



Achieving Its “Student First” Mission Using Blackboard



KEISER
UNIVERSITY

Keiser University, one of Florida’s premier private higher education institutions, incorporates a “students first” philosophy into all it does, both inside and outside the classroom. So, whether Keiser’s leaders were working to enhance courses, ensure programs were achieving the right student outcomes, or positioning faculty to be in lockstep with each student’s progress, one thing was clear—Keiser needed an integrated educational technology platform that could support the depth and breadth of their efforts.

“At Keiser, each student is considered an individual and the university strives to be aware—at all times—of the needs of each member of the student body,” shares Sherry Olsen, Vice Chancellor of Keiser’s Online Division. In an attempt to achieve this personalized learning experience for students, Olsen and her team tried using several different technical solutions in the past, but none offered the integrated and robust environment they demanded.

Selecting Blackboard to Create a High-Touch Student Experience

Keiser selected Blackboard’s suite of products due to its breadth of solutions and the depth of integration. By implementing Blackboard Learn, Blackboard Collaborate, Blackboard Analytics, Blackboard Assessment & Accreditation Solution, Blackboard Ally, and Blackboard Help Desk, Keiser has achieved a deeply integrated and seamless environment to facilitate top-tier teaching that supports the personalized student learning experience.

“Blackboard makes it easy to develop an ecosystem that serves all of our students. Blackboard has helped us solve many different issues and address a number of university goals.”

– Sherry Olsen, Vice Chancellor, Online Division of Keiser University

Location: 21 campuses in the State of Florida, Nicaragua and China; the main campus is in Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Students: 19,500 undergraduate and graduate students

Blackboard Products:

Blackboard Learn, Blackboard Collaborate, Blackboard Analytics, Blackboard Assessment & Accreditation Solution, Blackboard Ally, and Blackboard IT Help Desk

Developing High-Quality Digital Learning Environments

For Keiser and each of its 21 physical campuses, it was essential to deploy Blackboard university-wide while also offering the ability for each campus to personalize the learning experience for their specific students. The university took full advantage of the easy-to-use customization tools available within Blackboard Learn, ensuring that each campus could meet its campus-specific needs without losing out on university-wide integrations.

Following a master course system in which each class is either four or eight weeks long, Keiser's Online Division relies on Blackboard Learn to navigate its fast-paced learning and course programming environment. Blackboard Learn enables faculty to develop and prepare course content and transition courses into live terms as quickly as each and every month.

Engaging Inside and Outside the Classroom

Keiser faculty are also active Blackboard Collaborate users. The remote yet face-to-face experience of Collaborate is exactly the interaction that drives Keiser's student-first model.

“Without Collaborate, there's no way we would have the high-touch, high-feel that we want in our classes.”

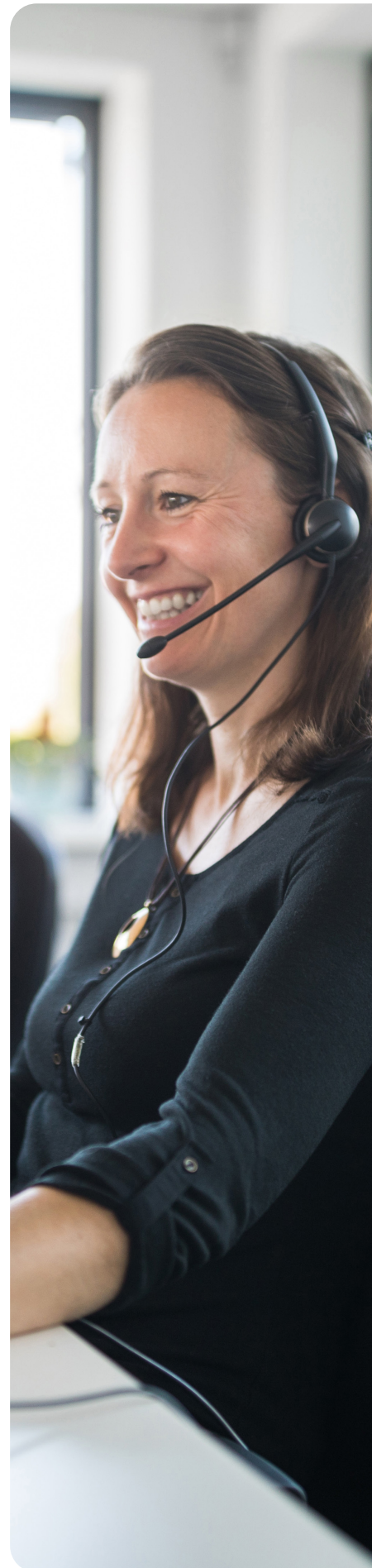
– Sherry Olsen, Vice Chancellor, Online Division of Keiser University

Keiser faculty, who also serve as student advisors, are expected to forge strong partnerships with students to oversee their progress and intercede when issues arise. “Blackboard Collaborate is so easy for faculty to use because it's embedded within the classroom and organizations,” says Olsen. Removing the need for faculty to navigate to other products to track participation has given Keiser a seamless environment for instruction and follow-through.

