eCampus Strategies I

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The NLC Professional Development Cycle

As part of NLC's ongoing commitment to excellence in education, the Wildfire Institute has developed an Online Education Professional Development track. This track will help faculty master new teaching technologies and pedagogies.

While this cycle is presented here as linear steps, it may not progress that way in all cases. Many participants will need to circle back, repeat steps, or skip steps depending on context, need, and expertise. This cycle is intended as a guide to assist planning, not proscribe it.

- eCampus I at 6 hours of professional development

- eCampus II at 6 hours of professional development

- SoftChalk V4 at 3 hours of professional development

- Quality Matters at 3 hours of professional development

- Respondus Quiz Generator at 1 hour of professional development

- Wimba at 2 hours of professional development

About This Course

Strategies for eCampus I is a highly recommended for first-time faculty eCampus users. It serves as an introduction to the potential of learning management systems. It is also an excellent review of eCampus for those who need a refresher course.

Strategies for eCampus I is open to all faculty and staff. Classes are taught in Small Group, High Exposure classes designed to promote experiential learning. Group size is typically limited to no more than ten participants. This class is awarded six (6) hours of professional development.

What is eCampus?

eCampus is the DCCCD's branding of the Blackboard Course Management software. You will often hear the terms Blackboard and eCampus used interchangeably. (eConnect is a different system.)

eCampus is a web-based, menu driven system. eCampus provides access to personal, academic, and Dallas County Community College financial information through the Internet.

All users must be registered with the District and assigned an eCampus user ID and password to order to log onto the system.

Within eCampus, a personal, secure account is maintained for you, which allows you to access the features of eCampus that you need, including course development and content management.

What is Quality Matters?

Quality Matters (QM) is the DCCCD inter-institutional continuous improvement model for assessing and assuring the quality of online courses. Quality Matters identifies 40 elements, distributed across eight broad standards, shown to positively impact student learning. Throughout the manual, QM components will be incorporated as a weighted rubric from 1 (important) to 3 (essential) indicating the significant elements of Best Practice design for distance education course content.

Courses Are Not One Size Fits All

Differentiating instruction makes teaching more interesting and effective. Everyone's class is going to be as individual as the instructor offering the course. While the Wildfire Mentors provide participants with guidance, we can best meet

Strategy for Developing Your Course Content

Creating an online course takes more thought and planning than developing a campus course. Since you are removed from your students it is more difficult for them to ask questions, so you need to plan ahead and anticipate their needs. This section will focus on course design. It will help you create critical course components which will meet quality assurance in online learning.

This section will help you meet all Quality Matters Level 3 objectives. These are the minimal components a course must contain to meet the Quality Matters standard.

I. Course Overview and Introduction

I.1: Navigational instructions make the organization of the course easy to understand.

Remember when you first used eCampus? Your students have the same learning curve. Do everything possible to make their journey painless.

- Add a "Start Here" button to your course.
- Provide a link to startup information
- Add a scavenger hunt assignment to force students to walk through the course.
- Add a navigation tutorial

I.2: A statement introduces the student to the course and to the structure of the student learning.

Be sure your eCampus course contains an idea of how the learning process is structured. Students need essential information such as

- A syllabus
- A schedule
- How to Contact the Instructor
- Communication Policies (Student/Instructor and Student/Student)
- How to Turn In Assignments
- Activities Assigned (Written, online tests, participation, labs . . .)
- Assessments (Tests, quizzes, projects . . .)

(Content omitted)

Understanding eCampus

eCampus is organized using a series of *tabs*, *buttons*, *folders*, and *items*. Navigating among these units is sometimes confusing, so watch your *breadcrumbs* -- they can help you keep track of your current location within a course. The *Control Panel* is used behind the scenes to modify course settings and content.

