

Information Technology Committee (ITC) Proposed Resolution on Canvas/LMS

April 14, 2016

I. ITC holds that any and all decisions regarding the adoption, integration, support and governance of learning management systems at the UW-Madison should be driven by a clear campus commitment to excellence in teaching and learning and by an inclusive decision-making process. Any transition to a new learning management system (LMS) or away from existing LMS's should enhance excellence in teaching and learning; minimize disruptions to student learning and to the teaching efforts of faculty and staff; support continued innovation in teaching and learning; and be informed by data on LMS digital tool use on campus. The transition should provide for an adequate representation of the needs of colleges, schools, and departments across the UW-Madison.

II. ITC supports and encourages the transition to a single, fully integrated and centrally supported learning management system. Student input and survey data indicate widespread frustration with the use of multiple LMS's on campus and a clear preference for a single LMS. In addition, moving to a single LMS will provide certainty and clarity for faculty and staff engaged in instructional design and redesign; reduce the cost of maintaining multiple LMS's; and take advantage of efficiencies in support and integration.

III. ITC supports the adoption of Canvas as the only fully integrated and centrally supported learning management system at UW-Madison.

A. UW-Madison has engaged in several pilot studies of Canvas. In those pilots faculty, staff and students used Canvas in a variety of courses and provided feedback. The results indicate that the core functionality of Canvas accommodates the teaching and learning needs of the majority of courses offered at the UW-Madison. Canvas has clear advantages in key areas. It has a clean and intuitive layout and format, is easy to use, provides for better interaction with instructors and other students, and for better engagement with course material. Its ability to integrate components strongly supports the requirements of distance learning and blended learning environments. It is an upcoming next generation LMS.

B. Canvas holds particular promise for learning analytics and for the sharing, discovery, and integration of digital content from disparate systems. These possibilities are in turn enhanced by UW-Madison's membership in the Unizin consortium, many other members of which have already adopted Canvas. The Unizin consortium also ensures that UW-Madison will have meaningful

opportunities to provide input to Instructure, the Canvas vendor, to mitigate functional gaps and other shortcomings in Canvas.

- C. ITC supports the adoption of Canvas as a single, fully integrated and centrally supported LMS at the UW-Madison. This means that once transition is completed, UW-Madison will not provide central support for non-Canvas learning management systems.

IV. The transition process

- A. ITC supports a reasonable transition period that takes into account financial constraints. At the end of this period the digital components of all or nearly all courses on campus that elect to adopt Canvas will be using it. While we recognize the importance of setting a target transition date, we also emphasize that no course that elects to adopt Canvas will face mandatory transition until it can be ensured that Canvas functionality will meet most of the pedagogical needs of the course and until support for performing such transition is provided to the supervising faculty.
- B. UW-Madison will not cease to support Moodle and Desire2Learn until adequate functionality in Canvas is provided.

V. ITC calls for a well-managed transition process that meets the pedagogical needs of colleges, schools, and departments

- A. ITC emphasizes the need to provide full support for the transition to the new LMS in a way that ensures the continued quality of all courses. Support will be provided centrally -- by DoIT -- and locally, by colleges, schools, and departments.
- B. As the transition proceeds, faculty and staff should receive clear, consistent and frequent communication about Canvas, its features, and when its various functionalities will become available. These communications should include information on best practices for faculty and staff currently creating new courses--especially new online courses--using Desire2Learn and Moodle.
- C. Courses that make extensive use of Desire2Learn or Moodle should receive particular consideration when providing support.

VI. Gaps, deficiencies, and functionality enhancements

- A. ITC recognizes the existence of gaps and other deficiencies in the current functionality of Canvas. Examples include support for math-based courses and

quizzing, features currently supported in Moodle. Other gaps and deficiencies are likely to be discovered in the future as the transition proceeds.

- B. ITC believes that dedication to resolving functionality gaps and deficiencies will encourage faculty and staff to make more extensive use of advanced LMS features, and reduce resistance to change.
- C. Existing and future gaps, deficiencies, and functionality enhancement needs should be addressed effectively and in a timely manner before, during and after the implementation.

VII. Governance structure: Principles

- A. ITC believes that it is essential to have an effective governance structure to manage the implementation, transition and operation of Canvas LMS service ensuring that the UW-Madison is provided with an effective, well-managed, and reliable service.
- B. ITC calls on the administrative sponsors to bring before ITC a clearly laid out plan for governance around Canvas. The governance structure may incorporate existing advisory and other groups involved with the deployment of Canvas. Perhaps it can be modeled after the governance structure of Moodle. We advocate the existence of a single governance structure rather than creating an additional layer of governance.
- C. ITC calls for a governance structure that supports the following principles:
 - Ensuring that the voice of various stakeholders -- faculty, students and staff -- is heard during the implementation, transition, and operational phases of Canvas.
 - Adhering to a community-based, inclusive and transparent decision-making process during those phases.
- D. ITC envisions the following responsibilities for the governance of the LMS:
 - Setting high-level priorities and strategies for the LMS service.
 - Making policy and operational decisions for the service and directing the service provider to implement them.
 - Overseeing the migration process.
 - Determining pedagogical needs that are not met in Canvas and establishing priorities for resolving gaps and deficiencies and for functionality enhancements.
 - Securing funding to support the transition process, resolve gaps and deficiencies, and enhance functionality.
 - Determining the most cost-effective methods to resolve deficiencies and develop enhancements.

IX. Role of local units in customization and functionality enhancements

- A. Local units are likely to find it necessary to customize the Canvas-based LMS and enhance its core functionality to meet their specific pedagogical needs.

- B. ITC believes that faculty and staff in local units are the right people to address these needs, because they are the most familiar with their pedagogical requirements. To this end, instructional technologists in local units should be granted the authority to customize and enhance the functionality of Canvas to meet those needs.