Cool Tools

Big Brother Works for You, Part II

Course Reports: Machines Can Do Cool Stuff

Trying to figure out what your students are doing and when they are doing it can be maddening, but Blackboard has the ability to gather an amazing amount of data concerning what you students are doing in your online class and when they are doing it. This can be useful in determining if your students are doing what they are supposed to, or if they are actually doing anything at all.

In the last edition of Cool Tools, I looked at the Retention Center and the kinds of information it can provide for you. This month I will discuss the various kinds of course reports that Blackboard can generate.

To access Blackboard's reporting functions, log into the class you want the information from, click on Evaluation, and then on Course Reports (left). This will pull up a new window which lists the various kinds of reports that Blackboard can create. To run a report, move you mouse over the report title you wish to run, click on the down arrow which appears to the right of the report title, and click on run. This will pull up a new screen where you can put in your desired parameters.

IMPORTANT: Blackboard will only report on items that you have told it to, so remember to click on Track Number of Views when setting up folders, Items, and assignments in your course. If you do not, Blackboard will not be able to report on student access of those items.

To be honest, Blackboard does a poor job at describing just what each report is, so when I started using reports I have to play around with them to discover the one I needed. Below is a brief description of what information is contained in each report type.

All User Activity inside Content Areas: This report displays a summary of all user activity inside Content Areas for the course. This report will generate a pie chart showing what the selected student(s) have been accessing, followed by a list of what they accessed, and when and how long they accessed the materials in bar graph and list formats

Course Activity Overview: Course Activity Overview displays overall activity within a single course, sorted by student and date. Data includes the total and average time spent per user and the total amount of activity the user had in the course. This report shows you a bar graph of the week and how long your students are in your course, followed by another bar graph of how long each student is in you course. This second bar graph has a line which indicated the average time the whole class spent in the course.

Course Performance: This report displays information showing how a single Blackboard Learn Course performs against a selected set of goals. Performance targets and a range of acceptable performance for the course can be determined when running the report. Data includes averages for the entire course as well as break downs for individual students and goals. The goals must be predefined or you will receive errors.

Overall Summary of User Activity: The report displays user activity for all areas of the course, as well as activity dates, times and days of the week. This report shows the number of times a student was in content areas, and their usage habits. This report will include information for course tool that Angelina College does not subscribe to, such as NBC Learn.

Single Course User Participation Report: Displays detailed statistics on assessment and collaboration tool submissions for all users in this course during a specified timeframe. Comes in spreadsheet format and will be blank if students are not using collaboration tool submissions.

Student Overview for Single Course: Student Overview for Single Course displays an individual student's activity within a course, sorted by date. Data includes the total overall time the student spent in the course as well as detailed information about the student's activity, such as which items and Content Areas the student accessed and the time spent on each. This is probably the most useful report, especially if your student is telling you they attempted to do something and you want to check up on their claim.

User Activity in Forums: This report displays a summary of user activity in Discussion Board Forums for the course. While it does not include their posts, this report will show you which forums your students accessed.

User Activity in Groups: This report displays a summary of user activity in Groups for the course. It will be blank if you are not using groups.

As you can see, Blackboard puts a lot of information at your fingertips which is useful if you are trying to figure out what you students do in your class. This is important if you are suspicious of their version of the truth.

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.