Tabs (District-level Control)

Tabs are used to organize material at a District level. Faculty cannot add tabs; but do have some control over the content that appears below the tab. At this time eCampus has seven main tabs.
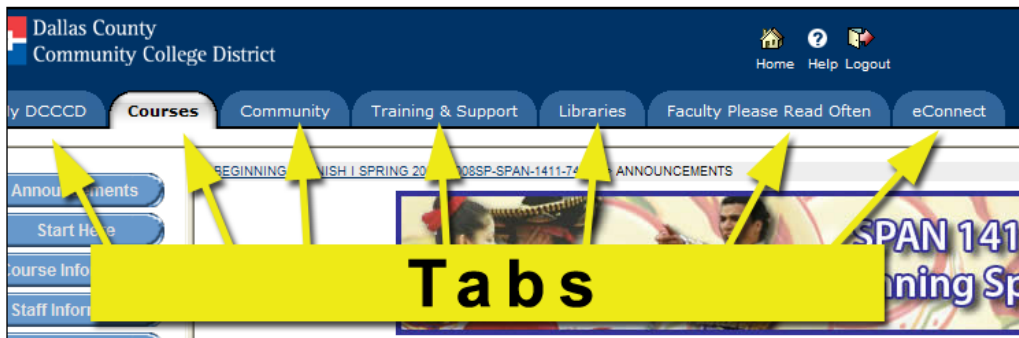
- My DCCCD – A customizable home page which typically contains your courses, announcements, and other tools that you have opted to use in eCampus.

- Courses - A list of all the courses that you are teaching or are enrolled in as a student.

- Community - A list of all the organizations that you are participating in; and a searchable database of all the organizations in eCampus. An "organization" can be a student club, a committee, or other workgroup.

- Training & Support - This area contains tutorials and training information. Some tutorials are video, others are in written form. The tab also contains information on DCCCD training classes. The bottom of the page contains a link that will allow faculty to request a fake student account.

- Libraries - A link to the DCCCD Libraries web page, which includes the library catalog and information on services such as online databases, eBooks, journals and magazines, and more.

- Faculty Please Read Often – Important information on eCampus is often posted here. At present this tab features some best practices for eCampus, a file format converter for

dealing with Word 2007 files, and a link to request your course be copied at the end of the semester.

- eConnect - This tab contains the portal to the **eConnect** system where faculty can look up rosters and report their grades at the end of the semester.

Breadcrumbs

Breadcrumbs come into play once you are within a course. Breadcrumbs map out a trail from your course home page to your current location; just as breadcrumbs helped Hansel and Gretel escape the witch's house and find their way home.
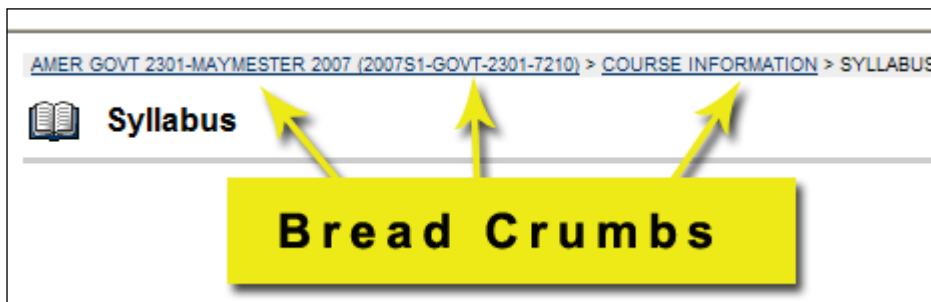

The example above shows breadcrumbs for a course user who is viewing the course syllabus. The syllabus is contained in Course Information, which is contained in the course AMER GOVE 2301.

If the user needs to get back to Course Information she can click the words "Course Information" in the breadcrumb trail. If she needs to return to the course home page she can click the words "AMER GOVT 2301" in the breadcrumb trail.

Buttons (Course-level Control)

Each course contains a left-hand navigation pane featuring course links. Typically these links are formatted to look like buttons; but they can also appear as plain text.
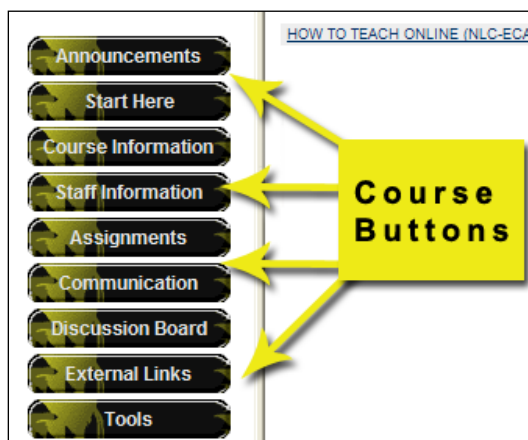
Buttons are your course building blocks. All course content is accessed by clicking a button, so it is very important to take time to plan your button strategy. Your goal is to make it as easy as possible for students to locate the material they need.

