Welcome to Chalk Talk!

You are receiving this newsletter because you are a member of our online learning community at SCPS. The next Chalk Talk you receive will be online, via email. The purpose of Chalk Talk is to serve as a resource for your online experience. Each issue will focus on using Blackboard and lessons learned from other successful distance learners.

For this issue, we thought we'd introduce ourselves: The Educational Technologies Center’s Instructional Design Team here at SCPS. Who are we? We're the faces behind the Help Desk, and the people behind the emails you receive with technical, instructional, and other types of support information. Our members include:

- **Stephanie Scheer**, Director of Instructional Design
- **Russ Bazydlo**, Blackboard/Learning Management System Administrator
- **Irene Huja**, Instructional Design Coordinator
- **Elizabeth Fanning**, Graduate Assistant
- **Virginia (Ginger) Scott**, Instructional Design Consultant

What can we do for you? In addition to maintaining the back-end of Blackboard, our job is to provide you with the support and resources you need to succeed as a distance learner. Give us a call at 434-982-5258 or email us at: uvaonline@esther.scps.virginia.edu

We look forward to hearing from you!

Additional Resources

- Student Resources: [http://www.scps.virginia.edu/bb/student/student.htm](http://www.scps.virginia.edu/bb/student/student.htm)
- Student Registration: [http://www.scps.virginia.edu/BB/instructor/preparing_to_teach.htm#studentregistration](http://www.scps.virginia.edu/BB/instructor/preparing_to_teach.htm#studentregistration)
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Announcements

- If you are teaching in the spring, make sure that your Program Administrator knows to request a course shell for you.
- Look for our special Registration Edition of Chalk Talk in early January.
- For those of you who can’t make it in person, check out our upcoming self-paced course in Blackboard!

Feature Article

Brain Teaser

Tell Us How We’re Doing!

Upcoming Topics

Otilie Austin: Brain teaser Winner!

We have a winner to our first Brain teaser! As you recall, last edition’s Brain teaser asked:

If your course grade includes participation in the forum discussions, how would you track a student’s online participation?

Otilie Austin, who works with the McGuffey/TEMPO Reading Outreach program, sent in this stellar response:

I use the Course Stats to see what they have read and how many times they posted. I also have my own checklist to rate the quality of responses so that they are more than, “That’s a great idea! I’ll have to try that.” At the midterm I give points for participation for the first half of the class so that students will stay actively involved. For my 16 week course, I allot 4.4 points per week. If they post for the minimum and the postings are good quality I give them 4.4. If they only post 1-2 times then they only get 1 or 2 points, it’s an effective system for me.

Otilie has been teaching online since 2001, and has picked up some seasoned experience along the way, explaining, “For me, the greatest challenge was creating a lecture for the web that complemented the course readings, rather than replacing them, wasn’t too long, and that was written in such a way that other instructors could use it. Fortunately, I had the wonderful benefit of working with instructional designer, Ginger Scott, who knew all the ins and outs of web design. Ginger created the basic structure for each weekly class that included module objectives, reading assignments, lecture, and interactive assignments. Ginger helped me to create a reasonable weekly workload for the students, which was commensurate with what would be done in a live class. I highly recommend that faculty work with instructional designers to get their expertise in designing effective courses that are a good reflection of what occurs in a live class.”

To see Otilie’s suggestions for encouraging active forum participation, click here.

And join us Tuesday January 10th from 5-6pm in the Faculty Blackboard Training Center Chat Room. Otilie will be there to answer questions and discuss her experiences LIVE.

TIP - As you may already know, Blackboard usually provides you with several ways to complete a task. Another way of checking on your students’ discussion board participation at the individual Forum level is to use the Search feature. Simply click on Search; choose your student’s name and review what the postings! Click here to see how this works!
In Blackboard, the Digital Toolbox is a great way to exchange files with an individual student. Here's the Brain Teaser:

As an instructor...

Where do you access the digital dropbox?

What steps do you follow to send a file to a student? Please be as specific as possible in your response, and send it via email to Brain Teaser. Be sure to type Brain Teaser in the title of the message.

In Our Upcoming Issues...

In future Chalk Talk issues, we'll cover how to...

- Get your Course Shell ready for next semester
- Use the Digital Drop Box
- Link your Blackboard site to Toolkit site

**Ollie's 4 Suggestions for Encouraging Active Participation**

1. **Create expectations** for posting responses on the forum. Make sure you describe your expectations for class participation in the syllabus and online. In my classes, I require students to post a minimum of four times per week. Three of those responses must be done on different days.

2. **Make attendance a significant percentage of the grade.** Blackboard participation is extremely important for an online class as it is worth 25% of the course grade.

3. **Four weeks into the class, post a piece of their attendance grade.** In order to make sure students realize how important class participation is, I evaluate their participation and post a portion of their participation grade in the on-line grade book so that the importance of participation is reinforced.

4. **Require initial postings by a specific day of the week.** Each week I have three different sets of questions and three different groups that are assigned to one topic each. Our class officially begins on Monday each week and I require initial responses to the questions every Wednesday morning. After that, students can respond to each other as they wish, provided that they post at least 3 more times.

Using the Search Feature to Track Student Participation

[Image of search feature]

*Return to feature story*
Announcements

Do you have questions about how to use Blackboard? Problems with getting connected with what you need? Click on these photos below to read their stories and see how Tech Support saved the day.

Help! My Password Doesn't Work! I Can't Get Into Blackboard!

It's Gone! My Course Isn't in Blackboard!

Zap! How Do I "Activate" My UVA Email?

Ow! What is My UVA PID? I Didn't Know I Had One!

My Password Doesn't Work!