Keiser utilizes Blackboard Collaborate outside the classroom setting as well. Preparing online students for the remote experience, Keiser uses Blackboard Collaborate inside their student orientation organization to conduct sessions on topics such as time management and LMS navigation. Getting students familiar with Blackboard Collaborate before the start of school has helped them feel more prepared for engaging in online learning. Olsen says that Keiser's student services department also uses Blackboard Collaborate for events, guest speakers, honors ceremonies, and leadership of distinction classes.

Increasing Retention with Analytics and Dashboards

Having complete visibility into educational performance and trends is a top priority for Olsen and her team. Using Blackboard Analytics, Olsen created a dashboard for each of their 21 campuses, offering campus presidents, deans, and faculty complete visibility into academic performance.



With this enhanced visibility and accountability, Keiser can make certain that engagement from both students and faculty follows the institution’s standard for a personalized learning experience. With easy-to-use dashboards, faculty can more quickly identify at-risk students and intervene, ultimately promoting higher retention rates. Plus, presidents and deans can ensure faculty are actively engaging with students, too.

“Blackboard Analytics helps us ensure that our students are getting the best support and attention available—and when they aren’t, it helps us identify the gaps so we can close them.”

– Sherry Olsen, Vice Chancellor, Online Division of Keiser University

Tracking Student Learning Outcomes

To ensure students achieve the learning outcomes promised, Keiser is using Blackboard Assessment & Accreditation Solution together with Blackboard Learn to map and measure the university’s program learning outcomes (PLOs) and student learning outcomes (SLOs). In Blackboard, Keiser has documented its learning outcomes for both programs and courses. These outcomes are then mapped to course assignments and assessments as a means of ensuring each is achieved and student performance of each outcome is continuously tracked.

“Faculty are now able to link learning outcomes directly to their digital assignments,” says Olsen. “Using Blackboard, our assessment teams now have easily accessible assessment data to review, can make data-supported improvements, and have set up a robust review cycle—all to ensure continuous improvement.”



Making Content Accessible for All Students

While Keiser acquired Blackboard Ally for the purpose of helping assess the accessibility of course content for students requiring accommodations, Olsen found its usefulness has extended to all of Keiser’s learners. Olsen provides the example of adult learners utilizing Blackboard Ally’s alternative formats capability whereby students can convert recorded lectures into written transcripts that can be read and documents into audio files for listening—all in support of individual learning preferences.



Harnessing Blackboard Consulting Expertise

Keiser has actively worked hand-in-hand with Blackboard’s consulting team—experts that oversee and assist the university—to achieve its goals. “We can rely on the expertise and experience our Blackboard consultants bring—especially around analytics, outcomes, and assessments. They understand our big picture and help us actualize each step we need to prepare for our future,” expresses Olsen.

Positioned to Move Fully Online without Missing a Beat

Blackboard’s ease of use was particularly beneficial when Keiser had to move all its courses online during the Covid-19 pandemic. “Because of all our unified processes within Blackboard, we didn’t miss a beat when we were forced to move everything online,” shares Olsen. “Blackboard enabled us to get resources to students more quickly, and because we were able to train faculty to make the transition without many barriers, we set them up to better help the students, especially those who were apprehensive to online learning.”

The Result: A High-Touch, Individualized Learning Ecosystem

With Keiser’s vision and Blackboard’s robust products combined, Keiser has been enabled to:

- ★ Attain historically high 2020 retention rates in a year most colleges experienced a decline.
- ★ Easily adapt to unexpected events like COVID-19.
- ★ Gain increased visibility and accountability across the university

“Blackboard offers a true learning ecosystem whose tight integration and interoperability enable us to achieve a student-first solution incomparable to anything else on the market.”

– Sherry Olsen, Vice Chancellor, Online Division of Keiser University

Looking Ahead: Blackboard for Student Advising

Keiser continues to innovate new ways to connect Blackboard Analytics data to make data-driven decisions about its practices and procedures. According to Olsen, one of the next steps is to “position faculty to look at historical data and get a whole picture of the student and advise them more effectively.”

In addition, Keiser is working on marrying Blackboard Analytics and Collaborate to assess faculty performance and participation and how the results are affecting trends, student engagement, and other factors.