



The University of Texas at Dallas
Science/Mathematics Education Department

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August 17, 2010

To: The Academic Senate

From: Homer Montgomery, Chair

Subject: Annual Report of the Distance Learning Committee of 2009-2010

1. Membership

The Distance Learning Committee was composed of: Rhonda Blackburn (OEE), Daniel C. Bochsler (SOM), John P. Fonseca (EE), Donald A. Hicks (EPPS), Marilyn R. Kaplan (SOM), Homer Montgomery (NS&M), and David P. Parry (A&H).

2. Meetings

The Committee met as necessary to complete an agenda we set out at the first meeting. Primarily, we focused on two goals: 1) Design and administer the first survey of student opinion about distance learning at UTD; and 2) redesign and administer a similar survey to the faculty. We hoped to be able to both better understand the opinions of the two groups and to provide a means to compare the two. Additionally, we had two speakers. David Parry presented a “state of the art” instructional session for the committee. Darren Crone spoke to us about how the elaborate distance learning program in SOM works. Finally, Rhonda Blackburn and Dan Bochsler produced the informative “Online Course Development Guidelines” which is available from either of the authors.

3. Surveys

The student survey was announced by President Daniel via email on January 14, 2010. The revised faculty survey was presented via email on April 23, 2010. Both were conducted using snavonline. Surveys were set up and administered by Katrina Adams of OEE.

4. Survey results

The following analyses provide rich detail from both student and faculty perspectives. Rather than reiterate the findings, we would suggest reading sections of the appended documents that interest you. What do your students and colleagues think about online learning at UTD? Find out. Survey results were compiled and organized by Christine Salmon and Rhonda Blackburn of OEE. The categories are: General Comments, Support, Ease of Use, and eLearning Tools. If anyone would like a copy of either survey, please contact Katrina Adams katrina.adams@utdallas.edu.

One can rapidly obtain a sense of the findings by reading the Sample Comments and Summary sections for each survey. (p. 3 and p. 12).

Examples

Faculty comments:

“eLearning should be used by every faculty, to the appropriate degree. It helps to keep things organized, saves time in preparing for subsequent courses, and at minimum is an effective way to drive some individual student learning to “their time” allowing more time for quality teaching planning and preparation.”

“Better than nothing...but I'd almost prefer nothing.”

Student comments:

“Compared to modern Web 2.0 sites, eLearning looks like something out of the stone age. It is very clunky and feels haphazard. The functionality is better than the looks, but still not great. Considering the main focus of UTD is technology, the site should look and work much better.”

“Please start offering online courses or I personally will have to transfer to a school that does.”

FACULTY SURVEY

UTD Instructional Technology Faculty Survey - Report on Analysis of Comments

Office of Educational Enhancement (OEE) – 972-883-6960 – oe@utdallas.edu – <http://oe.utdallas.edu> – HH 2.406

Sample Comments

This is the way of the future, and the future starts now. It is a highly interactive tool, while allowing time flexibility, and concentration of all relevant material in one place.

eLearning should be used by every faculty, to the appropriate degree.

The students seem to tolerate eLearning.

Grade submission from eLearning to Orion needs to be restored / established.

I had all my questions answered and problems resolved very fast and in a professional manner.

I found the eLearning staff very responsive to my requests for help.

Technical support was very helpful, but it took a long time to solve the problem.

You never get good technical support: it appears that any person that answers the phone has no idea about how to use E-learning.

They use elearning and appreciate that I can leave them updates, comments, etc and that they can discuss with each other.

It is easy to put materials in elearning.

The assignment submission and discussion features are nice.

Summary

Comments for the Instructional Technology Faculty Survey were asked from the following questions:

Q16 - I am satisfied with eLearning.

Q18 - My students are satisfied with their experiences in eLearning.

Q26 - Do you plan to continue to use eLearning for your courses?

Q40 - How satisfied were you with your experience(s) contacting UTD's 24/7 Helpdesk?

Q43 - How satisfied were you with your experience(s) contacting UTD's eLearning team (elearning@utdallas.edu)?

Q44 - Thank you for completing our survey. Please leave any additional comments here.

Comments from all questions were coded into six major categories, several with sub-categories.

General Comments

- Negative Comments
- Neutral Comments
- Positive Comments
- Student Satisfaction

Ease of Use

- Overall Comments
- Access
- Navigation
- Organization
- Technical Issues
 - Java
 - Login
 - Speed
 - Stability

Support

- Confusion
- Attitude of Service
- Knowledgeable
- Timely Response
- UTD 24/7 Help
- eLearning Team

Instructional Issues

- Instructional Uses
- Cheating
- Section Creation
- Copying Content
- Student Enrollment
- Link with Orion

eLearning Tools

- Overall Comments
- Desired Tools
- Assessments
- Assignments
- Calendar
- Chat
- Discussions
- Email
- Gradebook
- Syllabus

The report below describes in more detail these categories, beginning with a brief summary followed by representative comments.

