Choosing Course Tools:  
Course Studio, Blackboard Campus Edition or Websites

Professors at Collin College have several options available for managing courses, distributing course materials, collaboration and communicating with students online: CougarWeb Course Studio, Blackboard Campus Edition (formerly known as WebCT) and instructor websites. Remember that no single tool does everything well:

- Course Studio has good course communication and collaboration tools but is not a learning management system.
- Blackboard is the high-end course/learning management system providing many useful tools, but it has a steeper learning curve.
- Websites are good for marketing and distributing public information, but any special tools must be built from scratch.

The key to a successful online presence is to select the tool that work best for your course. This document will help you do that.

Course Studio:
Use Course Studio in CougarWeb if:

- You want an easy-to-use system for discussions, chat, distributing files, sharing photographs, and listing links to websites.
- You want a calendar that has pre-loaded the student class times and locations.
- You want to e-mail students using a pre-populated list. (You won’t have to create a GroupWise list or other email group each term.)
- You want to share a few photos, files or links published to the whole class.
- You do not need any quizzing, assignment drop-boxes, or other evaluation features.

Do Not Use Course Studio if:

- You teach a distance education class. Blackboard is the standard for distance classes at Collin College.
- You need to upload or download a large amount of files. At this time, CourseStudio can only store up to 15 MB per class.
- You need discussion forums that remember what messages you have read. Course Studio does not provide any indication of new or previously read messages.
- You need a grade-book, whiteboard, student tracking, private assignment drop-boxes, student group work tool, etc.)
- You want to roll the content over to another semester without archiving in your own backups.

Blackboard Course Management System:
Use Blackboard if:

- You teach a distance education class. Blackboard is the standard for distance classes at Collin College.
- You need to manage a student grade-book.
- You want students to be able to see their grades during the course.
- You need automatically graded quizzes or anonymous surveys.
- You want to provide a private assignment drop-box where markers can easily grade assignments and return them to individual students.
- You want students to work together in groups (Student Presentations).
- You need to easily compile and download discussion topics or lecture notes.
- You want more than one chat room (so multiple chats can happen simultaneously) or record the contents of a chat.
- You need a whiteboard to share freehand drawing among course participants.
- You need to easily and quickly organize a lot of web pages by adding navigation links between them (build “Content modules”).
- You want to export course material easily to other courses (using the Blackboard “import” and “export” capabilities).
- You want to backup your course materials easily (using Blackboard’s backup and restore features, or the ability to archive course materials as .zip files).
- You need to upload or download many files at once.
- You want an “image database” that is searchable. The photo gallery in CougarWeb/Course Studio is not searchable.
- You want to easily integrate your course with materials distributed on a CDROM.
- You want the system to remember the last page a student viewed so that next time they log in they can resume the course where they left off.
- You want the ability to release information to students only if certain conditions are true. For example, show Unit 2 only after they pass the quiz for Unit 1.
- You want to monitor student activities in a course (how they participated in discussions, content viewed, time spent in different areas of the course). Course Studio shows only the last time a student logged in.
- You want to monitor quiz effectiveness (how well students do on specific questions, which questions are consistently answered wrong, etc.) using Statistical Analysis.

**Do Not Use Blackboard if:**
- You need public web pages people can access without a password.

**Public Websites**

**Use a public website if:**
- You want to publish material that people can access without a password.
- You want to do things that are not available in CougarWeb or Blackboard.
- You need to make material available to people who are outside of the college and not eligible for access to CougarWeb.

**Do not use public websites if:**
- You need a tool that is already provided in either Course Studio or Blackboard (chat, whiteboard, gradebook, etc.).
- You need to password protect the page for copyright, confidentiality, or other reasons.

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