

A Powerful Partnership: Blackboard Keeps Berkeley College Connected

BERKELEY COLLEGE WAS AN EARLY INNOVATOR IN ONLINE EDUCATION,

and its partnership with Blackboard helped nurture the school's evolution and growth. Today, the college has a thriving online educational environment that relies on Blackboard Learn 9.1. The next-generation platform offers Berkeley a portal for student communications; operational stability; seamless integration with a range of applications; and connectivity that supports student and faculty engagement.

Berkeley College offered its first online class in 1998. Now the institution offers more than 271 classes and 28 degree programs through Berkeley Online—in addition to offering classes at its eight locations in New York and New Jersey. Through those years of growth, constant contact with students has been Berkeley Online's No. 1 priority. For nearly a decade, it has made that connection through Blackboard Learn.

"We use Blackboard Learn not only for online and onsite courses, but also for the distribution of information," said Carol Smith, Assistant Provost of Berkeley Online. "We take advantage of just about every feature the platform has to offer."

The college first began using Blackboard as a communication tool around 2003. "That was prompted by the realization that students needed one place to go for information," Smith said. "We are committed to communication that helps our students stay on track to reach their academic goals and graduate."

Students log into Blackboard with a unique user name and password that allows them access not only to their course materials, but also to their grades, transcript requests, tuition status and information about future courses. Enrollment, registration, academic support, tutoring and information about campus events are also accessed via the Blackboard portal, which is integrated with the college's PeopleSoft-based student information system. In addition, the college uses Blackboard for professional development training for faculty.

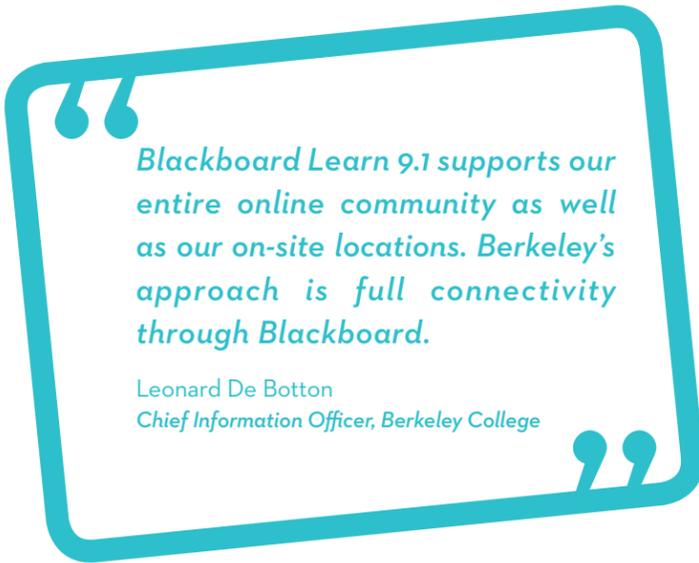


Blackboard Learn 9.1 Extends Functionality and Stability

Berkeley College's Chief Information Officer Leonard De Botton said the versatile communications portal was the college's initial foray into using Blackboard. The portal was created using Blackboard Building Blocks, a set of APIs that plug into the platform to allow integration between Blackboard and other software systems, such as PeopleSoft. From there, the platform expanded exponentially. Building Blocks enabled other key functionality, as well; for example, one plug-in allows faculty to generate student progress reports by pulling information from both Blackboard and PeopleSoft.

"The Blackboard platform has become the software backbone for the college," he said. "Blackboard gives us a solid platform to support our teaching and learning."

Blackboard Learn 9.1 offers the security and reliability Berkeley must have to support its online educational environment. "Moving to a 64-bit platform and using virtualization has really given us the stability that we need," De Botton said.



Berkeley College Students and Faculty Connect On-the-Go

Similar to the fast-paced and networked world in which we live, Berkeley students and faculty are on the move. To accommodate that pace, the college recently implemented Blackboard Mobile™ Learn, a powerful tool that allows students and faculty to access course content and information on a variety of devices.

"In a relatively short amount of time, 3,752 students have used Blackboard Mobile Learn to access their courses on their own mobile device," De Botton said. "A good portion of those students found the Blackboard Mobile Learn app in the Apple store and accessed our system before we even had a chance to announce it. This shows us that students really want to access our systems on their mobile devices."

Online Faculty Support Specialist Mary Jane Clerkin said instructors such as she also want the constant access Blackboard Mobile Learn provides. "Blackboard Mobile Learn allows us to keep on top of the courses we are teaching, anytime and anywhere," she said.

Berkeley also is adding Blackboard Mobile™ Central to its offerings to give students, faculty and staff on-demand access to essential information—maps, news, event calendars, course information, directories and more—whenever and wherever they need it.

BLACKBOARD BENEFITS

Comprehensive Connectivity

- Device-specific mobile functionality connects students and faculty to Berkeley College Online anytime, anywhere
- Blackboard Building Blocks™ enable expanded functionality across systems, meaning Berkeley gets more from every solution
- Communication-rich features engage students throughout their educational experience—from registration through coursework to assessment

Exceptional Stability

- Berkeley College is one of more than 1,500 institutions that have adopted the Blackboard Learn 9.1 platform because of its stability and enhanced functionality
- Blackboard Learn 9.1 supports integration of dynamic content across hundreds of courses
- Reliable infrastructure keeps online education up and running

Valuable Partnership

- Responsiveness of Blackboard team has been critical to maintaining Berkeley's operations
- Berkeley relies on Blackboard for disaster recovery services
- Long-term partnership with Blackboard has helped Berkeley fulfill the promise of online education

Full Connectivity Through Blackboard

Berkeley College's comprehensive use of Blackboard gives students many of the tools they need to succeed, said Smith. Course materials are always available, it's easy to connect with faculty and other students, and students have regularly updated information about progress and grades.

De Botton said Blackboard Learn 9.1 enables the seamless, constant connectivity that students need. "Being on 9.1 has really improved our up time and our ability to focus on delivering the rich and intuitive experience that students demand," he said.

"Blackboard Learn 9.1 supports our entire online community as well as our on-site locations. Berkeley's approach is full connectivity through Blackboard Learn," De Botton said. "We're looking forward to seeing how Blackboard will help us embrace new technologies in the future."

