

CSUCI LMS Canvas Evaluation Report

March 20, 2017

Background

CSU Channel Islands(CI) adopted Blackboard Learn as the first Learning Management System (LMS) in 2002. In the spring of 2011 a [pilot of Blackboard and Moodle](#) was conducted. Based on this pilot CI decided to stay with Blackboard Learn. The LMS ecosystems have changed dramatically since 2011 ([Educause, 2014](#)). The market has grown with new, more robust LMS products gaining momentum. Despite much change in the quality and functionality of these newer products, the LMS at CI has remained relatively unchanged since 2002. In 2015, the CSU Chancellor's Office convened a "CSU Planning and Evaluation Taskforce for Learning Platforms and Services (CSULPS) to engage provosts, faculty, students, CIOs, Directors of Academic Technology, faculty development directors, academic technology support staff and others across the 23 campuses in order to facilitate a strategic review of LMS needs across the entire CSU system" ([LPS Taskforce Website, 2016](#)). Michael Berman, VP of Technology & Innovation at CI, co-chaired this committee. Michael McGarry, LMS Administrator for CI, was part of the evaluation team, and Jill Leafstedt, Executive Director of Teaching & Learning Innovations, was our campus coordinator. This system-wide review resulted in the thorough evaluation of 3 LMS platforms: Canvas, Brightspace and Blackboard Ultra. The CSU developed Master Enabling Agreements (MEAs) for each of these products. The only new product to be adopted by any CSU to date is Canvas. San Jose State, CSUN, and CSU Humboldt have all moved to Canvas. The other campuses are evaluating the options or choosing to not make an immediate change.

Process

Our current Blackboard Learn license has expired. Given this information, the Teaching & Learning Innovations team at CI engaged deeply in the system-wide evaluation process. We participated in interviews with all three LMS companies, attended webinar demos and examined sandbox instances to examine functionality for each of the three products. Michelle Pacansky-Brock also hosted a [faculty panel](#) to discuss what is needed in an LMS as part of the CSU evaluation process. This panel included a CI faculty member. Our first step was to examine the new Blackboard Ultra system. We learned that this system is significantly different than our current platform. If adopted it would be a major change similar to adopting a brand new system. Knowing that change was ahead, we dedicated significant energy to evaluating the three options with the goal of choosing the best product for CI. As a result of the system-wide process, CI decided to conduct a [pilot with the intent to adopt Canvas](#). This decision was made for the following reasons:

- The system-wide evaluation of Canvas resulted in high marks for usability from both students and faculty.
- Canvas is being used almost system-wide by the California Community Colleges and is being adopted by our local partner institutions (SBCC, Ventura College, Moorpark CC and Oxnard College). This will ease the transition for transfer students, and for faculty that teach across institutions.
- Canvas gives faculty the option to share courses publicly while still maintaining privacy of student data.
- Canvas is mobile-friendly.
- Canvas integrates easily with the external tools we have currently adopted (Zoom, VoiceThread, TurnItIn, etc.).

The pilot began in January 2017 with 10 faculty and approximately 250-300 students. A call was sent out for faculty volunteers. We had 25 faculty interested in participating. From this group, we selected faculty that represented a broad range of programs and schools. We also assured that the faculty represented a broad spectrum of current technology use. We had one large course, two online courses, two blended courses, one STEM, and four traditional courses.

Faculty were invited to participate in an initial 2-hour 'Getting Started with Canvas' workshop, and a 'Beautifying your Course in Canvas' workshop. Michael McGarry, LMS Administrator, was available for one-on-one consultations for the faculty that could not attend the workshops. Faculty were also invited to drop-in support sessions every other Monday. All but two faculty attended the initial workshop. The drop-in sessions were not well attended and once classes started faculty reported not needing a great deal of help with Canvas.

Throughout the pilot, we have been working with IT to assure the backend of the system can be integrated easily with our current systems. We have confirmed that we can use our current external tools (Zoom, VoiceThread, TurnItIn, etc.), and set up e-Reserves and streaming video in conjunction with the Broome Library.

