A Peek Under the Hood of Blackboard Learn 9.1
Timeline

• Initial rollout
• General faculty training
• System rollout in production
Through our participation in the Blackboard Cohort sessions for institutions that have already moved from Bb Vista to Bb Learn, we learned that they found that when faculty had the opportunity and time to redesign their class from scratch, they found that preferable.
Bring up Bb Vista sample course and click on dropdowns next to “add file”, “create folder”, “add content” buttons. Mention that there are similar buttons on the Bb Learn interface, but there are many different content options.

The little “action links” dropdown arrow menus that appear next to various elements in Bb Vista, which provide context-sensitive menus, work exactly the same in Bb Learn.

One big difference that they’ll learn about as they work with Bb Learn is that there are many different options for what the “Course Entry Page” is. It can be a “home page” that’s much the same as a home page in Bb Vista. But they can actually specify other options as the Course Entry Page, such as opening to the Announcements tool, the new “Notifications Dashboard” or any other page or tool that they prefer students to see first.

Compared to Bb Vista’s Course Toolbar, the Course Menu in Bb Learn has many new options, though the course menu is still located along the left side in the same location as in Bb Vista. However, students will NOT see little green asterisks indicating new items. Indications of new activities appear on a “Notifications Dashboard”.

In Bb Vista, you could only customize the course toolbar just so much. You could hide items, you could re-order them (but not via drag and drop) and you could add a custom link that led to a website, but you couldn’t rename items on the menu, you couldn’t add dividers or logical subheadings to group the buttons,

Instead of Designer Tools, Bb Learn now has Course Management Control Panel with a number of new options.
The Course Menu stays in the same place on the left; the content frame on the right.

By default in a blank course shell, the Notifications Dashboard is the Course Entry Page (labeled as the “Home Page”. This can easily be changed, however, from the Customization section of the Control Panel, so another page or tool is designated as the Course Entry Page. For example, some faculty choose the Announcements tool as the Course Entry Page, since there are no longer pop-up announcements in Bb Learn.

Next we’ll look at what a migrated course “home page” looks like, and then we’ll talk about some of the new capabilities you’ll find in Bb Learn.
• Migrated courses display the information on the original course’s home page.

This screenshot shows what a migrated course section looks like. By default, a migrated course section does not show the new “Notifications Dashboard” as the Course Entry Page. Rather, Bb Learn takes all of the information and elements on the Bb Vista Home Page and recreates them on what is called a “Content Area”.

Notice that any customized icons will NOT appear in Bb Learn; customized icons are not supported.

Also, unlike Bb Vista, the layout in Bb Learn is always a simple, one-column vertical layout; there are no multiple column layouts.

A “Course Area” appears as a new button on the Course Menu, so students can navigate directly to it from the menu, and when clicked, it functions like a page that enables users to add content, tools, assessments, etc. to it.

Now let’s look in a little more detail.
Tell audience that after reviewing the items on these two slides, we’re going to look at two course shells:

One is a BLANK demo course which will be in one window, and the other is a simple little BUILT-OUT DEMO COURSE which will be in another window. Tell them that I’ll demonstrate a few of the methods in the blank course that I used to create the built-out course to give them an idea of how the new interface works.
In the built-out demo course, you’ll see these new content options in action!
What’s new & different?

- **Mashups** provide a simple way to add multimedia to your course (from Flickr, YouTube, Slideshare) without having to create it yourself.

- **Course Wikis** enable active collaboration around course content and group projects, and include grading integration.

- **Audio, Image, and Video tools** allow instructors to easily upload and integrate these media files in most common formats into a Content Area.

- **The Course Files tool** (previously File Manager) enables java-based drag and drop of folders and files from your PC into the Course Files area,...no more zipping and extracting folders.

- **New Blog options** enable instructors a choice of creating an individual blog for each student which others can read and add comments, OR a course blog (like in Bb Vista) where ALL students can post and/or comment on posts.

- **Assignments & Assessments** are graded in Grading Center rather than in the Assignment Dropbox or Assessments Manager.

- **Grade Center** has a number of new features: Easily customizable views, a field to provide individualized student feedback for each grade column, and an easy interface to weight different grade columns.
STEP BY STEP “PEEK UNDER THE HOOD” DEMO TALKING POINTS:

After reviewing the previous bulleted list slides, open the Blackboard Learn window, and show them the COURSE LIST, with my blank demo course as well as my “built-out” demo course.
Open the blank course in one window, and the built-out course in another window. Tell them that I’ll demonstrate a few of the methods in the blank course that I used to create the built-out course.

Highlights of Built-out course

Toggle Edit Mode on and off (No Build/Teach/Student View)
Notice how customized and organized the Course menu is. Menu items can be renamed and re-ordered with ease, and dividers and subheads added in order to group “like” buttons together.

Click the + sign in Course Menu to show the variety of new items that can be added to the course menu and also show how easily they can be renamed, hidden, or deleted course menu items.

Demo drag and drop reordering of Course Menu

Click the course menu action links dropdown menus and show how menu items can be renamed, hidden, or deleted.

Click on the “Course Content” button and show the different types of content and other action buttons.

I chose to create a single “Course Content” content area, and then I would add my weekly learning modules to it. Alternately, instructors could create separate content areas for each week, topic, or module which would appear on the Course Menu. But if you use Adaptive Release date settings to automatically “hide” certain modules or content from your students, then you would want to do the former. Can

Why? Because adaptive release date settings don’t work if applied to content areas, while they can be applied to items to learning modules or folders added to a content area, so the links to those modules won’t appear until I want them to. But that’s a personal design decision.

Under control panel, show:

Content Collection
Evaluation
Grade Center > Filter and Create a Weighted Column

In the Blank Course:

Rename the “Home Page” course menu item as “Notifications & Alerts”.
Rename the “Content” course menu item to “Course content”, which is what they’ll see I did in the built-out course.

Add an Item to the Course Content area.
Add a URL to the Course Content area, and have it open in a new window.
Add a tool link to the course menu for Email.

Create a sub-headers with a divider “Course Materials and Info” and reorder the menu items under the subheading.
Course Migrations

- Course content, including folders, learning modules, assessments, etc. all migrate over.

- Discussion topics import as “discussion forums”, including descriptions, and there are new grading options— instructors can grade forums OR individual threads, students can ‘subscribe’ to forums to receive updates via email.

- We’ll be doing testing on several sample courses that have been migrated from Bb Vista to Blackboard Learn and distribute a “migration checklist” for faculty.
Thanks for attending!

Questions? Contact Tobi Krutt at the System Office
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