop box" for exchanging files, collaborative group work tools and course statistics. Instructors can choose which features to use to meet their course goals.

According to Blackboard, CourseInfo software is now in use at 1,600 schools (see their site for specifics).

Some of the key features of CourseInfo are:

- Course calendar and announcements
- Threaded discussions
- Chat
- Online whiteboard
- Group tools for exchanging files and communicating among group members
- Online file exchange
- Course navigation tools
- Interactive quizzes and surveys
- Course use statistics
- Gradebook & grade reporting

Blackboard: <http://blackboard.com/>

CourseInfo at Duke homepage: <http://courseinfo.duke.edu/>

CourseInfo Arts & Sciences homepage: <http://www.aas.duke.edu/cinfo/>

### Review of project

Goal: To provide an easy-to-use, ready-to-implement tool for faculty as a way of encouraging experimentation with course web pages, course discussion boards, online assessment and other network based instructional techniques

Jan – Feb 1999	Reviewed potential software products; gathered information from other schools which had implemented similar types of software; discussed software and goals with CIT advisory board
March - April 1999	Selected CI and began planning implementation strategy
May 1999	Introduced CI to 18 faculty in Engineering as a pilot test
Summer 1999	Joint planning with OIT, A&S, CIT and one Med. School program for broader implementation in Fall, 1999. Developed help pages, created forms for requesting course site, developed student information sheet, planned integration with OIT and A&S help desks, etc.
Fall 1999	CI announced to all faculty via email to department contacts, inclusion in CIT events mailing (paper and email), Glove Box news and informal channels. A&S and CIT training sessions offered at start of semester. CIT student assistant available for one on one training and help later in semester. End-of-semester questionnaire planned.

## Use in Fall, 1999 semester

### CIT CourseInfo server statistics as of 12/1/1999

Number of courses:

- Active, Fall 1999: 29
- In development, Spring 2000: 17
- Total (active, in development, training, experimental, etc.): 141

Number of users: 1012

Number of hits to site: 153,010

Disk usage:

- Course documents: 88 MB
- Course database: 34 MB
- Site total (including course documents, course database, backups, programs, etc.): 458 MB

Server hardware:

Sun Ultra 60, 1 360-MHz CPU, 128 MB RAM, 18 GB hard drive (additional 1 GB RAM on order)

### Arts & Sciences server

Number of courses:

- Active, Fall 1999: 105
- In development, Spring 2000: 16
- Total (active, in development, training, experimental, etc.): 146

Number of users: 3,359

Number of hits to site: Peak usage during October, 1999 ~950,000 hits

Disk usage:

- Course documents: 575 MB
- Course database: 80 MB
- Site total (including course documents, course database, backups, programs, etc.): 880 MB

Server hardware:

Intel Dual Processor 450 mghz, 1 GB RAM, mirrored 9 GB hard drive

## What we've learned so far

- Faculty use of this tool exceeded our expectations.
- Most faculty can get started with CI with minimal or no training; however, they still need assistance as they try to find a fit between their course plans and CI's features.
- Use of CI at peak times has overwhelmed the system. We are upgrading hardware and balancing courses across the two servers to try to improve performance in the spring semester.
- Enrollment of students into courses is cumbersome in the current version.
- CourseInfo is being used for non-course purposes. Because of its ease of use, some faculty are trying to use it for purposes that don't really fit well with the software's features.
- Some access problems are the result of general network access problems rather than server problems.
- Use of CourseInfo has brought to the surface a variety of other technical issues, such as outdated browser software, faculty and students using different word processors, difficulty in using modems to access course sites, etc.

## Plans for spring, 2000

- Upgrade to version 3.0
- Better process for enrolling students in course sites.
- Unified gateway for CI and other course web pages.
- Additional training opportunities.
- Integration with Snareworks

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