

Dear Faculty,

In the last two years, Rhode Island College has been doing extensive research to select a replacement for our aging WebCT 4.1 Learning Management System (LMS). A selection committee composed of faculty representing a cross-section of schools and departments evaluated three LMS products: Angel, Sakai, and Blackboard 9.0. After careful consideration of a number of factors, including feature set and ease of migration from our current WebCT 4.1 platform, the LMS selection committee unanimously recommended Blackboard 9.0. With the purchase of Blackboard 9.0, the College acquires leading-edge technology for delivering exemplary online and hybrid education while maintaining our current WebCT license for one year to facilitate the transition.

Blackboard 9.0 has a number of significant improvements compared to our current system.

- Enhanced communication tools
- Improved grade book capabilities
- Easier file integration
- Adaptive release of assignments, reading, quizzes, etc
- Flexible course design to build a more logical information architecture for our students to enhance learning online
- Integrated Safe Assign (replacing Turnitin)

To review a short introduction video on what is new in Blackboard 9.0, please visit www.blackboard.com/projectng.

To make the process as seamless as possible for our users, we will be slowly introducing and migrating WebCT courses into Blackboard 9.0. Our current plan is to upgrade the login page over the summer months so that there will be a single login page for all users. As we move into the Fall 2009 and Spring 2010 semesters, we will be working diligently with faculty to migrate courses from WebCT 4.1 to the final Blackboard 9.0 environment. Although many faculty designers will choose to recreate existing WebCT courses in Blackboard in order to take advantage of new features and functions, others will want to avoid a rebuild and migrate existing courses from WebCT 4.1 to Blackboard. Our goal is to have all WebCT 4.1 courses migrated into the new Blackboard 9.0 system by Fall 2010. Please find below a summary matrix of our rollout plans as it pertains to your delivery of instruction. *Please note: during this migration process, as a WebCT 4.1 user, you will continue to use WebCT 4.1 with all the familiar functionality; however, your WebCT 4.1 course will be within the Blackboard 9.0 co-production environment.*

Establishing a well-defined upgrade procedure to move course content from WebCT 4.1 into Blackboard 9 is a key focus for User Support Services staff. Blackboard Inc. is working hard to improve migration tools in the 9.1 version of their software scheduled for release in late December or early January. Their software engineers have offered to provide pre-release versions of simplified migration utilities to RIC in the near future. Our upgrade team is committed to communicating with you directly as the process evolves. In an effort to keep our users informed, updated on our progress, and alerted to upcoming training opportunities, we will be making regular bi-weekly announcements via RIC email as well as through our User Support Services website.

Summer 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Establish a co-production environment.✓ Change the Login page to reflect new Blackboard 9.0 LMS.
Fall 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Pilot users* host courses in Blackboard 9.0✓ Target additional courses and users for migration and training✓ Develop step-by-step training materials to facilitate migration of WebCT 4.1 courses
Spring 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Goal of 50-100 courses migrated to BB9✓ Target remaining WebCT 4.1 courses and migrate remaining WebCT 4.1 courses
Summer 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ WebCT 4.1 goes off-line.✓ Full production of Blackboard 9.0 by Fall 2010

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