For Instructors

Using the Discussion Board tool in a Blackboard course at Heartland Community College.

Another tool you will be using to communicate with students in Blackboard in the Discussion Board. This tool will allow you to pose questions, gather feedback, monitor your students' amount of interaction with the course and other students and have students feel they are participating and engaged in the course. After logging into your course in Blackboard you will be taken to your courses landing page. As I stated the Discussion Board allows you to create threads to start and monitor discussions on topics. To utilize the Discussion Board in your Blackboard course you first have to create a Discussion Board link to this tool in your course navigation. To create a Discussion Board tool link you first need to make sure you are in the Edit Mode On. This mode allows you to make changes to your course. If the Edit Mode says Off simply click on it and it will take you back to the edit mode on option. With Edit Mode On click on the Create Item (plus button) in your course navigation and drop down to and click Create Tool link. This will open up more options allowing you to Type in a Name and choose the type of tool you'd like to add. In this case I am just going to call this section Discussion Board and drop down the "type" option and choose Discussion Board. Choose the checkmark box if you want to make the Discussion Board tool link available to students immediately. This can always be changed later to show or hide this link from the students' course navigation menu. To begin setting up your Discussion Board click on the link you just created to open up your Discussion Board. Discussion Boards are made up of two main parts, forums and threads. Forums are broad areas that you want the discussions to take place in. The threads are the individual topics for discussion that can then be replied to. Most likely as an instructor you will be making the Forums and your students will be using the individual threads within a forum to reply to the forums instructions. However you can also create threads within your forums if you find students need further instruction, an example of the type of thread you are looking for or simply want to contribute your own thoughts to the forum you created. First you need to create a forum. The Create Forum button allows you to create your first broad area. Click on Create Forum and you will see a screen allowing you to type in a name of the forum, give a description to the forum (basically instructions for the students), set your forums availability and set other forum settings such as allowing/denying anonymous posts by students, allowing authors to edit or delete their own threads or posts (which are responses to the original authors thread), and other settings. You can even grade a forum or a specific thread in a forum and add the points possible for addition in your Grade Center within Blackboard. In this case I am going to type in Introductions for the Forum title. In the description of the forum I will give students some instructions on how this forum is to be completed, by when and that it is mandatory participation. Then I will give them instructions on what I want them to create in each individual thread which the students author and suggest they take the time to read each other's threads and even post replies to the student's threads they find interesting. This will give students practice creating threads and reply posts and get the bugs out of their systems early on in the semester. Better to have problems now at the beginning then have students find out right before a big graded assignment down the road that there computer isn't working correctly. I set the availability to Yes for this forum and then click Submit. You will be taken back out to the main Discussion Board screen and shown that you've successfully created the new Forum. This screen also shows the Total Posts, Unread Posts and Total Participants. Now just because you've created this new Discussion Board posting doesn't mean students will know it is available for them to take unless they just happen to stumble upon it by clicking Discussion Board in their course navigation menu. So you might want to create a message to email to your students using the Messages tool alerting them to the fact that you've got a discussion board forum for them to post into and/ or you could add an announcement to a Course Announcements page. See those video tutorials for more information on creating and using the Messages tool and the

Announcements tool. From the Discussion Board main page you can navigate into the forum you just created by clicking on the title of the forum, in this case “Introductions”. This will take you into the thread screen for that forum. This is where the responses to the forum will be created by your students. As students begin to use the forums you create you will begin to see the total posts, unread posts and total participants numbers on your main Discussion Board screen. It is best to start out slow with using tools like the discussion board to see how much time you end up needing to devote to reading through posts, checking on the level of student discussion, interaction and engagement. As you become more comfortable with using the Discussion Board and how to add monitoring the discussions to your courses workflow you can then engage in more discussions if time allows. Discussions Boards bring another type of communication beyond using the Messages tool. Using Forums and Threads you can interact more fully with students and have them engage not only you but each other and the material more fully. The ability to add grades to discussion boards is another useful feature of the Discussion Board tool.