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# Universidad de San Sebastián – Chile:



UNIVERSIDAD  
SAN SEBASTIÁN

Empowering Educators Through Online Learning Best Practices and Pedagogy



**Blackboard**

Universidad de San Sebastián in Chile became one of the first centers of excellence worldwide and the first in Latin America certified by Blackboard to deliver the Blackboard Digital Teaching and Learning Series. As a result, the University not only possesses a team of trained and certified faculty for both online and blended courses, but also the credentials to deliver the program to other higher and school-level education institutions.

*“Blackboard’s Digital Teaching and Learning Series showed us the wide array of tools available for us in an online learning environment; the avenues and multiple alternatives technology provides is truly fascinating.”*

- Carol Hewstone, certified Digital Teaching and Learning Series professor.  
She teaches Differential Education Pedagogy – Advanced Modality at Universidad de San Sebastián.

### The Opportunity at a Glance

**Challenge:** In Chile, there are no official certificate programs that prepare faculty to teach courses within digital learning environments. In addition, encouraging academic staff to get acquainted with a new learning space can be challenging.

**Solution:** Through Blackboard’s Digital Teaching and Learning Series, faculty at Universidad de San Sebastián in Chile (USS) were prepared in online and blended teaching modalities so they can deliver a successful technology-oriented teaching and learning experience to their students. The program had a positive impact on faculty professional development and pedagogy.

**Results:** In just three months of rigorous work and dedication to the program, Chile’s USS enabled and certified 14 academic staff members selected based on their professional experience, leadership skills and adaptability. In addition, the institution became the first center of excellence in the region creating a Digital Teaching and Learning Series Diploma aimed to prepare faculty in the pedagogy, management and best practices of digital teaching and learning platforms.

### Becoming a Center of Excellence

#### Challenge

Today’s students have very high expectations for their learning experience, precisely because technology has enabled classroom and online learning to be more modern, collaborative, and flexible. Prompt communication and diverse teaching and learning tools are central to the education process.

Searching for excellence in online and blended teaching and learning experiences, Universidad de San Sebastián found that through Blackboard’s Digital Teaching and Learning Series they could solve one of their biggest challenges: encouraging teachers to get acquainted with a new teaching and learning space and to dare to experiment with the use of powerful technological tools. Additionally, the series will enhance pedagogical practices within the digital learning environment, beginning with the innovative use of LMS resources (in this case, Blackboard Learn with the Ultra experience). However, learning how to use a specific technology is not enough. What truly adds value is using technology appropriately to meet pedagogical goals through new educational methodologies such as collaborative and reflective learning, problem-based learning, and personalized learning, among others.

On the other hand, it is estimated that 30% of students in the United States are enrolled in at least one online course<sup>1</sup>, suggesting a high use of distance learning modalities. In Chile, by contrast, this figure is less than 3%<sup>2</sup>. This



is why University faculty launched USS Online Learning in 2018, a space dedicated to online education. “Those who believe that online education is a fad are akin to detractors during the printing press revolution,” asserts Iván Santander, director of Continuous Education at USS. Online education is an international trend that is, without a doubt, changing education globally and no country in the world should stay behind.

Moreover, there was no official certification program in place in Chile that enabled faculty to teach online and blended courses and classes supported by a digital learning environment. Each institution created its own teacher training program. But, “At Universidad de San

*“I really enjoyed the learning environment created between us and the instructor, and among ourselves. It was an extremely collaborative experience of mutual support, which was very interesting because even though some activities were held in classrooms, most of the work was online. This demonstrates that sound online design and execution can generate powerful learning communities.”*

- Ángela Valverde Henríquez, certified Digital Teaching and Learning Series (eTeacher) professor and Curriculum Assistant in the Post-Graduate Academic Department at Universidad de San Sebastián.

Sebastián, we are convinced that it is key to have faculty development based on international standards, which is where Blackboard’s support comes in,” states Santander.

*“I have the great challenge and opportunity to incorporate these new tools to my own professional development. Without a doubt, the Blackboard Digital Teaching and Learning Series motivated me to develop courses (or adapt existing courses) considering the resources available in online platforms, both as the main means to course development and as a classroom course support resource.”*

- Roberto Reinoso, certified Digital Teaching and Learning Series (eTeacher) professor.  
He teaches Pedagogy in Mathematics, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Universidad de San Sebastián.

## **Solution**

What is the best formula for effective online and blended teaching? The answer, we believe, is to become the student. With Blackboard’s Digital Teaching and Learning Series, faculty become online students first, so they can experience online learning themselves. This way, when they teach online, they are able to understand their students’ perspective and better support their success.



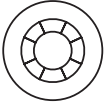
## The Blackboard Digital Teaching and Learning Series is comprised of three courses:

### Fundamentals



A basic level course that provides faculty with a solid foundation in digital teaching and learning. Content highlights include online teaching principles, course design best practices, how to maintain communication in distance courses, how to promote online collaboration, evaluation design and timely support for distance students.

### Design



Putting fundamentals course learnings into practice through specific LMS tools and online classrooms. This module focuses on empowering faculty and help them become confident in their technology use with a constant bias towards pedagogy and practice.

### Excellence



Once academic staff understand the principles and are able to use the tools properly, they are ready to develop the skills necessary for continuous course improvement using pedagogical methodologies with innovative approaches that strengthen teaching practices and the innovative use of technological tools.

*“Thanks to the program I had the chance to take my classroom teaching experience to an online environment, as well as teach my peers how to use digital platforms and work under a new scenario and with new possibilities. It helped me open myself to a new paradigm where teaching and learning can be achieved through new tools.”*

– Mónica Molina, certified Digital Teaching and Learning Series (eTeacher) professor. She is the head of Technical Educational Assistance Projects, Continuous Education Department, Universidad de San Sebastián.

