Cool Tools

Achievements

Napoleon Bonaparte once said, "A soldier will fight long and hard for a bit of colored ribbon." It seems that we as instructors now have the power to test Napoleon's theory with Blackboard's new Achievements tool; this tool gives us the power to give our students digital badges and certificates for completing things in our Blackboard courses. The Achievements Tool can be accessed by clicking on the "Course Tools" menu and then clicking on "Achievements (See image on right)."

The Achievements Tool has four functional areas: achievements description, reward, notification and sharing. Students must meet the instructor-defined criteria before a reward is earned. Students are notified when a reward is earned.

Achievements Description

The achievements description describes the achievement and identifies the criteria students must meet to receive a reward. There are three achievement types:

- Course Completion: The certificate reward is required, but an additional badge is optional.
- Milestone: The reward can only be a badge.
- Custom: Badges, certificates, or both are allowed.

The Achievements tool is built upon the content adaptive release technology of Blackboard Learn, so criteria supported by adaptive release are supported for the awarding of an achievement. This currently includes the following items:

- Attempts on test, surveys or assignments
- Grades on tests, surveys, assignments, graded discussion boards, graded wikis, graded blogs, graded journals
- Manual Grade Center columns
- Marked reviewed statuses on course content
- Group membership or specific users

- Starting date for earning the achievement

<u>Reward</u>

Each achievement must have *at least* one reward identified during set up. The reward is the item awarded upon meeting the required criteria. It is given in the form of badges and certificates.

Digital badges are an online representation of a mastered skill or completed educational milestone. It is a digitally signed and verified badge that cannot be copied and used by a different learner. The description and criteria for earning the badge are digitally encoded in the badge so others viewing the badge can see how it was earned.

For badges, a library of existing badges is available along with the option to upload a custom badge. For certificates, a small library of certificate formats is presented. At present you cannot have customized certificates.

<u>Notification</u>

Students are notified immediately they have received an achievement reward. This appears as an overlay notification at the top of the page they are currently viewing. It is possible the student will receive the reward when he or she is elsewhere in the course because an instructor graded an item or manually entered a grade. The overlay notification will appear wherever the student may be within the course.

If the student is issued the achievement reward while not in that Blackboard course— they are offline or in a different course—the notification will appear upon next access of the course in which the achievement reward was issued. They will also receive a new update message in My Blackboard indicating that they have earned a new achievement in their courses.

Within a course, the student can see all earned achievements as well as those not yet earned. Instructors can look at each individual achievement and easily see the total number and the names of students who have earned a reward or completed the course.

If you would like to use the Achievements Tool, I suggest that you use it sparingly as too much of a good thing is never a good thing. Do your best to make the badges and certificates you offer are meaningful and worth "fighting hard for."

If you have any questions on these or any other of Blackboard's cool tools, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Tom McKinney at extension 4522.