Information Technology Committee (ITC) Resolution on Canvas LMS
Adopted on April 15, 2016

I. ITC holds that any and all decisions regarding the adoption, integration, support and governance of learning management systems at the UW-Madison should be driven by a clear campus commitment to excellence in teaching and learning and by an inclusive decision-making process. Any transition to a new learning management system (LMS) or away from existing LMSs should enhance excellence in teaching and learning; minimize disruptions to student learning and to the teaching efforts of faculty and staff; support continued innovation in teaching and learning; and be informed by data on LMS digital tool use on campus. The transition should provide for an adequate representation of the needs of colleges, schools, and departments across the UW-Madison.

II. ITC supports and encourages the transition to a single, fully integrated and centrally supported learning management system. Student input and survey data indicate widespread frustration with the use of multiple LMSs on campus and a clear preference for a single LMS. In addition, moving to a single LMS will provide certainty and clarity for faculty and staff engaged in instructional design and redesign; reduce the cost of maintaining multiple LMSs; and take advantage of efficiencies in support and integration.

III. ITC supports the adoption of Canvas as the only fully integrated and centrally supported learning management system at UW-Madison.

A. UW-Madison has engaged in several pilot studies of Canvas. In those pilots faculty, staff and students used Canvas in a variety of courses and provided feedback. The results indicate that the core functionality of Canvas accommodates the teaching and learning needs of the majority of courses offered at the UW-Madison. Canvas has clear advantages in key areas. It has a clean and intuitive layout and format, is easy to use, provides for better interaction with instructors and other students, and for better engagement with course material. Its ability to integrate components strongly supports the requirements of distance learning and blended learning environments. It is an upcoming next generation LMS.

B. Canvas holds particular promise for learning analytics and for the sharing, discovery, and integration of digital content from disparate systems. These possibilities are in turn enhanced by UW-Madison’s membership in the Unizin consortium, many other members of which have already adopted Canvas. The Unizin consortium also ensures that UW-Madison will have meaningful opportunities to provide input to Instructure, the Canvas vendor, to mitigate functional gaps and other shortcomings in Canvas.

C. ITC supports the adoption of Canvas as a single, fully integrated and centrally supported LMS at the UW-Madison. This means that once transition is completed, UW-Madison will not provide central support for non-Canvas learning management systems.

D. ITC believes that providing adequate resources and funds to support the transition to the new LMS, resolve gaps and deficiencies, and enhance functionality is critical for the successful transition and use of Canvas. The support of ITC for Canvas is predicated on the UW-Madison providing the necessary resources and funding to this effect.

(continued)
IV. The transition process

A. ITC supports a reasonable transition period that takes into account financial constraints. At the end of this period the digital components of all or nearly all courses on campus that elect to adopt Canvas will be using it. While we recognize the importance of setting a target transition date, we also emphasize that no course that elects to adopt Canvas will face mandatory transition until it can be ensured that Canvas functionality will meet most of the pedagogical needs of the course and until support for performing such transition is provided to the supervising faculty.

B. UW-Madison will not cease to support Moodle and Desire2Learn until adequate functionality in Canvas is provided.

V. ITC calls for a well-managed transition process that meets the pedagogical needs of colleges, schools, and departments.

A. ITC emphasizes the need to provide full support for the transition to the new LMS in a way that ensures the continued quality of all courses. Support will be provided centrally -- by DoIT -- and locally, by colleges, schools, and departments.

B. As the transition proceeds, faculty and staff should receive clear, consistent and frequent communication about Canvas, its features, and when its various functionalities will become available. These communications should include information on best practices for faculty and staff currently creating new courses--especially new online courses--using Desire2Learn and Moodle.

C. Courses that make extensive use of Desire2Learn or Moodle should receive particular consideration when providing support.

