

Addressing Students' Needs for Learning Technology: Today and in the Future



AN LMS BUYER'S GUIDE
PRESENTED BY ANTHOLOGY

Blackboard 
by Anthology

At Anthology, our mission is to empower educators and institutions with meaningful innovation that's simple and intelligent, inspiring student success and institutional growth.

We believe that LMS technology has a fundamental role to play in helping higher education provide frictionless, personalized, and meaningful learning experiences for students of all backgrounds. This concise guide outlines key trends for the future of education technology, and the crucial steps to take today to ensure your institution will thrive in this ever-changing landscape.

Contents

**The LMS of the Future:
Trends and Opportunities4**

LMS data is at the heart of a connected campus 5

AI enhances the learning experience 6

All learning is hybrid learning 7

Technology breaks down educational barriers 8

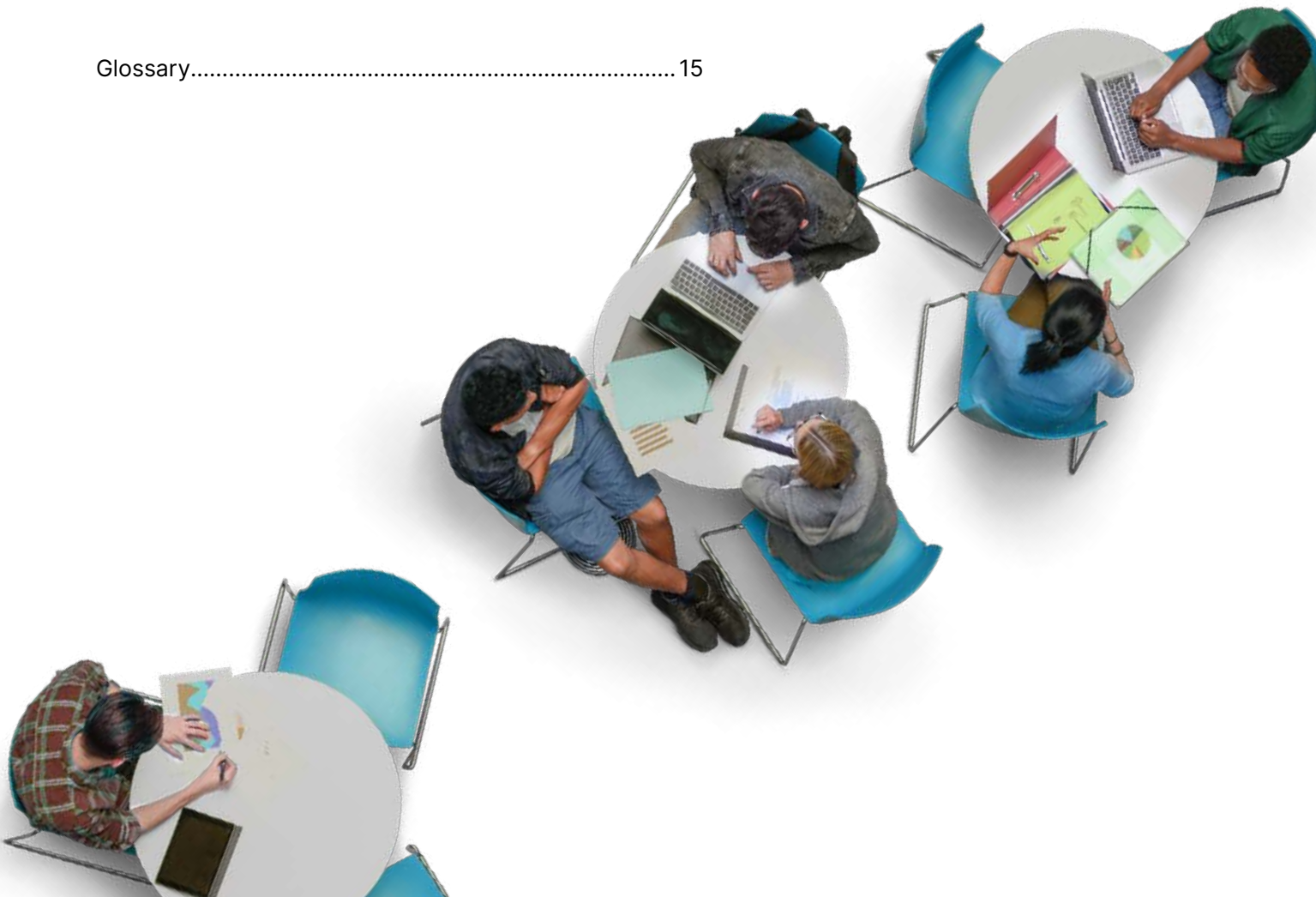
Skills-based learning continues to accelerate..... 9

