Illinois Tech

Bringing Canvas to the Illinois Tech Community

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In fall 2024, the Illinois Tech community transitioned to the Canvas Learning Management System from Blackboard, which had been available to instructors since 2013. The LMS is managed by the Center for Learning Innovation (CLI) with the support of the Office of Technology Services (OTS). The following report illustrates the steps The Center for Learning Innovation took to prepare the university for the new system and an overview of how well Canvas was adapted in the first semester.

Pre-Launch workshops

The Center for Learning Innovation held **5 "Preview Sessions"** to give instructors an early view of Canvas in January and February 2024. Total registrations: 82

Hands-on Workshops for Instructors

18 virtual workshops spanned from April - September 2024. Total registrations: 330

7 in-person workshops were offered from March – September 2024. Total registrations: 77
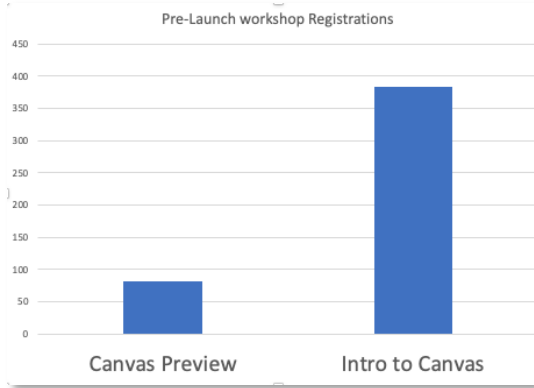

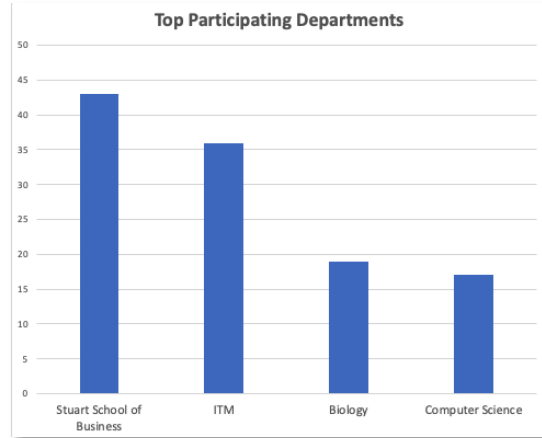*Figure 1: Faculty attendance to pre-launch workshops*

Figure 2: Top participating departments

5 specialized topic workshops were held on Data and Analytics, Outcomes and Learning Mastery, the Rich Content Editor, Outcomes for Admins, and Grading and Feedback. Average Registration: 18 people.
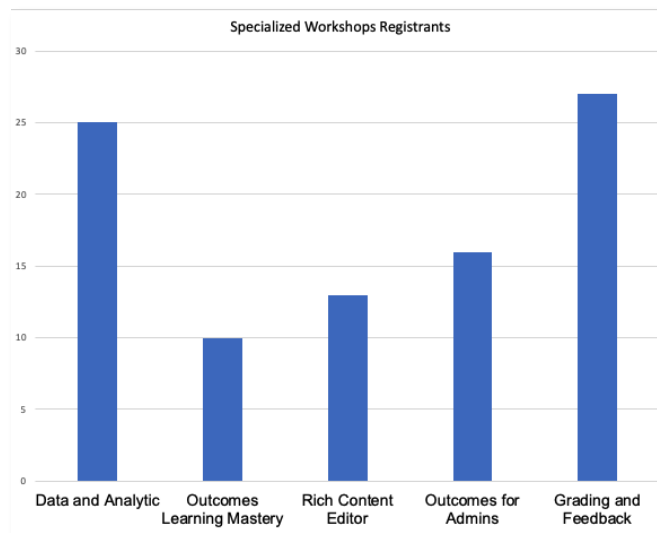