General Comments

Positive Comments
Neutral Comments
Negative Comments
Student Satisfaction

Most of the entries coded as “general comments” were attitudinal, including positive (5), negative (6) and neutral comments (7). Neutral comments indicated that eLearning meets faculty needs at a basic level, but negative comments indicated that some faculty feel forced to use eLearning - “It’s required” - or feel eLearning is the only option available to them - “Do we have any other choice?” Other negative comments focused on technical aspects and indicate a “high learning curve” for usability. Positive comments focus on the convenience of eLearning for both faculty and students. Most faculty will continue to use eLearning, but some comments indicate a reluctance to do so.

Positive Comments

“Simply, I find eLearning effective and reasonably efficient.”

“I find it to be an important communication tool and saves a lot of paper and printing resources that I have relied on before.”

“I like elearning, and I think it is important for students to have access to this information.”

“eLearning is the way college level courses are going and more hybrid courses should be encouraged at university and school levels instead of just relying on a few faculty members who are ahead of curve; students must expect eLearning in traditional courses and not resist it; likewise, UTD must support student access to eLearning with more user friendly labs because many students can’t afford to have their own computing facilities.”

“eLearning should be used by every faculty, to the appropriate degree. It helps to keep things organized, saves time in preparing for subsequent courses, and at minimum is an effective way to drive some individual student learning to “their time” allowing more time for quality teaching planning and preparation.”

Neutral comments

“It is the integrated system, so I have to use it in order to be sure I can reach all of my students. You have me prisoner.”

“Doesn’t hurt and helps some students.”

“I am sure that as I learn it, it will be less annoying. It seems to have useful features, and the students seem to be able to navigate it to their satisfaction.”

“It seems to be working fine. I don’t have strong feelings one way or another.”

eLearning seems to be okay for most of my purposes.”

Negative comments

“Relative to previous methods, too much effort for too little value added.”

“Better than nothing...but I’d almost prefer nothing.”

“It is the only resource available to me on which to post copies of the syllabus, assignments. If another more “user friendly” resource were available, I would use that particular platform.”

"Ultimately, eLearning is too closed, too limited, and too finicky about browsers."

Student Satisfaction

Comments about student satisfaction were similar to faculty satisfaction, ranging from positive to negative. Neutral comments indicated that some faculty do not know how their students feel about eLearning or have not heard complaints or praise. Comments coded as negative indicate that faculty perceive a lack of enthusiasm by students for eLearning. Positively coded comments were mostly a general acknowledgement that students like eLearning, with a few pointing out the convenience of accessing course materials.

Positive comments

"I think most students like the fact that everything for my course is in one spot, even if it is a link to another web site. I don't ever hear them complain!"

"The feedback I have had has been good."

"They seem generally pleased,"

"Students like it. They just need to get used to using it."

Neutral comments

"I think the students will use whatever tool is provided and told to use to complete the course."

"Haven't heard horror stories or anyone rave about it."

"I don't know how much students are satisfied. I have not heard any complaints. Hence I chose the Neutral option."

"It seems, the students are OK with the system, they did not complain."

"Students did not report me either positive or negative response."

Negative comments

"Students are no happier than I am with eLearning."

"My students have learned to live with it. They know that it helps them in some ways, but they are not too thrilled about it."

"The students are not enthusiastic about eLearning."

"They mostly find what they need, but they are not excited about eLearning and it does not invite them to participate."

Support

**UTD 24/7 Help
eLearning Team
Attitude of Service
Knowledgeable
Timely Response**

Responses to Q43 about the eLearning Team were overwhelmingly positive, indicating responsiveness and competency. Comments about the UTD 24/7 Help Desk were mixed. Some faculty received prompt and effective help while others were unsuccessful. Comments indicated that support staff, whether the eLearning Team or the 24/7 Helpdesk, have good attitudes and treat faculty with respect.

eLearning Team

"They are a wonderful group of people! Very helpful and knowledgeable."

"... my problems have been solved quickly and efficiently."

"They have been responsive to requests and making changes to my courses."

"VERY helpful."

"Responses have been timely and helpful."

"I am confident in the help that the eLearning team provides."

UTD 24/7 Help

"They answered my questions quickly."

"I ended up solving my own problems every time when I called."

"I called the 800 number and the guy I reached knew so little about elearning I was really stunned. Luckily as I was teaching him how to log on and do some basic things I answered my own question."

"My problem was solved quickly and efficiently."

"Individuals have limited online knowledge and seem to react to scripts and are not particularly interested in being helpful, probably because the supervisory level also doesn't care."