Evaluation

Faculty Feedback

During Week 7 of the semester, we surveyed the faculty and students in the pilot courses to learn about their experience with Canvas. The responses from faculty were overwhelmingly positive. Ninety percent of the faculty reported being extremely satisfied or satisfied with Canvas. When asked about satisfaction with Blackboard, 60% of faculty reported being extremely satisfied or satisfied and 40% dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied (Figure 1).

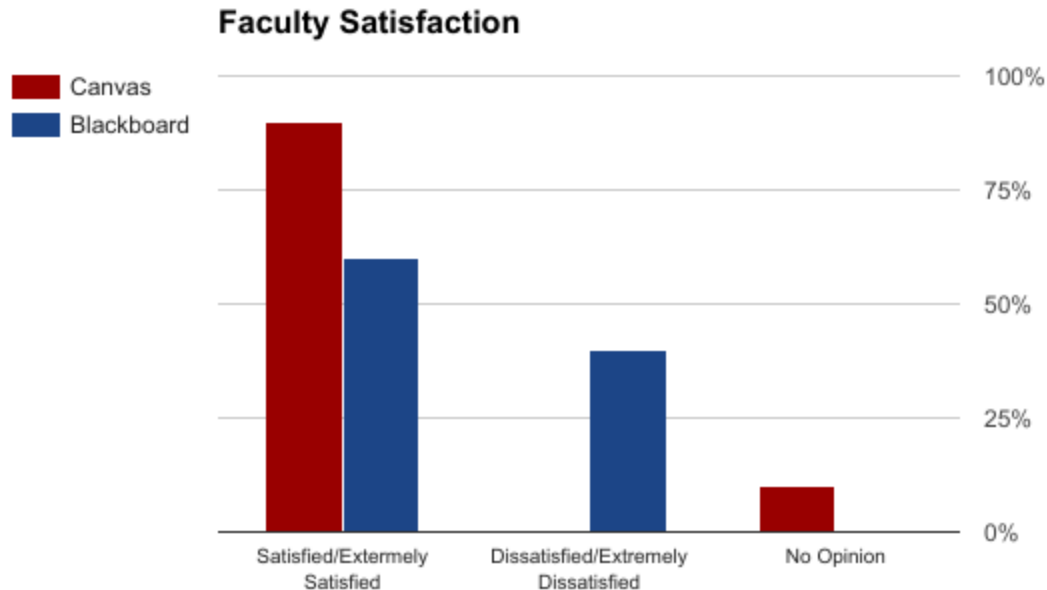


Figure 1. Faculty Satisfaction (n=10)

In addition to satisfaction, we asked faculty about the details of using Canvas. All of the pilot faculty stated that Canvas was easy to learn and 90% reported that Canvas allows them to easily deliver course material and use the LMS to enhance their teaching experience. The pilot faculty were also asked about moving existing content from Blackboard to Canvas. Half (50%) said they were extremely satisfied or satisfied with the process, while 40% had not tried this and one person (10%) was not satisfied with the process.

We also asked faculty to report on the ease of use for specific features of Canvas. Many of the pilot faculty did not use all of the features available. The features below were used by at least 3 of the pilot faculty. In each instance the faculty reported the features were easy to use. Follow this [link](#) to learn more about features available in Canvas.

Canvas Features that Faculty Find Easy-to-Use	
- Using the mobile app * - Using Student View - Integrating an external learning tool - Importing or exporting course content - Conducting live chats with students - sending/receiving notifications	- Annotating assignments - Giving formative feedback on drafts - Publishing course learning outcomes - Posting assignments * - Organizing course content and activities *

• Monitoring student activity • Managing the gradebook • Creating and using rubrics • Graded discussions • Giving video feedback	• Creating content pages • Embedding videos • Uploading course documents • Adding due dates to assignments • Using the syllabus page
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• Items with * had one faculty member that used this feature and thought it was difficult to use. All other features were all reported to be easy to use.

