

# *Blackboard & City University of Hong Kong*

City University of Hong Kong, a Blackboard client since 2002, provides enterprise learning and assessment for 26,000 staff and students, deploying the full range of formal and informal learning styles both inside and outside courses. This highly personalized learning solution is underpinned by a clearly defined University-wide learning strategy, robust operations, and well-defined partner relations.

Originally founded in 1984, City University of Hong Kong is considered one of the leading higher education institutions in the region. In 2004, to support their students and faculty and fulfill one of their institutional objectives, City University formed a task force to identify an enterprise learning solution to meet new course delivery, content management, and community engagement requirements. Using technology for blended learning was not a new concept at City University; up until the formation of the task force, multiple e-Learning solutions were used on campus. Key selection criteria for the single institution-wide learning solution included: ease of use, support, global standards, open systems, high scalability and implementation options. In 2004, after a thorough formal evaluation, City University's task force chose Blackboard because it was the only solution to meet the full range of selection criteria.

Today, City University considers Blackboard a mission critical component of the University's corporate plan. Adoption rates are high, with 60-70% of courses utilizing Blackboard technologies. By the end of 2008 this will reach virtually 100% when it will be mandated that all courses contain a Blackboard component.

## **ENGAGE AND ASSESS**

Over the years higher education institutions globally have learned that an engaged student is likely to be a successful student. Even so, the popularity and high adoption rates of the collaboration and communication tools within Blackboard have been a positive surprise to the University leadership. Uptake of tools in these areas had a significant impact on student engagement on campus and outside of the University. One particular area that had tremendous benefit from Blackboard technologies was

the Student Exchange Program. Prior to the introduction of Blackboard, students in the student exchange program would leave campus for 6 months without any communication or the ability to share their

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**Dr. Jerry Yu**  
CIO at City University

experiences with classmates until they returned to their home campus. Utilizing the community engagement and content management modules, City University organized exchange students into groups and each group had a tutor. This infrastructure laid the foundation for student collaboration; experience sharing through blogs and journals, updating of portfolios, and maintaining a sense of community even though not physically on City University's campus.

Another benefit was recognized with first year students at the University, who can quickly access the Welcome Program Pages as well as learn about their courses, organizations, and campus information as soon as they register. When these students arrive on campus they have a strong sense of community about City University and their individual program of study. This active student engagement model provides the University with data needed to assess the success of their programs, courses, and instructors. In turn this enables City University to assess, refine and manage their programs far into the future. Gathering and using information to increase quality ensures City University prepares students for critical thinking and workplace readiness.

## MANAGE

City University of Hong Kong takes a standards-based approach to technology infrastructure, operational planning, and deployment. At the forefront of this planning is strong communication internally and externally. Internally, a steering committee made up of members from both the technical and education departments sets regular milestones and deliverables. Externally, City University meets monthly with their Blackboard client manager, Professional Services lead, and Blackboard Technical Support Manager.

City University regularly engages Blackboard Professional Services<sup>SM</sup> to carry out infrastructure health checks and performance audits. City University is consistently striving to improve student satisfaction and engagement by running the most recent versions of Blackboard, participating in the Blackboard Developers Network<sup>TM</sup>, and determining innovative ways to extend Blackboard with the use Web 2.0 technologies.

An example of City University's commitment to managing the success of their Blackboard deployment is through an aggressive computer loan scheme to be launched in the second half of 2008. In the scheme, City University has committed to every student who "opts in" a notebook computer. The notebooks will remain the property of the University, loaded with all relevant applications.

In conclusion, Dr. Jerry Yu, CIO at City University of Hong Kong summarizes, the University's success by stating; "I expect higher education to experience rapid change in the next 10 years. City University has the necessary framework in place through the 'engage, assess, and manage' model, to embrace this change. In addition we must be prepared to continue to commit to the best IT infrastructure and support for our students to ensure they have the best chance possible for success."



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