

## Cool Tools

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### **“There’s an app for that”: The Blackboard Mobile Learn App**

I do not think you can find an AC student that does not have a Smartphone. I am fairly sure that the majority have tablets. While many of them may use them for entertainment purposes, you can actually incorporate these devices in your online courses. Blackboard has released an app for Smartphones and tablets called Blackboard Mobile learn. Students can download the app in the iTunes Store or at Google Play, and for \$1.99 per year they can access their online courses. There are, however, limitations.



To be honest, accessing Blackboard in this manner does not give the student or instructor the same level of access that one would normally have when accessing Blackboard through a regular computer. With the app you can check grades, post to discussions groups, attach files, read announcements, view content, create and comment on blog or journal posts, and take mobile-compatible tests. By reading this list you can see that there is a lot you cannot do, for example you cannot take tests which are not set up to work with the app. This alone is enough for me to dissuade anyone from using the app, but there are reasons I use it.

I find the app useful to see which of my students have turned in their homework when I am away from my office, and the app gives me the ability to quickly email those who are close to missing the deadline. I can post announcements to my classes on the go. I can also check student grades wherever I am, which a definite advantage is for any online instructor.

I hate to steer anyone in the wrong direction, so if this is something you are interested in please download it and try it out to see if it something which would beneficially augment your class. If you do not plan to use it, I would highly suggest that you tell your students so they do not waste their time wondering why your class does not work correctly with your class.

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.