canvas
BY INSTRUCTURE

Canvas and Auburn University

Auburn program implements Canvas in three weeks after faculty demand access

AUBURN
UNIVERSITY

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— Troy Hahn
CAP Director of IT
Auburn University

Auburn Favorite Features:

- Easy and intuitive
- Requires little or no training
- Simple course creation for instructors, instructional designers or techs
- On-demand video/audio
- Online test taking

- Communication between students and staff
- Gradebook
- Personal audio/video messages to students
- Student-centered learning
- Available 24/7

The Challenge

Every semester Dr. Leonard Lovshin teaches 250 students from around the world in Auburn University's Certification for Aquaculture Professionals (CAP) program. Grading biweekly exams for that many students in so many time zones was such a massive burden that he eventually quit. "With no efficient way to grade tests, I fell further and further behind and became increasingly frustrated—as did my waiting students," Lovshin said.

And he wasn't the only one frustrated with Auburn's learning management system. Many complained about Blackboard WebCT's "chunkiness" and outdated feel, said Troy Hahn, CAP's IT director. "Our LMS was in the Dark Ages." Particularly bothersome was Blackboard's inability to handle the demands of distance learning, which CAP was on the verge of expanding globally. The program's success hinged on the performance of its LMS.

The Decision

Hahn and CAP Director Antonio Garza began searching for a better one. "We wanted a modern system—something intuitive that would allow students to easily navigate through the courses," Hahn said. "We needed to make a change, and we needed to make it quickly."

When Instructure demonstrated its Canvas LMS, Hahn says, CAP instructors wanted to begin using it that very day.

The CAP team had found what they were looking for, but there was just one problem. The semester would begin in three weeks. Canvas had never been implemented that quickly, and there was a lot of work to do. Hahn's team developed a strict

"The difference between Canvas and the old LMS is like the difference between an iPod and a record player."

— CAP Student
Auburn University

Implementation Timeline

Week 1:

• Auburn IT staff explored Canvas Open Source
• Reviewed help documents
• Determined what functionalities Canvas offered and which CAP needed
• Received access to CAP's version of Canvas
• Began testing modules and functions
• Began work on Spanish translation

Week 2:

• Uploaded 30 gigabytes of content from previous LMS
• Learned and tested Canvas' online testing function
• Set up forums
• Continued testing modules

Week 3:

• Finalized module order
• Created help documents
• Created custom log-in page
• Neared completion of Spanish translations

timeline to migrate their existing information to the Canvas platform and then to learn, customize and test the solution's functionalities. "Everyone had to be on board and willing to work with the rapid implementation: IT staff, instructors, the university, as well as Instructure," said Hahn. "It required everyone's help to get it done in such a short timeframe."

The Result

As Hahn's team plunged into the work, they were inundated with demands from impatient instructors asking for access to Canvas. When faculty members were allowed in, they eagerly explored the system, pushing ahead of the IT group. The instructors found Canvas so user-friendly that they worked out most functions on their own.

Canvas' online testing function was a favorite of the faculty, permitting them to create quizzes from scratch or a bank of questions, using a variety of formats and question types.

Professor Lovshin was ecstatic. Canvas allowed him to re-engage with students, giving them timely grades and feedback.

"We knew it was a huge paradigm shift, so we were excited when we saw how thrilled the faculty was with Canvas and how eager instructors were to start teaching with it," Hahn said.

Although the implementation was swift and arduous, Canvas was up and running on time. Faculty and staff now have new methods for teaching across the globe, and students are thrilled with their new LMS.

One summed up the change this way: "I'm beyond shocked at the magnificent changes that have been made to the program's interface. You listened to our concerns. We are excited to finish the program."

As the CAP program continues to expand, Canvas is living up to expectations and growing alongside it. Canvas' success helped to promote CAP's certification program internationally. What's more, Auburn is also adopting Canvas across the university.

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