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GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DIVISION

eLearning Technologies

As the winter semester wraps up, thank you for your continued efforts to enhance student learning through technology. We hope you enjoyed a relaxing and rejuvenating spring break. Whether you're exploring new Blackboard features, seeking instructional design support, or improving content accessibility, the eLearning team is here to partner with you.

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May Blackboard Enhancements

Blackboard releases new features and improvements on the first Friday of each month. This month, we are highlighting three changes that improve the functionality of our Blackboard sites beginning May 8, 2026.

Course Switcher

The Course Switcher now includes a search box that allows users to quickly find and open any course they have access to. Instead of browsing the full Courses page, users can open the Course Switcher, search by course name or course ID, and navigate directly to the selected course.

Group Management Changes

Group management has been redesigned with a cleaner layout and more intuitive controls. Instructors now start by choosing how they want to structure groups before managing individual members. The options include:

- manual assignment
- automatic assignment
- self-enrollment
- import

This approach streamlines setup for common scenarios.

Instructors can now automatically assign students to groups by specifying the number of members per group.

With these changes, instructors can assign and unassign students using multiple methods:

- Assign students directly from the unassigned list
- Assign selected students to a specific group
- Add or remove members from within a group

Instructors can now sort:

- Students by first name or last name (A–Z or Z–A)
- Student ID
- Groups by group name
- Groups by number of members

White Space Improvements

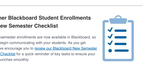
Blackboard has refined the spacing and layout behavior in Documents to reduce unnecessary vertical whitespace and improve overall readability and visual balance.

* * *

For a complete list of upcoming enhancements, please review the May 2026 release notes.

Summer Blackboard Student Enrollments and New Semester Checklist

Summer semester enrollments are now available in Blackboard, so you can begin communicating with your students. As you get started, we encourage you to review our Blackboard New Semester Start Up Checklist for a quick reminder of key tasks to ensure your course launches smoothly.



Fix Your Content Day: May 5 - Hands-on Support - Refreshments too!

Join us in person at Kirkhof Center, room 2263, Valley Lindemann Campus. Whether you stay for 10 minutes or two hours, work alongside experts from Student Accessibility Resources, eLearning Technologies, Blackboard, University Libraries, and University Marketing. We encourage you to register in advance to help us plan for staffing and light refreshments.

Support and Resources for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

Accessibility is an important part of creating an inclusive learning environment for all students. We encourage instructors to review the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and to explore the resources available to support the creation of accessible course materials.

Although the U.S. Department of Justice has recently extended the ADA Title II web and mobile accessibility compliance deadline to April 26, 2027, we are not treating it as a pause. Our professional development efforts will continue, with a strong emphasis on making steady progress in improving content accessibility over the coming year. We've highlighted a few steps faculty can take to make their Blackboard content more accessible.

- Review the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) website for background information.
- Delete files from your Blackboard courses that are no longer in use. This will improve your digital accessibility metrics generated from Blackboard Ally.
- Review your Blackboard Ally report for red and orange items, and address the most impactful issues first.
- Review the ways in which students need to engage in the course or complete graded work. Your syllabus and schedule are most vital; think through your critical readings and lecture slides.
- If your syllabus is created in Microsoft Word, use the Microsoft Accessibility Checker to identify and fix common issues such as headings, color contrast, and alt text.
- If you distribute your syllabus as a PDF, Adobe Acrobat's Accessibility tools can help you review and remediate accessibility concerns.
- You can also upload files to create Blackboard documents to improve accessibility, rather than converting digital files to PDF.
- Review your syllabus with permanent links. Your subject librarian can help you find articles in our databases.

The eLearning team and Student Accessibility Resources department offer a variety of training opportunities to support the creation of accessible content.

GVSU SAVE Reminder

It's essential to add the GVSU Save link and associated links to your course and make them available at the beginning of the semester in Blackboard. Students need to have access to these resources from day one. Read the Knowledge Base article for instructions. You can also contact your eLearning liaison for assistance or request that a GVSU Business employee be given temporary course builder access to provide technical help.

Call for Proposals: GV Technology Summit Returns November 3, 2026

The GV Technology Summit returns on November 3, 2026. This university-wide event highlights how faculty, staff, and students are advancing technology in learning, research, and daily work across GVSU. Join the conversation—whether you're an expert, innovator, or simply curious.

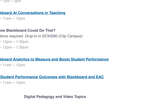
Date: November 3, 2026, 8:30am – 4:30pm

Location: Kirkhof Center, Valley Lindemann Campus

- Have a project or tech initiative to share? Submit a presentation proposal (breakouts, roundtables, or posters). **The submission deadline is June 30, 2026.**
- Planning to attend? Register to reserve your spot.
- Bookmark the event webpage for ongoing speaker and schedule updates.

Start planning now to join us at the Summit. Email us at techsummit@gvsu.edu

View our video trailer to learn more about the GV Tech Summit.



New Zoom Capabilities Now Available

The university has recently renewed our Zoom agreement, expanding the tools available to faculty, staff, and students across campus. These updates support teaching, collaboration, and communication while making several previously premium features available to everyone.

What's New:

- Host Zoom meetings with up to 500 participants (previously 300)
- Host Zoom Webinars for up to 500 attendees (previously a paid add-on)
- Unlimited Zoom Clips for quick video updates and sharing
- Zoom Workplace AI Companion for meeting summaries
- Translated captions during meetings
- Increased cloud recording storage

To take full advantage of these features, community members should sign in to Zoom using their university account when joining meetings. Faculty are encouraged to ask students to sign in rather than joining class sessions as guests, which can require manual approval to enter the meeting.

