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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 CANVAS PILOT AT BALL STATE
Historically, Ball State University has relied on a single Learning Management System (LMS) – Blackboard (Bb) to deliver online course materials. Bb has become Ball State’s essential technology to deliver digital resources and to provide interaction for all modes of online course delivery. However, over the last few years, there have been many changes to LMS technology. Modern learning management systems offer exciting features and functionalities that improve faculty and student engagement. The rapid growth of Canvas in the marketplace among our peer institutions brought it quickly to the forefront of our attention. In July of 2015, Information Technology (IT) signed a 3-year contract with Instructure’s Canvas to evaluate it as an alternative to Bb.

1.2 WHAT IS CANVAS
Canvas is a cloud-based Learning Management System (LMS), created in 2011 by Instructure, an educational technology company based in Salt Lake City, Utah. Canvas is recognized for its clean, intuitive user interface, which also features drag-and-drop functionality.

1.3 PILOT MILESTONES
7/15 IT signs 3-year contract with Canvas by Instructure.
8/15 IT and Integrated Learning Institute (iLearn) develop criteria by which to evaluate Canvas.
10/15 iLearn Instructional Designers and Technology Consultants (IDLT’s) are introduced to the Canvas LMS.
1/16 iLearn staff is given access to Ball State’s instance of Canvas (bsu.instructure.com) and begin learning and experimenting with platform.
Canvas administrator begins work with various constituencies on campus to integrate Canvas with Ball State’s student information system (SIS) and to develop support processes with IT.
iLearn develops a strategic plan for the pilot implantation.
8/16 1st Faculty pilot.
1/17 2nd Faculty pilot.
1.4 CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION
iLearn, in conjunction with IT, developed criteria by which to evaluate the Canvas LMS. Criteria includes:

- User experience (UX)
- User interface (UI)
- Integration with University SIS
- Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI) integrations
- Application Program Interface (API) availability
- Mobile support
- Web accessibility
- Stability/uninterrupted service/low downtime

1.5 TECHNICAL EVALUATION
iLearn, in conjunction with IT, performed a full technical evaluation and made the following observations about its features and performance:

- **Release schedule**: Instructure provides a new release of Canvas with interface changes every three weeks. These require no downtime. Most are small, but would still require awareness and management by iLearn and IT. The timing of when larger changes are made can be controlled by Ball State.
- **Performance**: Canvas scored well on availability and performance during the pilot period. Overall uptime exceeded 99.9%. Because Canvas leases server space from Amazon Web Services (AWS), the platform remains vulnerable to outages beyond its control. AWS incidents during the fall ’16 and spring ’17 semesters did impact the functionality of Canvas. However, Instructure’s proactive communication strategy mitigates its vulnerability.
- **Tools**: Canvas met or exceeded virtually all of the requirements for the functional areas defined by the technical team. It offers the functionality and usability that is needed and expected from a LMS.
- **Features**: The Canvas pilot project team performed an analysis of tools and features available in both Canvas and Blackboard. Generalizing, there are more customization options in Blackboard, but the tools and functions available in each are largely the same.
- **Accessibility**: To minimize problems with accessibility, Canvas was developed using modern HTML and CSS technologies. Instructure is committed to W3C’s Web Accessibility Initiative and **Section 508** guidelines.
- **Integrations**: Canvas offers the necessary technology to allow integrations to university systems, and third-party tools.
- **Course migration**: Canvas has an import feature allowing Blackboard content to import into a Canvas course; it was successfully used during the pilot. It requires instructors or course designers to reorganize the content once in Canvas.
- **Support issues**: Ball State pilot participants initiated a total of three requests for the fall ’16 pilot.
- **Analytics and reporting**: Canvas offers a variety of analytics and reporting functionality: student-facing, instructor-facing, and administrator/researcher-facing.
1.6 PREPARATION FOR FACULTY PILOT
The entire iLearn staff was introduced to Canvas in the fall of 2015 and issued Canvas access to the Ball State instance of Canvas in January 2016. Between January 2016 and July 2016 IT and iLearn developed processes to:

- Integrate the Student Information System (Banner) to preload semester courses, faculty and students.
- Create a shared knowledge base between iLearn and the IT Help Desk.
- Recruit faculty participants.
- Evaluate the faculty and student experience through initial trials.
- Integrate core Ball State instructional tools with Canvas.
- Implement processes with Ball State Registrar to replicate the ability in Bb to submit student mid-term and final grades.
- Train pilot participants to import their courses from Blackboard and convert them in Canvas.
- Train pilot participants to effectively use Canvas core functions.

