

Options in Blackboard for Faculty-Created Video Contents

Many instructors have come to recognize the impact that adding video contents to their Blackboard courses can have on instructional effectiveness and student success. Whether it's a short and simple welcome/introduction message or a full-length lecture, videos are quickly emerging as a popular option for direct instruction and supplementary content in fully online, blended/hybrid, and web-supported courses at UHCL.

Available Tools for Video Production

There are several tools that instructors at UHCL have employed to bring their own video contents into their Blackboard courses. These include the Video Everywhere tool (built into Blackboard itself), Collaborate (also built into Blackboard), Camtasia (a third-party application available from Tech Smith), and video camera recordings (either created by the instructor or created in collaboration with UHCL's Media Specialist, Brent Goucher). The following table provides a comparison of these options:

Option	Uses and Benefits	Disadvantages and Limitations
Video Everywhere	Integrated into Blackboard and can be used on content items, discussion boards, blogs, wikis, journals, assignments, etc. Enables instructors to provide quick, personalized messages to the whole or class or to individual students (such as on assignment submissions).	Instructors need to set up a YouTube account before using the tool. Although there is no published time limit, we recommend that Video Everywhere segments not exceed 5 minutes in length. Cannot display any on-screen or other items – strictly a “talking head” video.
Blackboard Collaborate (Web Conferencing)	Integrated into Blackboard and can be used to facilitate synchronous (“real time”) communication between two or more members of a class, including the instructor. Enables participants to display contents from their computer, share documents, annotate displayed materials, and record the session. Participants can employ microphones, text, and/or web cameras as needed to participate in the session.	Although much more user-friendly than its predecessor, WIMBA, Collaborate still takes some practice on the part of instructors to get comfortable with the system.

<p>Camtasia (Tech Smith) and Captivate (Adobe)</p>	<p>Both Camtasia, which is increasingly used at UHCL, and its direct competitor, Adobe's Captivate, have similar features and functionality. Both enable instructors to create a video in which they narrate/lecture while showing contents from their computer monitor (e.g., PowerPoint presentations, Word documents, spreadsheets, web sites, specialty software applications). There is also an option for a small video of the speaker to be displayed in a corner of the video, as well.</p>	<p>Neither Camtasia nor Captivate are integrated with Blackboard. Therefore, either the individual instructor or their department must absorb the costs associated with acquiring a copy of the application. As of May 2014, academic pricing for Camtasia was ca. \$180 for Windows users and \$75 for MacOS users. Academic pricing for Captivate was ca. \$300 for either operating system. UCT's instructional designers can only provide limited technical support for Camtasia, as we have no access to an installation of Captivate.</p>
<p>Video Camera Recording (Instructor-Generated)</p>	<p>Many instructors find it very easy to simply record themselves conducting a traditional lecture, either on a personal video camera or even from the camera within their smart phone. Videos can be made and deployed quickly. UCT will provide assistance, upon request, with loading instructor-created videos to the streaming media server and deploying videos as streaming contents within Blackboard courses.</p>	<p>Instructor bears responsibility to capture and edit the video(s). Video quality varies tremendously, depending on the quality of the video camera used. It can be difficult to clearly capture anything other than the speaker (e.g., images on a SmartBoard or white board). File sizes can be extremely large, making the process of uploading to Blackboard and the subsequent access by students highly problematic.</p>
<p>Video Camera Recording (Created by the Instructor and UHCL's Media Specialist)</p>	<p>Very high-quality video and assistance provided in deploying the video as a streaming video within Blackboard, resulting in far fewer student technical problems in accessing the material. There is no cost to the instructor and/or department for these services.</p>	<p>Requires that the instructor is able to come to the UHCL campus to be recorded in UHCL's studio. Needs to be planned well in advance, to permit sufficient time to script, shoot, edit, and deploy the video(s).</p>

For more information about the first three options, please consult the following resources:

