Blackboard is partnering with the Connecticut State Colleges & Universities system to bring a faculty training webinar series entitled The Blackboard Innovative Teaching Series (BITS). This program will bring training in online best practices and pedagogy to you in a series of monthly training webinars that have been designed for faculty members and will be led by faculty members from higher ed institutions around the country. As you all know, our system places a tremendous emphasis on integrating evidence-based best practices of online teaching into all of the Blackboard training that is currently being conducted throughout our system (check out the recently updated Distance Education Course Design: Guidelines for Student Success developed by our system’s Teaching and Learning Team for many helpful guidelines!). We believe that the online environment affords an opportunity for greater connectedness, a stronger sense of classroom community and interaction between students, and opportunities greater educator efficiency--so you can spend more time teaching and less time dealing with classroom management and administrative issues.

All faculty members are invited to attend, regardless of technical know-how or experience using Blackboard.

*Article continued on page 3.

The Final Hour

An article titled “The Final (Office) Hours” was published in the March 2012 issue of The Teaching Professor by Gary Hafer.

As a final grade, his students submit a portfolio of their work. The problem that arises is that feedback opportunities are severely limited. Hafer needed a solution for the pile of graded portfolios accumulating outside of his office at the end of each semester. His solution was to create “the final hour” which was an open office hour for students to discuss his/her graded portfolio. After grading the portfolios, he sends out individual e-mails with details about the final office hour and the final grade. He does wait to submit the final grade after the office hour. Students control the office hour with questions and complaints. Hafer responds to what the students share with him and finds he does more listening than talking.

Hafer feels that this conference makes him grade more carefully because there is a chance that he will have to defend his decision.

*Article continued on page 2.
The conference gives Hafer the opportunity to listen and see how students feel about the grade. He found that some students just want to come in and chat, while others want to hear what he liked best, and there are those who simply come for empathy. 

His students have found this comforting to them. Hafer uses this as a learning opportunity for his students as well as himself as they read through the portfolios and he shares his reactions to them.

Hafer states that he is not opposed to changing a student’s grade based on their discussion, but so far he has not had to do so and no student has asked him to do so.

Student Survey on Cell Phones

An article titled “The use and abuse of cell phones and text messaging in the classroom: A survey of college students” was published in College Teaching by D. R. Tindell and R. W. Bohlander (2012) and discussed in the March 2012 issue of The Teaching Professor.

A survey was conducted of 269 college students, representing 21 majors from 36 different courses. All of the students were equally distributed between first-year students, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Each student answered 26 questions about their use of cell phones.

Ninety-nine percent of the students reported having cell phones and 97% used their phones for texting. Ninety-five percent said they brought their phones to class and 91% stated they set their phone to vibrate. A whopping 92% admitted to sending or receiving a text message during class, while 30% reported that they send and receive texts every day in class. The students do not feel that their instructors know they are texting and almost half stated that it is easy to text without the instructor noticing.

The participants did not feel that texting caused serious problems. They did not realize that the person texting is being distracted and possibly distracting others. Students did not have many suggestions about cell phone policies that work. Tindell and Bohlander felt that it is difficult to imagine enforcing a cell phone policy and still having time to teach.

The original article contained the survey that faculty could use in their own classes and references to documents showing how texting interferes with and compromises learning.
See the schedule and register for the BITS series below. Please note that space is limited for this webinar series. Click on the links below to register.

**Session #1: Wikis, Blogs, Forums, Journals—Which One Do I Use & Why?**
This session is designed to assist educators as they try to determine which Blackboard tools will deliver the desired outcome in various teaching situations.
- **Time & Date:** 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm ET, Monday, February 27, 2012
- **Presenter:** Deborah Prickett, Jackson State University

**Session #2: Real Examples for Using Adaptive Release**
This session will show real examples of how adaptive release is used to guide students through your course, provide feedback and even provide additional content outside the scope of the course by using Blackboard’s adaptive release tools.
- **Time & Date:** 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm ET, Tuesday, March 27, 2012
- **Presenter:** Paige Brook – Jeffiers, Kentucky Community and Technical College System

**Session #3: Tips and Tricks for Utilizing Video and Media in Your Course**
This session will show examples of the tools, and techniques that an experienced online instructor used with great success to raise interactivity and learning in an online course by adding video and media.
- **Time & Date:** 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm ET, Monday, April 23, 2012
- **Presenter:** Julie Rorabaugh, Cowley College

**Session #4: Online Testing: How to Use Standard CMS Tools to Reduce Cheating**
This session will highlight a variety of features found in most course management systems that can be effectively utilized to reduce cheating in an online testing environment.
- **Time & Date:** 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm ET, Tuesday, May 29, 2012
- **Presenter:** Brian Morgan, Marshall University

