

# Troy University improving experience for online students with new e-commerce tool

The Blackboard Store provides centralized, convenient location for eTROY students to buy or rent textbooks and course materials

**T**roy University is a public, historic university of 23,000 students and 140,000 alumni. Students on the Troy, Alabama campus enjoy a traditional college experience. The university's campuses in Montgomery, Dothan and Phenix City, Alabama as well as around the world and online cater to the needs of working adults. Troy is well known today for its online program, eTROY. "Our online education program is generally considered one of the largest in the country, serving between 8,000 and 12,000 students each year," says Glynn Cavin, associate vice chancellor for distance learning and director of eTROY.

When Cavin first came to eTROY in 2013, he immediately looked for ways to improve the experience of eTROY students. "First and foremost, we're always looking for what we can do to reduce costs to the student," says Cavin. "We want tuition and other costs to be as affordable as possible. We also want the experience that students have online to be productive, easy to navigate and pleasurable."

The Blackboard learning management platform has been one of the key technologies supporting eTROY for the past 14 years. This year, Cavin and the leadership of eTROY jumped at the chance to implement the vendor's new tool, the Blackboard Store, because it offered a way of reducing costs and improving the student experience for all online students.

A fully operational e-commerce system, the Blackboard Store enables students to purchase and access textbooks and course materials right from within the Blackboard platform. Instructors can find, compare, and assign course materials from an online catalog of commercial and open educational content, and institutions benefit from knowing that students are getting the right materials at the right time to make the most of their educational investment. eTROY has just begun implementation of the textbook and course materials purchasing system.

"Once eTROY students are registered, the Blackboard Store automatically populates with the textbooks and course content they need for each course," says Cavin. "It will also show a comparison side-by-side of new hardcover, used, rental and eBook



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options of their textbooks, if they are available. Textbooks are extremely expensive, and we feel that having these choices side-by-side in the Store will drive adoption of eBooks, which are significantly less expensive to the student."

Apart from the potential for cost savings, Cavin says the Blackboard Store enhances the overall experience for online students. "This also simplifies the process of registering for classes and purchasing materials, by putting everything in one place. That makes it much more convenient," he says. Students can manage their resources in a virtual bookshelf, which remains available to them after they complete their program of

study at eTROY. "Students are able to export that virtual bookshelf and take it with them to graduate studies at another university, for example. That was another great feature," says Cavin.

In addition, because professors assign textbooks and materials directly into the Store, this ensures accuracy and lessens the chance that students will purchase the wrong textbook edition or materials. "There's nothing worse than a student buying the wrong book. That creates a long and frustrating process. Most of our online students are adult learners, so it is already intimidating for them to return to school," says Cavin. "If any part of the experience is frustrating or distracting, that has a direct effect on retention. Preventing these frustrating mistakes was another reason we saw the Blackboard Store as a great tool."

Cavin says the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. "All of the comments we've received from students have been positive, they really like having the ability to access everything right in one place, and how it is easy and intuitive to use," says Cavin. "Overall, the Blackboard Store fits right into our mission to provide an affordable, high-quality education."

**For more information,  
go to [www.blackboard.com/blackboardstore](http://www.blackboard.com/blackboardstore).**

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