

Learning Management Future Direction Committee

<http://sites.uci.edu/lmsfuture>

Final Recommendations Regarding Adoption of Canvas LMS

February 4, 2016

Synopsis

The committee supports the adoption of Canvas in the direction outlined by the OIT's Academic Web Technologies Team, with the LMS Advisory Committee providing input on the implementation as it progresses. The committee did note a need for increased support to assist faculty in the transition to Canvas and a need for structured oversight and transparency of the third party tool integration with Canvas.

Background

In Spring 2015, UCI initiated a year-long pilot of the Instructure Canvas learning management system to determine its viability as a core component of UCI's digital learning environment. Extensive assessments have been conducted throughout the pilot, including user surveys, focus groups, and usability studies. The Learning Management Future Direction Committee was reconvened in November, 2015 to review the Canvas pilot assessment results to date and provide recommendations on the decision process and criteria. The committee met again in January 2016 to review the most recent assessment results and develop final recommendations regarding the adoption of Canvas. The recommendations from both meetings are summarized below, followed by more detailed discussion.

Summary of Recommendations

The committee agrees that the Canvas pilot assessment results favor adoption of Canvas, although we recognize the potential for sampling bias given the voluntary nature of the surveys and the pilot itself. Should the University adopt Canvas, the committee recommends the following considerations be made:

1. As has been proposed, OIT's AWT group should continue to support EEE while moving forward with plans to identify EEE Tools that provide unique or superior functionality (compared to Canvas), rebuild them using an extensible framework, and integrate them with Canvas.
2. Initial communication regarding the transition should include an emphasis on why the change is needed, clearly specify the decision process and timeline for existing EEE tools, and set expectations for the availability of training and support.
3. Training for faculty should include the option of one-on-one consultations, as well as templates, sample courses, and sandbox spaces that can help lower the barrier to adoption.
4. Any significant push toward Canvas should be delayed until additional support resources can be put in place and adequate response times can be guaranteed.
5. Efforts should be made to ensure we are able to approve and integrate third-party tools with Canvas in a timely manner.
6. Following the adoption of Canvas, we should continue to leverage OIT AWT's distinctive capabilities to develop new tools and customize vendor products for our Campus' unique needs.

Discussion of Recommendations

Assessment Results

While the assessment results have consistently favored Canvas, the committee discussed some possible sources of bias that should be considered:

- The voluntary nature of the pilot likely resulted in a sample of instructors that is skewed toward innovators, early adopters, and those with specialized needs met by Canvas. TA's and students, on the other hand, did not have much choice and might be more representative of the broader population.
- Senate faculty, in particular, did not have strong representation in the pilot, despite multiple outreach attempts by OIT and DTL.
- Student survey results reflect both the technology (Canvas) and instructor/TA use of the technology. When interpreting responses, we have to keep in mind that course design and facilitation is likely a factor.

EEE and Canvas Parity (Recommendation #1)

The committee supports the plans proposed by OIT's AWT to systematically evaluate EEE tools to determine which tools to rebuild and which ones to sunset. Beyond specific tools, the committee highlighted a few additional needs:

- In EEE, instructors can assign very granular permissions to TA's and other assistants. That same level of granularity is not currently available in Canvas.
- To the extent possible, the flexibility that EEE provides in managing course sections should be carried over to rebuilt EEE tools.
- Non-course and non-instructional use cases should be considered when making decisions about EEE sunseting.

Communication, Training, and Support (Recommendations #2-4)

Regarding the possible adoption of Canvas, communication, training, and support emerged as the most critical components of the transition. When discussing the shift from an opt-in pilot to a more involuntary change, the committee came to consensus on several points:

- The message that the status quo was never an option does not seem to be coming across. Initial communication regarding the adoption of Canvas should stress this point and it should be reinforced whenever possible. For faculty, it may be helpful if this message comes from other colleagues.
- Faculty will need a clear timeline, preferably with rough dates for the various transition points (i.e. when certain portions of EEE will be sunset), so that they can plan accordingly.
- Prototype courses and templates would be very helpful. Faculty should be able to see examples, find one that works for them, and have it applied to their course. This can lower the adoption barrier by narrowing the scope of work involved, much like EEE course websites. Templates can also be very instructive in terms of modelling best practices.
- A transition to Canvas would require significant support resources. Faculty on the committee have already experienced delayed response times as a result of the pilot and caution that full adoption would cause a further strain. The committee agreed that until sufficient support is in place, there should not be a big push for moving courses to Canvas. Fall would be a good target, with some faculty-facing events in late summer.

- There was further consensus there would need to be enough support capacity to make one-on-one consultations available to faculty due to issues regarding workload. Unlike workshops, this format would enable faculty to receive personalized recommendations for setting up their courses in Canvas. There are many decisions that need to be made in moving a course to Canvas and faculty do not have time to learn all of the nuanced options available to them. The one-on-one consultations would help faculty identify the most effective ways to use Canvas for their particular needs.
- School and Department IT staff may be able to help in some academic units, but they need to be trained and there needs to be a clear charge.

Campus Cloud Strategy and Canvas Integrations (Recommendation #5)

There is strong interest in integrating other cloud-based educational technologies with Canvas; however, this process is not as straight-forward as vendors frequently suggest to our faculty. The committee discussed several challenges, including: informing faculty about privacy and security issues; prioritizing requests; securing contracts; funding licenses; configuring and troubleshooting integrations; and supporting users.

Future Capacity for Innovation (Recommendation #6)

In addition to redeveloping existing EEE tools, the committee also raised the larger question of OIT's future capacity for developing new tools and customizations for the campus. They highlighted the need to consider the kinds of educational technology services our campus needs and how innovative we want to be. Historically, our campus has been very innovative in this space—more so than most of our peers. This is a level of service that our faculty expect and they would not be satisfied with pure vendor products.