Blackboard
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KALTURA

At Virginia Commonwealth University, video matters

Virginia Commonwealth University
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With Blackboard Learn and Kaltura, VCU is enhancing the learning experience

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) is an urban, public research university committed to the academic success of its students. That commitment is underscored by its use of Blackboard Learn, the central place for learning at VCU. "We have more than 100 building blocks integrated with Blackboard," Colleen Bishop, VCU's Director of Academic Technologies, reports. "We use them to assist our faculty in presenting their content and to help enhance the overall learning experience for our students." One of those building blocks is the Kaltura Video Building Block.

Kaltura technology has a broad range of uses that have expanded more widely by integration with Blackboard Learn. The Kaltura Video Building Block for Blackboard Learn enables teachers, students, and administrators to easily record, upload, manage, clip, transcode, publish, and deliver high-quality video content to any device. Colleges and universities use the building block to easily add video to their Blackboard Learn environment, capturing and integrating lectures and course videos with other course content, and enabling video assignments and video-content sharing. Kaltura also serves as a media repository for the growing store of videos that institutions are assembling as learning relies more and more on rich and engaging media.

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Director of Academic Technologies, VCU

VCU

The search for a new video library

As an educational innovator which has long embraced emerging educational technology, VCU has many departments – life sciences, the medical campus, human services/social work, the school of art –that have been using videos as a teaching tool. "Video offers a different angle from reading words in a case study or on a PowerPoint slide," says Bishop. "It's much more immediate, and, for many students, it's their preferred learning style." Video is also a useful tool for instructors, who find it an easy way to browse and review course content from semester to semester. JaBari Scott, an application analyst at VCU, estimates that 40 percent of the school's courses use video at some point.
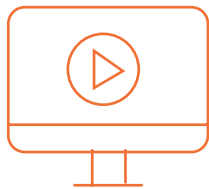
By 2014, VCU had amassed a considerable media library that used the Helix Media Server as its repository. That was the year when RealNetworks announced that Helix would no longer be supported, and the year when VCU began looking at Kaltura. "We looked at a number of products, and consulted with colleagues at a number of other schools before deciding to pilot Kaltura," Bishop says. "We then went through a fairly exhaustive trial process before choosing Kaltura."

Kaltura's integration with Blackboard Learn helps VCU make their choice

Fall and spring, VCU has more than 4,000 courses in Blackboard Learn. Students use Blackboard Learn as their LMS, and the majority of VCU's instructors use it to create their courses. "With Learn being so central to the learning experience at VCU, it was imperative that we have a video solution that's tightly integrated with Blackboard," says Bishop. Kaltura provides a Video Building Block to connect its product to Blackboard Learn.

Instructors and students alike benefit from Blackboard-Kaltura integration

With seamless access to the Kaltura video repository through Blackboard Learn, instructors are finding it easy to search for videos, and embed them in their courses. "They love the fact that they can integrate video into discussion boards, into content areas, into learning modules embedded in Blackboard," says Bishop. One instructor in the School of Dentistry has flipped their classroom. Lectures are recorded and imported in Kaltura, and students access them through Blackboard Learn. This enables the instructor to focus in-class time on discussion and assignments. "We're also finding that students are using videos, creating videos on their own or as part of a learning assignment, sharing them back and forth within

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their LMS. Video is so central to the way that today's students process information and learn. It's essential that video is well supported within their learning environment."

Single sign on is a key feature of the integration. "Having Kaltura available from within Blackboard Learn lets our students and instructors multi-task without having to go into multiple systems," Scott observes. "But it's much more than that. We're giving folks a onestop shop where they can create, manage and present video – all in one place. They don't have to worry about where to store the videos and whether they have storage space. And instructors don't need to develop a way for students to retrieve videos. Everyone's already familiar with the Blackboard Learn interface and layout."

Adoption grows rapidly

Initially, there were 200 Kaltura users working within Blackboard Learn. In the first year of its deployment, that number grew to 1,500 users creating or ingesting media through Blackboard Learn. For many colleges and universities, ease of use and the simplicity of access are being credited with the rapid expansion of Kaltura within Blackboard Learn. They encourage their instructors to use Blackboard Learn to its fullest by taking advantage of integrations like the one with Kaltura, which contribute to a seamless overall learning environment.

Video is growing in importance as a learning tool, Bishop notes. "Our instructors and students use Kaltura, but our technology services team does as well. We use it to make instructional videos, like the ones we've done for Blackboard Learn and the Grade Center. We're using it throughout VCU. It's all about how learning is delivered and received." The combination of Blackboard Learn and Kaltura is a winning one that truly enhances the learning experience.

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