

Learning Management System (LMS) Evaluation Summary

Baylor's current contract with Blackboard, Inc., expires in July 2015. In the fall of 2012, as a regular procedure of Baylor's contract review processes, the Electronic Library under the supervision of Tim Logan, Associate Vice President for the Electronic Library, and Dr. Sandy Bennett, Assistant Director of Online Teaching and Learning Services, initiated a process to review our current LMS and consider other competitive options.

Research

The Electronic Library has examined and explored many options over the last two years through the process of bringing in vendors, listening to our internal and external networks and talking with experts in the area. Key research efforts included:

- Online Teaching and Learning Services (OTLS) conducted phone conferences and a campus visit with University of Texas at Austin. A Blackboard LMS campus for many years, they recently completed an extensive LMS evaluation RFP process and are currently transitioning their LMS.
- ITS & Library leaders met with a Gartner, Inc. research analyst regarding the LMS market and the LMS transition process. Gartner, the leading information technology research and advisory company, gave us a better understanding of market share, overall business health, growth potential, and cost for the various LMS products.
- Individual OTLS members have attended multiple conference sessions regarding LMS transitions from EDUCAUSE'S main conference, the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative, and Sloan-C conferences.
- The Electronic Library staff, in collaboration with the Teaching, Learning, and Technology Committee (TLTC) Tools and Pilots Subcommittees, examined LMS platforms including Blackboard, Canvas, Desire to Learn, Pearson's Open Class and eCollege, Sakai and Moodle.
- The *Engaging the Future of Higher Education* report recommended initiating a pilot program using the Canvas LMS by Instructure in order to "explore Instructure's approach to offering flipped classroom and technology-enhanced learning as part of a residentially-based education." Several classes in fall 2013 and spring 2014 piloted Canvas. The Hankamer Online MBA pilot launching in summer 2014 and Louise Herrington School of Nursing (LHSON) Online MSN pilots launching in fall 2014 will use the Canvas LMS.

Fall 2013 Canvas Pilot

- The fall 2013 pilot concluded with 9 active courses, 7 faculty members, and roughly 180 undergraduate students. The disciplines represented included ENG (6 courses), FCS (1 course), MIS (1 course), and ELC (1 course).
- In order to collect feedback, OTLS staff conducted two luncheons for faculty during the pilot—one in the beginning of the semester and one at the end—and administered both a mid-term and final assessment of Canvas via Qualtrics for faculty and a final assessment for students via paper-based surveys. Overall opinion of the product was positive.

Spring 2014 Canvas Pilot

- The pilot of the Canvas LMS continued into this spring 2014 semester with a much broader range of disciplines with 12 faculty members, 318 students (undergraduate and graduate) in 18 active courses, representing ENG (8 courses), CLA (1 course), FCS (1 course), FDM (1 course), SWO (3 courses), TED (2 courses), and THEO (2 courses).
- Similar feedback mechanisms were used for this pilot.
- Four faculty members who participated in the fall or spring Canvas pilots presented their experiences at the Transformational Teaching Showcase on April 2 in Jones Library 200.

Constituent Engagement

As a part of the LMS evaluation OTLS met with several constituent groups on campus. The groups included:

- Teaching, Learning, and Technology Committee
- ITS/Library advisory board
- Library/IT student advisory board
- Staff Council
- Executive Committee of Faculty Senate
- Academic Technology Directors

Dean Pattie Orr also discussed the plans for evaluating Blackboard/Canvas with the Council of Deans in January 2014 and April 2014. Deans were asked to encourage faculty participation in the demos and roadshows. Dean Orr also contacted Dr. Jim Patton and asked for an opportunity to review the plans with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and presented to this group on April 1, 2014.

All faculty, staff and students received an email about the evaluation from Dean Orr on February 18, 2014. Additionally, large print ads were placed in the Lariat on February 21 and February 28. A digital Lariat ad was placed to run throughout the entire road show period. Posters were placed in the Student Union Building and Central Libraries. Ads were featured on digital signs throughout the libraries. A full social media campaign was conducted.

OTLS created a taskforce with a representative from each of the academic units and from the graduate and undergraduate student population to help gather information and to process the data and conclusions from the submitted LMS evaluations. After narrowing the selection of LMS options, OTLS sought additional data from the Baylor community by conducting a series of LMS demonstrations and roadshows.

LMS Demonstrations & Roadshows

- Both LMS vendors, Canvas and Blackboard, made trips to campus to demonstrate their platforms to faculty, staff and students in daylong workshops consisting of four demo sessions for Canvas on Feb. 24 and three demo sessions for Blackboard on March 25.
- OTLS staff held 16 (eight for Canvas, eight for Blackboard) half-day “roadshows” to allow faculty, staff, and students in eight different locations throughout campus to evaluate both Canvas and Blackboard. These locations included BSB, HSB, SOE, SWO, ECS, Moody Library, Draper, and the SUB. Traffic to the tables was very light, but Electronic Library representatives were available at each of the sixteen roadshows.
- At both the demonstrations and roadshows, faculty members were given the opportunity to sign up for a demo course in Canvas. Approximately 45 demo courses were created for faculty.
- At the demonstrations and roadshows, all attendees were given the opportunity to take a survey regarding their opinions about whichever platform they evaluated. Completion of the surveys included 54 Canvas evaluations and 23 Blackboard evaluations.
- The 54 Canvas roadshow/demo respondents included 63 percent faculty, 26 percent staff, 7 percent graduate students, and 9 percent undergraduates. 88 percent of these respondents answered “Yes” to the question, “Based on your experience today, would you support the university changing its learning management system?”
- The 23 Blackboard roadshow/demo respondents included 15 faculty, 5 staff, and 3 undergraduates. Of the 23 respondents, 18 answered the question “...would you support the university changing its learning management system?” Although a smaller percentage, 55% were in favor of supporting the university’s changing its LMS.
- Separate demonstrations/roadshows for the LHSON were conducted on March 26 (Blackboard) and April 16 (Canvas). During the March 26 Blackboard demos, a total of 15 faculty and 3 staff members attended. During the April 16 Canvas demos, a total of 17 faculty and 5 staff members attended. The results to the question “...would you support the university changing its learning management system?” from the LHSON was 86% in favor of moving to Canvas.

Final Steps

- OTLS consulted with the LMS taskforce to process the data and draw conclusions from the evaluations and then provide a recommendation to Dean Orr before the end of April 2014. After informally polling the taskforce faculty members regarding moving to Canvas, the taskforce responded with over 80% in favor of moving to Canvas.
- VP/Dean Orr met with each vendor to negotiate a contract in order to compare costs. After consultation with the Provost, she will make a decision, notify the Baylor community by email, and finalize the contract.

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