Institutions' tech stacks are streamlined
and simplified..... 10

**Blackboard: The LMS for Easier
Teaching and Better Learning11**

Institutions are choosing Blackboard 13

Glossary..... 15



The LMS of the Future: **Trends and Opportunities**



LMS data is at the heart of a truly connected campus

Harnessing the power of data doubles as both one of higher education's biggest challenges and its biggest opportunities. Recent years have seen institutions become inundated with data, but without the required systems and processes in place to make this data actionable across campus.

The LMS is an invaluable source of data. By providing inline insights within the platform, students, faculty, and administrators alike can understand progress, optimize in real time, and provide the necessary assistance should any challenges arise.

But this is just the start. The insights gleaned from your LMS aren't just relevant for teaching and learning, they can fuel your entire institutional strategy. Understanding the demographics, needs, motivations, and study preferences of your student body can significantly improve results for important initiatives across campus, including marketing, enrollment, support services, and retention.

"We've got to have better technology, better information systems, better insight, and better visualization to drive everything from how we create research and classroom experiences to how we utilize our facilities and optimize our space." ¹

"More calls for data informed decision making and reporting"

Ranked #3 on Educause's Top Ten Higher Education Trends for 2023 ²



Brett Dalton
Chief Business Officer
Baylor University

Blackboard Benefits

With Blackboard, insights are embedded into the user experience and appear contextually within workflows. Students, instructors, and administrators all receive timely progress updates with aligned communication tools to close the loop between insight and action.

Key RFP Considerations

- Data capabilities should be fundamental to any RFP.
- Data should be both "inline" within the LMS and easily accessible to assist across campus.
- RFP process should include stakeholders across campus, while ensuring that all have a strong familiarity with LMS software.
- Strong data security policies are an absolute must to ensure that data is used productively without impeding on students' privacy.

¹ Educause, Top Ten IT Issues 2023

² Educause: 2023 Higher Education Trend Watch

AI enhances the learning experience



AI has been the biggest talking point in education in recent times. As institutional leaders look to devise policies which balance the opportunities and risks that generative AI presents, there is a crucial role for learning technology to provide innovation and efficiency without jeopardizing control for the user.

Students see the potential for AI in the classroom. [A recent Anthology study](#) found that over 50% of students globally believe that AI will “revolutionize teaching and learning methods,” while more than 40% expect it will “enhance student engagement and interactivity.” Learners want the use of technology in education to mirror its use in the workforce, and generative AI is no exception.

An important first step to ensure these student aspirations are met is to empower instructors to use AI responsibly with tools designed for education. Teachers are the gatekeepers of learning, meaning that wherever technology can add efficiency to their roles, students will be the ultimate beneficiaries. The adoption of AI in learning technologies can streamline administrative tasks and provide instructors with inspiration for high quality courses, learning materials, and assessments tasks, delivering great learning experiences more efficiently than ever before. This, over time, allows institutions to then consider other AI opportunities within teaching and learning, including tools specifically designed to increase learner interaction.

Key RFP Considerations

- Ensure providers have an established AI policy and a proven history of applying it to their solutions. This should extend to stringent protection of all user data.
- Prioritize LMS technologies with existing AI innovations, as well as detailed development plans for the future.
- Consider the role of partnership: with tech giants investing billions in generative AI, look for EdTech vendors who have strong relationships and are implementing best-in-class AI tools in their solutions.

