



When the Need for Speed Meets Expertise: How North Carolina Central University launched two online programs within six months



The Institution

North Carolina Central University, founded in 1910 as the National Religious Training School and Chautauqua by Dr. James Edward Shepard, is a master's comprehensive institution offering bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, a Juris Doctor, and a Ph.D. in Integrated Biosciences to a diverse student population.

With more than 8,000 students, North Carolina Central University, has a strong tradition of teaching, research, and service, preparing students to become global leaders and practitioners who transform communities. Through a nationally recognized law school, highly acclaimed and innovative programs in visual and performing arts, science, business, humanities, and education programs, NCCU students are engaged problem solvers.

The Challenge

NCCU approved a fully online MBA program and an online certificate in Regulatory Sciences. There was a directive by the provost to get both programs implemented within a semester. Neither program had developed online courses, so the faculty were going to need a lot of support. Although the university has an Office of e-Learning, at the time these programs were approved, the office was staffed with just two instructional designers.

In an effort to meet the timeline set by the provost and the Dean of the School of Business and the Pharmaceutical Sciences department, the team, led by Kimberly Phifer-McGhee, Ed.D., Vice Chancellor for Extended Studies and Student Support, realized help was needed to support faculty in the course design and development process.

Kimberly provides leadership and support for the university's efforts in distance education, continuing education, summer sessions, e-learning training, faculty development, and

academic community service and engagement. Additionally, she is responsible for ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations related to distance and online education; therefore, Kimberly's call for expertise in delivering quality and compliant courses on such a tight deadline was a must.

The main challenge was having the first two semesters of courses in the newly approved MBA program fully developed before enrolling the first cohort of students. As for the Regulatory Sciences certificate program, all seven of those courses needed to be fully developed and offered within six months in order to meet a critical workforce need in the state of North Carolina.

The Partnership and Expectations

Blackboard has been a partner with NCCU for over 20 years. The collaboration has assisted the university on many projects for their e-learning programs, as well as improving digital content accessibility. The need to develop a large number of online courses in a short period of time was raised to the account representative during one of the check-in meetings. Kimberly was then introduced to one of Blackboard's senior consultants who met with the faculty to get a better understanding of the instructional objectives and student outcomes for each program.





The university contracted with Blackboard to provide and manage high-quality content development specifically for:

- ★ Aligning learning objectives with assessments and learning materials
- ★ Creating engaging activities that could be presented asynchronously or synchronously
- ★ Reformatting any existing PowerPoint files, videos, or images
- ★ Integrating Open Educational Resources as appropriate.

The Strategy

After the team of consultant experts met NCCU faculty and understood the scope of the project, the following plan came into place:

- ★ Assess existing courses using effective rubric practices for online course design (including course navigation, assessment, interaction, and learner support),
- ★ Develop a course template and design process based on effective practices for online learning,
- ★ Provide faculty development and training for course design and delivery, and
- ★ Design and develop 24 academic courses.

Blackboard's Course Design and Development team provided instructional design assistance by first evaluating the 15 current courses and assisting NCCU to develop course templates that would provide a consistent, but flexible, structure and approach to developing online courses. Furthermore, Blackboard's team provided faculty development and staff training to support their continued development of online courses and delivery by performing effective practices to achieve high levels of student learning outcomes for the university MBA and online certificate for Regulatory Sciences. The training included a two-day workshop for up to 15 participants to introduce faculty to effective practices, efficient processes, and key strategies for designing online courses (Designing Exemplary Courses).

The Result

As a result of working with the Blackboard Course Design and Development team, NCCU faculty were able to successfully complete 12 courses in time. As for the Regulatory Sciences certificate program, all of the seven courses were fully developed and offered within six months. Consequently, the university had an opportunity to partner with businesses in the Research Triangle Park to offer the certificate program to current employees. The implementation of these programs ultimately led to increased enrollment in the MBA program and the establishment of a partnership where the company provided tuition remission to its employees to enroll and complete the certificate program. After such a successful delivery, Blackboard signed with NCCU for three subsequent phases of design and development, culminating in 24 new course developments.

The Value – in NCCU words

For NCCU, the value-added services of Blackboard’s Course Design and Development is that they were able to quickly move online programs from approval to enrolling students. This resulted in an increase in enrollment and revenue. In addition, a large group of faculty now have the skills and abilities to design online course content and assist others in their department with the development process as needed.

“We have been very pleased with the Course Design and Development Services. The process is well-organized, faculty are a part of each stage of the development process, and the team was very patient with those faculty members who were not as experienced with developing online content. I would highly recommend these services to other institutions who do not have adequate staff to meet the demand of designing and implementing online courses.

The timelines we presented the team were very aggressive; however, each deadline was met, and the faculty were pleased with the final product. Having faculty involved in every step provided a level of comfort for those faculty members when it was time to actually deliver the course to students. They have an understanding of how their courses were designed and can easily tweak them based on student feedback, if needed.”

– **Kimberly Phifer-McGhee, Ed.D.**
Vice Chancellor for Extended Studies and Student Support



Great courses advance learning. [Let's talk](#) about how our [Blackboard team](#) can support building quality online courses.

Learn more about Course Design and Development Services at blackboard.com/coursedesign.