RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
MEETING AGENDA
Thursday, July 18, 2013
8:00-9:15 a.m.
FAC 228D

I. IT Shared Services Intro (Lisa Wright)

II. Canvas Transition, Timeline, Budget (Dave Moss, Dennis Klenk, Mario Guerra)

III. Office 365 (Pei Chen)

IV. FY 13-14 Priorities
Overview
The Shared Services Planning Project is the first step in advancing Recommendation 3.1 of the Business Productivity Final Report, “implement a shared administrative services model.” The objectives of the project are:

- Define the service delivery model for Shared Administrative Services
- Design the future-state operating model for Finance, Procurement, HR and IT
- Develop the change management strategy

Implementing a shared services model is anticipated to achieve the following benefits:

- Improve and streamline university business operations to better serve constituents
- Ensure appropriate controls are in place to comply with required policies and regulations
- Make better use of scarce resources to support teaching and research activities core to UT’s mission

The project will answer the following questions:

1. What services will be delivered in a shared services model, and how?
2. How will the change be implemented and managed?
3. How will Shared Services be governed? How will the customer’s voice be heard?
4. What enabling technologies are required?

Timeline
UT has engaged Accenture to assist with Shared Services Planning.

Requested Participation
Campus involvement is critical to the success of this project. We will be asking for participation in the following ways:

- **Project Steering Committee**: Support the overall shared services program through advisement, directional guidance and feedback
- **Functional Interviews** (primarily your business officers and staff): Support the development of future-state Finance, Procurement, HR and IT processes

We will be back to share results and preview the implementation plan in September.

Contact Information
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Vision – Future model of shared services

Service lifecycle drives where the service is in the service model, and is influenced by changes in demand, usage and technology.

Proposed List of IT Shared Services

These services have been identified as driving significant cost reduction through economies of scale and the potential for reuse. The project team is reviewing the proposed services with campus units to get agreement on level 1 services and direction for level 2.

- **Network** services provide users with wired and wireless connectivity to resources and between facilities throughout campus and over the internet in accordance to policy
- **Voice** services provide users with voice-related services on and beyond the campus leveraging the network and voice infrastructure on campus
- **Data Center** services provides managed facilities and optional management and administration of physical servers
- **Data Storage** provides and manages environment for end user data as well as enterprise data with varying degree of performance, security, and uptime
- **Virtual Compute** provides “raw” infrastructure (CPU, memory, storage, network) available on an as-needed basis in private cloud setting
- **Platform as a Service** provides virtualized development and run time platforms in a private cloud setting
- **End User Services** provides end users with the necessary end user equipment to perform their duties, gain access to, and use the information resources at UT Austin
Canvas Learning Management System Evaluation
Assessment Report 2012-13

June 2013

Leslie Pearlman, PhD
Jane Vogler Cragun, PhD
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Executive Summary

The University of Texas at Austin offers thousands of courses, taught by nearly 3,000 faculty, to over 50,000 students every semester. A large percentage of these courses utilize a learning management system (LMS) to provide course syllabi, reading materials, and assignments, which students must be able to access at any time. In turn, a LMS allows students to communicate with their instructors and classmates, upload their assignments, and access their grades. This functionality, and much more, has been provided to the university by Blackboard since 2000. However, according to a survey of faculty conducted in May 2010, only a small portion of Blackboard’s available features were being used, and other key features, such as mobile access and cross-browser compatibility, did not meet expectations. The university required a LMS that could support existing functionality provided by Blackboard as well as fulfill the university’s ever-advancing needs.

The Course & Learning Management System Evaluation\(^1\) was initiated as a collaboration between the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and Information Technology Services (ITS). The goals of the project were to gather requirements from the campus community for a next-generation LMS, conduct a fair and impartial assessment of the options available, and recommend a solution that meets the stated academic and technical needs of campus, while providing the best value.

To learn more, focus groups with over 75 students, faculty and staff were conducted in early 2011 to determine how Blackboard was actually being utilized, what worked well and areas for improvement. An online survey which gathered similar data was sent to the campus community and received approximately 700 responses. The two most common complaints were the (1) poor user interface (i.e. ‘clunky’, not intuitive, required a lot of clicks, too complex) and (2) slow response times.

In addition to this feedback, other considerations supported undertaking a LMS assessment, which included increased annual Blackboard licensing costs coupled with an inflexible campus usage model, a significant hardware refresh investment necessary in 2014 and frustration cited by technical staff from reported issues and repeated failed upgrades.