"The live chat basically functioned as little more than an answering service, unable to answer my questions and relaying them, by email to the OEE, where it didn't get answered until the next day (thus defeating the 24/7 availability). (And then those answers were dissatisfactory because of eLearning's limitations, but that doesn't influence my assessment of why the 24/7 chat help was pointless.)"

Instructional Issues

Instructional Uses Cheating Section Creation Copying Content Student Enrollment Link with Orion

Comments coded as instructional issues fell into several sub-topics. Many relayed the instructional uses of eLearning by faculty. Most comments indicated eLearning is used to share course materials as well as means to communicate with students. A few comments indicated a good use of eLearning features for class activities. Some faculty are still confused by the changes in the way sections in eLearning are requested and created.

Comments also indicated some displeasure with copying content from

semester. Several faculty indicated that not having a direct link from eLearning to Orion, especially for enrollment updates and grade submission, is a concern. One comment relayed a concern with cheating in online quizzes.

Instructional Uses

"I therefore mostly use eLearning to provide course materials and supplements for the course, even though it is capable of much more."

"Using e-learning helps me reach a large number of students quickly and effectively. I can contact them individually or as a group, and can provide them with their marks confidentially."

"Being able to communicate with my students through eLearning (i.e. handouts, announcements, etc.) at any time is very valuable."

"I post all course outlines, non-textbook required readings, optional readings, illustrative exercises & questionnaires, videos, and extra credit opportunities on eLearning. I send announcements between classes, I grade using eLearning, and all papers are turned in on eLearning. My course is nearly paperless - I haven't lugged home a big stack of papers in several years."

"It provides a course specific platform for posting course related materials including weekly power point presentations. It allows exchanging ideas through discussions and email. I consider eLearning user friendly allowing efficient use of time and effective use of web to provide course related material to students conveniently."

Section Creation and Copying Content

"It is now much harder for me to set up and manage my classes. I have a lot less access and control over my past classes and materials."

"I am confused every semester about how to get my courses for the next semester and how to copy over my content."

"...the lack of access to old courses is a problem as is the time it takes to move an old course to a new shell for use in a future semester."

Link with Orion

"Exporting grades to SIS is no longer available which is VERY burdensome for large classes."

"...we cannot submit grades via elearning STILL."

"Please update my eLearning student list in REAL TIME so I know who is actually enrolled and who is not."

Ease of Use

Overall Comments Navigation Organization Speed & Stability Technical Issues

Comments coded as ease of use fell into many of the same sub-topics as the Student Survey. Overall comments were mixed ranging from "user friendly" to "clunky" and "prickly". Like the Student Survey, many comments focused on difficulties users faced. eLearning is not generally perceived as easy to use. Respondents indicated several specific technical issues: javascript errors, browser issues, speed and stability. Several respondents indicated that eLearning has a high "learning curve".

Navigation for faculty and for students (as reported to faculty) is a concern.

Overall comments

"I have to relearn how to do things every time I plan a new assignment. There is a lot I CAN do, but the learning curve is too high."

"Students have hard time navigating and understanding the organization - Look at Facebook or Twitter for UI simplifications - this is where the students live. Give them 1990's design - most of them couldn't even type on keyboard when eLearning design was launched."

"I think it is not as user friendly as it could be."

"Cumbersome for advanced use (not related to training)."

"It is me (faculty) that I [sic] have to go thru lots of hoops just to post materials."

"Students report that they find eLearning unintuitive and clunky."

Navigation

"The platform is difficult to navigate. The "Blackboard" platform that we used previously was much more intuitive and easy to navigate."

*"[I]t is confusing why different functions are available in the "teach" and "build" sections [sic]."
"... [the] most frequent complaint is lack of flexibility and terrible -- repeat TERRIBLE -- navigation and interfaces."*

"Students have hard time navigating and understanding the organization."

"Changes are time-consuming and the flow is not always intuitive."

Speed and Stability

"I am apprehensive about eLearning mostly for reliability reasons. I cannot afford trouble accessing course material during the course of a semester."

"The bugs are mostly out of it now; it is reliable and dependable."

"They seem quite tolerant of the glitches."

"I have found the course to be accessible to both my students and me 24 hours a day, 7 days per week with rare interruptions to service delivery."

"My biggest concern with elearning is that it can be quite slow at times."

"Please try to make the system faster."

eLearning Tools

Assignments	Gradebook
Chat	Quizzes
Discussion	Files
Email	Desired tools

Respondents commented on the various tools in eLearning (see the box to the left). The tools most mentioned were gradebook, mail, files and discussions. Nine comments specifically referenced difficulty with the gradebook, some positive but most were negative. Again the issue of exporting

grades from eLearning to Orion was pointed out. Comments indicate that faculty sometimes have difficulty uploading files and posting materials. Concerns about email focus on the forwarding feature that does not allow replies. Discussion comments were mixed, some faculty use the tool with success and others had difficulties. Several comments suggested other tools, particularly collaborative social media, that could be incorporated into eLearning.