Figure 3: Faculty attendance to workshops by topic

Canvas Workshop Evaluation Survey Results

Responses to the workshops were positive, with registrants showing high satisfaction in the knowledge gained and the workshop meeting their expectations. (57 respondents)
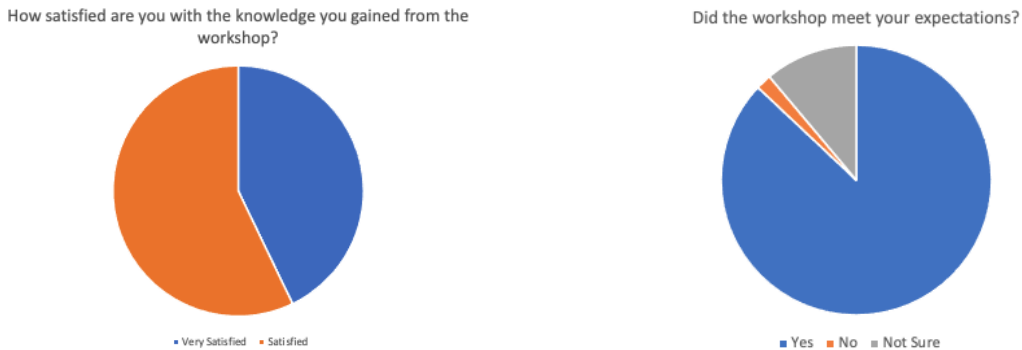
Figure 4: Faculty satisfaction rates with workshops

Summer 2024 Pilot in Canvas

Instructors were invited to pilot Canvas in the Summer 2024 semester. 15 Instructors from 9 different departments volunteered to teach their summer courses and use the new system. 13 instructors completed our End of Pilot Survey.

Figure 5: Faculty response to the comparison between Blackboard and Canvas

We are grateful to the participants of the summer pilot for their time and commitment. No "red flags" were raised during the pilot. The participation of these instructors helped us confirm that we were on the right path for the broader institutional implementation.

Additional comments from the survey included:

- *I found that Canvas was overall very easy to use, and it was easy to make the structure of the class (an online, asynchronous class) transparent to the students taking the class.*
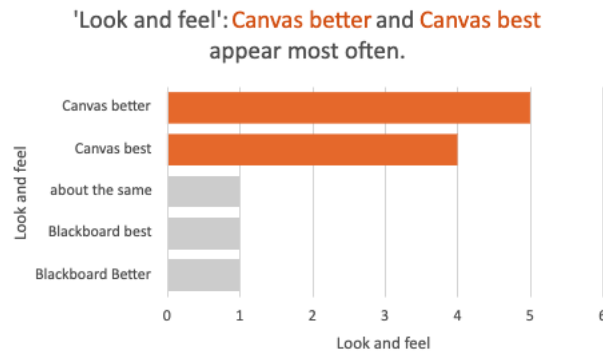
- *Everything went smoothly considering the short summer session.*

- *Uploading content and communicating with students using the inbox setting is more straightforward.*

- *The submit grades button is amazing*

- *I found it overall easy to use -- more user-friendly than Blackboard.*

- *[It's] Just a case of learning how to do on Canvas what I used to do in Blackboard.*

- *[Appreciated] ease of moving materials from blackboard. intuitive menus to update quizzes and assignments*

First Semester in Canvas

In **September 2024, Canvas was launched to the entire university**.

Each course must be "published" by the instructor to be viewed by the students enrolled in the course. In fall 2024, there were 1133 total published courses.
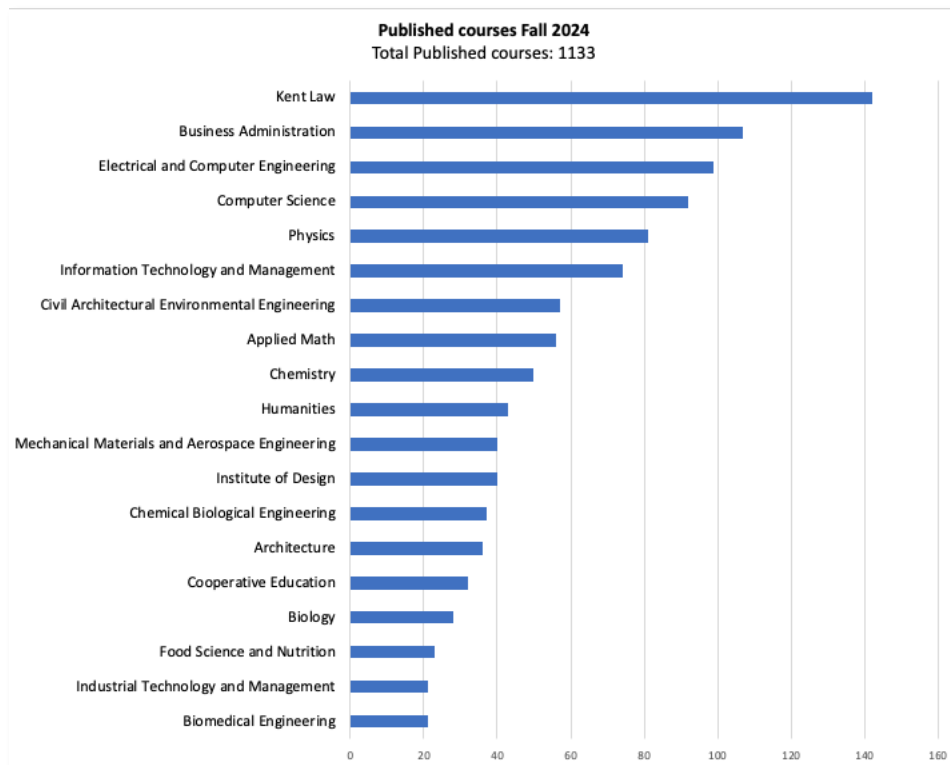

