

Discussion Boards, Blogs & Wikis: How Do You Choose? (Session Overview)

By the end of this session you should:

- Have a clear understanding of the basic functionality of discussion boards, blogs and wikis.
- Identify possible instructional uses of each of the tools.
- Be able to determine the most appropriate tool to match your instructional context and objectives.
- Understand key considerations involved in planning to use these tools to support teaching and learning.
- Understand key considerations related to assessing student use of these tools.

Key Questions

- What are the instructional advantages / disadvantages of discussion boards, blogs and wikis?
- Are there compelling uses of discussion boards, blogs or wikis that can support new opportunities for teaching and learning?

Tool Overview

- Discussion Boards - <http://blackboard.vcu.edu>
- VCU Blog – <http://blog.vcu.edu>
- Wikis - <http://www.wikispaces.com>
(There are literally hundreds of free wikis)

Discussion of Vignettes

Working in small groups, participants will examine and discuss sample classroom vignettes to determine the suitability of using discussion boards, blogs or wikis in specific instructional contexts.

- See collection of sample classroom vignettes (on reverse side).

Contact Information

Britt Watwood (bwatwood@vcu.edu)

Bud Deihl (wdeihl@vcu.edu)

Jeff Nugent (jsnugent@vcu.edu)

Sample Classroom Vignettes

1) Professor Jones teaches an introductory course in Biology to undergraduates. One of the things she noticed in teaching the course during a previous semester, is that students really seem to improve their understanding of difficult concepts if they have to explain and defend their views about a problem. However, the enrollment in this class is nearly 150 students and it simply isn't possible to provide the opportunity for each individual student to practice this during class time. What might be the best possible solution to support this goal?

2) Professor Einstein teaches courses in business ethics to graduate MBA students. One of the instructional goals he tries to achieve in his course involves helping students to develop meaningful collaborations to complete complex assignments. He would like to establish an electronic space that can support student collaboration. What might be the best possible solution to support this goal?

3) Elizabeth Grey is the kind of professor that is excited about sharing her passion for sculpture. She is an avid researcher as well as a very productive artist. She never seems to have enough time in the day to share all she'd like with students and colleagues. She is looking for a way to share her thoughts and perspectives about art, as well as provide useful resources to her students on a range of topics and formats. What might be the best possible solution to support these goals?

4) In teaching a course in cultural anthropology, Professor Lutz wants to provide her students with an electronic space to share reflections as well as document their learning in the course. This space should be able to accommodate a range of media formats (documents, images, videos, audio files and links). She wants this material to be openly shared among all members of the class. What might be the best possible solution to support this goal?

5) While teaching an introductory course in computer science, Professor Watson found that he wanted students to be able to rapidly share the web-based resources they were finding and using in their research. He felt this would serve the dual purpose of leveraging the all resources his students were finding, as well as modeling the idea that knowledge is distributed. What might be the best possible solution in helping to support these goals?