\(^1\) http://www.utexas.edu/its/course-mgmt/
A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was issued in March 2011. After reviewing all of the responses received, the RFQ review committee, comprised of faculty, staff and students, selected five qualified options for further assessment: Blackboard, Canvas by Instructure, Desire2Learn, Moodle and Sakai.

To determine whether any of these options were a viable replacement for the current LMS, the project steering committee\(^2\), including representatives from across the campus community, asked for a variety of data to be collected and analyzed so that an appropriate recommendation could be made:

- The project team contacted 11 peer institutions to determine which LMS was used, the costs, like and dislikes, and process used for transitioning to a new LMS (if applicable).
- The five selected vendors were invited to demonstrate their proposed solutions in presentations that were open to the campus community.
- Over 100 faculty, staff and students tested one or more of the five solutions and were asked to provide their feedback.

Based on the data collected, the project steering committee determined there were two vendors qualified to submit proposals to a Request for Proposal (RFP): Blackboard and Canvas. A Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued in summer 2011 and after careful review, the two finalists were only separated by a few points. As such, the recommendation of the steering committee was to move forward with a dual award, which allowed for additional evaluation of Canvas.

Canvas is a hosted learning management system from Instructure\(^3\) and is in use at over 300 colleges, universities and school districts including the University of Washington, University of Maryland and University of Utah. Moving to a different LMS is a significant proposition: faculty, students, and support staff are required to learn a new system and a process would be needed for migrating existing course data. According to peer institutions, transitioning from one LMS to another can take up to two years and require a significant investment in resources. Before making such a decision, it was critical that Canvas had been thoroughly tested by faculty and students.

As such, the Canvas LMS Evaluation project\(^4\) was initiated. The purpose of the project was to evaluate the use and effectiveness of Canvas in an active classroom setting. The project included


\(^3\) [http://www.instructure.com/](http://www.instructure.com/)

\(^4\) [https://www.utexas.edu/its/canvas-project/](https://www.utexas.edu/its/canvas-project/)
(1) the implementation work necessary to use Canvas, (2) the limited use of Canvas during academic year 2012-13, (3) evaluating its effectiveness, and (4) presenting the assessment results.

The evaluation of Canvas courses (T=250) consisted of a comprehensive, year-long assessment of faculty (T=170), students (T=12,000) and technical support staff (T=20). The majority of faculty surveyed (>90%) were teaching traditional, ‘in-person’ courses (both lecture and discussion) with course sizes ranging from small (<25 students) to large (100+).

The data collected through surveys and focus groups suggested consistent opinions related to the functionality and suitability of Canvas for UT Austin. The majority of those surveyed agreed that Canvas was more “modern”, “clean”, and “intuitive” than Blackboard. Spring faculty with experience using both Canvas and Blackboard were asked which LMS better supported their teaching needs, with 54% indicating Canvas compared to 17% for Blackboard. Other features noted by faculty were integrated rubrics, Speedgrader and the peer review tool. Student highlights were Google Docs integration, “What-if” grade and the calendar tool. Key differentiators cited by technical staff included Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI) integration (e.g., Mediasite lecture capture), transparent upgrades/enhancements and the free Canvas mobile app (Blackboard currently charges a fee for their mobile app).

The most frequent criticisms of Canvas stem from the communication and gradebook features. Both students and faculty would like the inbox to work more like an email system. Faculty comments, consistent throughout both semesters, included adding a subject line to a message and more organization features to manage large classes. Faculty also requested a more flexible gradebook tool (e.g., ability to calculate totals by points instead of percentages). *(Note: In the time since the assessment was conducted, each of the primary concerns identified by faculty with the inbox and gradebook have been addressed by Instructure or are under active development and expected to be available prior to the end of 2013. Additionally, Instructure demonstrated the ability to respond to and fix reported issues in a timely manner.)* Faculty and students seemed unaware of several features, and in both semesters made reference to the desire for different or additional training. Students’ biggest complaint was that not all of their courses were in Canvas and it was confusing and inconvenient to use more than one LMS.

At the conclusion of each semester, faculty, students and technical staff were asked whether or not they would support moving to Canvas as the university’s central LMS, with 80% of faculty, 66% of students and all technical support staff indicating they would support such a move.
The project steering committee reviewed the full assessment report in June 2013 and nearly unanimously (16 “yea” to 1 “nay”) recommended a move to Canvas as UT Austin’s central learning management system. The majority of steering committee members also agreed that a quicker transition (12 months) was preferred. This recommendation will be subsequently reviewed for endorsement by the Research & Educational Technology Committee\(^5\) and the Operational Information Technology Committee\(^6\).

\(^5\) http://www.utexas.edu/cio/itgovernance/research

\(^6\) http://www.utexas.edu/cio/itgovernance/operational_it