"Some of the tools are not user friendly."

"...apparently it has social functions they like--being able to communicate with each other and arrange study and work meetings."

Gradebook

"For example, yesterday we wanted to download some information from gradebook, and found that it was extremely cumbersome to do that."

"When a student drops the course I don't want to see their (usually ridiculously low) averages reflected in the statistics in eLearning. To get a real indication of how the students actually still in the class are doing, I again have to export to excel) and calculate the average and mean there."

"I am able to record and average grades very quickly."

Files

"It's difficult to post slides."

"I can upload the changed syllabus to elearning after the changes, but so far I haven't figured out how to get all the links to work."

"Students find eLearning's lack of ability to distribute multiple file databases frustrating, as I do."

Email

"When email is forwarded to me from elearning, net id is not included so I cannot reply without going into elearning or use the directory."

Discussions

"Board discussion icon remains on even when all discussions are read."

Desired Tools

"For it to work for me, it really should have a wiki component so that students can collaborate."

"eLearning doesn't work the way students (or I work) and lacks important tools, particularly in terms of collaborative work and social networking."

"They also resent the fact that they can't get push notifications or RSS feeds to keep them in contact when they don't login on a regular basis."

"Having a UTD template, departmental and/or school templates, course templates, and the ability to create our own course templates would be fantastic!"

STUDENT SURVEY

UTD Instructional Technology Student Survey - Report on Analysis of Comments

Office of Educational Enhancement (OEE) – 972-883-6960 – oe@utdallas.edu – <http://oe.utdallas.edu> – HH 2.406

Sample Comments:

I firmly believe the school should invest in a reliable internet system. Consider the one at DCCCD. I took an online course there with no issues but it seems that every online technology at UTD (eLearning, Orion, Galaxy, etc.) malfunctions on a regular basis. For how technologically advanced our school claims to be, I would expect higher quality [sic], reliable and functioning technology.

Please encourage more teachers to use eLearning, as it has proved to be a useful tool for myself, among other students.

eLearning may be bad, but Orion is much much worse.

I love that all of my course information is all online, on one site. I love that I can access it on my itouch while im in the

UTD campus buildings that way I can always check it.

UTD should be ashamed of not keeping up with technological trends, especially given its origins. The fact that only one class in my undergraduate degree plan was available online is a disgrace. Even the DCCCD offered many classes online and I found them to be a great alternative for a non-traditional, returning adult student like me. UTD should embrace online education or it will fall behind the universities that do.

I really love UTD online courses. The content is outstanding. The eLearning platform is horrible, though.

Thank you for enhancing my learning experience at UTD!

This software is not really integrated in the academic environment. Most instructors prefer not to use it at its full capability, or not to use it at all.

I have only been able to advanced as far as I have in my education because of on-line classes.

E-learning is a useful tool and helps me succeed in my classes. I like having documents and other tools available at any location.

I have never really had any problems with the elearning program. It helps me to stay in contact with my instructors and the aids in an organized manner because it is seperated [sic] by the classes.

“Please lower tuition for online classes.”

Compared to modern Web 2.0 sites, eLearning looks like something out of the stone age. It is very clunky and feels haphazard. The functionality is better than the looks, but still not great. Considering the main focus of UTD is technology, the site should look and work much better.

Summary

Comments for the Instructional Technology Student Survey were coded into six major categories, several with sub-categories.

Distance Learning

- Need More
- Attitude
- Cost & Fees
- Transfer
- Technology Desired
- Preference

Ease of Use

- General Comments
- Stability
- Navigation
- Speed
- Organization
- Technical Issues

Support

- Confusion
- Attitude of Service
- Knowledgeable
- Timely Response

Instructor Issues

- Use eLearning or not
- Ability to use
- Design of courses

Confusion

eLearning Tools

Announcements
Assignments
Calendar
Chat
Discussions
Email
Gradebook
Grading Forms
Notifications
Quizzes
Roster
Syllabus
Web Links
Who's Online

The report below describes in more detail these categories, beginning with a brief summary followed by representative comments.

Distance Learning

Need More

Attitude

Cost & Fees

Transfer

Technology Desired

Preference

Comments about distance learning ranged from high praise to intent to transfer if distance courses were not offered. Comments were coded into six major categories (see box to the left).

Need More

Need more comments by far outweighed any other category (more than 25 specific mentions). They generally called for UTD to provide more online classes, particularly for more undergraduate classes. The **Need more** comments cited the flexibility offered by online courses that allows students

to conduct their studies while working and to reduce their travel distance and travel time.

