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UMassOnline Selects Blackboard Learn 9.1
Closely Watched Evaluation Finds Blackboard the Best Fit for UMOL Community

WASHINGTON, May 31, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- A University of Massachusetts all-campus Learning Platform Review team, using a unique and rigorous evaluation process developed by UMassOnline, has selected _Blackboard Learn™_-9.1 following a major, comprehensive evaluation of six commercial and open source learning management systems (LMS), Blackboard Inc. announced today. Spanning nearly two years, the evaluation was one of the most thorough and closely watched in the industry. The process was led by UMassOnline and driven with input from officials, advisors, staff and users across the University of Massachusetts system.

A longtime leader in online learning, UMassOnline supports 15 campuses and over 125,000 users. The evaluation emphasized "functionality over features and an unflinching examination of the true and comprehensive underlying costs of our current and any future LMS solution," according to a summary report. The evaluation focused on six major areas of consideration, and in all of them officials found Blackboard Learn to be the strongest possible option.

At the heart of its evaluation, officials tested and ranked hundreds of UMass specific and unique user scenarios to better identify the functional needs of instructors and students, with Blackboard Learn rated among the highest options for teaching and learning. UMassOnline officials also found that, based on the university's existing and well-established practices and user expectations specific to UMass that may or may not be similar to requirements at other institutions, Blackboard Learn offered the greatest alignment with its business and operational goals, offered the most robust enterprise services and support, and represented the easiest path for migration from its current LMS.

In addition, officials found the ability to host several campuses through one installation of the Blackboard Learn platform – known as multi-tenancy – to be more developed than other options.

"We based our decision on a very thorough evaluation of both the various learning management systems and, just as importantly, our own internal practices as well," said Patrick Masson, Chief Technology Officer of UMassOnline. "Through this internal assessment, we identified how campuses actually deliver online education and thus the needs of our learning community. Ultimately, Blackboard was the best option for the UMassOnline community. Because our evaluation was so intensive, we learned a lot about the vendors that participated and found Blackboard's engagement in the process to be authentic, consistent, and very supportive."

Progress on the evaluation was communicated openly and publicly throughout the process using a public Wiki site created by UMassOnline which organized communications, documentation and project management. The site was leveraged by UMassOnline to solicit input from the community and also became a knowledge base for users and others interested in the evaluation. The site includes over 100 pages, 500 comments and more than 80 supporting documents.

As part of its evaluation process, officials completed a total cost of ownership for UMassOnline to fully evaluate the true cost of implementation, maintenance and support for each LMS option. Given the terms presented by

each vendor and normal cost of operation of each platform, UMassOnline officials found no significant difference in the total cost of ownership among the various commercial or open source options based on the system's specific needs and the overall products reviewed and evaluated.

UMassOnline officials also noted in their review Blackboard's full support of open industry standards including Common Cartridge and Basic Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI). The standards give institutions greater flexibility and control over their learning content and offer educators more choices for creating and delivering course content and integrating external learning tools within their courses.

For more information about Blackboard Learn, please visit
http://www.blackboard.com/Platforms/Learn/Overview.aspx.

About Blackboard Inc.
Blackboard Inc. is a global leader in enterprise technology and innovative solutions that improve the experience of millions of students and learners around the world every day. Blackboard's solutions allow thousands of higher education, K-12, professional, corporate, and government organizations to extend teaching and learning online, facilitate campus commerce and security, and communicate more effectively with their communities. Founded in 1997, Blackboard is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with offices in North America, Europe, Asia and Australia.

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