We asked the pilot faculty if they would recommend CI adopt Canvas. Eight faculty (80%) responded ‘yes’, with one faculty stating, *“I am not using Canvas in an advanced manner (or at least I am not using it in any more advanced manner than I use Blackboard), but I find it to be a superior LMS. The Wordpress-like configuration makes it very easy to use, I love the attendance feature, the menu at right makes adding items into pages a snap, and in general I find it to be a much more responsive system. The look is much cleaner, too, than Blackboard. I recommend that we adopt it.”*. Zero faculty responded ‘no’ and two reported ‘maybe’.

Would you recommend CI adopting Canvas? (10 responses)

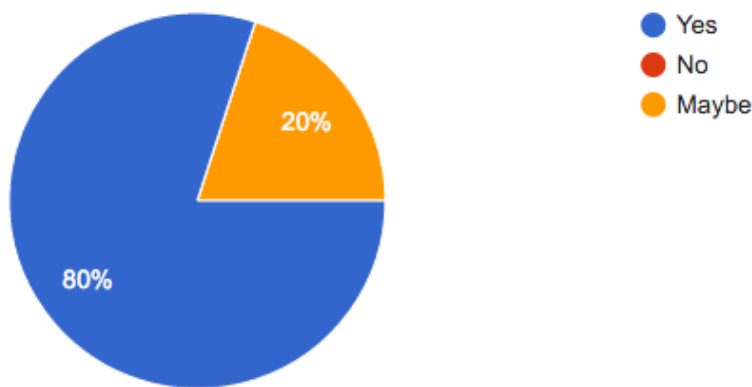


Figure 2: Faculty Recommendation for Adoption

Student Feedback

We had 89 students respond to the survey. One student was removed from the pool due to being an Open University student with no experience with Blackboard resulting in N=88. Of these students, the majority (62%) are satisfied or extremely satisfied with Canvas, and 76% reported being satisfied or extremely satisfied with our current Blackboard system. In addition to asking students about their satisfaction with the system as a whole, we asked what features were important to them and how those features worked for them in Canvas. Results of these questions can be found in Figures 4 and 5. In these figures you will see that students were

mostly satisfied with the features they used in Canvas. Accessing Canvas on a mobile device was the least important and also the feature they were least satisfied with.

