

which can increase the likelihood of service disruptions. Choosing the fresh installation approach demonstrates ITS' recognition of NYU Blackboard's importance as an enterprise LMS, and our efforts toward ensuring a smooth transition.

To provide the best training and support possible, ITS is working with Blackboard, Inc. to schedule initial training for a core group of people. As we go to press, ITS is working to organize training for those in technical support roles within ITS and the Schools. In this way, the University can ensure that support personnel are well prepared to assist faculty and staff members in the effective use of any new or unfamiliar Blackboard features.

The core NYU Blackboard team, made up of staff from ITS as well as some school- and Library-based IT departments, is also developing a number of training workshops for faculty. Slated to begin in May and continue throughout the summer and the following academic year, the workshop titles will likely include focused sessions, such as "What I Need to Know About the Blackboard Upgrade: What's Changed and What's New?", "Effective Use of Content: How to Take Advantage of Library Resources in Your Course Site", "Making the Most of Discussions: Lessons for the New Discussion Board", and "Keeping Students on Track: How to Use the Grade Center, Adaptive Release, and the Performance Dashboard to Person-

alize the Learning Experience", in addition to "Getting Started" and "Blackboard Basics" training.

One-on-one sessions will continue to be available for faculty members requiring individual support. Clinic hours will also be available at regular times, in which individuals may "walk in" to a designated location and ask a Blackboard expert questions. Along with these in-person training opportunities, ITS also plans to offer expanded online support options, including training videos and online tutorials linked from the Ask ITS knowledgebase (located at <http://AskITS.nyu.edu>), and will be working with Blackboard, Inc. technical staff to quickly populate online information with support material for a new version.

Sakai and ALEX

A Brief Look

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Sakai is a "community source" software product developed by the higher education community to serve as an open source learning management system (LMS) and collaboration suite alternative.

During the past two years, NYU has been carefully tracking the evolution of the higher education LMS market and evaluating the many available options. NYU has been a partner in the Sakai program for several years, and during the 2007-08 academic year ITS closely monitored the activities of the Sakai international community and supported a pilot project for 26 courses on the Washington Square campus using the Sakai product. The NYU School of Medicine also successfully implemented Sakai in its courses in a project known as ALEX (Advanced Learning EXchange).

Preliminary results from the Washington Square pilot suggest that Sakai is not yet ready to perform the features that NYU requires in an LMS. However, as other major research universities become more involved with Sakai (which has many possibilities for group collaboration and support), ITS plans to continue to test and explore possibilities.

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For more information on Sakai, visit www.sakaiproject.org.
For more information on NYU's ALEX project, visit www.nyu.edu/its/alex.