

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DIVISION

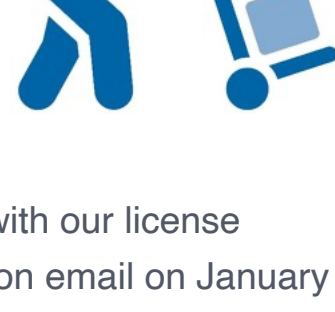
eLearning Technologies

Welcome back, and Happy New Year!

As the winter semester begins, the eLearning Technologies team is here to support your teaching and learning. In this January newsletter, you'll find a reminder about the next phase of the Panopto retention policy, February's Blackboard enhancements, information about the Digital Skills course available in Blackboard, resources to support remote instruction, and opportunities to connect with us through upcoming professional development sessions.

- [Panopto Retention Policy - Phase 2](#)
- [February Blackboard Enhancements](#)
- [Boost Digital Skills with Our "Digital Skills for College Success" Course](#)
- [Tips and Technologies to Support Remote Instruction](#)
- [Upcoming Professional Development Opportunities](#)
- [Connect with eLearning](#)

Panopto Retention Policy – Phase 2: Deleting Unwatched Videos



As a reminder, beginning February 1, 2026 Grand Valley State University officially enters Phase Two of our [Panopto Retention Policy](#). In Phase Two, videos that have not been viewed in three years will be permanently deleted from our archives—in accordance with our license agreement. All individuals affected by Phase Two received a notification email on January 16, 2026.

[You can use this link to view your individual Panopto Archive](#). If you'd like to see helpful tips on unarchiving your video content, view [this Knowledge Base article](#). You can also [schedule a consultation](#) with our Bridge team to review your video archives.

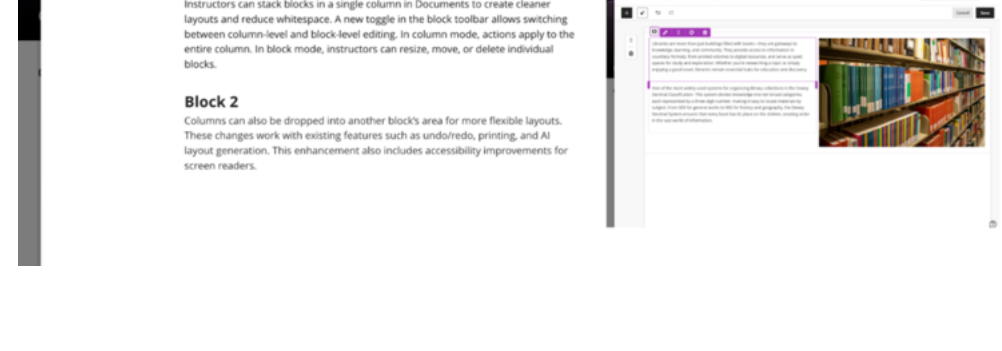
Blackboard Enhancement for February



Blackboard releases new features and improvements each month. This month, we'd like to highlight two changes that will improve the look and functionality of your Blackboard sites.

Stacked Blocks in Documents

Beginning in February, instructors will be able to stack blocks in a single column within a Document. This will make it possible to create cleaner layouts and reduce whitespace. A new toggle in the block toolbar lets you switch between column-level and block-level editing. In column mode, actions apply to the entire column. In block mode, instructors can resize, move, or delete individual blocks.