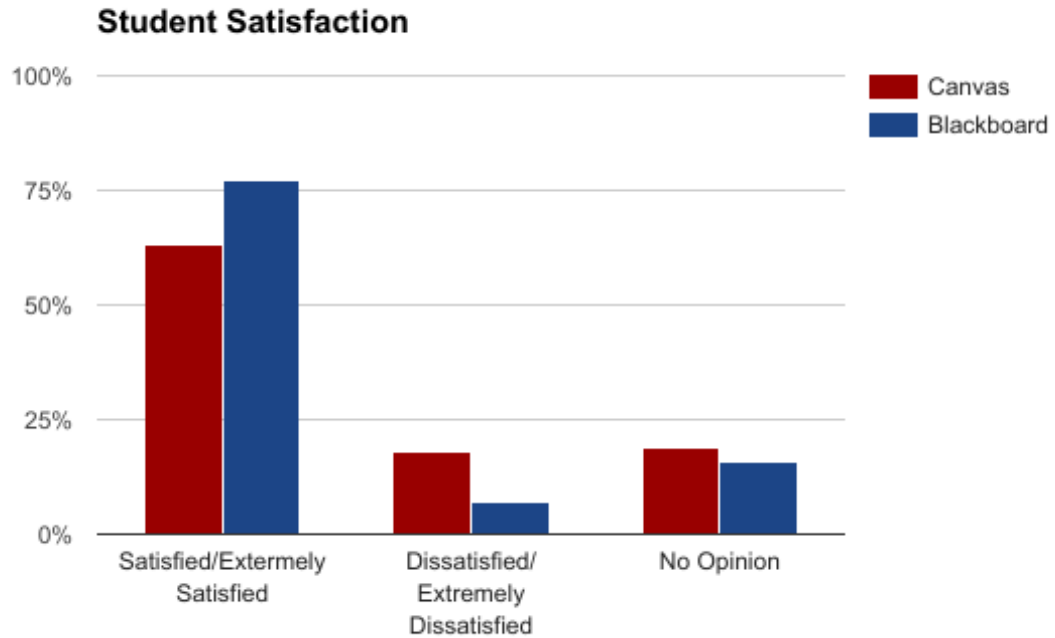


Figure 3. Student Satisfaction (n=89)

