

Massimo Morigi, Blackboard
+44 (0)20 7025 4808 or massimo.morigi@blackboard.com

Blackboard Delivers Continued Innovation for Flagship LMS

New enhancements to Blackboard Learn Ultra support institutional and student success

WASHINGTON, Nov. 1, 2018 - [Blackboard Inc.](#) today announced new features and enhancements for Blackboard Learn with the Ultra experience. The company's feature-rich, cloud-based learning management system is seeing strong momentum, as institutions experience the personalized, proactive, and intuitive user interface that Learn Ultra offers for learners and educators.

Thanks to a regular release of new features and enhancements delivered in recent months, Blackboard Learn Ultra is helping learners, instructors, and administrators achieve better outcomes through a more modern and efficient user experience. The solution offers unmatched flexibility, enabling clients to adapt the LMS to their specific requirements and support academic success. Key new features enabled recently for the Ultra experience include:

- **Blackboard Ally integration:** The company's [award-winning accessibility solution](#) is now available to assist instructors and institutions in increasing the accessibility of online course content within Ultra courses. Blackboard Ally automatically runs course materials through an accessibility checklist that looks for common accessibility issues. The solution generates a range of more accessible alternatives for the instructor's original content including Semantic HTML, audio, ePub, and electronic Braille. It provides educators with guidance for improving accessibility of their course materials, while also supplying reporting on the current state of content accessibility at both the course and institutional level.
- **Gradebook enhancements:** Improvements to Learn Ultra's gradebook capabilities provide new and innovative features that meet the diverse needs of instructors. Recent updates include better searching capabilities, support for anonymous grading, and the ability to download the gradebook for manipulation and analysis.
- **Discussion Analysis:** One of the biggest challenges instructors face is the time it takes to evaluate and grade discussion forums. Recent improvements in graded discussions assist instructors in determining complexity and engagement for each student. The new Discussion Analysis feature displays key metrics such as critical thinking, sentence complexity, total responses, total replies, and average word count for each student. The critical thinking metric is analyzed using a Blackboard-developed algorithm, while sentence complexity uses Flesch-Kincaid readability benchmarks.

- **Institution Page development:** The Institution Page (formerly known as tabs and modules), provides Learn Ultra administrators with a responsive, adaptive, and intuitive way to convey pertinent institutional information to the right audience. Recent additions to the Institution Page include the ability to upload images and to surface Learning Tools Interoperability® (LTI®) tools outside of the course context.
- **SCORM support:** Learn Ultra now supports the ability to select, add, present, and use SCORM content in Ultra courses. SCORM is a content standard that is used by institutions, instructors, and instructional designers to author and present online learning materials and assessments to students. Instructors can import SCORM packages into an Ultra course and select grading options for the package as a whole or each content item individually.
- **Mobile enhancements:** A key component of Ultra functionality lies in the Blackboard and Blackboard Instructor mobile apps. Both apps now support Apple File integration, meaning students and instructors can now access all their cloud storage providers through Apple Files when adding discussion board attachments and documents/media to assignments.

As Blackboard continues to focus its resources and investments on driving innovation across the company's entire portfolio, clients continue to select Blackboard as their preferred partner in change. To date, nearly 100 institutions have turned on the Ultra experience. Examples of partners include:

- **University of the Sciences in Philadelphia (USciences):** USciences, a university uniquely focused on the sciences, pharmacy, the health professions, and emerging related disciplines, has prepared students to be leaders and practitioners in the healthcare and science fields for nearly 200 years. As part of its plan to enhance its online presence, USciences needed a modern, user-friendly LMS. The university chose Learn Ultra and turned on the Ultra experience in July 2018 as part of its efforts to achieve online growth. Administrators are confident that the user-friendly Ultra experience will help USciences attract and retain nontraditional students.
- **California State University, East Bay:** With 54% of its 15,000 students taking at least one online or hybrid course, Cal State East Bay is focused on providing the most reliable and innovative technologies for faculty and students. The university turned on the Ultra experience because of its 21st century design and user-friendliness. The Ultra Base Navigation was rolled out in 2017, and faculty is given the option to choose between using the Ultra Course View or Original Course View.
- **Belmont University, Tennessee:** At Belmont University, a 128-year-old institution with over 8,000 undergraduate and graduate students, the Department of Instructional Technology is focused on enhancing how learners interact with content, the instructor, and other learners – both inside and outside of the traditional classroom. In 2017, Belmont decided to enable the Ultra experience for Blackboard Learn and give professors the option to adopt the Ultra Course View. Faculty and students have found the Ultra Course View to be more visually appealing and user friendly. Ultimately, the enhancements enable Belmont to utilize Blackboard to bring about

innovations in information dissemination, learning, instructional delivery, and administrative practice.

In addition to Ultra, Blackboard continues to see great momentum with clients migrating to its SaaS (cloud-based) deployment of Learn, giving them the option to enable the Ultra experience. With recent deployments in China and South Korea, Blackboard now has Learn SaaS and Ultra available worldwide through six regional offerings. There are 433 clients in production with a growing pipeline of additional migrations planned through the end of the year.

"Blackboard is proud to showcase all the new features and capabilities we have delivered to improve the educational experience for our users," said Jim Chalex, Vice President of Product Management for Teaching and Learning at Blackboard. "We're seeing these efforts pay off as institutions around the world continue to select Blackboard as their preferred partner to meet the evolving needs of their learners."

Blackboard will demo the new Ultra features during EDUCAUSE, October 30-November 2 in Denver, Colorado. Attendees can visit Booth 1221 located in the exhibit hall. Educators can also try out the Ultra experience by using [CourseSites](#), Blackboard's platform that allows instructors to deliver live online courses for free.

About Blackboard

Our mission is to partner with the global education community to enable learner and institutional success, leveraging innovative technologies and services. With an unmatched understanding of the world of the learner, the most comprehensive student-success solutions, and the greatest capacity for innovation, Blackboard is education's partner in change.