You have almost limitless power over buttons. You can hide buttons you're not using, rename buttons, and add new buttons. This manual will show you how to punch your own buttons later.

eCampus comes with several standard buttons, some of which you may want to use. This section will describe the standard buttons.

Standard Course Buttons

- Announcements – Typically course announcements will appear on the course home page, but can also be accessed using this button. Course announcements are authored by faculty and are the equivalent of announcements you would give to a face-to-face class, like test reminders.

- Course Information – A place to house your syllabus, special instructions, guidelines, important dates and e-mail instructions.

- Staff Information – Information about the instructor sometimes including a photo, contact information, and office hours.

- Assignments – All your class content, including course work, modules, chapters, assignments, test links, etc.

- Communication – An area to view announcement and send email. Also contains a link to the discussion board.

- Discussion Board – One of the premiere online tools for active learning, discussion boards are places for students and faculty to dialog on specified topics related to the class.

- External Links – Important links to web sites used in conjunction with the class.

- Tools – A place where users can access grades, a calendar, their personal information (including their email address and password), student home pages and podcasts.

Course Items

Once students have clicked a button they will be presented with content. Content is organized into a series of items.
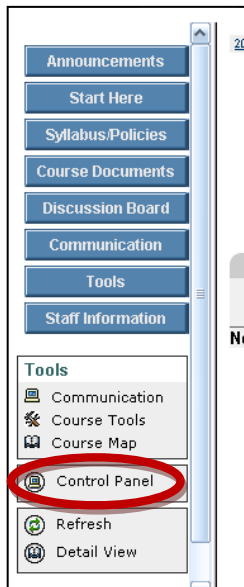
The image above shows how one instructor has organized his Syllabus & Policies area. (Syllabus & Policies is a custom button in this instructor's course.) The image shows three items: A plain item (the reminder), a web link item (the syllabus), and an assessment item (the survey). Each item type has a different icon.

eCampus has several types of course items:

- Item – The most basic (and most flexible) type of item. Can include text, hyperlinks, attached documents, PowerPoint, and more.

- Folder – Just like folders on your PC, an eCampus folder will help you break your class materials into smaller units. Folders can contain items and other folders.

- External Link – A link to a website.

- Course Link – A link from one portion of your course to another portion. For example, if you have a Week One folder it could contain a link to a Discussion Board topic students have to complete that week.

- Test (or other assessment) – A link to an eCampus test, quiz, or survey.   eCampus can help you generate objective tests that will be automatically graded and placed in your eCampus gradebook.

- Content Type (also known as "that drop-down menu") – adds specialized content. Most of this content will require additional specialized training, but this manual will discuss the "Assignments" feature.

The Control Panel

The control panel is the "behind-the-scenes" area where you can configure your course settings. It is only available to instructors. You access the control panel from your left-hand navigation pane.


The control panel has many options. You will explore some of the options in this manual.

Working with Buttons

Buttons are the primary building block for your courses. It's important to remember that your buttons don't have to look like buttons. Instead they can be simple text links as shown in the right-hand image below. For this reason, Blackboard calls these building blocks "content areas." This manual will stick with the term "button" because that is the term we hear faculty use daily, regardless of what their Content Areas looks like.
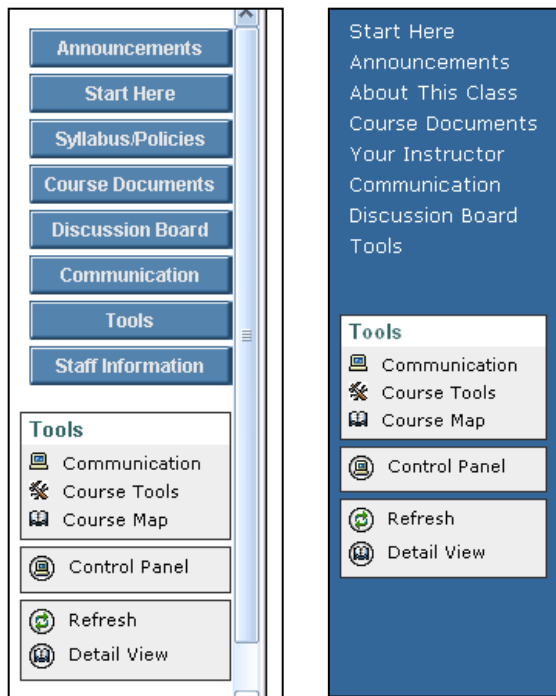
eCampus comes with several default buttons, each of which has a specific reason for existence. We will look at the default buttons and their purpose in this unit.