Zoom has also expanded its AI capabilities. AI Companion 3.0 now provides powerful AI tools through both the Zoom desktop application and a web interface. Community members can access AI Companion directly from their Zoom desktop application. Beginning in August, this feature will be available to all web accounts. Zoom provides helpful support documentation for using AI Companion on the web.

May and Early June Professional Development Opportunities

SELF-PACED OPTIONS

- Accessibility and Blackboard Ally Self-Paced Training
- Accessibility Best Practices for Responsive Lockdown Browser
- Adobe Self-Paced Courses
- Getting Started with Blackboard Ultra
- M Coach(Cet) Learning Modules and Certificate (CKR Basics)
- Padlet 101
- The 5 STEPS for Course Design!

WEBINAR OPTIONS

Unless specified otherwise, these sessions are held via live webinar on Zoom. Please be sure to download the Zoom app for Windows (current) and reserve your meeting link. If you have difficulty registering, contact email Kim Kenward (kenwardk@gvsu.edu).

AI Topics

AI-Powered Productivity: Transforming Faculty Workflow
5/6/26 – 11am – 12pm

Understanding AI: Tools, and Teaching Policies - A Faculty Discussion
5/20/26 – 10am – 11:30am

Using Blackboard AI Conversations in Teaching
5/19/26 – 11am – 12pm

Notebook LM Adventure for Quick Podcasts and More
6/16/26 – 1pm – 2pm

Accessibility Topics

PDF Tune-Up in 15 Minutes Using Blackboard Ally
5/4/26 – 9am – 9:15am
5/14/26 – 2pm – 2:15pm
6/4/26 – 10:30am – 10:45am
6/17/26 – 1pm – 1:15pm

Making PDF's Accessible
6/11/26 – 9am – 9:30am
6/18/26 – 10am – 10:30am
6/10/26 – 10am – 10:30am

Accessibility and AI's: Creating Course Materials That Work for All
5/27/26 – 1pm – 2pm

Blackboard Topics

Blackboard Ultra Essentials
5/7/26 – 11am – 12pm
6/22/26 – 10am – 11am

Blackboard Ultra Rubric Design Assistant
5/18/26 – 1pm – 2pm

Using Blackboard AI Conversations in Teaching
5/19/26 – 11am – 12pm

Did you Know Blackboard Could Do That?
No reservations required. Drop-in in DCH2600 (City Campus)
5/13/26 – 1:30pm – 3:30pm
6/16/26 – 12pm – 1:30pm

Using Blackboard Analytics to Measure and Boost Student Performance
5/28/26 – 11am – 12pm

Evaluating Student Performance Outcomes with Blackboard and EAC
6/10/26 – 11am – 12pm

Digital Pedagogy and Video Topics

Declutter your Digital Life
5/6/26 – 1pm – 2pm

Hypothesis: Collaborative Annotation Tool for Blackboard
5/6/26 – 10am – 10:45am

Learning Lab: Hypothesis for Returning Faculty
This webinar is sponsored by Hypothesis
5/14/26 – 2:30pm – 3:15pm

Media Assessments, Transform Your Existing Assignments into Student-Created Video
5/20/26 – 11am – 12pm

Learning Lab: Design a More Engaging Summer Course Learning Experience
This webinar is sponsored by Hypothesis
5/26/26 – 2:30pm – 3:15pm

Padlet's New Feature Releases for May
This webinar is sponsored by Padlet
5/6/26 – 1:30pm – 3pm

Using Pulse1 to Engage Online Learners
5/20/26 – 9/11/26 11am – 12pm

Creating Instructor Presence with Panopto
6/2/26 – 9/16/26 – 11am – 1:30pm

Podcasting 101
This session is held in-person in DCH2600
6/18/26 – 2pm – 3pm

Introduction to Adobe Express
These sessions are held in-person at DCH400 (Health Campus) and on Zoom.
5/12/26 – 9/16/26 – 11:00am

Video Editing with Adobe Express
6/25/26 – 8/13/26 1pm – 2pm

Microsoft 365 and OneDrive Topics

Getting Started with OneDrive
5/13/26 – 1pm – 2pm

Practical Ways to Enhance Your PowerPoint Presentation
5/20/26 – 1pm – 2pm

20 Microsoft 365 Tips To Work Smarter, Not Harder
6/11/26 – 1pm – 2:30pm

Time-Saving Tips in Outlook
6/3/26 – 1pm – 2pm

Microsoft Excel Formulas & Functions (Part 1)
6/17/26 – 1pm – 3pm

Microsoft Excel Formulas & Functions (Part 2)
6/24/26 – 1pm – 3pm

Adobe Education Institute

The Adobe Education Institute (AEI) is an exclusive professional learning program geared toward K-12 educators. It's a dynamic, interactive experience that combines hands-on experiences with Adobe tools and practical strategies you can apply in teaching, student support, communications, and campus initiatives. Pick and choose sessions according to interest. Participants can earn a badge for every session completed.

This webinar series is sponsored by Adobe, and times vary based on sessions:
5/5, 5/6, 5/11

Connect with eLearning!

There are many benefits to working with eLearning. We can assist in developing your Blackboard course, assessing online and hybrid learning experiences, and incorporating innovative tools to foster active learning. You're encouraged to contact your eLearning Technologies liaison or submit a consultation ticket at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Kim Kenward, Director of eLearning Technologies
kenwardk@gvsu.edu
GVSU Information Technology

Visit our eLearning Technologies website

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