Figure 6: Number of courses published in Canvas in Fall 2024

Canvas offers multiple features, some emulate a similar feature in Blackboard, while some other features are new. Faculty were willing to experiment with them and were pleased with the results. Figures 7 and 8 show faculty and students interactions with the system. Figure 7 displays the most commonly used features in Canvas by instructors who have published their fall 2024 courses. The most used feature is "Files", which are any type of uploaded file, followed by Pages, which is a way to share information with students. "Interactions by Category" (Fig. 8) shows the category that both students and instructors are utilizing the most. The first is files, which is not surprising since that is the most commonly used "feature," followed by Course Home, the home page of each course site, followed by "Assignments," the course page from where most assessments are launched.

Figure 7: Most used features in Canvas in the first semester of the transition
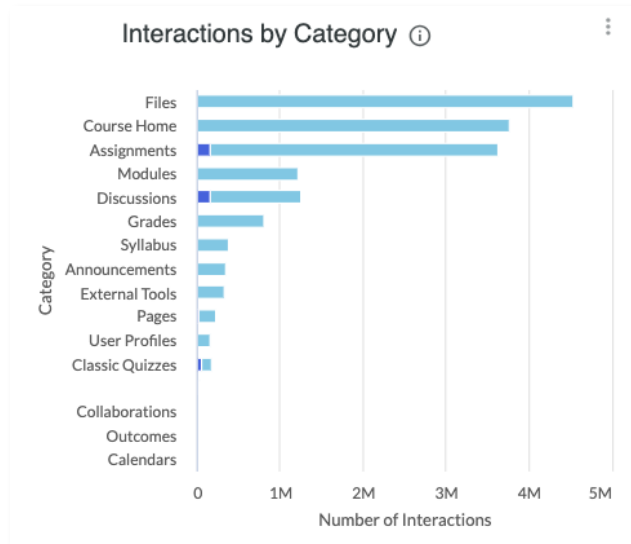

Figure 8:The areas that were most used by faculty and students

Students' interactions with the system are exposed in the two images in Figure 9. They show the number of unique students with activity in a 2024 Fall course. The graphs overwhelmingly indicate that the majority of our students are interacting with the system. Approximately half of the students access the system through the mobile app.
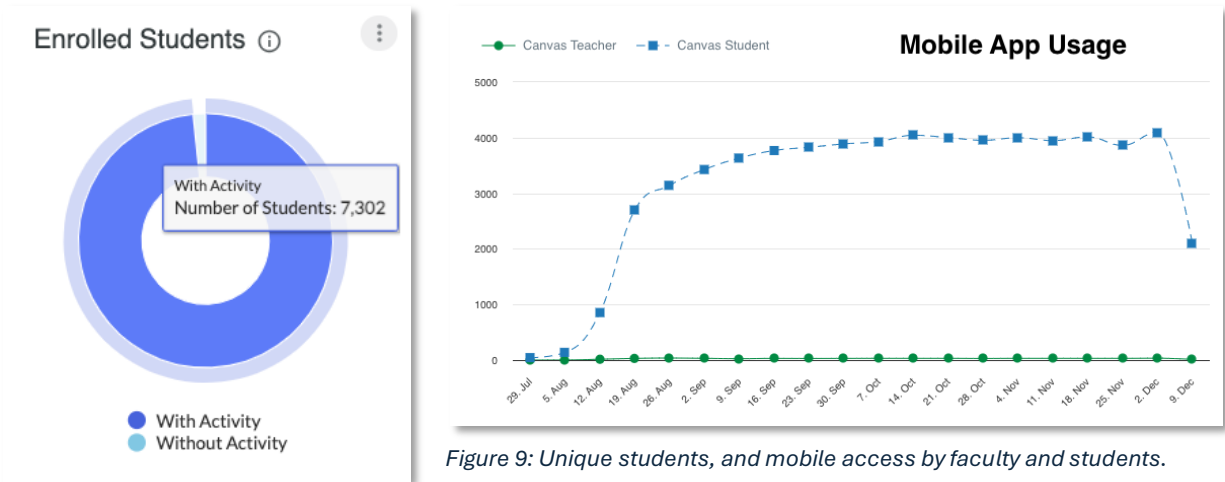

