

Blackboard Unveils The File Transformer to Increase Accessibility of Digital Course Content for Students

New alternative format resource eases student transition to remote learning environment in light of COVID-19-driven campus closures

RESTON, Va., April 1, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- [Blackboard Inc.](#) today announced the launch of the [File Transformer, Powered by Blackboard Ally](#) — a free resource enabling students to convert their digital course content into a range of alternative formats to meet their unique learning needs and preferences as they adjust to digital teaching and learning modalities. The new resource allows students to personalize their learning experience and choose from several different format types designed to work better with mobile devices, assistive technologies, and study tools. The temporary, free resource is designed to ease students' transition to digital learning as K12 school districts and higher education institutions continue moving to fully remote learning environments over the next several weeks as a result of COVID-19 contingency planning.

The File Transformer is an extension of Blackboard Ally, a solution that helps improve the accessibility of course content and uses machine learning algorithms to generate alternative formats of digital content for students. While Blackboard Ally integrates seamlessly into leading Learning Management System (LMS) solutions, the File Transformer is temporarily available to anyone and can be accessed outside of the LMS via web URL. Students can simply upload a digital file from their courses and select their desired file format, including mobile-friendly HTML, audio MP3, ePub, electronic Braille, and Beeline Reader.

"Offering students the flexibility to choose how they engage with course content during this transitional period is critical," said Nicolaas Matthijs, product director for Blackboard Ally. "The launch of the File Transformer, Powered by Blackboard Ally builds upon our vision to reduce barriers to accessible course content for as many students as possible, particularly in light of the education community's widespread shift to digital teaching and learning modalities."

The development of the File Transformer was inspired by an increase in usage of alternative formats in the LMS, detailed in the latest whitepaper from the Blackboard Ally Inclusive Learning Research Series, titled "[Choose your Format: Usage of Alternative Formats of Course Content](#)." Analysing data from over 300 institutions and 7 million alternative format downloads, the study explores alternative format download activity across different types of institutions. Key findings help validate the positive impact of alternative formats on the student learning experience.

Additional Resources

To learn more about the full range of Blackboard Ally capabilities and benefits, visit

<https://www.blackboard.com/blackboard-ally>


For additional free information on ensuring the development of high quality, engaging, and inclusive digital course content during the transition to a fully remote academic environment, see the [Ally accessibility checklist](#), for select, easy-to-follow best practices.

About Blackboard

Our mission is to partner with the global education community to enable learner and institutional success, leveraging innovative technologies and services. Blackboard delivers a dynamic platform that seamlessly integrates learning management system (LMS), web conferencing, and accessibility technologies with robust data and analytics capabilities. With an unmatched understanding of the world of the learner, the most comprehensive student-success solutions, and the greatest capacity for innovation, Blackboard is education's partner in change.

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<https://press.blackboard.com/2020-04-01-Blackboard-Unveils-The-File-Transformer-to-Increase-Accessibility-of-Digital-Course-Content-for-Students>