Banner Image Changes

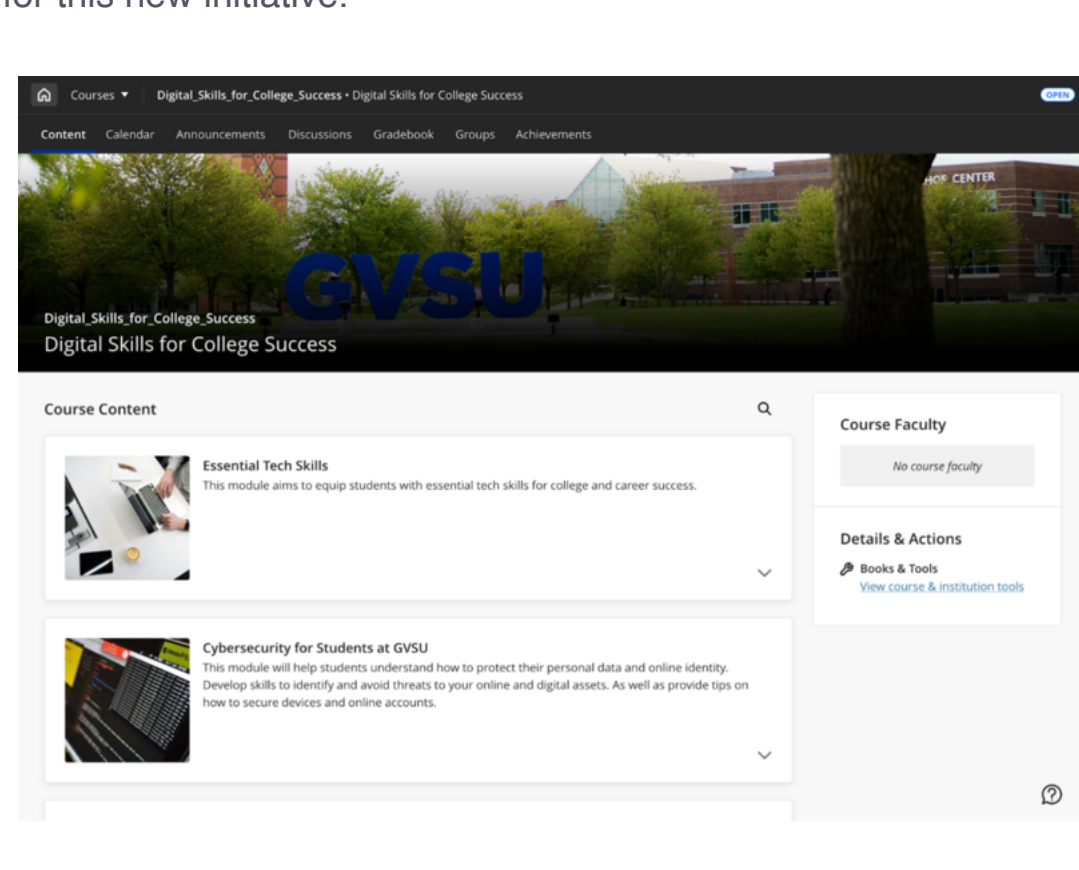
Blackboard recently updated how course banner images are displayed to better align with accessibility guidelines. As part of this change, a darker gradient was applied to banners to ensure sufficient contrast. Blackboard has since identified that the gradient appears darker than intended and will be making adjustments. No action is needed on your part as this update will be applied automatically in the near future.

See the [February release notes](#) for additional enhancements.

Boost Digital Skills with Our "Digital Skills for College Success" Course!



This fall, we launched the new [Digital Skills for College Success Blackboard course](#), created by the Digital Literacy Task Force to strengthen students' foundational digital literacy skills. All students and faculty were automatically enrolled, and early engagement shows a strong start for this new initiative.



As you kick off your winter semester, we encourage faculty to remind students about this resource. A simple way to integrate it into your course is to create an assignment that asks students to upload their completion certificates. This helps you track engagement and ensures students gain core digital skills that support their academic success. To make it easier for students to access, please [add this link to your own Blackboard site](#).

Faculty who want to bring technical and digital literacy skills into their courses, or who need in-person support for students, can reach out to Avery Olearczyk, Digital Literacy Librarian at olearczka@gvsu.edu.

Tips and Technologies to Support Remote Instruction



Moving your course online during weather-related disruptions involves more than choosing the right technology tools. The eLearning team can support faculty with instructional planning, course adjustments, and teaching strategies that promote continuity and student engagement.

Start thinking through these questions:

- Modify your expectations: what are the essentials that you need to keep?
- Are there due dates or policies that you can relax to accommodate student anxiety?
- Can a test or quiz be open-book or postponed for another time?
- If participation and attendance are part of your course, how might that look online?

