

University of Idaho

DRIVING ADOPTION AND SIGNIFICANT COST SAVINGS WITH BLACKBOARD COLLABORATE

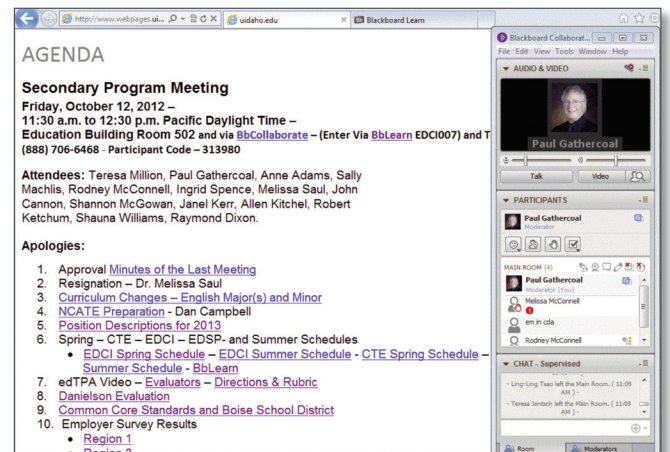
Facing budget cuts, the University of Idaho turned to Blackboard Collaborate to connect in and out-of-state faculty and staff, saving \$111,000 over three years. And with more faculty members participating in discussions and meetings, there is increased communication of issues and ownership of decisions, along with improved department morale and improved services to students.

The university's College of Education faculty is spread across as many as five locations throughout the state. In the past, the College of Education relied on expensive telephone conferencing and compressed video for meetings, paying \$67 per hour for video facilities and equipment support alone. With Blackboard Collaborate, the College of Education has significantly reduced its dependence on the more expensive technology.

Advocacy Plays Key Role in Technology Adoption

Blackboard Collaborate champions Dr. Michael Johnson, Department of Leadership and Counseling, and Dr. Paul Gathercoal, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, joined forces to facilitate adoption and encourage faculty to embrace the technology. Today, university faculty members are eager to meet and collaborate online in real time.

With Dr. Johnson providing individual tutorials to over 60 instructors and creating support resources and Dr. Gathercoal's consistent product use and instructor mentoring, distance is no longer a viable excuse for faculty failing to work together. As a result, both departments now use Blackboard Collaborate for faculty meetings and hybrid courses.



“Blackboard Collaborate has been a life saver for our two geographically dispersed departments, says Gathercoal. “Without it, faculty members would meet less, communicate less, and be less engaged in the running of their department.”

Department Faculty Stay Connected and Engaged

Department faculty members have embraced the Blackboard Collaborate platform, reducing dependence on costly compressed video. Meeting attendance from distant locations has increased, and more work is completed in an efficient manner.

“Our hours-long meetings move quickly and ensure participation from everyone, including faculty located on three campuses and two online instructors in Texas,” Gathercoal adds. “The agenda is displayed for everyone to see, and the meeting is run without a hitch. Faculty members attend, edit documents, take votes, and make curricular decisions.”

Committee Members Take Care of Business

In addition, the Accreditation Committee for the university's College of Education national accreditation with NCATE (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education) uses Blackboard Collaborate for its meetings. “While committee members are spread across all of our campuses, the work must be done as one unit,” Gathercoal explains. “Every other Friday, the NCATE committee meets over Blackboard Collaborate and conducts its business of advancing the university's programs for national accreditation.”

Impact of Collaboration

The impact of using Blackboard Collaborate can be assessed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Over the past three years, the university saved an impressive \$111,000 using Blackboard Collaborate.

- **Department of Curriculum and Instruction saved \$35,000 on meetings and \$30,000 on courses for a combined savings of \$65,000.**
- **Department of Leadership and Counseling cut costs by \$7,000 for meetings and \$36,000 for courses for a total of \$43,000.**
- **NCATE Committee bi-weekly meetings saved an additional \$3,000.**

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Because of Dr. Johnson's advocacy for Blackboard Collaborate at the college and university levels, he is now seen as an expert at the state level. In fact, Idaho recently adopted Blackboard Collaborate as its state-wide platform.

Paul Gathercoal, Ph.D.,
Chair, Curriculum and Instruction
University of Idaho

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From a qualitative perspective, meeting attendance from distant locations has increased because everyone can actively participate. And because of efficiencies, more work is completed faster. Plus, increased participation translates to increased ownership of decisions, increased communication of issues, improved morale in the departments, and improved services to students.

Better Programs Ensure Engaged Students

The big winners in the departments' use of Blackboard Collaborate are the students, who can be found in all corners of the primarily rural state. With increased communication and collaboration, faculty members deliver better programs, which benefit students greatly. And the students' increased ability to actively engage in course content and discussions makes classes more vibrant and meaningful.

“The bottom line is that our faculty and students benefit, along with our budgets,” concludes Gathercoal. “We look forward to becoming experts in other products in the Blackboard solutions portfolio.”