

“Enhancing Teaching with Technology: Blackboard@Duke” Interactive CD Project Report

Randy A. Riddle, Duke CIT
prepared 2.26.02, updated 6.21.02

Overview

In the Fall of 2001, the Center for Instructional Technology contracted with erroyo, Inc. to create an interactive CD on Blackboard to enhance teaching at Duke. The Knoxville based company has produced video and multimedia projects for corporate and educational clients, including the Duke Executive Education program. The company was chosen for the project, based on their previous work and portfolio of interactive CD's produced for K-12 and higher education clients.

The CD was conceived to support the rollout of the enterprise-level version of Blackboard at Duke University. Duke has used the system for three years, supporting an increasing number of instructors across the various schools at the university. The interactive presentation on the CD provides practical information to current and potential Blackboard users, highlighting information on the types of skills, technical requirements, and time commitments needed to carry out the illustrated activities. As of June 21, 2002, over 800 copies of the CD have been distributed to Duke faculty, graduate students and support staff through an online request form and contacts through the CIT's Advisory Board, ITAC, OIT, Arts and Sciences Computing, Library staff and campus committees.

The CIT's user testing of the CD and a survey of CD users indicates interest in the content and an enthusiasm for the presentation. The online survey, completed by 56 respondents who received the CD via the CIT's online request form, indicates that over eighty percent regarded it as "very helpful" or "somewhat helpful" in learning more about Blackboard and stated that it gave them new ideas for using Blackboard in their own classes. Among those that had never used Blackboard before, over forty percent stated that they created a new course site based on material they saw on the CD.

More work needs to be done by the CIT over the semester to observe broader effects from the CD, including increased Blackboard use by first-time users, inquiries concerning more advanced functions, or departmental efforts that may be discussed and put in place based on the profiles contained on the CD. Although a clear majority of respondents were able to run the CD with little or no assistance, the range of computer operating systems, available plug-ins, and technology levels will need to be investigated further in future projects of this type.

Our experiences in working with erroyo on the project have been positive, with staff members of the CIT and erroyo working closely on the project. A longer time frame will be required for similar projects in the future to allow more time for user testing of draft versions of the interface and reworking of the project to improve usability. In shooting of the video material, simpler camera setups may be needed to make interview subjects feel more comfortable. An additional day of shooting might also provide more opportunities to obtain useful secondary footage, student input, and a broader range of faculty to accommodate varying schedules of the individuals involved.

Over 150 hours were contributed during a three month period to the project by members of the Center for Instructional Technology. Coordination of participating faculty members, creation of draft textual content and interview outlines, as well as the creation of still-frame screen captures for the CD constituted the largest time commitments for the project.