Figure 9: Unique students, and mobile access by faculty and students.

LTIs in Use

Learning Tools Interoperability is a specification that allows learning management systems to integrate external applications and content in a course site while providing a high level of security for passing data about the users, enrollment, and roles. Zoom and Panopto are the highest used applications that are integrated with Canvas.

Zoom is one of the most used highly used tools. It is used for both hybrid and in-person courses, for scheduling remote meetings with students, and can be used to record videos for repeat viewing by students. Many instructors record in-person sessions in Zoom for students who miss class or wish to view the material a second time. Zoom was in use in 726 courses in the fall 2024 semester.

Panopto, our video management service, is also a heavily used tool with about 10,000 views per day. It is used to stream saved classroom recordings after class, or to stream other materials instructors wish to share with their students, such as instructional assets they have created as well as student-created videos and assets. As the data illustrates (see Figure 10 below), many students (unique viewers/green) watch assets multiple times, allowing them to rewatch classroom videos or other assets until they fully comprehend the material.
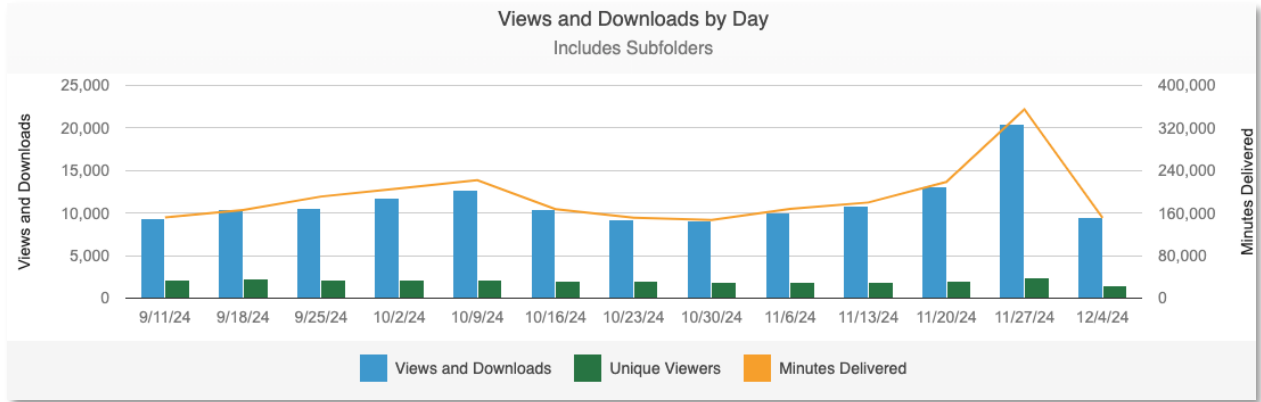
Figure 10: Users access to Panopto, IIT video streaming service

