

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lessons Learned Evaluation Process

Upon completion of the Canvas Pilot Project, a Focus Group was assembled to gather information regarding the Project for the development of a Canvas Pilot Lessons Learned Report. Discussion centered on the following topics:

- Building course content
- Creating, collecting, and evaluating assignments
- Managing student grades
- Communications
- Teaching/learning experiences
- Ease-of-use and training process
- E-portfolio tool

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Focus Group Summary

The Focus Group found Canvas to be an easy, intuitive tool for building course content and teaching courses. As a whole, the integrated feature sets within Canvas enabled faculty to manage courses effectively. The Focus Group found students to be more engaged in classes and learning outcomes were enhanced and/or improved.

Please find below Canvas key strengths and recommended future enhancements. Both were identified by the Focus Group.

Findings

Building Course Content

Strengths

- Uploading content into Canvas is easy, and the uploaded content is placed in the logical place by design.
- As content is uploaded, the content is automatically linked to the areas where students could access it.
- Canvas is intuitive with its set up wizard feature. It works well in stepping faculty through what should be done next when building course content. After setting up one course, faculty found building additional courses could be done very efficiently.

Future Enhancements

- Importing content from textbook publishing companies needs to be developed so content can be easily imported into the courses. Currently Pearson is the only available publisher, but LTI integration capability allows integration with other publishing companies. Relationships between Canvas and the publishing companies need to be established.

- Canvas has intentionally limited customization capability to benefit the students, but some faculty would like a more flexibility with customizing the navigation for the course.

Creating, collecting, and evaluating assignments

Strengths

- Assignment, Syllabus and Calendar are integrated, streamlining the need to change dates in multiple places. Revising one area changes all three areas. The integration between features is a very efficient way to develop a class and saves the faculty time.
- Any assignment a student submits is automatically saved in that student's files area.

Future Enhancement

Browser and operating systems issues with Canvas have been identified periodically during the semester. Instructure (Canvas company) continues to gather information to identify the issues so they can be resolved. Faculty felt these issues were minimal.

Managing Student Grades

Strengths

- The Speed Grader is very efficient in grading a large number of student assignments one after another.
- The ability to make audio comments about an assignment is beneficial.
- The grade book allows students to enter "what if" grades to determine what they need in order to achieve to a certain final grade in the class.

Future Enhancement

The ability to add a column in the grade book without creating an assignment is something faculty consider desirable.

Communications

Strengths

- Canvas keeps a running log of all communications sent to each student, enabling faculty to click on a student's name and see all of the communication with that student.
- Faculty benefit from being able to set up or configure notification preferences concerning their course and also the communication to and from the students, thereby improving communication.

Future Enhancements

- Canvas needs more flexibility and the capability to organize all communications. For courses with a large number of students, the organization can be overwhelming.
- Faculty need to control whether students can choose to opt out of a communication choice.
- Faculty need the capability to modify the landing page so that students' communications are not immediately displayed when they access their course.

Teaching/Learning Experiences

Strengths

- Faculty feel students are more engaged and learned more effectively using Canvas.
- The quiz feature works really well.
- Faculty feel that using Canvas enabled the quality of students' work to improve.

- Overall the experience is good with uploading and downloading assignments and student collections. Also, the capability to upload and download in multiple formats is value added.
- Faculty feel there is value to integrating video directly into the pages.
- Leaving audio and video comments on discussion board improved the quality of student engagement.
- Leaving audio remarks for students is very efficient.

Future Enhancements

- Faculty want more flexibility concerning extra credit. Currently faculty must assign zero points to the assignment.
- Faculty would like the ability to download a rubric.

Ease-of-use and Training Process

Strengths

- The students asked for more content, which is positive.
- The module system is "elegant," attractive.
- Canvas is intuitive and efficient, and faculty indicate it took minimal time to get used to working with Canvas.
- Faculty, in general, feel comfortable with Canvas as soon as the first course has been built.
- Some faculty feel that Canvas speaks to their philosophy of online teaching.
- With the automatic alignment of dates for future courses in Canvas, when copying a course, faculties simply have to change the start and end dates. Canvas adjusts the courses dates accordingly.
- With the ease-of-use, faculty feel as if there is an increased level of student engagement.

Future Enhancements

- When working with Canvas Support on usage issues, the conversations aren't always effective. At times terminology used by the two sides is not commonly defined and leads to misunderstanding.
- The Canvas User Guide documentation needs to be improved. The guide provides limited assistance to the user.

ePortfolio

Strength

The basic functionality exists and works well. Canvas has the ability to easily bring assignments into the e-portfolio.

Future Enhancement

There needs to be the ability to create a template for a student assessment portfolio, so students would know exactly what artifacts need to be included.

Focus Group Thoughts

It would be to the benefit of the University to use a learning management system that faculty support and like.

The Focus Group believes the Canvas product has better potential to draw faculty to online teaching. It has usability features that are better than the currently supported LMS. The Focus Group acknowledged a Learning Management System cannot promote faculty use of an LMS. Faculty must be encouraged to move from brick and mortar teaching to an online learning management system. Canvas is an excellent product to assist in this transition.