Additionally, as you set up your course you may find the default set does not meet the needs of your class. In that case, you can modify the existing buttons or add new ones. The provided tutorials will help you accomplish that task.

The "Manage Course Menu" Screen

All button issues are handled through the Control Panel.
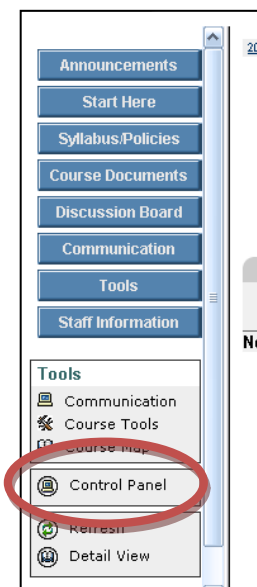
Once you are in the Control Panel, examine the lower left corner of the screen. Locate **Course Options**, and find the **Manage Course Menu** link. The name isn't very intuitive, but this is where you manage buttons.

Once you have clicked the link, you will be directed to a page much like the one pictured below.
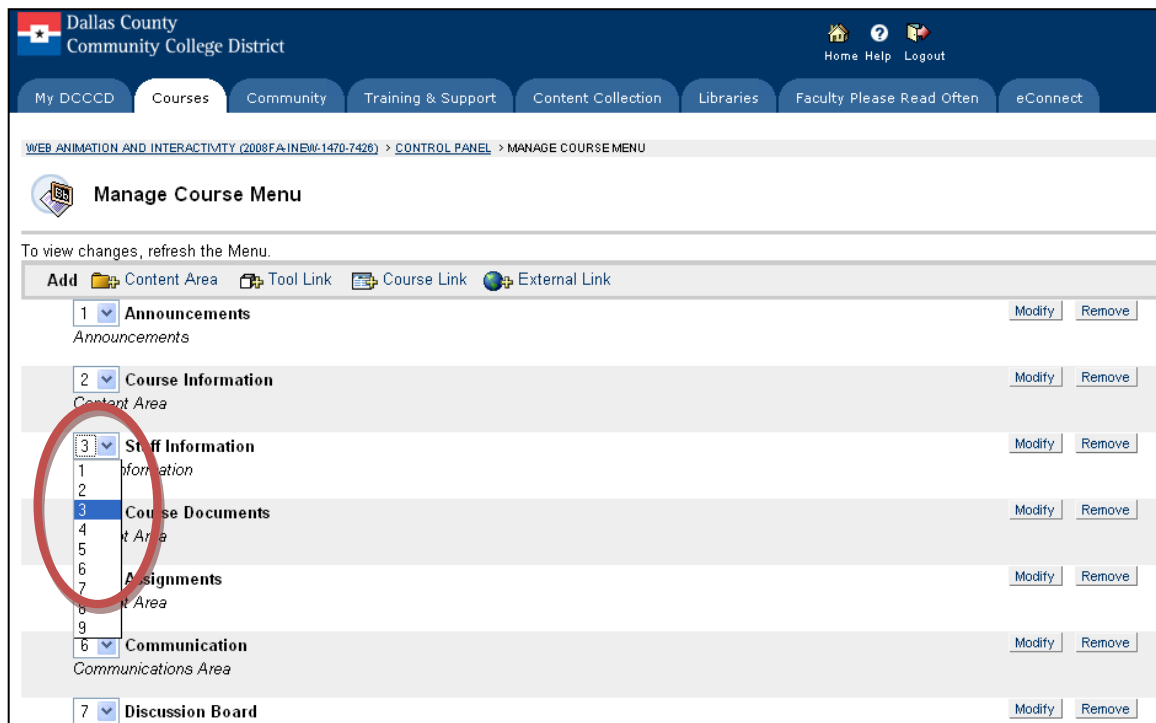
Change the Order of Buttons

If you want to change the order of your buttons use the drop-down menu beside each button, as shown in the image above. The top button will always be #1.

