Communication Strategies in Blackboard

Announcements
Students can view important messages from you in the My Announcements module on their Blackboard system homepage. Announcements can also be accessed inside a course in the Announcements module.

To create an announcement, start in the Announcements area of your course site or go to Control Panel > Course Tools > Announcements. Select Create Announcement. Enter a subject and message, set your display options, and add a course link if desired. You can also choose to email a copy of the announcement to your students. Click Submit. If you wish, you can create announcements to be posted on a specific date.

Course Calendar
You can use the Course Calendar to indicate important course related events. The dates and events that appear on the calendar are for all users in the course (populated due dates for assignments, exams, etc. will automatically appear in the course calendar).

There is a calendar link on their Blackboard system home page (Tools > Calendar) where calendar items for ALL courses and organizations will be present. You can also add a button for a new area displaying the calendar on your Blackboard page (or it can be accessed by students under the Tools link).

To Create a New Button or Content Area for the Calendar:
1.   Go to the "+" in the top left and select Tool Link.
2.   Enter a name for your button/content area, and select Calendar for type.
3.   Be sure to check Available to users and click Submit.

Creating New Link on Blackboard
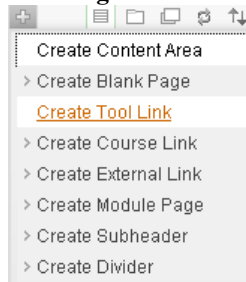
Email
To send an email through Blackboard, go to Control Panel > Course Tools > Send Email. You can also access this function by clicking on the student Tools link.

In the Send Email menu, select the category of users you want to email. You can also choose Select Users to send mail to specific individuals in the course site.

Blackboard Voice E-mail
Voice E-mail can add expression and inflection of human voice to your electronic correspondences. Note: Instructors will need to have a microphone to create Voice E-mails. Students need only have speakers or ear buds.

To record a Voice E-mail using Collaborate:
1. Click on the student Tools Link.
2. Select Voice E-mail.
3. Select your recipients. **Note:** Make sure JAVA is up-to-date, or the Voice Email function will not work.
3. Record your message. You also have the ability to add a subject line and text.
4. Click Send when finished.

Voice Email Screen
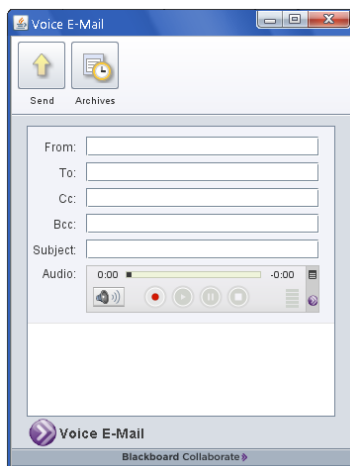
Some final thoughts on online courses and communication:

1. Be consistent! Students will be more likely to notice and benefit from the information you are providing. For example, I send out weekly reminders every Monday afternoon. I also post announcements a couple days before a major assignment is due.
2. Protocols for student questions should be clearly defined. Establish guidelines for responses (responses within 24 hours? 48 hours?).
3. Establish guidelines for feedback (what type and when can students expect feedback). Feedback should be timely.
4. There should be an opportunity for student-student interaction and student-instructor interaction.
5. It is clear (either on the syllabus or in Blackboard) where students can receive technical assistance as well as other assistance (Center for Writers, ACE, subject matter librarians, etc.).
6. Finally, I must say it again: be consistent even when the semester gets busy. Your students will appreciate your predictable presence.

Some of the above material is from the University of Pennsylvania:
http://www.library.upenn.edu/courseware/communication_tools.html

Material was modified by Melissa Vosen Callens.