To: All Northwestern Faculty
From: Provost Dan Linzer, VP and CIO Sean Reynolds
Date: April 30, 2014
Subject: Announcing a new Learning Management System for Northwestern

To Northwestern Faculty,

To provide the best possible teaching and learning environment that takes full advantage of developments in electronic teaching tools, Northwestern University will be adopting a new Learning Management System (LMS), commencing this summer. The new system, Canvas, will replace our current LMS, Blackboard.

Blackboard has served the University well, but many faculty and students have identified needs that Blackboard was not able to address. As a result, the IT Governance Educational Technology Advisory Committee (ETAC) initiated a review in January 2013. Twenty-six faculty, staff and students studied improvements that could be made to our electronic teaching environment. The review process included a thorough assessment of current LMS providers, on-campus demonstrations of the leading educational technology platforms, and pilot course offerings in multiple environments. The review group was enthusiastic about Canvas, after testing 56 pilot courses with more than 2,000 students during the current academic year. The assessments of the faculty and student pilot users cited the modern user experience, the adaptability of Canvas to a wide variety of educational practices and the extremely reliable environment. As a result, the LMS Review Group recommended the move to Canvas.

Other University groups were consulted during the evaluation process; the Undergraduate Council, the Associated Student Government, and eleven schools were represented in the evaluation process and in Canvas pilot courses. The result was that all of the representatives from each of the schools in the University supported the move to Canvas and are now preparing for the transition.

To understand more about the Northwestern experience of students, faculty, and staff in the pilot, visit the LMS Review blog.

TRANSITIONING TO CANVAS

ETAC is forming the Canvas Transition Committee, with representatives from across the schools as well as the Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching, the NU Library, and NUIT, to coordinate the successful move of our electronic teaching activities from Blackboard to Canvas. A phased deployment will take place over the next academic year.

The University’s current Course Management System, Blackboard, will continue to be available until August 2015.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CANVAS
Effective immediately, all faculty members, TAs, and staff may request a Canvas account to begin familiarizing themselves with the new platform. To request an account, complete the online Canvas Sandbox request form.

NUIT will be providing more information about Canvas workshops, hands-on training sessions, consulting services, and transition timelines for the move to Canvas in the coming months.

More information is available on the NUIT Web site at http://www.it.northwestern.edu/transitions/2014/lms.html.

For questions regarding this message, please contact the IT Support Center at (847) 491-3547 (1-HELP) or consultant@northwestern.edu.

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