**Session #5: What is My Role in the Online Classroom? Ways to Engage and Interact with Your Online Students**
This session will focus on your role as the instructor and the teaching techniques that will stimulate a student’s curiosity and encourage active learning.
- **Time & Date:** 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm ET, Monday, June 25, 2012
- **Presenter:** Katherine Dowdell, Des Moines Area Community College

**Session #6: Why and How to Best Use Rubrics in Blackboard Learn 9.1**
This session will explore the pros and cons of using Rubrics, how Rubrics employ Chickering and Gamson’s Seven Principles of Good Teaching Practice, and how the use of Rubrics will benefit your students.
- **Time & Date:** 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm ET, Tuesday, July 24, 2012
- **Presenter:** Katherine C. Riley, BS, Goldfarb School of Nursing at Barnes Jewish College
**Techy Tip**

**Google in Education**

Attention Googlers! Google has united its educational resources for you at: [http://www.google.com/edu/](http://www.google.com/edu/). There, you will find classroom and professional development tools, student resources and, discover a series of educational resources organized by function such as “collaborate & connect,” “search,” “visual tools,” “computer science” and “digital literacy.” For more information, see the links to the right.

**Links:**
- Educator Resources
- About Google in Education
- Google Product Help

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**Adjunct Faculty Forum**

**When** – Tuesday, March 13, 4-6pm (Open House style, come when you can)
**Where** – E-211 – IDEA Center
**What** – An opportunity for adjunct faculty to get together and discuss what is going well and give suggestions to one another.

**We will be having Adjunct Forums periodically throughout the semester.**

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**Call for Articles and Events!**

We are looking for articles for future IDEA Center newsletters. If you would like to submit an article, please e-mail Nina Stein at nstein@trcc.commnet.edu.

If you have an event that you would like included in the “Calendar of Events” section of the newsletter, please send the information to Nina Stein at the above e-mail address. Please include the name of the event, facilitator, location, date, and time.

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**Science Teaching Workshop**

**When** - May 18th from 9.00 AM – 4.00 PM
**Where** - University of Connecticut in Storrs, location to be determined at a later date
**What** - Learning Science – A workshop for teachers on student engagement Science is inherently exciting but many students get put off, becoming submerged in a sea of disparate and hard to comprehend information. This workshop will focus on classroom approaches that engage students, improve their learning and generate excitement about science. It is intended for science teachers from high schools, community colleges and universities.

**For more information contact:** Dkhan-bureau@trcc.commnet.edu
February's Professional Day Breakout Group Discussions
By George Rezendes

I have collected and collated as best as possible all of the information from the Professional Day on Thursday Feb 2, 2012 Breakout Group Discussions and it has been posted on the Institutional Research Intranet Website.

IR Intranet Website: http://trweb.trcc.commnet.edu/ir/

The summary document has been organized around the three questions that the breakout groups were asked to answer. I have done my best to take the documents that I received from each of the groups and organize them in a way that the information can be read and hopefully used by the entire College Community to have a positive impact on the things that we do for our students. However, I want you to feel free to provide me with your feedback/comments if something is missing or stated incorrectly. If there are additional notes that need to be incorporated or changes that need to be made please let me know.

In reflecting on the information contained within the document the first thing that I noted as I was constructing it was that it provides each and every one of us the opportunity to celebrate the enormous amount of hard work and energy that we as a College Community put forth every day in support of our students and each other. Next, the document gives us a glimpse into activities performed by others within our Community that we may not have the opportunity to interact with on a regular basis. The document also provides an opportunity to share some thoughts about what we might be able to do differently to support the needs of our students and to improve student success. To this end there is no magic bullet. We all play a role.

In addition to the professional day document I have also included a link to a report that was just released by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) entitled “A Matter of Degrees” which looks at some of the best practices for advancing community college degree attainment.

“I'm Gonna Be Late,” One Online Professor’s Solution

Are you tired of those annoying e-mails from students who try to hand-in assignments late or ask for extensions? An online professor was and came up with a solution that works for her. She gives her students a certain number of late passes. The number of passes depends on how long the course term runs. She created 8 rules for her students, three are listed here. She feels like this is a time-saver for her when dealing with late work.

This professor does have a policy for true emergencies and deals with those on an individual basis.
1. Do not email to ask me for a due date extension. Use a late pass.
2. Do not include an explanation for the work being late (it’s irrelevant since everyone gets the same number of late passes to use for any reason).
3. Late work is graded once every two weeks so keep checking the gradebook for your grade and please do not email to ask why your late work hasn’t been graded yet.

To read this entire article, click below.
### Calendar of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Room</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excel 2010</td>
<td>K. Barfield</td>
<td>E108</td>
<td>3/7</td>
<td>9-11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Getting Started with Bb Learn</td>
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<td>3/13</td>
<td>2:30-4:30</td>
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<td>E211</td>
<td>3/13</td>
<td>4-6</td>
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<td>3/14</td>
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Please use the Course Cart to register for the computer workshops located in E108.

“Any smoothly functioning technology will have the appearance of magic.”