"UTD needs to offer online courses! It would benefit many students by allowing them to reach their goals. Please start offering online courses or I personally will have to transfer to a school that does."

"UTD should be ashamed of not keeping up with technological trends, especially given its origins. The fact that only one class in my undergraduate degree plan was available online is a disgrace.... UTD should embrace online education or it will fall behind the universities that do."

"I have been an UTD staff member for over 10 years. I have only been able to advanced as far as I have in my education because of on-line classes. I am unable to leave work to attend classes on campus. I hope this program expands in the near future."

"PLEASE!!!! Give students the option to do online studies..."

"I would love to see more undergraduate courses offered on line. It would really help people who want to learn but don't have the flexibility to attend daytime classes. Too many courses are not offered in the evening."

"I would like to stress how useful online courses are to students with a tight schedule. Please offer more online courses."

"I prefer the online classroom. Being able to work at my own pace helps with a busy life. As time is precious, online classes allow me to use my time more efficiently."

"Making Distance Learning an efficient tool is imperative. If more classes could be taught in a "Virtual Classroom", the necessity of commuting to campus on a regular basis would decrease, thus reducing the overall cost of attendance."

Attitude

Attitude comments were coded into Positive and Negative comments about distance learning. Most comments were positive, indicating that student like the option of having online classes and desired more. Negative comments tended to focus on cost, on technical problems or on how the course was designed, although several did suggest that certain courses - majors courses or graduate courses - were not suited for online learning.

"Online Education was very appropriate [sic] and rewarding for me."

"Online learning is great & I would definitely recommend it to

"I really love UTD online courses. The content is outstanding."

other prospective students with busy professional &/or personal schedules!"

"I answered no for on line courses. The reason for that is: I learn better face to face. Some courses I will consider [sic] taking on line, not the courses for my major."

"E-learning is more time consuming than I believe it is meant to be. By the time I access the discussions, assignments, etc after dealing with checking your browser and changing settings, I could have just attending class that evening and had a formal discussion or retrieved my assignments from the syllabus."

Cost and Fees

Several respondents commented on the cost of online/distance courses, indicating dissatisfaction with additional fees.

"Perhaps the only unfortunate part of the online course is the added fee."

"I think elearning should not charge student "distance learning fee". I paid more money for one of my TBA course. I'm not satisfied with that extra charge policy. In many universities [sic], the on-line course usually cheaper than the traditional course. However, UTD goes the reverse way. At any time if I can choose on-campus course, I will not choose on-line course. Thank you."

Transfer

Several respondents indicated that they would have to transfer to other institutions because UTD's online course offerings are insufficient.

"I am considering transferring to SMU because of their distance education program. I will be able to take any graduate class as a distance student, and then I won't have to worry about needing to miss class because of work, or not finishing my degree in a timely manner due to limited class availability. If this were an option at UTD I would stay either way."

"Please start offering online courses or I personally will have to transfer to a school that does."

Desired Technology Use

Respondent comments included requests for specific technologies, including podcasting, webconferencing and wikis.

"...I believe our learning experience can be enhanced by new media (podcasting, wikis, etc.)..."

"Please podcast eLearning lectures. Also, it would be huge to make free conference calling available at [sic] eLearning students for meetings (ala GoToMeeting or Verizon Conferencing)."

"Have you considered providing a taped recording of the inclass [sic] lecture as the distant education content? In class lectures involve detailed explanation of concepts and the distant students can also benefit from the questions asked in the class."

Preference

Several comments stated specific preference for traditional face-to-face classes, although some did acknowledge the benefit of online components. Interestingly, several comments indicated that graduate classes are better suited to the traditional face-to-face format.

"I prefer classes that deliver the lectures online. The hassle of discussion online quickly becomes redundant and is basically a check box substitution for speaking in class. I like taking the tests online and my convenience."

"I prefer traditional education, although I would like to have more online course offerings at UTD."

"I think eLearning and online courses can be very helpful for undergraduates, especially in basic courses. I just don't see as much of a use for them at the graduate level, at least not in A&H."

I feel that my coursework as a graduate student necessitates the traditional, face to face interaction that only the classroom can bring.

"At the graduate level an important part of what I pay for is to be part of a discussion in a seminar setting. Blackboard software can be very effective in managing a course without going to the extreme of offering the course only online. I realize that with online courses you can have a single professor be responsible for more courses and students thus reducing university costs, but as I stated earlier, part of what I pay for and expect is face to face contact with other graduate students and the faculty in an on-campus environment."

Instructor Issues

Use eLearning or not Ability to use Design of courses

Comments revealed three major instructor issues: whether or not instructors do or should use eLearning, their ability to use it or other technology well, and the design of courses using eLearning. These last two can be construed as a matter of training.

eLearning use

Many of the comments indicate a desire for more instructors to use eLearning, either for distance learning or as support for face-to-face classes. Respondents cited primarily immediate access to class materials. Also indicated was student perspective of a negative faculty attitude toward eLearning. There were comments expressing a preference for web-based tools in place of eLearning.

