Engaging in Campus Conversations on the Course Management System Selection – a Guide from the OEI Steering Committee

The OEI Steering Committee asserts that technology decisions be heavily dependent on faculty teaching needs. The decision about which CMS a college adopts, should be made by relying primarily on faculty expertise through your academic senate. However, we also know that ease of use by both the teaching community and the students is critical component of successful CMS implementation. Using a CMS can cause challenges for both teachers and learners if the tool used to accomplish the learning is not intuitive and potentially interferes with the educational process. So, we encourage you to engage your students in the selection process as well as the other stakeholders on your campus. As the Canvas folks say on their website, it's not worth much if people don't use it.

You may be wondering how to start the conversation at your college about changing course management systems. It's a big decision and requires input from many stakeholders who will be affected. The concerns and needs of the users vary across a college or district and should be factored into your decision-making processes.

The OEI Steering Committee has made a list of suggested stakeholders and some of the concerns they might have. This list is likely not exhaustive. The culture of your institution will inform the list of stakeholders you develop; however, your academic senate should take a leadership role in this conversation. Stakeholder concerns are important considerations in the decision making process.

Below are some of the stakeholders you should involve in the decision making process at your college, and some of what they are concerned about in the approximate order of importance/concern of the stakeholder:

1. Faculty members: Functionality, ease of use, accessibility, mobility, adaptability
2. Students: Ease of use, accessibility, mobility
3. Support Staff: Ease of use, available support resources, accessibility
4. Administration: Effective usage across all courses, cost, compliance
5. Technology Staff: Resources for implementation, ability to populate courses, data portability, ease of use, cost
6. Research Staff: Ability to retrieve useful data, ease of use

Understanding what concerns relate to which stakeholder groups will help in the planning for meetings and product demonstrations as you consider whether or not you wish to change your CMS.

Individual colleges have their own governance processes that would direct the selection processes for this kind of decision. However, the OEI Steering Committee strongly suggests that colleges engage in a college-wide conversation with the conversation with the local Academic Senate in a lead role.

It is important, however, to make sure that you have included the stakeholders mentioned above in the process of evaluating Instructure’s Canvas.

Some additional considerations:

• **Migration:** All groups are concerned with the time factor for migrating courses and entire systems. We are working with the @One team who will be providing migration training workshops beginning in Fall 2015 to support the major CMS that are being used by the CCC’s now. The time it takes to bring a course into Canvas varies by the original source of the course. Total time to migration can take from three months (really tight!) to 2 years. Most system migrations happen within a year.

• **Cost:** Now that the contract process with Instructure is complete, the OEI project has announcement that we are paying for all of the Canvas subscription and implementation costs
through the 2018-19 academic year. While we can't guarantee the ability to do so for longer, we know that the funding from the Chancellor’s Office and Legislature is intended to be ongoing money. We hope to continue funding at a full level but the possibility does exist that we may have to share the cost with colleges after 2018-19.

There are other benefits to being part of the system-wide adoption that include: not having to go out through an RFP process, taking advantage of cost reductions due to economies of scale, and having access to integrated resources.