Blackboard® and Kadir Has University



Blackboard Learn™ and Managed Hosting: Setting a New Standard in Academic Excellence

Established in 1997, Kadir Has University (KHU) is one of Turkey's most respected educational and cultural institutions. Based in Istanbul with three campuses, the university offers six areas of study—Engineering, Sciences and Humanities, Economics and Administrative Sciences, Communication, Law and Fine Arts—as well as several vocational schools. KHU has earned an international reputation as a center for research and scientific excellence.

Dedicated to continually improving the depth and quality of its educational programs, KHU opted to implement a learning management system to better serve its students, faculty and business needs. After exploring various open source options, the University selected Blackboard Inc. e-learning and managed hosting solutions. Regardless of time and place, Blackboard has delivered an exceptional e-Learning experience to the University's constituents in a highly efficient and cost-effective manner.

The Right Hosted Interface

Key to the selection process was the need to easily interface with the University's existing systems. Blackboard brought a high level of expertise and support, having deployed the Blackboard Learn™ platform in over 3,000 universities worldwide, including numerous institutions in Turkey. KHU Academician Sinem Senol says that she was impressed by the strategy and infrastructure behind the Blackboard Learn platform. The institution considered an open source coded program but decided against this since it would have been an expensive solution to seek out a full-time technical team with the necessary experience to manage the platform.

Adding to the appeal of Blackboard was its managed hosting solution, which provides 24/7 technical support o the University.



"Blackboard's education management system has brought a standard to our education and improved the quality of the classes."

Sinem Senol Kadir Has University academician



Blackboard Managed HostingsM is a fully-managed solution that allows institutions to focus on other educational initiatives and predictably manage their budget over time.

The adoption and effectiveness of the Blackboard Learn platform on campus can be directly correlated to whether or not it is readily available and performing in an optimal manner. This can be a burden to some IT departments and can divert resources away from other pressing initiatives. Blackboard Managed Hosting ensures the application is always up and allows the IT staff to focus on other priorities while still saving money in the long run.

Senol says, "The Blackboard solution is one of the only systems to offer integrated benefits in one easily implemented platform. This was a natural choice for us, one that has saved us considerable time and money."

A Successful Migration

KHU began the learning platform selection process in the summer of 2007, and upon selecting the Blackboard solution, activated the program in the fall. The new education management system was tested the first semester of the 2007/2008 academic year. The system was well received by students and faculty and went live the second semester.

By the spring of 2008, all classes were uploaded into the Blackboard Learn platform. Every semester, 800 - 900 classes are automatically uploaded into the Blackboard Learn platform. Approximately 4,200 students are active users and around 600 academicians have accounts in the system. About one-half of the students actively use Blackboard software at a basic level, while the remainder use the more advanced Blackboard Learn functions.

KHU's Education Technologies Support Office manages the Blackboard Learn platform, providing general support for a variety of functions including the Web conference room, smart boards in the classrooms, academician laptops and applications such as projections. Since the University has a registry system and a database of its own, the office uploads classes, with ongoing support from Blackboard.

"The Blackboard solution is one of the only systems to offer integrated benefits in one easily implemented platform. This was a natural choice for us, one that has saved us considerable time and money."

Sinem Senol

Information about enrolled students and academicians is also posted on the student information management system via daily updates. Students can easily access the system using one username and password. Students can automatically view all classes they are enrolled in and academicians can view and develop classes online.

Improving the Quality of Formal Education

All class information is stored in the Blackboard Learn platform, enabling instructors to build class content semester to semester. Class content, which takes time to build, is stored there as well in the event it will be used again the next semester. If similar subjects are taught, instructors can copy the class content automatically and easily prepare the class for that semester by simply adding extra subjects or making adjustments. Blackboard solutions have saved the instructors a great deal of time, allowing them to focus on other priorities.

The University has succeeded in using the Blackboard Learn platform to develop a community to manage social and extracurricular activities. Past difficulties in making announcements to students have been eliminated. For example, the University can now reach all first year students via the class area they created; business administration faculty secretaries can reach all students whenever needed; and internship announcements are made using the Blackboard Learn platform.

A Higher Standard

Serving today's diverse, cosmopolitan students requires innovative, borderless solutions. Students have come to expect higher standards and more choices in their learning opportunities. Managing the expectations of complex groups of students with differing academic and socioeconomic backgrounds can be challenging, particularly within traditional formal education platforms, which can lead to serious quality issues.

Senol credits Blackboard with providing an important alternative to manage the learning process. "Students can remotely access information through the Blackboard Learn platform. It makes life so much easier for an ambitious, motivated student. Now they have a source to make up for what they miss when they cannot attend the class. We have elevated our standards and left the students with no room for excuses. It is now easier to say 'I expect you to do this' and expect it to be done."

"Blackboard is also important as it brings the opportunity of e-learning to KHU. Since we have made an investment in the platform, university management felt the need to claim it administratively. It has had a strategic impact since all academicians are expected to comply with certain standards. We accept assignments online, perform exams, and provide instant feedback – all using the Blackboard Learn platform. We take advantage of all these massively, in terms of educational psychology. Generally speaking, it has become a strategy. Administration improves the quality of education and they expect academicians to ensure this. And the academicians expect the same from the students. This has become the administrative approach."

The University has achieved an overall usage rate of 75 percent. At the present, KHU does not provide distance education, but it is using the Blackboard Learn platform to increase participation in classes. More than 500 students have taken Ataturk's Principals and History of Turkish Revolution and Social Responsibilities, classes the University would not be able to provide in terms of costs and administration if it were not for Blackboard.

Senol says the University has already obtained a return on their investment in Blackboard services. In her "Students can remotely access information through the Blackboard Learn platform. It makes life so much easier for an ambitious, motivated student. Now they have a source to make up for what they miss when they cannot attend the class. We have elevated our standards and left the students with no room for excuses. It is now easier to say 'I expect you to do this' and expect it to be done."

Sinem Senol

financial analysis, she includes calculations as to how many students the University reaches, as well as the time and cost savings experienced to date.

A Bright, Borderless Future

The University plans to further extend the benefits of the Blackboard Learn platform, making it available to additional staff and implementing new programs. Academicians who work half-time, and may face more difficulties in reaching students than full-time faculty, will soon be able to use the platform to monitor students and improve the quality of their classes. The University also plans to enter into new markets like distance education and master programs, and to migrate more classes to the online environment.

"The number of academicians collecting assignments, making exams and preparing automatic tests on the Blackboard Learn platform is increasing every day," says Senol. "They are excited about using Blackboard, and the potential to reach students and help them learn in innovative new ways."

