What are Blackboard Communities?
Blackboard Communities are online environments for formal and informal organizations and clubs at the university. When a department or a center wants to use Blackboard for purposes that are not course-related, it can request a Blackboard Community. Communities have the same features for presenting information and communicating with other users that are found in academic courses and they are also managed in a similar way. Communities are fee-based and they can either be temporary or on-going entities.

Requesting a Blackboard Community
1. Blackboard Communities can be requested through the Forms page of Information Technology Services (ITS) at http://itsforms.niu.edu
2. Click Computing Access Resources (CAR)
3. From the drop-down menu on the following page, select Faculty/Staff Account
4. Select Blackboard and click the Continue button
5. On the following page, select Community Request and click the Continue button
6. Then select New Community and click the Continue button
7. On the adjacent page, fill in or select the various options and complete the process as directed

Accessing a Blackboard Community
1. Log in to Blackboard at http://webcourses.niu.edu
2. Click the Community tab located near the top of the page
3. The Communities that the user is enrolled in appears under My Organizations — to enter a particular Community, click the relevant link under Organizations you are leading or under Organizations in which you are participating

Remember!
- Blackboard Communities are not free. Additionally, charges are incurred each semester for on-going communities. For rate information, visit www.niu.edu/its/blackboard/blackboard_community.
- In addition to communication and collaboration, Blackboard Communities can be used to offer online training via the Wimba Classroom feature.
- Blackboard Communities should not be used for any external (outside NIU) commercial activities.
- Blackboard Communities can also make use of tools such as Assessments, Discussion Boards, Wikis, Blogs, and Groups.
- For more information, visit http://www.niu.edu/blackboard/communities
Enrolling Users

1. After accessing your Community, from the Control Panel, click **Users and Groups**
2. Select **Users**
3. On the adjacent page, click the **Find Users to Enroll** button
4. On the Add Enrollments page, if the Username of the user is known, enter it in the textbox (Z- or A-ID) and click **Submit**; otherwise, click **Browse**
5. If you clicked **Browse**, search for users by Username, First Name, Last Name, or NIU Email and click **Go**
6. Click the **Submit** button if user was located
7. On the Add Enrollments page, select the appropriate **Role**
8. Click the **Submit** button

Modifying Status of Users

1. After accessing your Community, from the Control Panel, click **Users and Groups**
2. Select **Users**
3. To change the status of a user in the Community, click the action link next to the **Username** of the user
4. From the drop-down menu, select **Change User’s Role in Organization**
5. On the following page, for **Role** select the appropriate choice (see **below** for more information about Roles)
6. Click the **Submit** button

Important!

There are a variety of user roles within a Blackboard Community, including:

- **Organization Builder**— Has access to most areas within a Community, including the Control Panel, however, no access to participant grades or the Grade Center.
- **Grader**— Has limited access the Control Panel, but can assist with the creation, management, delivery, and grading of assessments and surveys within a Community.
- **Leader**— Has access to all areas within the Community. This role is generally given to those developing, teaching or facilitating the Community and is comparable to the role of Instructor.
- **Participant**— Has no access to the Control Panel, and is the default role within a Community. This role can be compared to the role of Student in a Blackboard Course.
- **Assistant**— Has full access to the Control Panel, but is not listed in the Community Catalog as a Leader. Can also manage (add, change, delete) membership of the organization.
- **Guest**— Has no access to the Control Panel. Areas within the Organization can be made available to Guests. Visitors such as prospective students, alumni or parents may be given the role of Guest.