Introduction: Do you want to increase student engagement in your classes? Here’s an easy way to create a collaborative space within your Blackboard course where all students can view, create, contribute, and edit course content.

What is a wiki? A wiki is a tool that permits collaborative authoring. It allows users to contribute and modify one or more pages of course related materials. A wiki creates a virtual space where users can share and exchange thoughts and ideas. Students can also create and edit wiki pages that pertain to course content or special topics.

How to create wikis: There are two types of wikis on Blackboard: group and course wikis. Course wikis are enabled by the instructor and can be read by all course members. For group wikis, users must be members of a group to edit a page or make a comment. The instructor can change the default settings to allow only certain group members to view a group wiki.

Creating a Wiki
1. From the Control Panel, click Course Tools
2. Click Wikis
3. Click Create Wiki
4. On the Create Wiki page, provide the wiki Name and Instructions
5. Set Wiki Availability to ‘Yes’
6. If the wiki is going to be restricted to a certain time period, select Wiki Date and Time Restrictions; otherwise, leave the fields empty
7. If students will be allowed to edit each other’s entries, select Open to Editing; otherwise, select Closed to Editing
8. If the wiki is going to be graded, select Grade and specify Points possible. If grading is enabled, Blackboard will automatically add a column to the Grade Center
9. Click the Submit button

Creating a Wiki Page
1. From the Course menu, click Tools, then click Wikis
2. Click on the wiki name
3. Click Create Wiki Page
4. Under Wiki Page Content fill out the Name
5. Type the message in the Content area. Using the Visual Textbox Editor, users can embed multimedia files or mashups
6. Click the Submit button

Benefits of using Wikis: Wikis can help build a community of collaboration and learning by increasing social interaction during the exchange of information. Wikis can also be used to:

• Assess student engagement and participation
• Foster a social and interactive approach to learning
• Provide support and prompt feedback
• Assess student learning (formative and/or summative)
• Increase communication and accountability
• Support non-linear thought with the use of hyperlinking functions
• Promote information literacy
Ways to use wikis in the classroom: There are many ways to use wikis to increase student engagement and collaboration. Users can create and edit pages quickly, while tracking changes and additions—allowing for effective collaboration between students. Each change in content is recorded and can easily be reverted to previous versions.

Here are a few ways for instructors to use Wikis in their classrooms:

1. Assign certain chapters from the text to groups and have students create wiki pages to post their summaries or outlines.
2. Have students post their group project presentations for easy viewing and future reference.
3. Use wikis for students to sign up for certain research topics.
4. Have students create wiki pages to share their solutions for scenarios and case studies.
5. Have students share lab experiments and results.
6. Encourage students to post lesson plans and allow others the opportunity to provide feedback and suggestions.

Conclusion: A wiki is a collaborative tool that is readily available to VCSU faculty and students on Blackboard. There are so many ways to use Wikis to create collaborative, engaging, and meaningful learning environments—both in and out of the classroom. The possibilities are endless!

For more information about Blackboard wikis, click this link: http://bit.ly/1H8utTT