

Canvas Spring 2014 Pilot Final Evaluation Report

Executive Summary: Report Summary and Highlights

Introduction

The focus of this report is on the Spring 2014 Canvas pilot, which is related to one aspect of the full TLT agenda: migrating to Canvas as a common teaching platform. Results from our data and that from other universities indicate that Canvas is a strong and flexible platform for teaching and learning. Given Canvas' general strengths, this evaluation is intended to help TLT launch and support the most stable and appreciated Canvas product possible, in support of teaching and learning.

The report at this stage has two goals: (1) Document the migration progress and results as of the Spring 2014 Pilot; (2) Provide useful guidance to staff towards making the transition to Canvas as smooth as possible, with appropriate expectations for teachers and students.

Evaluation methods included and reported on:

- (1) Collection of analytics and summary of program activities
- (2) UserVoice placed on Canvas pages
- (3) Two surveys of students, teachers and instructional support staff

Summary Conclusions

Overall, the findings suggest the following conclusions:

- With a strong pilot test, our findings are consistent with experience elsewhere, indicating that with appropriate preparation, teachers and students appreciate the platform's strengths and functionality.
- Our survey measures regarding responses to the teaching and learning experience as supported by Canvas are similarly positive.
- Given the learning curve and transition needs, issues regarding learning to use Canvas and satisfaction can be addressed with focused support, further introduction to features, and encouragement to explore Canvas' potential for transforming teaching and learning.

Action Steps/Recommendations

The following are recommended action steps for key and/or front-line support staff:

- (1) Examine the open-ended negative comments closely and as a group, to identify top priorities for additional support and develop ideas on what support tools to use to address these issues.
- (2) Draw on the Satisfaction-Importance grids to identify training and use issues for teachers and students and areas for technical improvements. The four areas noted in the report suggest:
 - a. Addressing the three "most" important functions may yield important gains for overall satisfaction: providing assignments, posting readings, managing announcements.
 - b. Additional attention to the student's online class discussion experience may be helpful.
 - c. Faculty, particularly those with smaller classes, may need support to post course readings more often, with potentially significant gains for student satisfaction.
 - d. Canvas use may reach more of its potential if the support area targets low-use functions to encourage and report on successful use, keeping in mind satisfaction results for each function.
- (3) Re-develop the iSites-Canvas comparison table, given new information on faculty transition needs.
- (4) Support and encourage course faculty in providing students with an early-term in-class demo of how Canvas will be used in the course.
- (5) In next steps for support and research, consider how Canvas can be integrated into teaching and learning in different course types and situations, as well as variation in faculty approaches and goals.

Summary of Detailed Findings

A. Pilot scope and outcomes

- (1) The pilot was a strong “test” of the system based on diverse activities.
 - a. Involved 9 of 11 schools, 47 courses, 284 teaching staff and 2,920 students
 - b. Posted 1,006 assignments, 1,273 discussion topics, 2,642 files and 165 media recordings
- (2) Support transitioned to a more stable Canvas experience over the semester.
 - a. Drop-off in help requests and UserVoice activity from mid-term to end-term, both of which did identify issues to address early in the term.
 - b. Four LTI tools were successfully built and integrated into Canvas supporting reserve reading, lecture video display, Skype group chat and student locations.

B. Canvas and the teaching and learning process

- (1) Ratings of the platform as a whole are moderately high at this stage, with the learning curve accounting for some mixed responses.
 - a. Around half or more in both groups rated “Functionality” and “Visual Look and Feel” highly.
 - b. Around 40 to 50% of students and 20 to 30% of teachers were comfortable using the platform (ratings 4-5 of site navigation, ease of use, overall experience).
- (2) An examination of satisfaction in relation to perceived importance and use of specific functions at this point can inform future support.
 - a. Most Canvas functions fall in the “high satisfaction” category for both students and teachers, with some variation between the two groups.
 - b. Teachers and students generally agree on the “high-importance” functions, with 5 of 6 being the same functions in the two analysis-grids.
 - c. The three functions considered most important, and which are also used the most, show high satisfaction ratings; they do, however, show unusually large satisfaction “gaps” due to their high value and use, which suggests they need continued attention.
 - d. Functions seen as less important are generally used less often. With some differences between the two groups, about half of these functions show less satisfaction, suggesting that some low-use functions are more successfully implemented than others.
 - e. A few other satisfaction-importance results stand out:
 - i. The **class discussion** function is high in importance to students and teachers and is widely used, but it is lower in satisfaction for students.
 - ii. While teachers cite the grading function positively in open-ended comments, they appear less satisfied with the **quiz** process, particularly given its importance.
 - iii. As noted above, satisfaction with the three functions rated as the most important appears to fall short of their importance (see satisfaction-importance gap); these include: **course assignments, course readings and announcements**.
 - iv. Providing **course readings** is often rated important, and is among the top three in importance, yet a majority of teachers were not using the function at this stage (40% non-use). (Teachers with larger classes are likely using it more, since students show only 20% non-use)

- (3) Students and faculty see value in the platform, indicated by high rates of agreement with statements about Canvas support for course logistics.
- a. A large majority of students agreed that the platform worked well in several communication areas: providing assignment grades, supporting class-wide communication, and providing feedback to students. A smaller majority gave high ratings to one-on-one communication.
 - b. Around two-thirds of the students agreed that the platform supported student engagement and enhanced opportunities for learning in general.
 - c. The results for teachers were similar, with slightly lower percentages agreeing.
 - d. A large majority of students also indicated that the platform was successfully used in their course to support participation through tools such as sending information via announcements and email, providing course readings, creating interactivity, using the course calendar with materials, and including live links and lecture videos.

C. Platform experience and interest/need for support:

- (1) A majority of both groups agreed that with an introduction the platform works well for students.
- (2) About half of the students and about three-fourths of the faculty found the interface confusing at first, with different needs for support. In both groups, smaller proportions found it remained confusing.
- a. Overall, teachers feel they have support and technical resources to draw on more often than students; at the same time, other responses suggest they do not find that these resources have been sufficient to prepare them to date or are unsure about whether they need more support.
 - b. Students feel more confident in using the platform and fewer feel the need for more support; however results indicate students have a specific need for in-class demonstrations to get introduced to the platform.
- (3) Teachers and students note many positive aspects to Canvas as a platform.
- General positive comments about the platform:
 - Students: clear, easy to use, integrated and organized, with a nice look and feel.
 - Faculty: integrated, attractive, feature-rich, interactive, and fast.
 - Specific features identified in positive comments:
 - Students: the grading system, document access and organization, discussion and/or chat, videos and slides, and calendars/reminders.
 - Faculty: grading tool, communication tools such as discussion and announcements; also conferencing, modules, quizzes, and the calendar.
- (4) In response to a separate question, respondents cited negative experiences. Many of these can be viewed as transitional and “incidental” at this stage, while also identifying some platform functions used. They will be examined more closely for improving support and setting expectations.