If you try to log into Blackboard and your password doesn't work, first check to make sure you're not trying to use the same password you use to access your UVA email. Yes, unless you deliberately set these passwords to be the same, these two passwords are different.

If you still think you are using the right password to access Blackboard, you may need Technical Support.

My Course Isn't In Blackboard!

If you log into Blackboard and your course isn't listed, it could mean one of two things:

- You are not enrolled
- The instructor has not uploaded the course yet

If you enrolled within 24 hours, the system may not have updated you to the course yet. You may want to wait overnight to see if the course appears a few hours later.
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Chalk Talk: Students, page 2 of 2

What can Tech Support do for you? Says the easily approachable Russ Bazylko, “Usually I’ll first look and make sure the user has a Blackboard account.” Then, after checking to make sure you are using the right password to login, Russ will be ready to reset your Blackboard password for you, creating a new one that’s usually based on the last four digits of your social security number and date of birth.

And it’s all just a phone call or an email away.

Similarly, you might want to check the next day to see if your instructor has made the course available online in that time.

If the course still does not appear, you may need Technical Support. What can Tech support do for you?

Explains the valiant Russ Bazylko, “When this happens, I check to see if the student is enrolled in the course. Then I check to see if the course has been made available yet.” Adds Russ, “If the course has already started, I make it available to the student.” Whatever the outcome, Russ will work with you to take to make sure the course appears the next time you log into Blackboard.

What is My UVA PID? I Didn’t Know I Had One!

Yes, you probably do have a PID and the good news is that anyone who is a student at UVA has one too.

What is a PID? It’s your UVA computing ID, the name you were given when you registered as a student.

What’s your PID? Take a look at your UVA email address. It’s the first four to five characters before .virginia.edu.

Why do you need a PID? Use your PID to log into any UVA computing resource including Blackboard, UVA email, or Toolkit, for instance.

Brain Teaser

Describe two ways you can upload an assignment in Blackboard (besides email).

Send your e-mail response to Brain Teaser and type BrainTeaser in the title of the message.

Additional Resources

- Minimum System Requirements for Students and Instructors
- Student Registration
- UVA Online
- Student Resources
- Course Offerings

In Our Upcoming Issues...

In future Chalk Talk issues, we’ll cover how to use Blackboard to

- Send files to your Instructor
- Access grades to your assignments
Appendix D: Is an e-Newsletter Right for You?

What follows is a checklist to help you or your department consider if an e-newsletter is right for your organization in terms of:

- Need
- Technical Considerations
- Look and Feel
- Content

Your Organization’s Needs and Your Intended Audience’s Needs

A newsletter can provide your intended audience with a consistent message and at the same time provide a means for people to connect with each other. It’s a nice way to “put faces on the crowd.” Is an e-newsletter right for you? To begin to answer this question, determine:

1. Your organization’s mission
2. Your organization’s overall message
3. The purpose of your newsletter, and how this relates to your first two steps.

To see if an e-newsletter is the best way to deliver your message, consider if:

- Your organization is new or has undergone changes, and needs to integrate a new understanding, process, or identity within your intended learning organization
- Your organization regularly needs to notify people about updates to software or other technical issue
- Your intended audience is unclear on who to go to for technical or pedagogical support, which your organization provides – the e-newsletter can make your organization’s purpose clear
- Faculty is geographically dispersed or do not regularly work at a location near other faculty or people with your organization
- Students are geographically dispersed
- Your intended audience has access to the internet
Technical Considerations

You will want to ensure not only that your organization has the technical capability to create and send an e-newsletter, but that your intended audience is able to access and read it. Be sure to consider the following:

- **Server** – appropriate capacity to conduct activity
- **Software** – to build newsletter
- **In-house skills** using the software
- **Size limit** – you may want to set a limit to how much memory loading your newsletter will require
- **Address book** with faculty email addresses
- **Address book** with student email addresses if you are considering a newsletter for students as well

Look and Feel

For user readability and a professional looking message, you will want all of your newsletters to be consistent in how they are laid out and in overall appearance in terms of color and font. To ensure this, make sure to consider the following:

- **A template** – using the software package with which you intend to create your newsletter, you may want to put together a standardized template that you can reuse and keep the look and organization of your newsletter consistent
- **A style sheet** – again, to manage how your newsletter appears in other browsers and to keep your newsletter consistent
- **A color scheme**, one that is simple, easy to read, identifies with your organization, and doesn’t use up a lot of memory to load. Your color scheme should not only include background colors, but frames for graphics and the fonts in your style sheet.
- **A banner** to go across the top of your newsletter, which includes the title of your newsletter and logo for your organization
Content Guidelines

What follows are some tips to ensure that your newsletter meets your intended purpose and conveys your message:

ₐ Keep your newsletter to one feature article. You don’t want to overload your reader, but rather to have them process a key point.

ₐ Limit articles to less than 500 words, if possible. If you need to break the article into chunks of information, accessible by a bookmark or link within the newsletter.

ₐ Keep the voice of your articles casual but informative, and the sentences shorter, since people are reading off a computer screen.

ₐ Appeal to your readers on an individual level to help make them feel like they are participating in and a part of something.

ₐ Make graphics bold, easy-to-read and informative. In some cases, you’ll find that you can even use your graphics to reduce the word count of your article.

ₐ Provide your readers with a way to contact your organization through the e-newsletter to create dialogue and foster community.

ₐ Include a list of upcoming topics so that people begin to anticipate and look forward to your next newsletter.

ₐ Find ways to get people to interact with the newsletter, either through a brainteaser or a web-based treasure hunt, for instance. People like to play and win a prize, no matter how insignificant the booty.

ₐ Provide your users with an easy way to provide you with feedback. You’ll want to know what you can do to improve this process.