The Royal Flush: Blackboard Deals a Fresh Deck of Innovations in Las Vegas

In recent years, Blackboard® has become as synonymous with innovation as Las Vegas is with casinos and The Hangover. Through July, we've released significantly more new capabilities in 2025 than both D2L and Canvas, placing us on track for a fourth straight year as the market's most innovative provider.

It was fitting, then, that earlier this week the Blackboard team took to the stage in Sin City to announce a host of incredible new developments in the platform. Pull up your seat at the poker table, throw down some chips, and let's go through the Royal Flush of Blackboard innovations for 2025.

The Ace: Anthology Virtual Assistant (AVA)

Blackboard is leading the market for [responsible and impactful use of generative AI](). The new Anthology Virtual Assistant will take this to the next level in the coming months and provide a series of capabilities to streamline interactions between learners and instructors. The staggered rollout will include **AVA Responses**, to help quickly address common student inquiries; **AVA Playground** a safe sandbox for experimenting with AI models within Blackboard; **AVA Feedback Assistant**, to add efficiency when instructors are reviewing student work; and **AVA Announcements**, which will simplify the process of delivering instructor-defined, performance-based nudges to students. All these capabilities will be available at no extra cost for all Blackboard customers until the end of June 2026.

The King: Learning Object Repository

As pretentious marketers never cease to remind us, "Content is King." The same applies in the LMS, and the new Learning Object Repository provides institutions with increased visibility and control for content that is being used in multiple courses and organizations.

The initial release in April provided institutions with a single, centralized location to manage Blackboard documents (objects). As of the July release, this has now expanded to include a broader range of file types and is supported with a new "Associations View" which clearly maps out where each content piece is being applied across the institution.

The Queen (of the Screen): Video Studio
The addition of Video Studio to the Blackboard platform has been a revelation over the last 12 months. Institutions love having a lightweight video solution that is natively available within the LMS.

"Finally, we can add video where and when we want it with ease, and it's captioned! Video Studio makes video easy, affordable, and fast."
—Carolyn Speer, PhD. Director of the Office of Instructional Resources, Wichita State University

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Video Studio now supports 360° video, providing immersive experiences to students in Blackboard by allowing them to explore labs, field sites, and complex scenarios from any device—and seamlessly hand off to a VR headset when available. In the coming months, we will be adding embedded knowledge checks within videos to ensure learner comprehension and retention of key information.

The Jack: Enhanced Usability
As learning modalities continue to evolve, so too must the LMS in order to offer a platform that can support the breadth of modern education—it must be, in short, a jack of all trades*. With this in mind, we are constantly enhancing the usability of the Blackboard platform to ensure a smooth experience for all users across our global learning network.

Recent developments include a persistent table of contents, distraction free full-screen mode, and a frictionless gradebook that reduces clicks and keeps instructors focused on teaching. The interface adapts gracefully to mobile devices and high zoom settings, making navigation easier for everyone, including low vision learners. On the back of these additions, Blackboard has recently been recognized by G2 as the Best Usability Enterprise for both overall LMS and assessment.

We will be doubling down on these enhancements over the next year, with the rich text editor, course content creation flow, system navigation, and gradebook improvements among the initial highlights. Interested customers can join Anthology UX and design focus groups or our Instructor and Student Taskforce to get involved in pilot programs and beta testing on various UX improvements.
Before you get smart and add "but a master of none!" on the end here, a reminder that we also support mastery learning. Which brings us to…

The 10: Outcomes

Finally, we're excited to announce that learning outcomes in Blackboard are getting a whole new look. The new outcomes system will help institutions easily measure, manage, and showcase student learning directly within the LMS. It will make it easy for instructors to align assignments to learning outcomes and track student achievement over time, while institution-wide dashboards will provide assessment teams the insights they need to support accreditation, highlight areas of strength, and guide continuous improvement. This launch builds on other recent developments to support competency-based education, such as the Mastery Gradebook, which help educators evaluate performance against defined skills and standards. An Early Adopters program for the new outcomes system is now open—speak with your Anthology representative for more information or sign up here—with general availability planned for early in 2026.

When it comes to Blackboard innovation, these five highlighted areas are just the start. Be sure to register for our next series of roadmap webinars, coming up in early September, to see the full deck of new capabilities that the Blackboard team is dealing out. We're sure you'll agree that it makes for a winning hand.

Ben Burrett
Senior Product Marketing Manager
Anthology