

Design Tips from Blackboard Exemplary Course Winners

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The IDeL team held a special seminar session to highlight 2 faculty members that have been awarded the Blackboard Exemplary Course Award for their course design. This session was also offered for the College of Education's "Big Byte".

*The "Design & Organization Tips from GVSU's Blackboard Exemplary Course Winners" session was delivered by Affiliate Instructor in the School of Computing and Information Systems, **Szymon Machajewski** and **Julia VanderMolen**, Assistant Professor in Allied Health. These faculty received their award for their recognition of course quality in the design of their courses. The award in 2014 recognized 67 other winners from 43 institutions from around the world.*

Key Design Tips

- **Clear communication** with students of what is happening now and what is coming up and when things are do.
- **Chunking content** within items and folders and replicating certain blocks of content can help students keep track of the most important information.
- **Numbering sequences** are also helpful in the content (1, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc.) to match the sections in the gradebook.
- **Links within the course** to help documents for students provide timely assistance. For example, linking to the student help area on help.blackboard.com to provide information about how to submit their assignment.
- **Quick links in the navigation panel** such as "Send Email" is helpful because it is easy then for students to contact the instructor with the subject of the email indicating the section that the student is enrolled in.
- In the **gradebook changing the total to "Projected Grade"** helps student to understand where they are in the course at any given time. A "Final Grade" column is set up to show students their non-cumulative grade to help them get a better view of their progress.
- Using **colors in the gradebook** provides quick and at-a-glance views of the students that may not be performing as desired. Using a magenta color for flagging cells of higher than 100% provides the instructor with a quick way to check their work for accuracy in grading. That is, to catch errors in input.
- **Providing multiple file formats to support universal design** and access to content helps students with their ability to review the content from whatever computer or mobile device they are using.
- Learning styles may be now "lifestyles"

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- Szymon uses **achievements and openbadges** for students so they can export these to Mozilla Backpack. [Here are some videos](#) about using badges through openbadges. Badges can be linked to outcomes and provide an element of incentive for students (think gamification) and then also take these achievements with them after they graduate in their Mozilla Backpack.
- Julia uses screencast-o-matic (like Panopto) for **weekly introductory videos** which are part of weekly modules. Each week has a task and agenda. There are 3 opportunities to see and hear what is due in the week. In the course syllabus, there are also reminders of what is due and when. There is a check list of what tasks need to be done.
- **Each week there are learning outcomes** that are clearly identified to students which helps them zero in on what is due and where to focus.
- **Blackboard Collaborate tutorials** are provided to students to help them connect to live sessions.
- Julia **embeds the Google calendar in Blackboard** so students can easily add the event to their calendar because all students at GVSU have access to Google.
- **Consistency is key** with same font and good colors.
- **Due dates** are also important to use because it helps students organize and prioritize their work across multiple classes.
- Using the **discussion board helps to build community** through a “getting to know you” opportunity.

Interested in learning more? Check out the resources on [the Blackboard Exemplary Course Program website](#).

