

Canvas Update: Broad Timeline and General Information

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Dear Colleagues,

I write today with a brief update on the University's move to Canvas. It will not provide detailed answers to most of your questions, but it will give you a general sense of the broad timeline and milestones ahead of us.

Below this email (and [attached as a PDF](#) for ease of viewing), you will find general information about:

- The timeline for this project
- Blackboard access beyond this summer
- Our approach to training and preparation for faculty/instructors
- Our approach to migrating courses from Blackboard to Canvas and things you can be doing now to prepare

We are working as quickly as possible to finalize a number of details that will allow me to provide much more detailed information in the coming weeks. You can expect more regular updates from me as we move forward.

We appreciate your patience as we work through critical details.

Debie

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Canvas Update | Timeline and General Information

Project Timeline

As you know, Canvas will replace Blackboard as the University's learning management system (LMS) beginning in the fall. That means all fall 2021 courses will be created in Canvas, and Blackboard will no longer be available for teaching purposes. Summer 2021 courses will be the last courses taught using Blackboard.

Between now and the start of the fall term, there is much work to be done, and the ITS and Reinert Center teams are working hard to ensure faculty have the support and training they need to be ready to use Canvas in the fall.

Here is a general timeline of key milestones ahead:

- 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 in Canvas; all faculty have full access to Canvas and their fall courses, as well as a personal "sandbox" course (which provides you with a space for

experimentation and trying out things as you are learning) and access to Canvas training materials

- Mid-to-late-May: Scheduled training sessions begin; supported course migration begins
- August: fall courses begin in Canvas; no new courses, students, or faculty will be loaded in Blackboard, and Blackboard may not be used for teaching purposes
- June 2022: Blackboard contract ends; Blackboard access for faculty ends; ITS maintains limited access to archived Blackboard courses.

Blackboard Access and Availability

We know you have many questions about Blackboard--how long you will continue to have access, what level of access you will have, what happens if you need access to course materials after the Blackboard contract ends, and more. Obviously, if you are teaching with Blackboard this summer, you will continue to use Blackboard as your LMS until your summer course ends. Beyond that, you can expect to have access to previous courses and materials in Blackboard through the spring of 2022. We are still working through questions about how long students will have access to previous Blackboard courses.

ITS is working to develop a plan for long-term archiving of Blackboard courses. We anticipate ITS will be able to access archived Blackboard courses in limited circumstances (such as a student grievance or a legal concern).

Training and Preparation for Faculty/Instructors

We know different faculty members will want access to different kinds of training and preparation. Some will want us to turn on Canvas, point them toward a set of resources, and stay out of their way. Others will want to attend structured, synchronous training sessions. And we expect many will want to engage in training sessions asynchronously, in self-paced ways that work for their summer schedules. Everyone will want access to knowledgeable folks when they need one-on-one assistance.

With all of this in mind, we are working to ensure there are multiple opportunities to be trained on Canvas and that those opportunities provide flexibility for faculty. We are not currently planning on any in-person training experiences. Later this spring, we will provide more details about training opportunities, including registration for virtual sessions (both synchronous and asynchronous).

Finally, we recognize that many of you already have experience teaching with Canvas and may have insights that can help us refine our training and supporting plans. Additionally, some of you also may appreciate opportunities to share your experience and knowledge with other faculty as we move forward. If you have taught using Canvas before, we encourage you to share your knowledge and insights by completing [this Google form \[LINK\]](#). *Note: You must be logged into your SLU Google Drive/MySLU in order to access this form.*

Migration of Blackboard Courses to Canvas

We know the question of if/how Blackboard courses will move to Canvas is of particular concern as we look ahead to fall. As with training, different faculty will want to do this in different ways. Some will prefer to build their fall courses in Canvas from scratch, only bringing in what they want from previous versions of the course. (And there are some good reasons to do this!) Others will want as much assistance as possible getting content from Blackboard into Canvas. Regardless of the path you end up choosing, it's important to know that Canvas and Blackboard are designed differently, and no course in Canvas will look exactly as it did in Blackboard.

At this time, we are working to fully understand different migration options and planning the support model we will have in place to assure faculty have assistance as they build their courses in Canvas. While I can't provide details yet, here are a few things to know:

- No Blackboard courses will be migrated to Canvas “automatically.” The process is not seamless, and we want to be sure every faculty member has agency over migration decisions.
- This means we will adopt an “opt in” process. We believe faculty who want help migrating Blackboard courses to Canvas will have a couple of different options for how the process works. We will have more details about these processes soon.
- The look and feel of your Canvas courses will be different from your Blackboard courses, and some Blackboard courses will translate more easily to Canvas than others.

So, is there anything you can be doing now/soon to make the course migration process smoother? Yes! In fact, when we share details about how we will approach course migration, we will provide a detailed checklist of pre-migration activities you should engage in. In the meantime, here are 3 things you can do in the short term that will make the move to Canvas smoother:

1. **Identify which of your previous Blackboard courses/sections are the ones you will carry forward into Canvas.** Don't plan to bring every version of every course you still have access to in Blackboard. Instead, think about which version you would grab and bring with you if your house were on fire. Make a list of these courses, so you know exactly which ones you'll want to move forward into Canvas when we're ready to migrate.
 2. **Make a list of any students who have outstanding incompletes in your courses.** You don't need to do anything else at this point, but knowing which courses have students with outstanding work will be helpful later on.
 3. **Remove any Blackboard-specific language in your old courses or make notes about language you'll need to change.** You will have places in your previous courses where you make reference to the LMS by name. Changing it now will help ease the way later on.
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