1.7 FALL 2016: FIRST FACULTY PILOT
In July of 2016, iLearn recruited a small cadre of instructors to participate in the first faculty pilot. The pool included 10 faculty, representing 4 colleges, across 10 departments. There were 6 on campus courses and 4 online courses. 407 students participated in the pilot (67 online, 340 on-campus.)

1.7.1 User Assessment
Feedback on Canvas was elicited from faculty and students by survey. Below are the highlights from the fall ’16 semester pilot.

1.7.2 Faculty Survey Highlights
- 80% of faculty participated in the survey.
- 88% of the faculty respondents reported that Canvas was “Easy” or “Somewhat Easy to Use.”
- 100% “Agree[d]” or “Somewhat Agree[d]” that Canvas was easy for the students to learn.
- 100% reported that Canvas was “Useful” or “Somewhat Useful” as a teaching tool.

Faculty reported a higher overall usefulness and utility of the LMS for teaching of Canvas over Blackboard.
1.7.3 Student Survey Highlights

- **36%** of the students participated in the survey.
- **74%** of the student respondents “Agree[d]” or “Somewhat Agree[d]” that Canvas helped them learn the course materials/content.
- **76%** “Agree[d]” or “Somewhat Agree[d]” that Canvas was beneficial to their overall learning in the course.

Students reported little difference on the impact of their learning experiences of Canvas and Blackboard.

1.8 **Spring 2017: Second Faculty Pilot**

For the spring ‘17, we have 26 faculty pilot participants. 7 of the faculty participated in the fall ‘16 pilot and 19 new faculty members were recruited for the pilot. The 26 faculty members represent 6 colleges and 19 departments. The spring ‘17 pilot has 52 total courses; 45 taught on campus and 7 taught online. In this pilot, there are 1396 student participants (278 online and 1118 on campus.)

1.8.1 Additional Communication Efforts

In an effort to involve as many faculty as possible in the important decision regarding whether to change the LMS, we would like to launch a communications campaign and web page to educate the community about the pilot and invite all faculty to participate in the fall ‘17 pilot.
1.9 **MOVING FORWARD**

1.9.1 **Summer 2017**
- iLearn will recruit faculty for a summer ‘17 pilot. We anticipate participation will be less than the spring ‘17 pilot because there is a smaller faculty pool teaching summer courses.
- We will continue to investigate LTI integrations, particularly a plagiarism tool comparable to Blackboard’s Safe Assign integrated into their assignment tool.
- We will investigate Template/Standardization tools that can enhance the Canvas user interface and can further improve Web accessibility.
- Continue integration with Banner.

1.9.2 **Fall 2017**
- Beginning fall ‘17, because all faculty were invited to the pilot, we anticipate approximately 50 to 75 faculty, 100-150 courses and 2,600-4,900 students participating.
- The iLearn team plans to create a more focused assessment, asking both faculty and students to compare functions and experiences in Blackboard and Canvas, to create a side-by-side analysis of the perceived functionality and usability of the competing technical systems. Focus groups might be conducted with instructors and students to obtain anecdotal information about their experience in the Canvas LMS.
- iLearn will continue offering workshops for faculty development and training.
- We further recommend that iLearn and IT begin a second phase of collaboration to include:
  - Closer partnership with iLearn and IT to begin planning if moving forward with Canvas.
  - Analyzing additional resources needed for long-term support for faculty and students from both iLearn (instructional design, technology training, course migration, etc.) and IT (Tier 1 HelpDesk Support (ServiceNow), back-end integration, security, etc.).