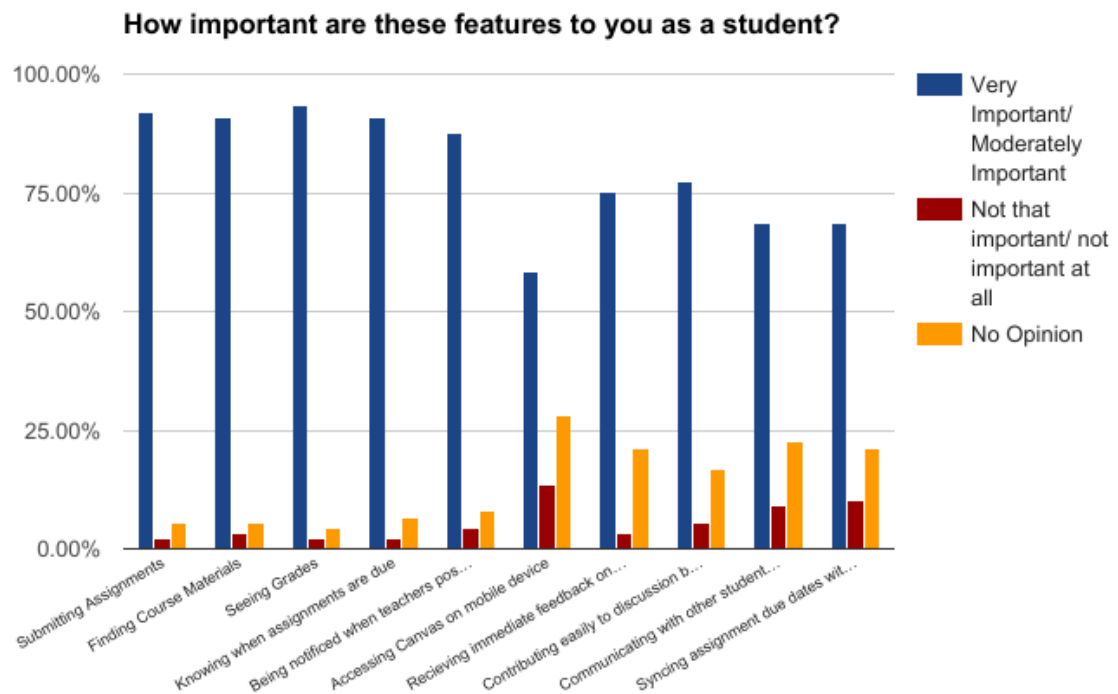


Figure 4: Importance of Features, N=88

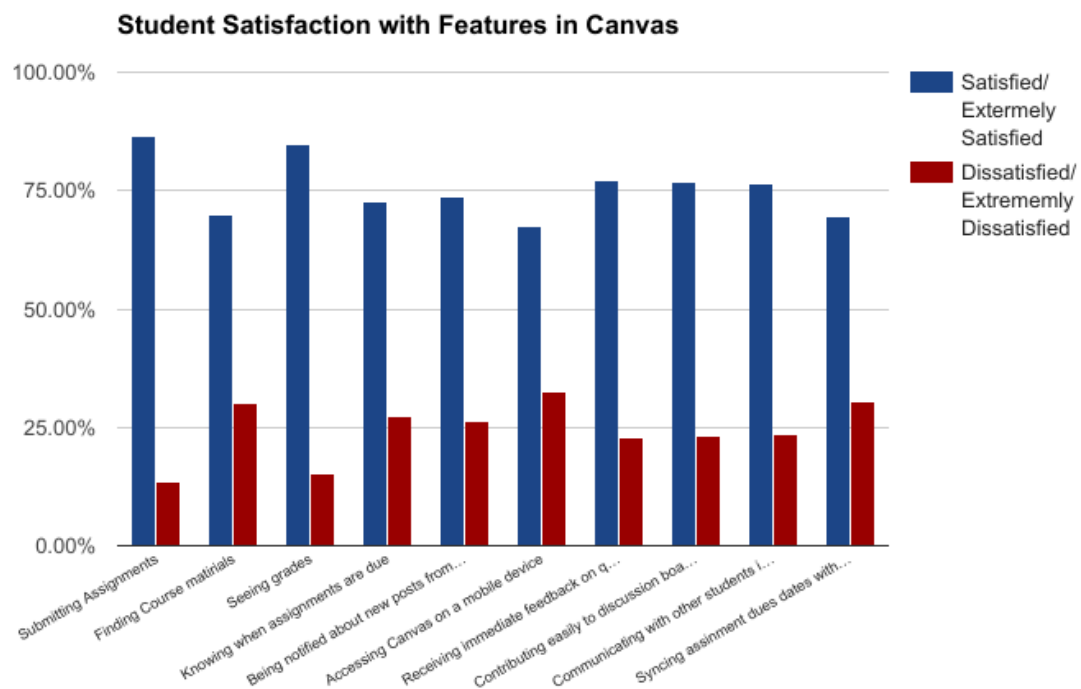


Figure 5: If used, how satisfied were you with these features? N ranges from 29-78 depending on use of feature.

Lessons Learned

In evaluating the outcomes of the pilot, Teaching & Learning Innovations examined survey data from CI students and faculty. We also evaluated our experience supporting Canvas and learned from other institutions using or adopting Canvas (CSUN, Humboldt, UW Bothell, University of Oklahoma, and Butte College). At the time of this report, the following topics fall amongst the most important of the lessons learned:

- Faculty Support is important. Faculty that participate in at least one training experience are more likely to use Canvas in a robust fashion that meets the expectations and needs of students.
- Canvas functions more like a website than Blackboard. This allows for easy hyperlinking between documents, pages, and tools.
- Copying course materials from Blackboard is more effective than copying the full course structure from Blackboard to Canvas.
- The ability to share courses publically in Canvas without sharing any student data greatly improves collaboration and alignment across course sections.
- [Canvas Commons](#) is a great tool for sharing signature assignments and full courses with other instructors.
- Canvas is fully [accessible](#) and more than met our expectations for serving students and faculty that rely on screen-readers and assistive technologies.
- Canvas support is excellent and the company is very easy to work with.

Next Steps

Based on the pilot, Teaching & Learning Innovations recommends adopting Canvas for our new campus Learning Management System for CSU Channel Islands. A brown bag session will be held to answer questions about the pilot and decision making process. There will also be the ability to ask questions through a simple online [form](#) for those that can't attend the Brown Bag session. Our proposed timeline is as follows:

- Fall 2017 - Both Canvas and Blackboard will be available. Beginning July 1, 2017 Faculty can opt-in to using Canvas. Those who choose not to opt-in may continue to use our current version of Blackboard
- Spring 2018 all courses will be taught in Canvas.

Canvas support will be available for faculty starting in July 2017. Support for faculty will include:

- 24/7 support from Canvas for faculty
- Self-paced Canvas training course
- Weekly Getting Started with Canvas Workshops
- Additional online interactive learning experiences for faculty throughout the transition.