

Pausing Our Transition from Blackboard to Canvas

provost@slu.edu

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Dear Faculty and Staff,

Thank you all for your continued efforts as we navigate this unprecedented time. The ways in which you have risen to the occasion to serve our students in this virtual environment are truly remarkable, and I want you to know that I notice and appreciate your work.

Today, I want to update you on the decision to postpone the transition of the University's learning management system (LMS) from Blackboard to Canvas. I have heard from many of you who have expressed concerns about a change of this magnitude during a time of crisis.

This difficult decision came after much consultation with our key stakeholders, and I want to reiterate my gratitude to those who have helped us. Our plan to pause this transition to Canvas means we will return to the originally-approved timeline once things have stabilized. *(Please note this does not impact the School for Professional Studies and the School of Medicine, who are currently piloting Canvas and will share their learnings prior to the campus-wide rollout.)*

This means the soonest we might roll out Canvas campus-wide will be Summer 2021 – and that will depend on things stabilizing with regard to COVID-19 so that appropriate work can be completed in Spring 2021 to prepare for this change. Given all we know today, the more realistic launch date for all courses to be offered in Canvas is likely Fall 2021.

I know some of you will be disappointed by this news, and I hope you know this was not an easy decision. As tempting as it might be for some to change systems at this time, I feel strongly that we must maintain stability during this time of crisis. Additionally, given the financial challenges that accompany the COVID-19 disruption, it simply isn't financially responsible to invest in this transition at this time.

Our students deserve fewer changes during this period, not more. Our faculty, too, deserve an opportunity to build on what they have learned this spring to enhance their remote teaching skills in the event that this pandemic affects our fall term. *(Note: Please be aware that we have a group of students, faculty and staff working on recommendations and plans for the Fall 2020 semester, and we will be communicating those soon.)*

When we can effectively turn our attention to the transition to Canvas, I assure you we will devote the necessary resources to support, training, and course migration to make the shift as easy for you as possible. This includes making sure resources are available to assist with the migration of courses you are building in Blackboard now, so that the burden of re-building those courses in Canvas does not fall on your shoulders.

Thank you for your patience as we weighed this important decision, and for your understanding of the decision itself.

Thank you, and God bless.

Chester Gillis, Ph.D.
Interim Provost