

Update on Canvas Implementation and Appointment of Faculty/Student-Focused Project Manager

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Dear Saint Louis University Community,

As you know, the University has been looking forward to implementing Canvas as our new Learning Management System (LMS). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to launch Canvas on our original timeline. I write today to provide a brief update on the Canvas rollout, including information about how the Provost's Office will provide leadership for this important project.

Kyle Collins (Interim VP and CIO) and I have determined that Canvas will be the LMS for all fall 2021 courses. Given everything that must happen to be ready, Canvas will not be available for summer courses except in the School for Professional Studies and the School of Medicine, where the tool is already in use.

In order to be successful, we agree that the implementation of our new LMS must be faculty- and student-centered, prioritizing academic and instructional needs above all else. Therefore, I have asked Dr. Debie Lohe (currently serving as Interim Vice President for Student Development) to provide leadership for this effort on behalf of the Provost's Office. Debie's work in the Reinert Center, her leadership of the University Learning Technologies Advisory Committee, and her long track record of consultative, collaborative, and transparent project management make her an excellent fit for this task.

To be successful, this initiative will require a significant amount of time and planning, with a clear focus on faculty preparation and support. Therefore, to ensure Debie has adequate time to devote to this effort, I have asked her to serve in a temporary, projects-focused role in the Provost's Office as she transitions out of Student Development. From February 15 - September 30, Debie will serve as Special Assistant to the Provost.

In this role, she will work closely with colleagues from Information Technology Services and the Reinert Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning, as well as faculty, staff, and students, to ensure the successful rollout of Canvas next fall. This temporary role also allows Debie to provide transition support for the new Vice President for Student Development and to continue working on key student-focused projects related to retention, mental health, and diversity, equity, and inclusion, among other things. During this period, Dr. Gina Merys has graciously agreed to extend her exceptional leadership of the Reinert Center as Acting Director.

A change in LMS is always a challenging and complex undertaking, but I believe the move to Canvas is important for our future. I know many of you are eager to make the shift, while others are anxious about such a big change. In the coming weeks and months, you'll hear more from Debie about what the rollout will look like, when training will be available, when courses will be accessible, and how the migration of existing courses from Blackboard will work. In the meantime, I appreciate your patience as Debie completes her term as Interim VP for Student Development and begins to get up to speed on the work ITS has been doing to lay a foundation for a successful LMS transition.

Sincerely,

Mike Lewis, Ph.D.
Interim Provost