VI. Gaps, deficiencies, and functionality enhancements

A. ITC recognizes the existence of gaps and other deficiencies in the current functionality of Canvas. Examples include support for math-based courses and quizzing, features currently supported in Moodle. Other gaps and deficiencies are likely to be discovered in the future as the transition proceeds.

B. ITC believes that dedication to resolving functionality gaps and deficiencies will encourage faculty and staff to make more extensive use of advanced LMS features and reduce resistance to change.

C. Existing and future gaps, deficiencies, and functionality enhancement needs should be addressed effectively and in a timely manner before, during and after the implementation.
VII. Governance structure: Principles

A. ITC believes that it is essential to have an effective governance structure to manage the implementation, transition and operation of the Canvas LMS service ensuring that the UW-Madison is provided with an effective, well-managed, and reliable service.

B. ITC calls on the administrative sponsors to bring before ITC a clearly laid out plan for governance around Canvas. The governance structure may incorporate existing advisory and other groups involved with the deployment of Canvas. Perhaps it can be modeled after the governance structure of Moodle. We advocate the existence of a single governance structure rather than creating an additional layer of governance.

C. ITC calls for a governance structure that supports the following principles:
   - Ensuring that the voice of various stakeholders -- faculty, students and staff -- is heard during the implementation, transition, and operational phases of Canvas.
   - Adhering to a community-based, inclusive and transparent decision-making process during those phases.

D. ITC envisions the following responsibilities for the governance of the LMS:
   - Setting high-level priorities and strategies for the LMS service.
   - Making policy and operational decisions for the service and directing the service provider to implement them.
   - Overseeing the migration process.
   - Determining pedagogical needs that are not met in Canvas and establishing priorities for resolving gaps and deficiencies and for functionality enhancements.
   - Securing funding to support the transition process, resolve gaps and deficiencies, and enhance functionality.
   - Determining the most cost-effective methods to resolve deficiencies and develop enhancements.

IX. Role of local instructional support staff in customization and functionality enhancements

A. Local units on campus are likely to need extensions and modifications to Canvas functionality to meet their instructional and pedagogical needs.

B. ITC believes that local technology support staff should be given accommodations (permissions, delegated authority, unit-specific teaching and learning tools, etc.) where practical and reasonable to enhance Canvas as needed.

C. The process for determining and prioritizing these enhancements needs to be inclusive, transparent, and collaborative. The governance structure proposed in Section VII will oversee the process and endorse recommendations.
Information Technology Committee (ITC):

Faculty
Meghan Mitchell, Art/Arts and Humanities
Ellen Zweibel, Astronomy/Physical Sciences
Constance Steinkuehler, Curriculum & Instruction/Social Sciences
Christina Kendziorski Newton, Biostatistics & Medical Info/Biological Studies
Greg Moses, Engineering Physics/Physical Sciences
Rafael Lazimy (Chair), Operations & Information Management Business/Social Studies
Joe Salmons, German/Arts and Humanities
Linsey Steege, Nursing/Social Sciences
Robert Nowack, Electrical and Computer Engineering/Physical Studies
Murray Clayton, Plant Pathology/Biological Sciences

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Students
Chris Yue
Jason Postweiler
Srinidhi Emkay
Edward Leonard

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Bruce Maas, CIO and Vice Provost for Information Technology
John Krogman, Deputy CIO and Chief Operating Officer of DoIT

Provost Appointments
Nicholas Tincher, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research & Graduate Education
Clare Huhn, Representative of the Provost
Ed Van Gemert, General Library System
Bobby Burrow, General Services, Representative of the VC for Administration
Mark Sweet, Representative of the VC for Administration
Steve Cramer, Representative of the Provost

Campus Liaison, Group
Antonella Caloro, School of Business, ComETS
Rick Konopacki (School of Medicine and Public Health), CTIG
Lee Konrad, (Libraries), MTAG
Mike Pitterle (School of Pharmacy), Moodle Council
Alan Silver, (Chemistry), Network Advisory Group