50+%

of students globally believe that AI will **revolutionize teaching and learning methods**.

40+%

of students globally expect that AI will **enhance student engagement and interactivity**.

Blackboard Benefits

The **AI Design Assistant**, developed in partnership with Microsoft, makes Blackboard the first major LMS to leverage generative AI to inspire instructors' course structure, test questions, authentic assessments, and grading rubrics.

All learning is hybrid learning



Following the upheaval of the pandemic, students have spoken! With the boundaries between online and in-person continuing to blur, hybrid learning has emerged as the preferred modality for many learners.

Institutions will need to leverage technology to provide the desired level of flexibility and adopt pedagogical practices which aren't tied to any single modality.

Combining the social and networking benefits of in-person interaction with the flexibility of online is important to align with students' needs, and it's essential that your LMS provides a consistent experience throughout. This starts with a quality mobile experience, which should be key criteria in any technology decisions your institution makes moving forward.

30%

of four-year students already consider hybrid learning their **preferred modality**.³

73%

of teachers say blended learning **increases engagement**.⁴

85%

of higher education programs in North America are forecast to be **hybrid or fully online by 2025**.⁵

Key RFP Considerations

- Don't restrict the evaluation process to desktop, ensure mobile application is tested as a fundamental need for both students and instructors.
- Consider where additional help from the vendor might be valuable to develop courses that align with changing student needs and different modalities.

³ Anthology National Student Survey

⁴ Mark In Style, Blended Learning Statistics

⁵ Forbes

Blackboard Benefits

The recent release of Blackboard's **enhanced mobile app** is receiving great feedback from students and instructors for providing superior workflows and instant access to all-new product features.

Technology breaks down educational barriers

As higher education strives to foster belonging for students, technology will play an essential role in improving inclusivity and accessibility for learners of all backgrounds.

Your LMS should be at the forefront. Learning technology must be inclusive by design, with the inbuilt functionality to allow students not only to learn effectively but also to express themselves. When students feel that they can't be true to themselves, they inevitably disengage from the learning process and academic outcomes suffer as a result.

Fostering collaboration is also a vital consideration. Your LMS should provide the tools for students to collaborate easily with their peers and instructors, creating a learning community even when users are physically distant.



54%

of students feel **negatively singled out** by their institution because of an identity marker.⁶

Key RFP Considerations

- Is accessibility built into the LMS design?
- How does the LMS facilitate and encourage self-expression?
- Does the LMS make it easy for students and instructors to collaborate?

⁶ Student Belonging: The Next DEI Frontier in Higher Education (hanoverresearch.com)

Blackboard Benefits

Blackboard provides an **accessible and engaging** learning environment for all students. With a clear and consistent interface, native self-expression features, accessibility insights on content, and easy creation of alternative formats, all learners and instructors are empowered to pursue their goals.

Skills-based learning continues to accelerate



Employers are increasingly focused on recruiting “work-ready” graduates, which will drive changes in pedagogical practices as higher education institutions adopt skills-based learning. Redefining instructional modalities will also help institutions to boost enrollment, with students actively looking for study opportunities with a direct path to future employment.

LMS technology must evolve as a result. It’s essential that your LMS supports multiple modalities to enable genuine skill development, including the facilitation of engaging and dynamic lessons, innovative assessment options, and increased flexibility for instructors. As noted on the previous page, fostering collaboration is also essential as teamwork will remain among the skills that employers value most.

“Expectations and demand for noncredit and nontraditional education and skills training are on the rise...these changes signal to institutions a need to realign education and business models to better fit these consumer and industry trends.”

Educause 2022 Horizon Report, Teaching and Learning Edition

Key RFP Considerations

- Does the LMS allow instructors to be innovative with the course, lesson, and assessment design?
- Does the LMS promote teamwork and other valuable skills that will help your students gain employment?
- Will your faculty require additional assistance from the vendor to deliver skills-based learning in a digital environment?

Blackboard Benefits

With a new **Mastery Gradebook and integrated badging and microcredentials**, Blackboard allows both learners and instructors to focus on the competencies that lead to workforce opportunities.

