



Student and Instructor Usage of Blackboard Ally Increase as Remote Learning Accelerates

Blackboard's accessibility tool processes over 1 billion content items

BRISBANE, Australia, 20 May, 2020 – Blackboard Inc., a leading education technology company for teaching, learning and student engagement, today announced that Blackboard Ally - the company's accessibility tool - has experienced a significant uptick in student and instructor usage from February to April, the period when schools and institutions largely shifted to fully remote learning models due to COVID-19.

During this timeframe, students downloaded over 3.5 million alternative formats of their course content through Blackboard Ally. Instructors also improved the accessibility of over 250,000 files during this time, with a 50% increase in improved files in April, as compared to February. Since launch, Blackboard Ally has now checked over 1 billion digital content items for accessibility issues, providing millions of instructors with guidance for improving the accessibility and quality of their course materials, and millions more students with access to file formats that meet their diverse needs, abilities, and devices.

"With the vast majority of students across the globe now participating in learning environments that require interfacing with digital content, we're thrilled that Blackboard Ally is helping to optimize the experience," said Nicolaas Matthijs, Blackboard Ally Product Manager at Blackboard. "As the education community shifts to more robust, holistic online learning models, the uptick in Ally usage is helping to accelerate a culture of inclusion. We're proud to be supporting so many institutions in a united effort to meet the needs of diverse learners."

Since February, more than 150 higher education and K-12 clients have adopted Blackboard Ally as their inclusive learning solution, joining a community reaching more than 11 million students globally. New institutions include Curtin University in Australia; the California Community Colleges system in the United States; Universidad Continental in Peru; Universitat de Barcelona in Spain; and the British University in Dubai (BUiD) in United Arab Emirates. For most institutions, this recent momentum coincides with the global shift to remote learning in response to COVID-19 and also reflects the education community's broader, sustained efforts to improve the accessibility of course content for all learners, beyond the pandemic.

In 2020, alone, Blackboard Ally has launched 16 new releases, expanding the ways in which administrators, instructors, and students can improve the accessibility and usability of digital course content. The newest feature enables Blackboard Ally users to access alternative formats—including mobile-friendly HTML, audio, ePub, electronic Braille, a language translation version, and Beeline Reader—on mobile devices via the Blackboard App.

To learn more about Blackboard Ally and Blackboard's plans for celebrating Global Accessibility Awareness Day on May 21, please visit <https://www.blackboard.com/teaching-learning/accessibility-universal-design/blackboard-ally-lms> and <https://go.blackboard.com/gaad-fix-your-content>.

About Blackboard

Our mission is to partner with the global education community to enable learner and institutional success, leveraging innovative technologies and services. With an unmatched understanding of the world of the learner, the most comprehensive student-success solutions, and the greatest capacity for innovation, Blackboard is education's partner in change.

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