

DATE: 03-29-2021  
TO: All SLU students  
FROM: provost@slu.edu

Subject: Canvas Update | Broad Timeline and General Information for Students

Dear Billiken Colleagues,

I hope you are enjoying the spring weather and a successful semester. I also hope that you are taking good care of yourselves.

I write today from my new role with a brief update on the University's move to Canvas, the learning management system (LMS) that will replace Blackboard starting next fall.

At this time, there isn't much to tell that students will care about, but it seemed important to remind you that this change is happening and to provide some general information about how the project is unfolding.

Below this email, you will find information about:

- Why the University chose Canvas
- The general timeline for this project
- Blackboard access going forward
- Our approach to training/preparation for students

For most of you, your first Canvas courses at SLU are a little ways off yet, but we wanted you to know how things were going. We are excited about the things Canvas can do and think you will be, as well.

Best of luck finishing up your spring courses.

Debie

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Debra Rudder Lohe, Ph.D. (she/her)  
Special Assistant to the Provost

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## [Canvas Update | Timeline and General Information](#)

### **Why the University Chose Canvas**

The Learning Technologies Advisory Committee undertook a robust and thorough review of our LMS options several years ago. Students had a seat on that committee and were invited to participate in the process by demos from three leading vendors and providing feedback. Key factors involved Canvas's

focus on accessibility, robust student performance analytics, options to automate performance notifications to students and faculty, user-friendly interface with drag-and-drop functionality, video feedback tool, enhanced assessment features, strong mobile app, and extensive array of third-party integration options.

### **Project Timeline**

As you know, Canvas will replace Blackboard as the University's learning management system (LMS) beginning in the fall. This means, beginning in fall 2021, all courses will be created in Canvas, rather than in Blackboard. With very few exceptions, summer 2021 courses will be taught using Blackboard, and these will be the last courses taught in the Blackboard system. Here is a general timeline of the milestones ahead, in case you're interested:

- Early-to-mid-April: Finalize system set-up; conduct final testing; finalize detailed training and course migration plans
- Mid-to-late-April: Fall 2021 courses available to faculty members in Canvas
- Mid-to-late-May: Formal training sessions for faculty members begin
- Summer 2021: Faculty training continues; fall course development continues; training materials and resources available to students on demand; last courses taught in Blackboard conclude
- August: fall courses begin in Canvas; no new courses, students, or faculty members will be loaded in Blackboard

### **Blackboard Access and Availability**

You may be wondering how long you will continue to have access to your Blackboard courses. It's a very good question -- one we're working to get clarity about ourselves. When we have more detail, we will share it with you.

### **Training and Preparation for Students**

Most of you won't have access to Canvas until the fall semester begins. Even then, you'll only have access to courses your instructors have published for you to see/access. In terms of learning about the new system, different students take different approaches to learning to use a new LMS. Some of you will have used Canvas before. Many will prefer to learn by doing--logging in, looking around, and getting a feel for the tool on your own. Others will want some online resources that provide an overview of Canvas and step-by-step information about how to navigate the new system. It's important to remember that every instructor will use Canvas slightly differently, too, so some instructions likely will be course-specific and provided by your instructor, once your fall classes begin. Later this summer, you can expect to hear more about digital resources that will help you understand the new LMS and how to navigate it. We'll also provide information about how to access Canvas via their mobile app, how to change your profile to add a photo and pronouns, and more.