Institutions' tech stacks are streamlined and simplified

As with many industries, university campuses have been overwhelmed by different technology—much of which has very specific applications and doesn't align with the rest of the tech stack. Streamlining is going to be essential to improve efficiency and effectiveness within higher education.

At Anthology, we've built the world's most comprehensive EdTech ecosystem, meaning that Blackboard is developed and supported by a team whose knowledge extends across the full breadth of campus technology.



Your LMS should evolve to match the needs of your faculty, not the other way around. This starts with deep integrations with the teaching tools that your instructors know and love, meaning they can create engaging lessons without having to leave the LMS environment. As learning technologies continue to develop, from running AI-assisted institutional analysis to bringing AR/VR experiences to the classroom and everything in between, LMS data and integration capabilities will continue to be central for a streamlined tech stack and quality learning experience.

Key RFP Considerations

- How does your LMS align with your broader tech stack? Can your provider offer expertise across the breadth of EdTech to improve campus effectiveness?
- What integrations does the LMS offer to enhance pedagogy?

Blackboard Benefits

Blackboard has seamless integrations with more than **200 tech partners**—including Microsoft Office—to create a holistic, engaging learning environment.

Blackboard: The LMS for Easier Teaching and Better Learning

More flexible. More inclusive. More insightful. With modern, intuitive workflows and hundreds of new features, it's time to take another look at Blackboard.

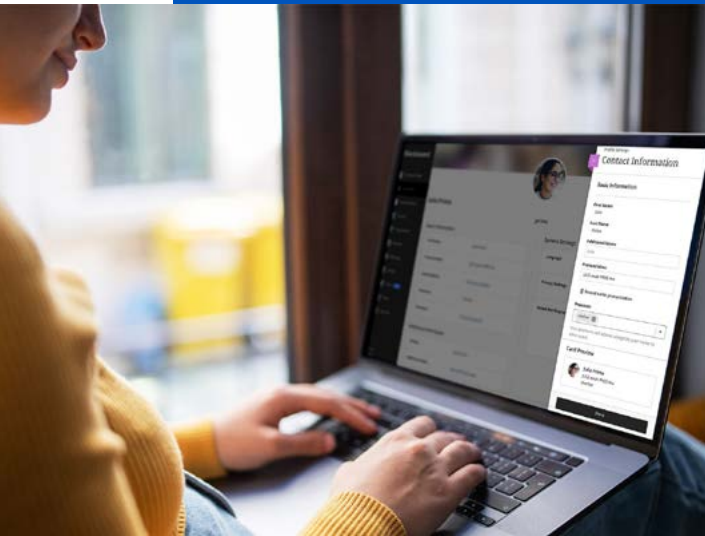
More time for what's most important: teaching

The **AI Design Assistant** in Blackboard, powered by Microsoft Azure OpenAI Service, leverages generative AI to inspire instructors' course and assessment creation.

Empower instructors with AI

- In its first **12** months, **618** institutions enabled one or more AI Design Assistant capabilities, powering **738,414** education tasks
- The **test question generation** feature has been used more than **119,000** times by **493** institutions