"I wish all of the professors would go to eLearning, it makes it much easier to have access to the class materials and grades."

"Minimum duty of a professor"

"...many professors and lecturers choose not to use it, making eLearning only semi-helpful."

"Not all teachers use it. More consistency."

"It's difficult for instructors to use; two of my instructors refuse to use it, instead relying on their personal UTD web space to distribute [sic] notes and assignments."

"...professors hate it so much they hardly update or use it. t makes it frustrating."

"I'd like to see it used more uniformly across all classes, though. It helps me to have all material for all classes organized consistently in a single place."

"I am satisfied with the information it provides, but I do wish more instructors would make use of it."

"Communication between students and their instructors is an essential key to success, and I believe more utilization of eLearning by teachers and students would be a mutually beneficial experience. eLearning provides additional avenues for communication and is a great way to receive/submit assignments, and an easy place to make materials available, such as the class syllabus and lecture notes."

"NO" I don't want instructors to use eLearning, I want them to use the real Internet."

Instructor ability to use

Comments clearly showed a perception of instructors who either are unable to use eLearning as students believe it should be or instructors who simply do not use the functions students prefer.

"The eLearning is good when the professors use it appropriately. Sometimes, they don't post everything online, and so if I have to go out of town for work, I have no idea what was covered, or what I need to do if some of the professors don't post information online. I've had to drop a class because of the lack of information received online."

"This software is not really integrated in the academic environment. Most instructors prefer not to use it at its full capability, or not to use it at all. Some additional training would be useful for both students and instructors."

"eLearning is a great tool to have if it is utilized properly. It is apparent that some professors are not taking advantage of the gradebook, calender [sic], and assignments."

"...many time professors are not prompt at answer questions on discussions and email, if promptness and thoroughness are not going to be observed, then they should not use these tools at all."

"For Blackboard software to be effective for graduate students, the faculty, or at the very least their TAs, should be trained on and encouraged to use the Blackboard tools."

"Professors need to learn how to use it properly."

"Many faculty either avoid using it, or use it only to post assignments and grades. It has lots of potential that is not being realized. Perhaps a mandatory training for all faculty, TA, and students if it is a university goal to adopt it fully."

"It's frustrating when it doesn't work properly and when professors don't use it correctly but overall I like eLearning."

"...teachers/TAs do not all seem to know how to use it properly. In one class the TA would post assignments to the discussion forum and only on the day of submission (and sometimes after) would the teacher post the actual assignment to be submitted. Then the TA would post a grade independent of the posted assignment (so the assignment would appear ungraded if examined)."

Design of courses

Calls for more uniform design.

"Instructors aren't consistent, it would be good if there were a few tools used by each professor...maybe syllabus and announcements at a minimum...."

"eLearning seems to be an efficient tool, but the professors are not utilizing all that it offers."

"Requiring uniform usage of eLearning by faculty would greatly benefit students in that they would know what to expect and be familiar with navigation in eLearning."

"It appears that distance students are short changed. It is hard to believe that even without all the inclass [sic] discussions, the lecture for 3 credit hour class can be just 25-30mins per week! The lectures do not go in depth into the topic and are only power point deep - no detailed explanations at all...."

"Some instructors throw everything to the front page. If there is a syllabus link, then all the teachers should make an attempt to use it rather than posting in different sections. This makes it harder for students to find things."

"Many professors lack the proficiency to post their syllabus or their gradebook on elearning. The syllabus is best to view and download as a PDF file, but many teachers choose to give a MS Word file, which is hard to download."

"It's hard to find the information I need sometimes since different instructors post things in different online avenues. Sometimes information is emailed and not on elearning or the information is not on elearning and not emailed. The way the instructors use the program is not very efficient."

Confusion

Comments indicate that some respondents were confused about eLearning. They were unable to distinguish elearning from WebCT or Blackboard as well as WebCT from Blackboard.

"not sure how to distinguish [sic] that from Blackboard which is already used. I certainly prefer to have all materials in a single CMS/LMS."

"Please get something that works at least as well as WebCT."

"It's not that I don't like eLearning, just don't know anything about it. I've used Blackboard for all my classes."

"I prefer the Blackboard layout to eLearning/WebCT..."

"i am not familiar with 'elearning.' however i can tell you that 'blackboard' leaves a lot to be desired."

"I have no knowledge of the purpose of eLearning. None of my instructors have used it. I don't understand how this would be beneficial and no duplication of material posted on BlackBoard."

"WebCt seemed to have worked fine, why did you try to fix something that was not broken?"

