

Provide Students with Frequent Feedback

1. Offer practice **quizzes** in Blackboard. Whether a course is face-to-face or online, practice quizzes offered in Blackboard could help students self-assess their progress in the course. The quizzes could be for practice only (not included in Grade Center calculations) and set to show students the correct answers and feedback after they take the quiz. Even though they would not affect the students' grades, practice quizzes could help them study.
2. Use **Inline Grading** to provide detailed feedback on **Assignments**. Feedback is essential for students to understand how they are doing in the course and how well they are learning. The Assignments in Blackboard include inline grading, which automatically displays any PDF or Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, or Excel file within the browser. This integration also enables **inline annotating**, such as adding comments in the margin, highlighting, strikethrough, and drawing, to provide detailed feedback on student submissions.
3. Use **Interactive Rubrics**. A rubric is an explicit set of criteria used for assessing a particular type of work or performance and provides more details than a single grade. This helps students understand what is expected of them and how they were graded. Blackboard Interactive Rubrics can be built in Blackboard and associated with Assignments, short answer Test questions, graded Blogs, Journals, Wikis, and Discussion Forums. The Rubrics can be shown to students before they submit work and can include comments for each criterion (row) to provide detailed feedback that can improve student performance.
4. Motivate students with **badges** and **certificates**. You can use the **Achievements** tool



in Blackboard to award digital badges (compatible with the Open Badges initiative) and certificates for students who master certain concepts or demonstrate exceptional performance in your course. These recognitions can motivate students to excel and provides a map of their learning that is more personal than a grade. Plus, these certificates and badges can go with students when they leave the university, helping them to communicate their professional identity and reputation to open opportunities for career success and further education.

Sources

- [1] Moore, J. C. (2002). The Sloan-C Pillar Reference Manual Quick Guide. The Sloan Consortium.
- [2] Moore, J. C., and Fetzner, M. J. (2009). The road to retention: A closer look at institutions that achieve high course completion rates. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks (JALN)* 13(3), 15-17.

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Office of Distance Learning and Instructional Technologies

Web: <http://www.untdallas.edu/dlit>

Phone: 972-338-5580

Email: UNTDDistance@unt.edu



Best Practices for Increasing Student Retention through Blackboard

The Five Pillars of Online Learning Effectiveness [1] provide a framework for developing and sustaining online learning programs. The five pillars were created by J. C. Moore of The Sloan Consortium and include Faculty Satisfaction, Student Satisfaction, Learning Effectiveness, Scale, and Access.

Researchers J. C. Moore and M. J. Fetzner [2] mapped online retention best practices to each of the five pillars, resulting in a compiled list of common practices shared by institutions with high online course completion rates. The following best practices for the Learning Effectiveness and Student Satisfaction pillars are drawn from their research. You can use them to support students in successfully completing your distance learning courses. To read about best practices for all five of the pillars, see the full article [2].





Learning Effectiveness Pillar

Featured best practice: **Emphasize intensive faculty-student and student-student inter-activity.**

1. As you welcome students and introduce yourself to the class, include a photo and model the type of information you want your students to include in their introductions.
2. Use the student's name in one-to-one personal communications and in public discussion postings in Blackboard. This encourages individual students to respond to your posts.
3. In your **Announcements and Discussions** areas, consider using phrases such as "our class" instead of "the class" and "we've had a great week" instead of "it's been a good week." This helps the one-to-many posts seem more personal to each student.
4. Plan to create at least three announcements or discussion posts each week to establish your **online presence** and show students that you are monitoring the course regularly.
5. For **group work**, assign student leaders in each group to facilitate discussions and post the team's final answers to the **group assignment**. This allows the faculty member to review the team's work and discussions by group, rather than by each individual.



Student Satisfaction Pillar

Featured best practice: **Identify online learning obstacles to eliminate them for students.**

1. UNT Dallas offers an orientation to online learning, encourage or require your students to take it. The office of Distance Learning and Instructional Technologies has made available brochures, quick guides and resources that offer time management tips, and gives students an opportunity to practice with online tools such as **tests** and **assignments** in a non-graded situation.
2. When using **collaborative tools** such as discussions, blogs, journals, and wikis, let students take the lead to prepare them for the types of online communication they will encounter in the workforce.
3. Use Blackboard's **Retention Center** to quickly identify students who are struggling. Contact the students individually to find out what their specific difficulty is and what can be done to solve it.
4. Seek student input with course surveys and regular, informal "temperature checks." Find out what is working for them and what is not. Demonstrate that their opinion matters.
5. Provide links to campus resources such as advising, disability services, scheduling, registration, and technical support.



Spotlight on Student Engagement: Blackboard's Retention Center

There's a simple and easy way to track student performance in your online course and identify students at risk. The **Retention Center** can monitor in real-time if students are at academic risk in your course based on criteria you define.

There are 4 customizable rule types in Retention Center:

Course Activity: Alert is based on students' overall activity within your course. Students who are below a defined level of activity trigger the alert.

Grade: Alert is based on a defined score for any grade or calculated column in the Grade Center. Students who score above or below the defined threshold for a specific grade item trigger an alert.

Course Access: Alert is based on the date users last accessed your course. Students who have not logged in for a defined number of days trigger an alert.

Missed Deadline: Alert is based on a defined due date for an assignment, test, or survey. Students who do not complete an assignment, test, or survey by the due date trigger an alert based on the option you choose.

How to Access the Retention Center:

Under Course Management, Control Panel, expand Evaluation and click on Retention Center. Retention center is automatically on by default.

To turn it off, go to Control Panel > Customization > Tool Availability, scroll down to Retention Center and check the checkbox to the right of Retention Center, then click Submit.