Response to Canvas

The CLI conducted an end-of-term survey to identify pluses and deltas of the canvas implementation based on instructors' and TAs perspectives. As the graphs below indicate, the results were overwhelmingly positive: 69% were satisfied or extremely satisfied with the experience, and 66% found it easy or very easy to navigate Canvas.
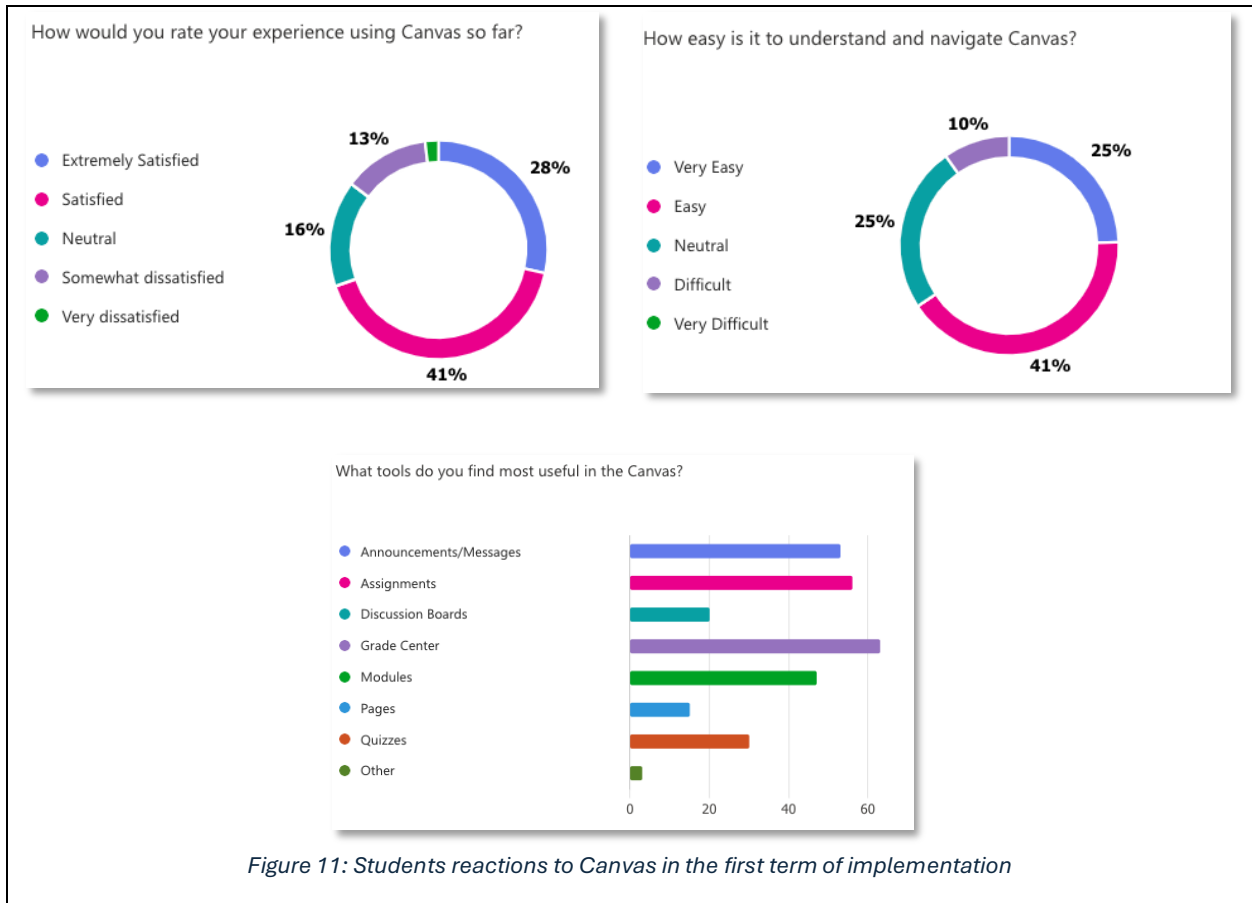

Figure 11: Students reactions to Canvas in the first term of implementation

Comments from the survey

> *As a TA, being able to search for my students in the Grade Center made my life much simpler when inputting grades.*
>
> *Best part of Canvas: The intuitive interface allows easy navigation and quick access to course materials, assignments, and grades.*
>
> *It was sooooo much easier to user than Blackboard. I also like the modules feature so I can organize by week.*
>
> *The best part of canvas is the calendar tool, which clearly displays when all of the assignments are due.*

What's next?

The CLI will offer at least two Introduction to Canvas workshops per term, focusing on key features of the system for new instructors and those who would like a refresher. We will also incorporate workshops for more experienced and advanced instructions on features such as the Gradebook, Rubrics, and assessment options. The CLI will continue to support faculty interested in innovations in their teaching by using new or advanced features in the system. We will also take advantage of the advanced reporting options in Canvas to track usage and adoption in the system.

Summary

Canvas has been overwhelmingly well-received, and both instructors and students have adapted to the system extremely well. The Center for Learning Innovation will continue to provide workshops, videos, webpages, and newsletter content to aid instructors in learning more about the system and tools that will facilitate the teaching and learning environment.