Ease of Use

General Comments

Stability

Navigation

Speed

Organization

Technical Issues

Comments coded as "ease of use" ranged from the very negative to positive. We identified six sub-codes as listed in the box. Other than the general comments, which included positive, most of the sub-code comments were negative and focused on difficulties users faced.

eLearning is not generally perceived as easy to use. The word "buggy" or some derivation of it was used several times, as was "not intuitive" and "clunky". eLearning was compared to other web-based programs, which were seen as simpler, easier to use and more desirable. Stability and speed were clearly issues. Respondents indicated several specific technical issues: difficulty logging in (too many clicks), javascript errors, popup windows, and browser issues. Several comments suggested a single login for all UTD technical services (eLearning, Orion, Galaxy).

General comments

"eLearning is NOT intuitive to use as either a student or instructor."

"eLearning is easily one of the worst programs I've ever used. It's excessively bloated... and the navigation is completely unintuitive...."

"eLearning is a terrible system and needs drastic renovations to become feasible."

"It is usable."

"My experiences with eLearning are split between helpful and frustrating."

"I thought WebCT 4 was bad. It seems like every "upgrade" since then has added more bloated features that I have never used... Overall, let us see a solid product that does a few things well rather than one that fails at the million things it tries to do."

"I have used WebCT during my undergraduate studies and I felt comfortable with the eLearning environment. eLearning's uptime was also fairly good. My studies were never affected as a result of an eLearning outage."

"I have had little trouble with e-learning. Most of the materials posted are easy to access."

"It's not bad, but it could be much more user friendly. It's a clunky system that mostly does what it set out to do, but it could be much more seamless."

"I really love UTD online courses. The content is outstanding."

"eLearning is great system and I believe is better than the previous version of WebCT. I believe it would have been very difficult to learn interactively without eLearning."

"Elearning has been an effective tool to access course information and materials. I have also found it very useful when tracking my grades and communicating with the teacher's assistant."

"eLearning is nothing special. Supplementing eLearning with tools like GoToMeeting (or other on-line collaboration / conferencing tools) is critical for on-line group projects. Also, Google Docs and Microsoft Office Live are free and offer much better tools for on-line collaboration than eLearning does."

Stability

"eLearning is, at present, dysfunctional and undependable."

"Last semester the eLearning site was down more than the independent [sic] sites my instructors used. Another factor is compatibility ease of use and speed with my instructors sites vs. the eLearning site that UTD provides."

"Elearning is very buggy, inefficient, and difficult to use."

"It crashes often and is not as easy to use as the Pearson Education...."

Speed

"I don't think eLearning is too hard to navigate, but sometimes it's confusing and/or slow."

"I find that accessing the eLearning site is cumbersome and difficult, and that the entire system is too slow to navigate."

"The software is slow and cumbersome."

"Pages take forever to load, and you're not permitted to open more than one main browser tab to elearning at once. Combined, these two features create a terrible user experience."

Organization

"The site is inconvenient, poorly designed, clunky (java?), and is generally only useful because there is no other method available for teachers to send files to students."

"I found that I spent too much time learning new techniques rather than the material. It was very frustrating to need to master one thing before being able to get to the material. While I see an importance in both, I often felt as if I was spending too much time dealing with the structure rather than the content of the class."

"The software used (WebCT/eLearning/...) is extremely inefficient."

"The layout and organization could be more user-friendly. The site has an archaic look and feel. Crowded."

Navigation

"It is rarely used in my classes because it is difficult to navigate."

"Very slow and very unpleasant to navigate."

"it takes a lot of clicks and requires popups. i swear it acts like 90's software."

Technical Issues

"...the additional login hassles and cookie separation are new annoyances."

"The on-campus computers often have error messages when trying to open eLearning. On my home computer, I inconsistently receive [sic] Java & javascript errors."

I have to click three screens before I am even able to log in. The system is down sometimes when I have to turn in assignments.

The one thing I would like out of the current system is a single public url for accessing eLearning instead of the current system.... Why five(5) clicks before I can enter my credentials? It makes no sense.... Apart from that, eLearning is alright.

To many Log in's. You have to log into galaxy to check email, then you have to log into elearning to see the courses and payments are done thru orion. Would like to have you log in for all.

It's not so much a problem with eLearning, but the campus' internet services are hugely disorganized. Students are forced to log into 3 different web services to manage their school activities. These should be centralized/integrated.

The email system is truly cumbersome [sic] and it needs to be linked directly to the UTD email system...

There are pop ups coming up whenever I open the eLearning site, and that's very irritating.

The website is annoying when I have to access galaxy, elearning and that that new orion nonsense [sic] simply to check emails, grades, register and course material.....someone in the IT department who thought it would be fantastic MUST be insane!!!! This is ridiculous! [sic]

"It is not compatible with the browser I use- Google Chrome."

