

“Cadillacs zoom in America.”

—from “America,” *West Side Story*, composed by Leonard Bernstein, born on this day in 1918, with lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, born March 22, 1954 (March 22, 2020, being our last day before virtual teaching this past spring)

Dear Colleagues:

If you were put in mind more of “doom” and “gloom” and less of speedy convertibles at the mention of “Zoom” during yesterday’s outage, you are not alone. Over the past 30 hours or so, as ITS and the CTE have contended with work-arounds from that outage, we have also identified one or two challenges with using Zoom and other virtual collaboration features still to be addressed. This email attempts to address them:

- Virtual Office Hours: What follows comes as an elaboration on clarification of some advice I sent on Friday.
- Zoom Class Meetings: Namely, how to schedule them inside your Blackboard Learn courses to maximize navigability, accessibility, and security.

Virtual Office Hours

The CTE email of last Friday described creating virtual office hours in ways that did not quite match the terminology used by Blackboard and Zoom to name features of their collaboration spaces. It also perhaps provided too little detail for some who might have wished for a more step-by-step guide.

So, please see below for a hopefully clearer, more precise description of how you can go about creating Virtual Office Hours, particularly in Zoom. Please note: **The following directions apply only to setting up Virtual Office Hours, not for scheduling class meetings.**

- Make sure there is a main room in which students can gather if more than one student shows up at a time. Then, from there, you can admit students to a breakout room for private one-on-one or small-group consultation.
 - Zoom reminder: Non-authenticated users will need to be admitted from the required waiting room to the main room first, which means keeping an eye on the waiting room during your session.
 - Zoom Office Hours: Here’s a step-by-step guide to setting up Zoom-based office hours:
 - Log into drake-edu.zoom.us. This login provides a direct connection to your zoom account.
 - Once you’ve logged in, it should take you to your meetings panel.
 - If not, click on “Meetings” in the left-hand menu.
 - Click the “Schedule a Meeting” button on the page.
 - Title the meeting with something like Office Hours or similar.
 - Add a Description about what the purpose of this meeting is if you wish.
 - Click on the “Recurring meeting” option

- Under the “Recurrence” setting, choose “No Fixed Time”.
- Choose any of the settings you wish for this meeting.
- When finished click “Save”
- Copy the link to the new meeting.
- You have now created a meeting housed outside any course you may be teaching. So, at this point, students will not have access to this meeting from within the Blackboard course. Only you see this meeting from within your course, and only if you have connected the Zoom tool to your course.
- Post the invitation link inside your courses for students’ reference by creating a “Content Area” link in your course’s navigation menu, naming it “Virtual Office Hours,” and posting the link there. **Please do not simply email the link to the meeting and assume your students will reliably find it each time they want to visit office hours.**
 - In Collaborate Ultra, you can use a similar set-up, as described [here](#).
 - As with Zoom above, you will need to cross-post the guest link into your other courses.
- Do not post links to your virtual office hours in publicly accessible places (e.g., your blog, Twitter, or Insta).
- Consider disabling screen-sharing, audio, and video for students inside the main meeting room to minimize the possibility of disruption in the main room while you’re in your breakout sessions.
- Asking students to make appointments whenever possible will minimize the amount of room-monitoring you need to do, especially if you are planning on using your computer screen to do other things when you’re not interacting with students.

Zoom Class Meetings

When you set up Zoom class meetings, do so from within the Zoom tool **within the course you’re scheduling the meetings for.**

- You should schedule individual dates, start times, and end times for each session at the outset.
- You can do so either with recurring meetings or with individually scheduled one-time meetings.
- **Please do not set up a recurring meeting with no fixed time in place of individually scheduled class times, as it makes it more difficult for students to navigate to and join the meeting at the correct time.**

I know all this information is a lot to digest, much less put into seamless practice. Please let me know if I can continue to advise and, hopefully, help you as we bely one another on our climb up this steep learning curve.

As ever,

Craig