*Read the **Twelve Months of the AI Design Assistant white paper.***

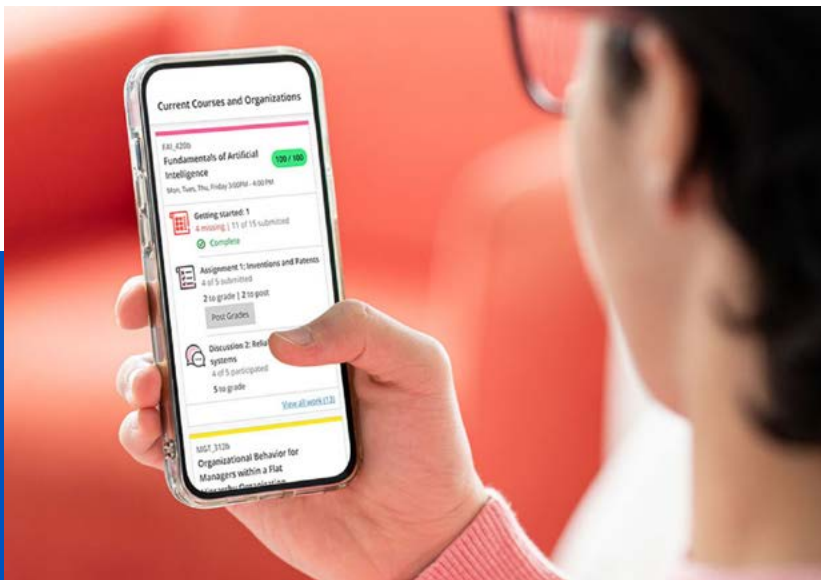


Make it your own

No two learners or instructors are the same. We've created an inclusive LMS that combines consistency of experience with tools that allow users to express—and celebrate—their unique identity.

Amazing on any device

Access content on the go, and get the same modern, intuitive experience on a laptop, tablet, or smartphone. Blackboard is designed to provide a better experience for instructors and students from any device or location.



Let every student shine

Creating a fair, accurate, and equitable testing environment has always ranked among the biggest challenges for online learning. Blackboard is designed to create a stress-free environment where students can achieve their true potential.

A pathway to success

Blackboard provides inline insights direct to instructors, students, and advisors at every step in the learning journey. This creates a data-informed approach to education, where courses, content, and delivery can be constantly optimized to help every student achieve their goals.

Grading that's less grating

We've collaborated with hundreds of instructors to create the new Flexible Grading experience in Blackboard. With the option to grade either by student or by question, progress tracking for grading tasks, and easy access to multi-media feedback tools, Flexible Grading is designed to save instructors time.

Institutions are choosing Blackboard

Whether new to Blackboard or renewing their commitment to the LMS, institutions consistently find it to be the best choice on the market. Blackboard is regularly selected over other vendors for its industry-leading innovation and vision, frequent feature releases and improvements, and user-friendly interface—all designed to enhance the online learning experience.



“In tests and focus groups, our students chose Blackboard’s intuitive, mobile-first design as their strong favorite.”

CENTENNIAL
COLLEGE

Dr. Cary DiPietro
Dean of Learning, Teaching and Scholarship
Centennial College

“After gathering feedback from our faculty and students, we found that Blackboard was the clear favorite.”

BRIDGEWATER
STATE UNIVERSITY

Eric LePage
Executive Director, IT Teaching and Technology Center
Bridgewater State University

Read the campus conversation.

“Blackboard is the most comprehensive.”
“Lovely to use and easy to navigate.”
“Provides everything that I need in a user-friendly format.”

 **Sacred Heart**
UNIVERSITY

Sacred Heart University Faculty

Read the case study.

Blackboard 
by Anthology

Why not try it for yourself? Visit anthology.com/try for a FREE trial of Blackboard.

Blackboard by Anthology: The LMS for the Future

“It’s been great to see the increased pace of feature development for the Ultra Course view. There are a lot of features that have just come out and a lot of features that are coming out very soon that I know our faculty are really excited for.”



Northern Illinois
University

Stephanie Richter

Director Faculty Development and
Instructional Support Northern Illinois University



Glossary

AI = Artificial intelligence, where technology learns and adapts without input from a human agent.

AR = Augmented reality, technology augments real-life experiences.

Hybrid Learning = A learning method that combines both virtual and in-person learning experiences.

LMS = Learning management system, a digital technology designed to facilitate the design and delivery of learning experiences, such as Blackboard.

VR = Virtual reality, where technology creates completely unique, virtual experiences.

About Anthology

Anthology delivers education and technology solutions so that students can reach their full potential and learning institutions thrive. Millions of students around the world are supported throughout their education journey via Anthology's ecosystem of flagship SaaS solutions and supporting services, including the award-winning Blackboard® (LMS), Anthology® Student (SIS/ERP), and Anthology® Reach (CRM). Through the Power of Together™, we are uniquely inspiring educators and institutions with innovation that is meaningful, simple, and intelligent to help customers redefine what's possible and create life-changing opportunities for people everywhere. [anthology.com](https://www.anthology.com)