

Client: Blackboard

Title: E-learning Update

Monthly Unique Users: 15,000

Date: March 2011

This month's **Features**

# Taking Education **Mobile**



Today's students expect to be connected on the move and are doing everything with their smartphones except interacting with their college or university. However more and more institutions are now recognising the added value mobile and location can bring to a range of academic and non-academic services. Here **Kavyon Beykpour** – who created an iPhone application for Stanford University while still a student, and has since developed mobile solutions for over 70 more institutions including The University of Manchester, Sheffield Hallam, Cardiff University and Newcastle University – discusses the huge potential of mobile learning.

**In the last ten years, we've become more connected and information is more mobile than ever before. As a result, it is increasingly difficult for schools, colleges and universities to connect and interact with students, parents and teachers through traditional means.**

The rise of the Virtual Learning

Environments (VLE) and evolution of desktop technology has revolutionised academic life both inside and outside of the classroom. As a result, students and parents expect to have instant access to information about academic performance, course materials and academic life in the same way they have access to almost any other information they seek online.

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## Technology **Feature**

In much the same way as VLEs caught on, so is mobile technology – and fast. Research shows the mobile market already has over 4 billion subscribers worldwide<sup>1</sup> and by the year 2010, most people across the world will be using a mobile device as their primary means for connecting to the internet.<sup>2</sup> In addition, a recent survey commissioned by Blackboard and conducted by the NUS revealed a significant number of students already own an Android, Blackberry, or Apple OS device such as an iPhone, iPad or iPod touch.<sup>3</sup>



### Adding value through **Mobile Learning**

While technology advances with each new device in the marketplace, students, parents and teachers are evolving too. Institutions struggle to keep up with the expectations of millennial students for more technology in their learning experience, and in other areas they are looking for creative ways to keep non-traditional students engaged.

Outside of the academic environment we already expect to be connected by our mobile devices for an array of everyday tasks. In fact, it could be said that students are now using mobile devices for just about everything other than interacting with their school, college or university.

Yet there are critical ways mobile technology can be used to enhance the education experience by extending teaching and learning beyond the classroom. Mobile technology offers opportunities for increased student and teacher efficiency through applications that enable them to access grades, reading lists and other



course content. Mobile learning can also help foster student engagement with subject material by enabling them to participate in forum discussions and share resources more easily and frequently.

For students, mobile access to courses promotes interaction and

increases engagement. These qualities can have a direct, positive impact on how students perform academically, and can increase the likelihood that they will capitalize on resources provided by the institution. Overall, mobile isn't just a cool or fun thing to add to the academic mix – it can

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make a real difference to performance, retention and completion rates over time.

### **Adding value through mobile services**

If students can pay their bills, check bus and train schedules and map the nearest restaurants with their mobile devices, why shouldn't they be able to add or drop a class, look up their instructors in a directory and email them and check campus sports scores and bus schedules in the same way?



Just as mobile technology can transform the academic experience, it can also increase engagement among the larger university community of teachers, parents, alumni and prospective students. Mobile

technology can give the community access to useful university information and services like course information, university news, events calendars, directories, maps and much more. Applications can even allow staff and students to send documents to print directly from a mobile phone or find out how many free computers there are in the library before going there.

It's this mix of utility and connectivity that mobile can deliver in new ways that will build a stronger university community over time. And the investment in mobile services isn't simply a practical one – yes it can save time and resources and make life more convenient. But it can also be a central part of how an institution builds its own brand and expands its reach in a changing marketplace.

### **Putting it into practice**

So, how do institutions actually go about going mobile? How do they meet this huge demand and opportunity while juggling resource constraints and other priorities?

We believe it is about focusing

on teaching rather than technology. To fully succeed, staff must be able to concentrate on how mobile technology can best foster interaction and engagement with and between themselves, their students and their guardians, without having to worry about developing and maintaining the technology itself. That's a challenge Blackboard has already helped hundreds of institutions tackle worldwide with intuitive native application interfaces for teaching and learning. And while the specific challenges vary for each institution, it largely comes down to freeing up staff to answer two common questions: "what are the main information and services we must deliver to students and our community and how can two-way interaction through mobile devices be most effectively deployed within my subject?"

### **Summary**

Ten years ago, schools were looking at the rise of PCs and the internet and looking for ways to harness the technologies to add value to the

teaching and learning experience. Now, according to EDUCAUSE campus computing 2009, 30% of schools already have a strategic plan for mobile devices and a further 25% are currently preparing a plan.<sup>4</sup> So, it is clear that the mobile revolution in schools has begun and that those that fail to acknowledge the role that mobile will play in facilitating interaction with staff, students and parents are liable to be left behind.

Are you ready and prepared for the change?

**Kavyon Beykpour, Vice President of Blackboard Mobile.**

- 1 Johnson, L., Levine, A., Smith, R., & Stone, S. (2010). *The 2010 Horizon Report*. Austin, Texas: The New Media Consortium.
- 2 Anderson, J., Rainie, L., (2008). *The Future of the Internet III*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Internet & American Life Project.
- 3 Blackboard, *Innovation in Education: The Student Experience*
- 4 EDUCAUSE, *Campus Computing 2009*