Since the introduction of Blackboard to the UM–St. Louis campus during the summer semester of 2000, we have seen unprecedented growth in both the number of courses represented as well as the student and faculty use of the services it provides. As of November 1, 2001, there are over 630 courses, which have online content accessible through MyGateway. There are approximately 9,422 students who are enrolled in one or more of these courses.

Upgrades and changes are currently in process for the coming semester. The ITS staff is working on implementing a major upgrade to the Blackboard software for the Winter 2002 semester. We will be moving to version 5.5 level 3 of the Blackboard software, which will provide new features and improvements to some old ones. The students will see a new “portal” look to MyGateway that will let them snap in various external content modules. There will also be a new web based student email interface. Faculty will see an improved grade book among other features.

In the meantime, courses for next semester were recently added to MyGateway and the instructors of record were assigned to them. Courses that are developed prior to the cut over will be automatically migrated to the new version during the upgrade period. Students will be enrolled in the MyGateway courses beginning the week prior to the start of classes.

There are several resources available for MyGateway support. You can go to the web site at http://mygateway.umsl.edu and click on the Help button. This will take you to a site that offers many resources from a Frequently Asked Questions page to a schedule of training courses offered to our faculty. You can also send email to blackboard@msx.umsl.edu to address a specific question to our support team. The Technology Support Center (211 Lucas) is also available to assist students with any password or sign on issues.

This may make it impossible or extremely difficult to adopt the Hewlett Packard printer line as the printer of choice. ITS staff members have considerable experience in connecting HP printers to the network, but use of Maxisplus, Windows, and even UNIX systems. Since Hewlett Packard printers are recognized as an unofficial industry standard, they are typically in the form of Web documents section. If Course Documents are available, courses no longer require paper copies and can be distributed electronically. This eliminates the need to print additional copies, which reduces paper usage and saves money. Indeed, students are often more successful when they have access to course materials online. This is because they can access the materials at their own pace and at their own convenience.

In summary and at the risk of oversimplifying the situation, the difference between using MyGateway in a traditional course and in an on-line course can be found in Course Documents section. If Course Documents only contains supplemental material it is "traditional" and if it also contains actual course notes to be studied asynchronously it is "on-line."
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