Telling our Story: Merrimack’s Epic Journey to Ultra Course View

Presenters:
Karen Slaton, Director of Academic Technology, ITS
Janet Syed, Associate Director/Lead Instructional Designer, CETL
BRACE YOURSELVES

ULTRA IS COMING
About Merrimack College
Merrimack College, just minutes from Boston, is a selective, private college whose mission is to enlighten minds, engage hearts and empower lives.
About Merrimack

• Private institution founded in 1947
• Suburban 220 acre campus
• Approximately 3500 undergraduates
• Approximately 1700 graduates
• Growing online Masters programs
• Division 1 athletics
• Apple Distinguished School
Merrimack College Rollout to Ultra
Spring 2017 - Present
Why Ultra?

- Clean design
- Intuitive
- Mobile friendly
  - Ultra view is responsive
- Increased accessibility
Process Overview

• Developmental approach

• 2 year process
  – The journey began in Spring of 2017 and will “end” in August of 2019
  – Provide time for feature development
  – Socialization
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SAAS & SIS

Why?
• Merrimack sought to get the “latest and greatest”
• Course creation and enrollments were done via manual file upload - not sustainable
• Students were added but not dropped - burden was on the faculty to maintain their enrollment list

How?
• Upgrade to SAAS and SIS integration at the same time
• 3-month turn around, Blackboard worked closely with us

What We Learned
• Be prepared for a week of downtime
• Test server and “go live” server were different - as a result there were a few issues that came up that were not found during testing
• Notifications are on for all
## Project Timeline

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Spring & Summer UPP Pilot

Why?
• Staffing
• Access to pilot server

How?
• UPP support
• Hands on with faculty
• Student training

What We Learned
• Comments collected included:
  ─ easy to use
  ─ hidden views are convenient
  ─ gradebook is easy to find
  ─ missing key features like uploading/downloading gradebook
  ─ creating groups is repetitive
  ─ cannot enter one grade for the whole class
  ─ missing key integrations like McGraw Hill Connect
• Back up your pilot courses
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Faculty Opt-In Fall/Spring 2018-2019

Why?
- Faculty agency
- Increased socialization
- Gain advocates and influencers

How?
- “Ultra Readiness” survey
- Target specific faculty based on available features
- Two-part training sessions: Ultra Navigation and Ultra Course View
  - Five schools
  - Synchronous online (Collaborate)
  - Custom tutorials

What We Learned
- Copying Original to Ultra - time intensive
- Copying Ultra to Ultra - easier
- Follow the process: manual conversions during trainings
- Ultra readiness survey too general - missing feature questions
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Why?

- All courses in one view
  - Faculty benefit
  - Student benefit
- Reduce support burden

How?

- Collaboration
  - ITS, CETL, and Provost
- Communication
  - Regular college-wide messaging
- Ongoing Development
  - Training: face-to-face, online, and 1:1

What’s Next?

- Professional Development Opportunities
  - Face-to-face sessions
  - Synchronous sessions
  - 1:1 CETL support
  - Mobile mentors
- New Features Added
  - New opportunities to train

- Fall 2018 courses converted to fall 2019 sandbox courses
- Intensive week long course design sessions and spa days (May and August)
Live Demo
Feedback and Results
Data - What we Expected

Survey Data

18% Response Rate
Data collected from Spring, Summer and Fall 2018
Results are still coming in from Spring 2019 pilot

Support Data

• The number of Blackboard support tickets doubled 17/18 to 18/19
• In the Spring of 2019, almost all support tickets were for Ultra View and not Original View
  – Primarily new users. Ticket volume for early adopters decreased.
• We currently get a high volume of tickets for Collaborate
  – This is our first campus-wide web conference tool
  – Training is key for fall
  – Docs and videos for students
Feedback From Faculty Early Adopters

- Easy to “surf through courses”
- Convenient ways to communicate with students
- Convenient ways to share materials with students
- Great Interface!
- Interactive
- Well organized
- Hidden views allow [faculty] to see the documents and select how students view them
- Gradebook easier to navigate
Feedback From Student Early Adopters

- Easy to use
- Reliable
- Cutting edge
- More organized
- Efficient in helping me find school work
- Helpful reminder about due dates
- Aesthetically appealing
- Worked well with iPad
- Easy access to grades
- Notifications are the first thing you see which helps you manage time
Challenges

Incremental Features

• Uploading to gradebook *
• Question banks *
• Creating groups *
• Publisher integrations (still lacking)
• Student preview mode *
• Creating an assignment with no grade
• Extra credit
• Peer review

*feature now exists

Additional Pain Points

• Student and instructor apps need work
• Can’t create special roles and permissions for Ultra courses
• Drag and drop of content (using the arrows) is clunky
• Color customization is limited
## Additional Benefits to Conversion

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<th>Course Design/Redesign</th>
<th>Collaboration/Flip Tools Introduced</th>
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<td>• Activities</td>
<td>• Collaborate</td>
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<td>• Assignments</td>
<td>• Panopto</td>
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<th>Consistency for Students</th>
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<td>• Faculty Brand New to Merrimack College</td>
<td>• First Year Experience Course</td>
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<td>• Long Term Faculty</td>
<td>• Fall Training Sessions for Students</td>
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<td>– Word Spreads Fast</td>
<td>– “Mobile Mentors”</td>
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Blackboard

#BbWorld19
Improving the Student Experience

Consistency in Courses
- First Year Experience Course
- Fall Training Sessions for Students
  - “Mobile Mentors”
- Efficiency at the Help desk

Improved Workflow
- Note-taking, submitting assignments, quizzing
  - iPad with keyboard and Apple pencils (Chrome)

Flipping & Active Engagement Strategies
- Adding/recording sessions with Collaborate
- Recording videos with Panopto
  - quizzing, captioning, discussions, demonstrations
What Do We Say to Failure?

Not today.
Questions & Thank you!
Don’t forget to rate this session in the BbWorld app.