

Blackboard® & California State University Dominguez Hills



California State University — Dominguez Hills

- Blackboard client since 1999
- Founded in 1960 in Carson, CA
- 7,786 undergraduate students
- 5,121 graduate students
- 4,000 students using Blackboard
- 1,000 faculty members
- 2,800 Blackboard courses (spring 2001)
- Blackboard solution: Level Three of Blackboard 5
- Administrative system: SCT Banner
- Server platform: Solaris

www.csudh.edu



Bringing Education Online™

THE CHALLENGE

California State University-Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) has long been known as a pioneer in the field of distance education. As early as 1991, CSUDH began experimenting with cutting-edge broadcast technology for its distance learning courses. Dr. Warren Ashley, Director of Distance Learning at CSUDH, states that his long-term goal has been to create “the CNN of distance learning.” Warren wants CSUDH to set the standard for distance learning through the use of emerging technologies. Bringing Blackboard’s software platform to CSUDH is yet another step towards reaching that goal.

Adding Internet-enhanced education to its distance learning program has also allowed CSUDH to improve its on-campus course offerings. CSUDH had to choose an e-Learning platform that would be valuable for every student and instructors, administrators, and IT staff as well. Warren and his staff were tasked with finding a software platform that could satisfy the following requirements:

- the platform must revolve around teaching and learning, with a robust course management system as its backbone;
- the platform must offer opportunities to create a *community* of teachers and learners; and
- the platform must integrate with pre-existing administrative systems, specifically SCT® Banner™, to create a complete online environment.

THE SOLUTION

Some instructors at CSUDH were already exploring the benefits of online learning by developing their own course Web sites. However, for Warren and his staff, supporting this wide variety of formats became cumbersome and did not provide the level of quality and continuity the administration sought for the teaching and learning environment at CSUDH. Warren purchased and installed Blackboard CourseInfo™ in July 1999, and subsequently upgraded to Level Three of Blackboard 5™ (released in July 2000) to take advantage of the newer software’s advanced portal and back-end integration features. Warren believes that “the portal and community features will benefit every CSUDH student by removing the distinctions between distance learners and on-campus learners. Every instructor and student will share in the CSUDH community.”

Creating CSUDH’s online community was easy with Blackboard. Built from the ground up for education, the platform’s ease of use appeals to students, instructors, and administrators. Increased levels of customization, flexibility, and scalability in Level Three of Blackboard 5 “allows instructors to concentrate on providing high-quality content while administrators concentrate on managing the platform itself.” Advanced communication tools go far beyond simple email to include course- and discipline-specific chat rooms, white board/threaded discussion areas, and the Digital Dropbox where students can submit work for review.

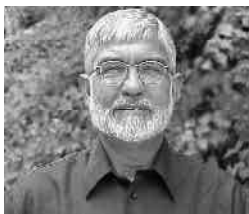
The portal capabilities of Blackboard 5 allow for the development of an online “campus,” giving distance learners and commuter students the ability to participate in on-campus life without needing to be physically present.

Customization options within the portal environment allow CSUDH to create a “branded” home page that serves as the gateway to the online campus – from course offerings, to social and other extracurricular activities, to administrative functions like registration and financial aid.

The second key to creating a fully integrated online campus was to ensure that the teaching and learning platform integrated smoothly with CSUDH’s existing administrative systems, including student information, registration, grades, and financial records. CSUDH used the SCT Banner solution to manage most of its administrative functions (*see sidebar for additional information about back-office integration*).

THE BLACKBOARD-CSUDH SUCCESS STORY

CSUDH is in the process of upgrading all of its course offerings (both on-campus and distance-learning) to include online components powered by Blackboard 5. The Distance Learning Program will use the Blackboard platform as its primary course-delivery method, offering about 150 courses per semester. On-campus programs will introduce Blackboard more slowly, but



Warren Ashley, Ph.D.
Director of Distance Learning
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Dominguez Hills

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Warren envisions that CSUDH will eventually offer approximately 2,800 courses per semester with online components on the Blackboard platform. Blackboard’s scalability and ability to grow with an institution’s online education needs was one of the primary reasons CSUDH chose Blackboard as its e-Learning platform.

Based on the enthusiastic response Warren has received so far, he predicts that introducing Blackboard’s technology at CSUDH will transform the university into one of the foremost destinations for distance learning in the country – and offer a better on-campus experience at the same time. Approximately 75% of the instructors who have taken advantage of the technology got their courses up and running with little or no difficulty. Those few that did have difficulty are being offered training and additional assistance to make the transition easier.

As the premier platform for providing online education, Blackboard was already familiar to many of the instructors, administrators, and students at CSUDH. The capabilities of the product and the fact that a majority of students and instructors sought this kind of solution allowed Warren and his team to overcome the occasional obstacle they encountered during their push to bring Blackboard 5 and a consistent, high-quality e-Learning environment to CSUDH.

When the transition to Blackboard 5 is complete, CSUDH will achieve Warren’s goal of becoming “the CNN of distance learning” by offering the best teaching and learning experience possible for every student. “Ten years ago, we were the Rodney Dangerfield” of the Cal State system – we got no respect. But that status allowed us to take some risks. Introducing Blackboard as our only e-Learning platform was definitely a risk – but it’s a risk that’s paying off.”

THE COMPLETE ONLINE CAMPUS

CSUDH needed a way to make its Web environment more of a “one-stop shop” for teaching, learning, and doing business with the university. Integrating the teaching and learning platform with existing administrative systems was one way to do that – but could it be done?

Level Three of Blackboard 5 is specifically built to integrate with an institution’s existing systems to provide a complete, end-to-end solution for e-Learning. Combined with Blackboard’s award-winning course management technology and new portal capabilities, Level Three includes system integration tools that can combine data from existing student information systems, financial aid offices, and other data-rich environments – and integrate these systems together. Single log-in user-authentication is available so that information remains secure but still easy to access by authorized users.

CSUDH had been using SCT Banner for nearly ten years when they decided to integrate their online teaching and learning with their administrative systems. Banner is one of the most widely used software packages in the education industry, and Blackboard integrates easily with it. Blackboard’s Consulting Services team worked with the CSUDH team to design and implement an integration plan.



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