

# Improving Student Success With Always On, Anytime, Anywhere Technology **Support Services**

**“ We were struggling to meet students support needs. Students were demanding extended hours of Blackboard Learn™ support. Our team was already spread thin, we just couldn’t staff for it.”**

**DAN LUCIANI**  
District Project Manager

## **A Familiar Challenge**

The phones are ringing off the hook with student calls, emails, and voicemails are going unanswered and the number of unresolved tickets continues to grow. For many IT departments, this is an all too familiar scenario during the beginning of each semester. Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD) was no different. “We were swamped with emails, voicemails, tickets, and phone calls related to issues with their online courses. Everyone from students to faculty was calling the same number, resulting in long hold times. We just weren’t efficient with resolving student issues,” says Veraina Boudreaux, District Ecampus Help Desk Manager.

A key objective for DCCCD is to fulfill the educational demands of their students by improving student success. With a large number of students taking online courses across multiple time zones, the administration and staff quickly recognized they were impeding the very mission they were trying to accommodate by not providing 24/7/365 academic technology support. Additionally, online students were expressing dissatisfaction with the limited support hours and not being able to get assistance when they needed it most.

Students weren’t the only ones dissatisfied; faculty members were also experiencing long hold (wait) times, and not receiving timely assistance on either simple or complex questions. An internal review revealed most of the staff’s resources were being used to address simple issues such as password reset requests, course navigation, basic operating system support, inquiries regarding adding/dropping courses and more. Leaving IT personnel with little time to concentrate on the research and training they needed, impacting overall operational efficiency and staff productivity. It was becoming a no win situation for all stakeholders on campus.

The team was at a crossroads. Students were demanding a level of support that the team at DCCCD simply couldn’t manage on its own. After weighing the pros and cons of an internal student help desk vs. an outsourced approach, DCCCD had a decision to make.

## GOALS:

- Expand academic technology support hours to 24/7/365
- Allow staff more time to focus on faculty issues and LMS maintenance updates
- Scale to meet peak demands without hiring additional headcount

## SOLUTION:

- Partnered with Blackboard to provide 24/7/365 support for students
- Launched a self-help portal/ knowledgebase for all students
- Implemented self-service technology and multi-channel support options for students

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Significant cost-savings and operational efficiency in help desk operation
- Increased student satisfaction
- Established a partnership focused on improving student success



## The Solution: People, Technology and Data

Offering quality service and extending support coverage for students was critical to student success. DCCCD had previously outsourced to a vendor without much success. This experience provided them with a great base from which to assess prospective partners. Taking into consideration student needs and the impact that would have on internal resources, DCCCD decided to leverage Blackboard's help desk support model to provide academic technology support for its student base.

Blackboard adopts a holistic approach to support, one that includes a mixture of people, technology and data to help institutions deliver world-class service to their students, faculty and staff. Through a Blackboard Learn API and support technology, Blackboard's advisors are able to quickly resolve high volume Blackboard Learn inquiries like password resets, course availability, navigational support and technical troubleshooting for students.

Since 2011, DCCCD has relied on Blackboard's team of knowledgeable advisors and Help Desk solutions to provide:

- **Live student support of Blackboard Learn** available 24/7/365, delivered by highly trained, knowledgeable advisors
- **Multi-channel support options for students** including phone, email, chat, and web
- **Self-Service technologies** including an Integrated Voice Response (IVR) for password resets
- **Student self-help portal** with access to knowledgebase articles highlighting FAQ's
- **Business Intelligence reporting** to deliver timely insight into problem areas and key metrics to enable continuous operational improvements.

## The Results: Quality Service = Student Success

"I can't compliment Blackboard enough for the transition and change in the quality of service we are now receiving. I used to get a call daily from an instructor regarding the service from our previous vendor, that has changed drastically, since partnering with Blackboard," says Boudreaux.

Everyone from staff, faculty and students are enjoying the benefits of partnering with Blackboard. The staff is no longer inundated with Tier 1 support calls, faculty is no longer experiencing long hold times, and student satisfaction has increased. Students can now get assistance anytime, anywhere through various channels of support -phone, email, live chat, and web. With self-service technology and a self-help portal in place, students now have the power to help themselves more so than before. If they are unable to resolve their own issues, they have comfort in knowing they can pick up the phone and call whenever they need it.

According to Boudreaux, "Blackboard lifts the burden from our staff by enabling my team more time to serve faculty, more time to focus on research and training and most importantly, spend more time with students on more complex issues - making it easier to do more."

The partnership has:

- An 11% or 4,603 incident elimination rate with the automated password reset tool launched in 2013; estimated savings of \$30,000
- Extended coverage to 24/7/365 for online students
- Enabled staff to focus on faculty support and learning initiatives rather than being overburdened with routine calls
- Increased customer satisfaction by over 85%

“We spend very little time managing the relationship with Blackboard as they are reliable, proactive and provide full visibility into what is happening with our students, enabling us to improve processes and operational efficiencies,” said Dan Luciani.

## Key Elements of Success

When asked what guidance DCCCD would like to share with institutions contemplating a shift to outside resources for their academic technology support, Luciani and Boudreaux offer these three key points:

1. **Consider the full picture.** There is so much to consider when it comes to outsourcing or staffing internally. With an internal help desk, an institution needs to weigh the cost of staffing, employee benefits, operating cost, training needed to sustain the organization and overall readiness of the help desk agent. According to Luciani, “You don’t fully understand what they [a partner] can take off your shoulders or appreciate the benefits of the level of support and technology available from a partner, until you have to do it by yourself.”
2. **Understand the needs of students.** Students are the backbone of an institution and their success is often determined by how well the institution is able to meet their needs. For an online student, this is even more important. It is critical to evaluate and analyze the needs of your online students before you can truly support them. “Online courses never end, nor should the support,” offers Boudreaux. She also adds, “If an institution invests the money to provide 24/7 support for their students, at the end of the day, they will see their profit, via an increase in retention and graduate rates.”
3. **Invest in the partnership.** A true partnership involves equal commitment from both sides. The institution needs to be fully vested and willing to communicate their needs effectively. “We visit the call center twice a year to meet with our team. We are in constant communication with our account manager, we listen in on calls and meet monthly to review key data to understand how to continuously improve our processes to guarantee we are meeting student needs,” explains Luciani.

## Learn More

To learn more about how Blackboard can deliver a scalable, and personalized Help Desk support solution to help your institution, district or system deliver a more immediate and personalized level of service for students, visit [blackboard.com](http://blackboard.com) or contact your Blackboard representative.

## QUICK FACTS:

- A district of seven individually accredited community colleges located in Dallas
- Currently serve over 83,000 credit students and over 20,000 continuing education students
- A large distance-learning program that attracts students locally and internationally
- Utilize Blackboard Learn™ for their learning management system



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