

To: VPISD Keith Snow-Flamer; Academic Senate leadership; DE Planning Committee
From: Canvas Advisory Group (CAG)
Date: Thursday, Oct. 9, 2014
RE: Recommendation to adopt the Canvas™ LMS as a successor to MyCR/Sakai

Executive Summary

After careful consideration, research and discussion, the Canvas Advisory Group (CAG) has voted to recommend the permanent adoption of the Canvas™ Learning Management System (LMS) for College of the Redwoods.

The CAG formally recommends that district-wide adoption of Canvas should begin in Spring 2015, with these conditions:

- a) The full deployment of Canvas shall commence Spring 2015, available to all class sections;
- b) All faculty shall be encouraged to adopt Canvas for Spring 2015;
- c) Adoption shall be voluntary – not mandatory – during Spring 2015 and Summer 2015; *
- d) Adoption shall be mandatory commencing Fall 2015. *

* This modifies the Spring 2014 LMS Task Force recommendation (which had been for uniform Spring 2015 adoption), based on consultations with constituent groups such as the Academic Senate and CRFO.

In order to effect this change, the CAG further recommends that:

- a) MyCR/Sakai shall remain available until the beginning of the Fall 2015 semester to allow for an orderly migration pathway to Canvas; and
- b) MyCR/Sakai shall no longer be available for new class sections as of the beginning of the Fall 2015 semester.
- c) Training efforts shall be informed by evidence/data obtained from faculty, student, and tech support feedback (e.g. surveys, interviews, etc.) so as to give faculty the necessary resources, support and information for an orderly adoption.

Introduction

The CAG is a short-term task force that was created Fall 2014 in order to accomplish specific tasks in a timely fashion:

- To ensure that the Canvas pilot faculty receive support and training opportunities;
- To generate feedback to inform training and support for District-wide Canvas adoption;
- To track the progress and outcome of the Canvas pilot;
- To evaluate the results of the Canvas pilot and specifically to decide if Canvas is a satisfactory choice as successor to MyCR/Sakai LMS; and
- To formally issue a recommendation regarding whether or not to adopt Canvas.

Previous LMS Task Force: Spring 2014

During Spring 2014 a predecessor work group, the “LMS Task Force,” was convened to identify a successor LMS to replace the MyCR/Sakai LMS. After several months of careful research and active solicitation of many competing vendors and scrutiny of the vendors’ products in open, public forums, the LMS Task Force identified Instructure’s “Canvas™” LMS as the best candidate to replace MyCR/Sakai. Furthermore, that task force recommended that Canvas be rolled out to the District in two distinct stages:

1. An initial Fall 2014 rollout to volunteer faculty, during which time the LMS would be scrutinized to determine if there were any serious and credible reasons to rescind the recommendation to adopt Canvas as a successor LMS;
2. A full-district rollout available to all sections beginning Spring 2015.

Given that that task force separately made these recommendations to relevant stakeholders last spring, the details of its recommendation are not further repeated here, for the sake of brevity.

Current “Canvas Advisory Group” Task Force Membership

To leverage the knowledge base accumulated by members of last spring’s LMS Task Force, the current Canvas Advisory Group (CAG) has retained many members who were on the preceding LMS Task Force:

- Mark Winter (tri-chair)
- Mark Renner (tri-chair)
- Lisa Sayles (tri-chair, and co-chair of last spring’s LMS Task Force)
- Angelina Hill (co-chair of last spring’s LMS Task Force)
- Reno Giovannetti (instructional support)
- James Hays (IT support)
- Wendy Riggs (faculty)
- Gary Sokolow (faculty)
- Thomas Zagoria (student)

This fall’s CAG task force has added one new member:

- Alison Stull (Director, Health Occupations)

Evidence supporting recommendation to adopt Canvas as the LMS to replace MyCR/Sakai

Last spring the LMS Task Force identified a preferred LMS successor – Canvas – and recommended a potential rollout strategy beginning with a limited “pilot” period in Fall 2014. The CAG has continued and extended that work by seeking any valid reasons why the recommendation to adopt Canvas should be rescinded. Examples of reasons to rescind the recommendation: If Canvas had serious flaws, errors or omissions; if faculty and students found it unsuitable or unsatisfactory; or other evidence suggesting Canvas was a poor choice for CR.

There are several primary lines of evidence which the CAG has studied to determine viability of Canvas as a successor LMS:

- a) First-hand support experience by CR technical support staff (principally James Hays and Reno Giovannetti);
- b) Evidence gathered from users (both faculty and student) by Hays/Giovannetti;
- c) Evidence/data gathered in two surveys (one of faculty adopters, and the other of their students).

Results: The CAG discussed many specific events, issues and problems. The group found that no event, issue or problem rose to a level that would disqualify Canvas as a viable replacement for MyCR/Sakai. In addition, the surveys provided evidence of broad-based acceptance of (and even accolades for) the new LMS.

Conclusion: The CAG voted, on September 30 and again on October 7, 2014, to recommend the adoption of Canvas as a successor LMS for College of the Redwoods. The CAG believes that CR will be well-served by adoption of this LMS, joining a rapidly-growing list of other institutions/entities which have adopted Canvas, such as:

- In California:
 - Pasadena City College
 - Sierra College
 - Solano College
 - Yuba College
 - Potentially Humboldt State University (which is currently piloting Canvas)
 - Biola University
 - Claremont Graduate University
 - Pacific Union College
 - San Jose State Univ.
 - Santa Clara University
 - Stanford Graduate School
 - UC-Berkeley
 - UCLA Extension
 - Univ. of San Francisco
 - Others...
- State of UT system of higher education (e.g. Univ. of UT, UT State Univ., Weber State, Southern UT, Salt Lake Community College, ...)
- State of WA system of higher education (e.g. Univ. of WA, E. WA Univ., W. WA Univ., C. WA Univ., Lower Columbia College, Evergreen State College, ...)
- Many others (see, e.g. <http://mfeldstein.com/new-lms-market-data-edutechnica-one-year-update/>)

Appendices

Appendix A – Canvas survey summary - faculty in pilot (Sep.23-Oct. 2, 2014)

Appendix B – Canvas survey summary - students in pilot (Sep.23-Oct. 2, 2014)