Change the Name of a Button

1. Locate the button you wish to change, and click the **modify** button beside it.

2. On the next screen, enter the title you to appear on the button. Limit yourself to eighteen characters or your button text may be truncated.
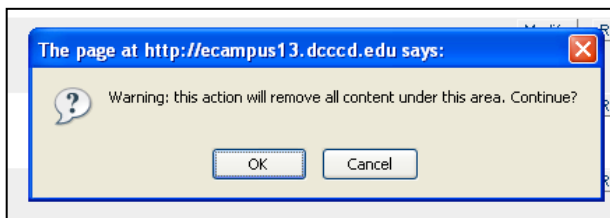

3. Be sure to check all three checkboxes. This insures that anyone with access to your site will see the buttons.
4. Click the Submit button to finish.

Faculty to Faculty: Don't remove buttons once the semester has started. It's just too risky.

1. Removing a button could potentially wreak havoc on your course. PROCEED WITH CAUTION!!!
2. Never remove a button unless you are absolutely sure you don't need the course materials the button links to. Once the button is gone the material is gone, too. (One sad, sad IT faculty accidentally removed the wrong button, and wiped out six hours of work.)
3. Once you are sure it's safe to remove the button, locate and click the **remove** button.

4. You will see a warning about content you may be about to loose. (Internet Explorer's warning is shown below; it will look a little different in Firefox.) Click OK to remove the offending button.

Add a Button

1. To add a button, click Add Content Area. ("Content Area" is the official Blackboard term for a button.)

Manage Course Menu

To view changes, refresh the Menu.

Add Content Area Tool Link

2. On the next screen, enter the title you to appear on the button. Limit yourself to eighteen characters or your button text may be truncated.

Set Area Properties

Type	Announcements
*Name	Announcements
	Suggested maximum 18 characters.
	Longer names or names that use wide characters may cause problems with the button Menu style. See Course Menu Design under Course Design to change Menu style.
Allow Guest access	☑
Allow Observer access	☑
Available for Student/Participant users	☑

3. Be sure to check all three checkboxes. This insures that anyone with access to your site will see the buttons.
4. Click the Submit button to finish.

DESIGN TIP: Don't overwhelm your students with options. Try to keep it under ten buttons.

Appendix B: Blackboard Checklist

Out with the Old (Closing Your Class)

- ☐ Make classes unavailable to all students except incompletes
- ☐ Export the gradebook as an exel file and save to your hard drive
- ☐ Compile & save discussion board messages
- ☐ Delete files from dropbox
- ☐ Print hard copy of grades & discussion board
- ☐ Archive class
- ☐ Export class

In with the New (Preparing for Next Semester)

- ☐ Change password
- ☐ Get a new shell or template
- ☐ Verify shell is ready
- ☐ Add fake student to class
- ☐ Change your course title
- ☐ Manage your course menu
- ☐ Give colleagues access (teaching assistants, etc.)
- ☐ Post a welcome announcement & send it as email
- ☐ Set course availability to yes
- ☐ Call students who do not have an email address on file.
- ☐ For an old course
  - ☐ Import previous semester's course content, gradebook and settings
  - ☐ Update all documents with current semester dates
  - ☐ Update syllabus
  - ☐ Double-check gradecenter
  - ☐ Turn off unused features
- ☐ For a new course
  - ☐ Add a syllabus
  - ☐ Add coure content
  - ☐ Set up discussion boards
  - ☐ Upload cartridges
  - ☐ Organize gradecenter
  - ☐ Turn off unused features
  - ☐ Add course banner
  - ☐ Change button style
  - ☐ Add wildfire rlos

Every Week

- ☐ Back up grades
- ☐ Make course archive & export course
- ☐ Hide dropped or de-registered students