Start-of-Semester "Housekeeping" (Faculty)

The beginning of any semester can present a daunting array of tasks that faculty need to accomplish before the first day of class. In order to relieve last-minute Blackboard-related worries, we suggest that faculty use the following checklist at least one week before the start of each term:

☐ **Provision and/or Request New Blackboard Courses (face-to-face or partially online) in OPALS for the next semester.** Course requests may be submitted at any time, although there are firm deadlines (set well in advance) for any requests for new FULLY ONLINE courses. You may provision for the next semester as soon as the course schedule for that term has been publically released to students.

☐ **Replace Existing Syllabus, Schedule and Other Semester-Specific Documents/Materials.** This may seem like something of a "no brainer," but it does seem to occasionally slip instructors' minds in the rush to start the semester.

☐ **Use the Date Management Tool to Update Assignment, Activity and Test/Quiz Due Dates to Align with new Schedule.** Blackboard's Date Management Tool provides single-page access to your existing activity, assignment, and test/quiz dates, enabling you to change them all from one location.

☐ **Update/Delete Existing Course Announcements (If Used).** Because there are some faculty who "recycle" course announcements from one semester to another, the provisioning/course copy process does not delete announcements. We recommend that instructors periodically review their course announcements and delete/modify them to avoid student confusion and misinformation.

☐ **Update/Delete Existing Discussion Forums/Threads**. As with the Announcements described above, there are some faculty who "recycle" discussion posts from one semester to another. As a result, the provisioning/course copy process does not clear discussion forums/threads. Posts from previous students are merely annotated as having been posted by "anonymous". We recommend that instructors periodically review their discussion forums/threads and delete/modify them to avoid student confusion and misinformation.

☐ **Review Course Content Areas for Existing Adaptive Release Settings and Modify/Delete**. Although Adaptive Release is (and should be) used sparingly and with caution, it has proven useful in the past, especially when tests/quizzes needed to be released on a different date/time or a different version was needed for accommodation purposes. Blackboard's new test exceptions options should eliminate the need to use Adaptive Release for those purposes from this point forward; however, if you have Adaptive Release settings from a "recycled" course, you should completely remove those rules from and quizzes, tests, assignments, etc., to avoid rendering the items unavailable to current learners. IMPORTANT! Instructors of Fully Online courses in the School of Business (BUS) are required (as per the Dean's instructions) to maintain the Adaptive Release settings associated with the Academic Honesty Resources that were previously deployed in those courses. We strongly recommend that those instructors work with a member of the course support team to verify/correct any Adaptive Release settings in fully online BUS courses.

☐ **Use Student Preview Mode to Thoroughly "Test Drive" the Course as a Student**. Instructors no longer need to request a "zzaccount" for Student role access to their courses. The latest version of Blackboard includes a new Student Preview mode that is a genuine Student role presentation of the course. We strongly recommend that instructors, as a final pre-semester check, use the Student Preview mode and go through parts or all of the course as a student, clicking links, taking quizzes, submitting assignments, etc.

NOTE: When working in your Blackboard courses prior to the start of the semester, you'll likely see a note attached to each course name on your My Courses list that says, "Unavailable – Will not be available until [Date]". This indicates that the course will be unavailable to **STUDENTS** until the Saturday before the semester begins. Faculty may access the course at any time, once it appears on their My Courses list in Blackboard.

Please feel free to utilize either or both of the options below for information about or assistance with any of these recommended actions:

1. Contact a member of our course support staff, either by contacting your assigned Instructional Designer (ID) directly or by contacting the Support Center and requesting assistance. The Support Center will enter your request into the help ticket system and you will be contacted by a member of our team shortly thereafter. You may contact the Support Center at 281-283-2828 or by email at SupportCenter@uhcl.edu.
2. From the Blackboard login page, use the More Blackboard Support link within the For Faculty field to access UHCL's Faculty Blackboard Support page. The support page contains handouts on how to provision and request new courses using UHCL's OPALS application. The page also contains a link to the Official Blackboard Support Site, where you can locate instructions on working with the Grade Center, exporting Grade Center data to Excel, and archiving your Blackboard course(s).