

New Features from Blackboard Connect Boost Student Engagement at Colleges and Universities

WASHINGTON, /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Blackboard Inc. announces a range of product enhancements to the Blackboard Connect™ platform that extend its leadership in mass notification and alerts for colleges and universities.

The new features include the first point of integration between the Blackboard Connect and Blackboard Learn™ platforms, and allow higher education institutions to enhance student engagement by delivering communications in the modes that students and faculty prefer most.

The integration for Blackboard Learn is accomplished with the Connect Integration Toolkit for Learn™ (CITL), a feature that helps facilitate communication and collaboration between instructors and students. As students rely more upon mobile devices and services, CITL helps institutions better engage them with automated notifications from Blackboard Learn and customized messages from instructors.

With the integration, faculty members can easily inform students of assignments and deadlines, schedule changes and grade announcements, all delivered to mobile devices in voice, text or email messages directly from Blackboard Learn.

"Blackboard constantly strives to meet our students' evolving communication needs, and we always try to offer them the most advanced technology available," said Terry Patterson, Director, South Arkansas Community College, one of the first institutions to implement CITL. "Putting the power of Blackboard Connect in the hands of our instructors will help us provide the best learning environment possible."

In addition, Blackboard has added significant new features to its core mass notification platform, Blackboard Connect, including rich-text HTML e-mail support that allows clients to create and send messages with formatted text, embedded images and hyperlinks to make notifications more compelling and effective. Additional enhancements include:

- Secure document links that let clients share documents through email notifications without the capacity and cost constraints associated with traditional file attachments.
- Enhanced accessibility of Blackboard Connect messages, including automatically detecting teletypewriter (TTY) devices for the hearing and speech-impaired.
- Automated weather alerts during severe weather events, based on data from the National Weather Service/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

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"Mass notification service is rapidly becoming a critical component of the technology infrastructure for more higher education institutions," said Ed Miller, President of Blackboard Connect. "These new enhancements help colleges and universities better engage with digital natives and keep them connected with the teaching and learning experience no matter where they are."

Blackboard Connect is also introducing Behind the Blackboard™, a no charge knowledge base for all of its current clients that offers around the clock access to on demand help information, campus communication best practices, community discussion boards and other benefits.

For more information about Blackboard's mass notification solutions, visit <http://www.blackboard.com/Alert-Notification/Resources/Landing-Page.aspx>

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