Video Everywhere

- ✓ Handout (*Using Video Everywhere – New*) available on UHCL’s Blackboard Faculty Support web page (http://prtl.uhcl.edu/portal/page/portal/UCT/New_UCT/documentation/BlackBoardFacultySupport). Located under the “Uncategorized Topics” heading.
- ✓ Blackboard’s YouTube video, *Blackboard Learn Quick Hit: Video Everywhere Building Block*, located at the following URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=glYGdxw-mM>

Blackboard Collaborate

- ✓ Collaborate On-Demand Learning web site, located at the following URL: <http://www.blackboard.com/Platforms/Collaborate/Services/On-Demand-Learning-Center/Web-Conferencing.aspx>

Camtasia and Captivate

- ✓ Tech Smith’s Camtasia web site, located at the following URL: <http://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.html>
- ✓ Adobe’s Captivate web site, located at the following URL: http://www.adobe.com/products/captivate/educationsoftware.edu.html?skwcid=AL!3085!3!43029743902!b!!g!!+adobe%20+captivate&ef_id=U2QSLgAABb7VwQhT:20140506193842:s

In addition, there are numerous demo, open source and shareware options available for producing video contents. However, UCT can only provide support for the options discussed in this document.

Guidelines, Tips and Advice for Using Video in Blackboard

Regardless of how you create your own video contents, there are some issues of which you should be aware when planning to deploy those into Blackboard:

1. **File size and formats:** Video files tend to be extremely large and, as a result, when not properly deployed can negatively impact the performance (speed) of your Blackboard course and can be frustrating for students to access and play. In addition, video files can be created in a number of file formats. Depending on the format that you use, students may have difficulty opening your video. For these reasons, we strongly recommend that you work with one of UHCL’s instructional designers to convert your video(s) to a standard file format, upload it to the university’s streaming media server, and deploy it into your course as a streaming item. NOTE: Your video isn’t reviewed and doesn’t go through any type of approval process. They merely get a copy of the file from you, process it, transfer it to the server, and then create a link to it within your course.

If you prefer to retain complete ownership/control of your video contents, we recommend that you upload your video(s) to YouTube and then create links to your videos within Blackboard using Blackboard’s YouTube mashup tool. NOTE: If you prefer that your video not be accessible to the general public on YouTube, upload it as an “unlisted” video.

2. **Accessibility provisions:** It is not uncommon for UHCL to have students with low or no vision and/or low or no hearing enrolled in classes each semester. In order to make your course

contents readily accessible to these learners (as required by federal law), it's a good practice to provide text alternatives to all video contents within your Blackboard courses. Two recommended practices are providing print-based transcripts of the audio contents of your videos as a link to accompany the video or to provide closed captions with your video contents. In addition, for learners with low or no vision you also need to provide an audio description of any relevant visual elements in your video that are not already thoroughly described in your narration. Additional information about making multimedia contents accessible may be found at the following URL: <http://www.w3.org/2008/06/video-notes>. In addition, UHCL's Disability Services staff is also equipped to assist you with your accommodation efforts. Contact information for that office is provided on the Disability Services web site, located at the following URL: http://prtl.uhcl.edu/portal/page/portal/UAO/Faculty_Staff.

3. **Planning and scripting:** Instructors typically find that producing their own video contents is expedited when they carefully plan the video, beginning with the drafting of a script and by assembling any visual elements (e.g., PowerPoint presentations, charts, graphics) in advance of recording. Having a script to follow not only streamlines the recording process, the script document may then be used as an optional transcript or as the basis for creating closed captions for accessibility.

However you decide to produce your own custom video contents, rest assured that you are not entirely on your own. The Instructional Design staff members are standing by to offer suggestions for how you may best proceed, offer tutorials for Video Everywhere, Blackboard Collaborate, and Camtasia, and provide assistance with getting your videos stored on the university's streaming media server and deployed within Blackboard.