Support

**Confusion
Attitude of Service
Knowledgeable
Timely Response**

Comments for the Support question were coded into four sub-categories (see the box to the left). Many comments indicated a confusion of eLearning support and HelpDesk with the UTD IR HelpDesk. In both cases, respondents described a variety of response time and issue solutions, ranging from immediate response but no solution to long response time and no solution. Overall, though, support personnel were seen as polite and trying to help. The

Confusion

"They were helpless in aiding me in setting up my email on campus to work with my work computer. I had to utilize my work IT person to get my computer to be useable."

"The UTD helpdesk was polite but unable to help me with my problem. They referred me to the elearning helpdesk, and they were able to help me."

“The response was quick and I accomplished what I needed.”

Attitude of Service

“The people who answer my questions (I have used the help desk on more than one occasion) were very friendly and seemed competent. Even after I hung up the phone, they were searching for answers to my problems and got back to me in the same day. I was impressed that they found answers so quickly - it made me feel valued as a student at this university.”

“Timely and knowledgeable representative that was able to fulfill my request.”

“Every time I've called them, whether it was for a password reset or troubleshooting information, I've always been helped quickly and completely.”

“I had no idea how to access my email, and they were super helpful.”

“When I called it was for a very simple question that I could have answered myself if I had taken the time. So when I asked the question whoever was on the other side was very helpful and did not appear frustrated at all at the simplicity of my question. Those are the things that one as a user appreciates.”

**“When I called, I did get help.
That is what I expected.”**

“The technician didn't understand my problem, was not able to resolve it, didn't have a helpful attitude. (NOTE: this is NOT the response I get from actual UTD IT technicians. It was clear this was a call center located elsewhere.)”

Knowledgeable

“They couldn't help me. My browser crashed in the middle of an online mid-term. They were useless. I had to email the professor and take the exam over. It was a very stressful experience.”

“[T]hey are good but there is only so much you can do with e-learning and the major problems they cannot answer.”

“eLearning helpdesk could not solve my problem or tell me why the system was down. I guess they're good for "documentation" in case I have an issue while taking an on-line exam.”

“As mentioned, the response in case of difficulties with eLearning has to be addressed promptly and in a serious fashion. The treatment was (1) I do not know when the service will become available again (2) Please try again and Good Luck. There is no accountability for when the service will be come available in case of issues.”

Timely Response

“I had a quick response and the problem was resolved within the day.”

“My call and my questions were answered right away.”

“They were able to solve the problem quick and efficiently with high service satisfaction.”

“Took 2 months to respond to an issue I had.”

“It took too long to reply to my problem and not until I contacted them again. Unfortunately they gave me a wrong answer.”

eLearning Tools

Announcements	Grading Forms
Assignments	Notifications
Calendar	Quizzes
Chat	Roster
Discussions	Syllabus
Email	Web Links
Gradebook	Who's Online

Respondents included many comments on the various tools in eLearning (see the box to the left). The tools most mentioned were mail, quizzes and discussions. The comments were mixed - some liked the discussions and others criticized the tool. Timing out seemed to be the most common complaint for quizzes. Several respondents indicated a desire for email notifications and for those notifications to go to a personal email address.

"I enjoy being able to see my grades online and get averages before they "officially" appear-- this helps me keep track of where I need to be."

"eLearning has been very easy to use. It is very helpful at times also, especially discussions, when you have problems its very easy to get some help from other classmates. Assessments are also easy to take."

"eLearning has improved my education by allowing me to easily access course material in a timely and efficient manner. I especially like the web link feature where professors include extra information, and calendars that remind me of upcoming quizzes, exams, and homework assignments."

"Mail is cumbersome and reliability is an issue."

"Quizzes online are not user-friendly."

"The discussion boards is not intuitively laid out and it's hard to view an entire thread at once and there doesn't seem to be a way to set that to be the default. The discussion board also causes most computer to hang for a minute when first opened (probably because Java is being loaded.)"

"The discussion threads are often hard to follow. For example, I prefer my discussions to be 'unthreaded' however, there isn't a button I have found to lock in that option - so I have to choose it every time which is annoying."

"When a professor posts an assignment on eLearning, I do not receive an email that says I have a new assignment. I would like to receive an email to my personal email account (not my UTD account) letting me know that there's a new assignment posted for my ABC 1234 course."

"...the "Attempt 1" is not clear in that there is more than one attempt allowed for an assignment."

"As a TA, I would like to see more flexibility in defining rubrics for assignments. The grading rubric tool is designed to work with writing assignments and doesn't accommodate math or science work very well."

UTD Distance Learning Committee

"i would like the elearning module to be improved in a better way..like i would like to know if anyone has posted anything or replied through a notification to my email..jus[sic] like have we get notifications from facebook.."