By implementing the Blackboard Digital Teaching and Learning Series, professors have been able to access resources that transformed their pedagogical practices, says Sary Afandi, Neuroanatomy professor within the Morphology department, “I got to know a new world full of resources to improve my teaching and motivate my students.” The program has also become a great option for academic staff professional development, affirms by Ángela Valverde Henríquez, curriculum assistant in the Post-Graduate Academic Department. “Being a trained and certified instructor is very important, but beyond having the certification, I feel like I have the necessary tools to guide my peers thanks to this modality.”

*“We want to open the program so any institution that wishes to train their teachers with us can do so, with guarantees from both Blackboard and USS.”*

- Iván Santander, director of Continuous Education at Universidad de San Sebastián

All faculty enabled and certified in the Digital Teaching and Learning Series agree that a key element of the certification is the high level of collaboration included in the program. “I discovered many new digital learning alternatives — it was a great experience to share, exchange ideas, and learn from other professors. One would think that a digital environment wouldn’t allow for interaction, but when classes are well-designed and the environment enables it, collaborative learning is extremely possible,” affirms Carol Hewstone, professor of Differential Education Pedagogy – Advanced Modality.

The Blackboard Digital Teaching and Learning Series program offers world-class professional development delivered by digital teaching and learning pedagogy and instructional design experts. Course content was conceived to help academics develop their potential and help institutions achieve academic effectiveness. And in the case of USS, for academic staff to make the most of the educational technologies invested by the University.



(L to R) Carol Hewstone, Mónica Molina, Sary Afandi, Ángela Valverde

## Results

In three very demanding months for faculty (completing the program in addition to teaching) Universidad de San Sebastián managed to enable 14 instructors from the Santiago, Concepción, Puerto Montt and Valdivia campuses. Among the most impactful and immediate results were the faculty's remarkable transformation and empowerment. According to Nathalie Rehbein, USS Engineering professor, "This is a great opportunity to offer teaching from anywhere. Teaching through this modality [online learning] is a great responsibility, as it entails far more work to teach someone you have not built a deep bond with from the beginning."

After having completed the first professional development and certification program for faculty, the University launched the Digital Teaching and Learning Strategies Diploma. The program aims to meet different objectives for both institutional development and third parties wishing to take it.

From an internal standpoint, the University aims to:

- Prepare faculty for postgraduate instruction as the University is transforming part of its offering and is developing new programs in blended or fully online formats. The university plans to offer at least five graduate and two master's degree programs through these modalities. To that effect, the University is working with two upcoming cohorts of faculty who will be prepared and certified.
- Improve faculty training for programs being taught in the afternoon with the aim of improving the student experience and thus expand the current offering of 100% face-to-face classes into the new modalities.

According to Magdalena Vicuña, director of USS Online Learning, "Today, the National Accreditation Council requires adhoc training for faculty in blended and online formats, so each institution has prepared its programs. We believe that the Blackboard Digital Teaching and Learning Series could be an excellent alternative for those institutions that want international accreditation for their faculty and that it is aligned with UNESCO standards."

As a result of this work, Universidad de San Sebastián, with both national and international accreditations, has become one of the first centers of excellence worldwide and the first in Latin America, making it a pioneering university and a regional leader.

Due to the positive experience their teachers had during the program, they

*"I believe that our individual interests as professors before the course led to the creation of a group with shared interests, which eased the work and the general dynamic. There was an interest in the topics, and previous knowledge in some cases, which enriched the overall work."*

- Jessica Bastías Rojel - Digital Teaching and Learning Series certified instructor. She teaches Differential Education Pedagogy at Universidad de San Sebastián.

managed to transform several of their pedagogical practices. According to Veterinary Medicine Professor Marcos José Pedreros Díaz, “I have acquired a great responsibility and am willing to impart the knowledge I gained in the course in the best possible way in order to demonstrate and demystify online and blended education.” Likewise, the perception that stands out among faculty and according to Álvaro Álvarez Martínez, Physiopathology professor, is that “Blackboard’s Digital Teaching and Learning Series offers tools that will allow me to stand out among my peers and stay up to date with worldwide teaching trends.” The latter is what drives Blackboard as a company, as it aims to become a partner for educational institutions globally as they adapt and change.

Another positive result of the program is evident through the advice offered by the trained and certified academic staff to their peers. USS accredited facilitators perceived the program to be an opportunity to keep up to date, develop new competencies, support innovation projects and learn from each other. “Teachers must prepare to face the changes presented within context and modern times, in addition to take advantage of the opportunity to manage tools that allow us to bridge the gap between digital natives and new users,” says Dr. Mario Zuñiga Mogollones, Undergraduate and Post-Graduate Dentistry professor.

Lastly, with the implementation of the Blackboard Digital Teaching and Learning Series, USS created a strong teaching community capable of teaching online, sharing their knowledge with their peers and ready to transform Chilean education.

*“Becoming the first center of excellence in Latin America is a great step forward for education in Chile”*

- Sergio Mena, Vice-President of Professional Development and Post-Graduate Courses, Universidad de San Sebastián.

## Conclusion

Thanks to Blackboard’s Digital Teaching and Learning Series, Universidad de San Sebastián in Chile boasts developed and certified academic staff (within international standards) for the delivery of online and blended courses in digital learning environments like Blackboard Learn or Blackboard Open LMS. In addition, implementing the program has made USS a regional leader in taking advantage of the educational technologies it has invested in, while breaking paradigms on the proper and exponential use of such tools.

The program is transforming the education landscape in Chile, as Universidad de San Sebastián can now deliver quality courses in the country’s most remote areas. Before the program, USS did not possess a robust platform like Blackboard Learn, nor the academic staff with the proper online education training.

## Sources

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