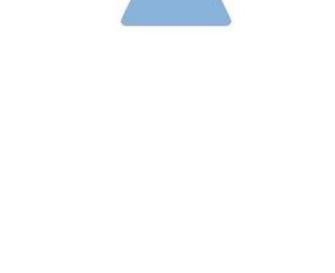
For example, can you use [online discussions](#) to maintain community AND encourage students to be present and engaged?

Once you've considered those questions, consider using these tools:

- Use [Blackboard announcements](#) to quickly communicate with all students.
- If necessary, use Zoom to hold LIVE meetings and online office hours with students. This [article](#) explains how to add a Zoom meeting link to your Blackboard course.
 - If you used Zoom during last week's remote instruction and need to review attendance, we've created a [helpful resource](#) to guide you through the process.
- If you aren't using Blackboard to collect student assignments, review [this article](#) on how to use Blackboard's assignment tool.
- Post your lecture notes, PowerPoint files, and other essential resources in Blackboard. See [this article](#) for assistance with posting a variety of content in Blackboard.
- Don't forget to revise your syllabus to reflect any changes you make to your course structure and assessment plans, and post the updated version back in Blackboard.

Most importantly, each department has been assigned two [eLearning Technologies Liaisons](#). Your liaison is available to answer questions and schedule individual consultation appointments. Collaborating with liaisons can save you time and get you key assistance when the university needs to move to remote instruction.

Upcoming Professional Development Opportunities



Self-Paced Online Professional Development Options

[Getting Started with Blackboard Ultra](#)

[MI eXpLOER Learning Modules and Certificate](#) (OER Basics)

[Padlet 101](#)

[The '5 STEPS for Course Design'](#)

[Accessibility Best Practices for Respondus Lockdown Browser](#)

Microsoft 365 and OneDrive

[Microsoft Excel 101](#)

1/28/26 • 1 – 2pm

[Practical Ways to Enhance Your PowerPoint Presentation](#)

1/29/26 • 1 – 2pm

[Microsoft Bookings Basics](#)

2/4/26 • 1 – 2:30pm

[Getting Started with Microsoft OneDrive](#)

2/18/26 • 1 – 2pm

[20 Microsoft 365 Tips to Work Smarter, Not Harder](#)

2/25/26 • 1 – 2pm

Accessibility Webinars

[Accessibility Strategies to Address the Impact of ADA Title II Updates](#)

On-demand web recording sponsored by Anthology

[Making PDF's Accessible](#)

2/5/26 • 1:30 – 2pm

2/19/26 • 3 – 3:30pm

3/5/26 • 9 – 9:30am

[PDF Tune-Up in 15 Minutes Using Ally](#)

1/30/26 • 10 – 10:15am

2/13/26 • 2 – 2:15pm

2/27/26 • 9 – 9:15am

3/19/26 • 12 – 12:15pm

[Accessibility and Ally: Creating Course Materials That Work for All](#)

2/13/26 • 1 – 2pm

3/20/26 • 2 – 3pm

Blackboard Webinars and In-Person Events

"Did you know Blackboard Could Do That?" Drop-in Series

This drop-in series is hosted monthly in DCIH 260 (City Campus). Reservations are not required. Faculty are encouraged to bring their laptops. See our [monthly newsletters](#) to review the latest updates.

2/19/2026, 3/19/2026, 4/16/2026 • 12 – 1:30pm

[Blackboard's Rubric Design Assistant Seminar](#)

1/30/26 • 12 – 1pm

2/23/26 • 11 – 11:45am

3/18/26 • 12 – 12:45pm

[Using Learn Ultra Analytics to Measure and Boost Student Performance](#)

2/2/26 • 11 – 11:45am

2/19/26 • 1 – 1:45pm

[Evaluating Student Performance Outcomes with Blackboard and EAC](#)

3/17/26 • 11 – 11:45am

Digital Pedagogy Webinars and In-Person Events

[The NotebookLM Advantage for Quick Podcasts and More](#)

Are you looking for a tool to create podcasts using your own content? How about a tool to summarize lengthy readings? Join this informative session to hear how NotebookLM can help with these and many other things, as well as how faculty have used it in their courses.

2/4/26 • 11am – 12pm

3/31/26 • 1 – 2pm

[Generative AI and Course Mapping: The Alignment Audit](#)

Creating a well-aligned course in which objectives, assessments, and learning activities work together seamlessly requires careful planning and regular review, and is critical for student success. This interactive workshop shows you how to partner with Generative AI to audit and improve course alignment. We'll experiment with prompting strategies to map your course and explore recommendations for creating tighter connections between objectives and assessments. We will focus on the responsible use of AI that supports, rather than replaces, your expertise as an instructor.

2/12/26 • 2 – 3pm • City Campus in-person (DCIH260)

[Generative AI and Course Mapping Part 2: Prompt Engineering](#)

Immediately following the session "Generative AI to support Course alignment", we will continue with further hands-on practice and learning how to write prompts. Through demonstration and/or practice, we will use free accounts to compare different LLM engines and evaluate their outputs.

2/12/26 • 3 – 4pm • City Campus in-person (DCIH260)

[Partnering with Generative AI for Enhanced Assessment Design](#)

Generative AI tools can act as powerful collaborators in your assessment design process, helping you brainstorm, refine, and align assessments with your course outcomes. In this hands-on session, you'll practice using AI to generate assessment ideas that target different levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, draft assignment prompts and instructions, and create scaffolded assignments—all while keeping your disciplinary expertise and academic integrity at the center. Join us to explore how to thoughtfully integrate AI to build more creative and pedagogically sound assessments.

3/26/26 • 1 – 2pm • City Campus in-person (DCIH260)

[Introduction to Quality Matters](#)

In this session, you'll be introduced to the nationally recognized standards for online and QM rubric courses. In addition to an overview of each of the eight standards, we'll discuss the QM rubric, what informs it, its value, and how to take the next step toward validating the quality of your online courses and recognizing where you can make improvements.

3/11/26 • 1 – 2pm

3/18/26 • 12pm – 1pm

Digital Media Workshops

[Introduction to Adobe Express](#)

2/17/26 • 2 – 3pm

[Video Editing with Adobe Express](#)

2/19/26 • 2 – 3pm

[Hypothesis: Collaborative Annotation Tool for Blackboard](#)

2/26/26 • 1 – 1:45pm

Visit our [eLearning website](#) for a complete list of other eLearning Technologies professional development offerings for the 2026 winter semester. Registration is available in [Workday Learning](#).

Connect with eLearning!

There are many benefits to working with eLearning. We can assist in optimizing your Blackboard course structure, enhancing online and hybrid learning experiences, and incorporating innovative tools to foster active learning. You're encouraged to contact your [eLearning Technologies liaisons](#) or submit a [consultation ticket](#) at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Kim Kenward, Director of eLearning Technologies

kenwardk@gvsu.edu

GVSU Information Technology



1 Campus Drive
4490 Kindschi Hall of Science
Allendale, MI 49401

Share this: [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [LinkedIn](#)

[Subscribe to our future emails](#)

[Subscribe](#) to our email list.

[Visit our eLearning Technologies website](#)

podcast by Jensen Weiser from Noun Project / Question by Adrien Coquet from Noun Project / feedback by Vectorstock from Noun Project / meeting by Adrien Coquet from Noun Project / idea/open by shashank singh from Noun Project / wellness by Adrien Coquet from Noun Project / reminder by conchan from Noun Project / explain by kornegreder from Noun Project / fix by Adrien Coquet from Noun Project / Tour by Gokuroustyle from Noun Project / key by Aaron K. Kim from Noun Project / clouded by Gimgor Creative from Noun Project / cleaning by Nabuka Karim Baraka from Noun Project / new by jlsam402 from Noun Project / leaf by Deepor from Noun Project / founded by M. Olu Olatunde from Noun Project / working together by Kholim from Noun Project / Accessibility by mikolaj from Noun Project / toolbox by David Rodin from Noun Project / startup by Gimgor Creative from Noun Project / Training by Adrien Coquet from Noun Project / original paper roll by Garia Nurgisha from Noun Project / Software by Asahb from Noun Project