

Kean Learning Management System (LMS) Evaluation 2020 – Phase 1

Executive Summary

For many institutions of higher education, the Learning Management System, or LMS, is their most significant enterprise system for teaching and learning. The LMS is the means by which course information is distributed to students. It is not uncommon for an institution to periodically review its LMS system (in our case Blackboard), particularly if it has been in use five years or more. It is time for Kean to review Blackboard and its current competitors to ensure that we have the most effective tool in place to support the academic enterprise.

Kean University's transition from WebCT to Blackboard occurred in 2005 so we are long overdue for such an evaluation. While we have performed some upgrades to the Blackboard system (we are a Self-Hosted user of version 9.1, aka 'Original'), we contend that these changes have not allowed us to keep pace with the changes in pedagogical demands of students and faculty. The outcome of this Evaluation project will either validate Blackboard as the appropriate LMS for Kean University or recommend an alternative.

The LMS Task Force

While faculty have clearly communicated dissatisfaction with our current system in past years, this was reflected most strongly during an all-faculty meeting in the Spring recess of March 2020 at which time the VPAA acknowledged the faculty's strong feelings. Although delayed by the COVID transition that took place immediately thereafter, and at the same time spurred by the rapid mandatory roll-out of BlackBoard for the delivery of all face-to-face classes for the remainder of the Spring semester, the University Senate took up the task of creating an LMS Task Force at the beginning of summer. It is our plan to openly and fully Assess, Create, and Execute an evaluation to determine the best Learning Management System for Kean University students, staff, and faculty in 2020 and beyond.

LMS Expectations

The LMS primarily serves the academic mission of the institution. We know that the context of teaching and learning changes. Accordingly, we need to regularly evaluate our LMS to be sure that it is supporting the academic mission and strategic goals of the university. We know that we need to adapt to pedagogical change more rapidly and need an LMS system that is equally flexible. In addition to identifying the best system for Kean University, we intend to engage the campus community in discussion around interesting and effective teaching, and raise awareness that an LMS system is more than a course website, as part of our evaluation process. Kean needs an LMS that can provide tools for engagement and collaboration that support active learning both online, face-to-face and in the new hybrid style learning we are now engaged in.

Whatever tool we choose must be interoperable and integrate well with our current systems. It must be flexible and adaptable to changing pedagogical needs. It must be cost effective, easy to support and be easy to use. Finally, it has to be both scalable and sustainable.

Current LMS Trends

The national Campus Computing Project is the largest continuing study of the role of information technology in American colleges and universities. The annual survey is completed by Senior IT officers representing 235 two- and four-year public and private/non-profit colleges and universities across the United States.

The 2019 Campus Computing Survey and other similar surveys indicate a number of trends to note concerning available LMS software:

Trend #1: Research conducted in the last quarter of 2019 indicates the LMS market has settled around 3 products: Blackboard, Brightspace/D2L, and Canvas.

Trend #2: BlackBoard has been losing market share to Canvas.

Trend #3: LMS management has migrated from self-hosting to cloud based.

As we evaluate Blackboard and it's Ultra cloud based platform, we are also evaluating the current market competitors Canvas and Brightspace/D2L. Current data suggests that Canvas and Brightspace/D2L are viable options for Kean and so this process will determine the best LMS for our future. We have begun evaluating all three LMS, as well as two LMS support tools Ment.io and Panopto and will do so through Fall 2020, at which time we will bring a recommendation through the University Senate.

History of Blackboard at Kean University

Blackboard has been Kean's Learning Management System since its adoption in 2005. We have updated versions as noted below. [Confirm]

2005 – Version 6

2007 – Version 7

2008 – Version 8

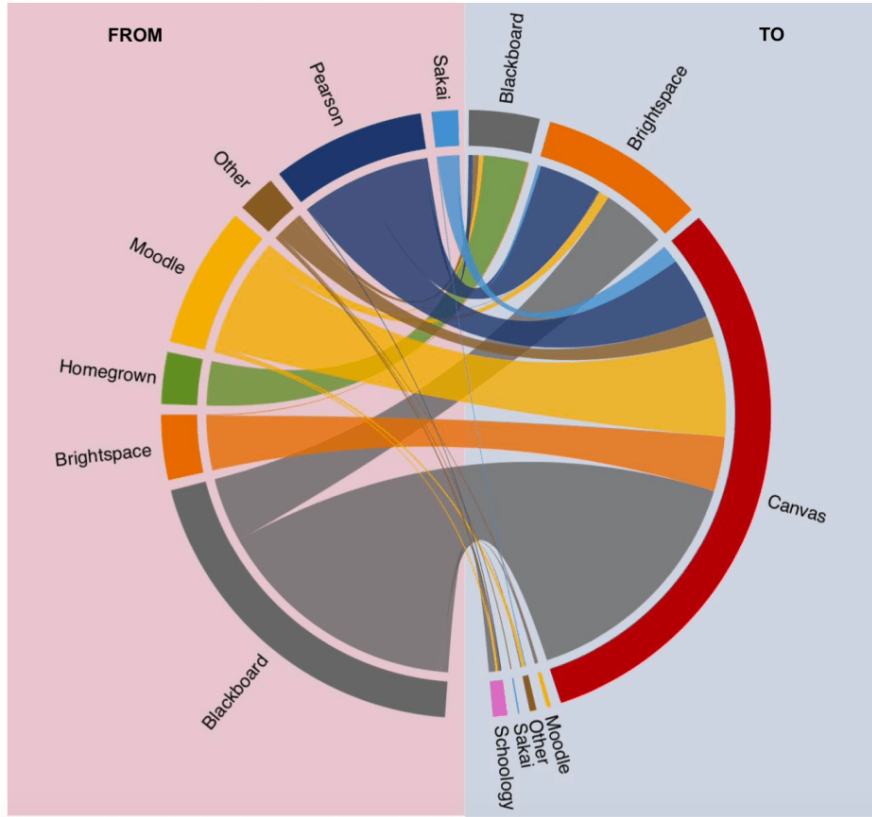
2010 – Version 9.1

Market leading LMS systems

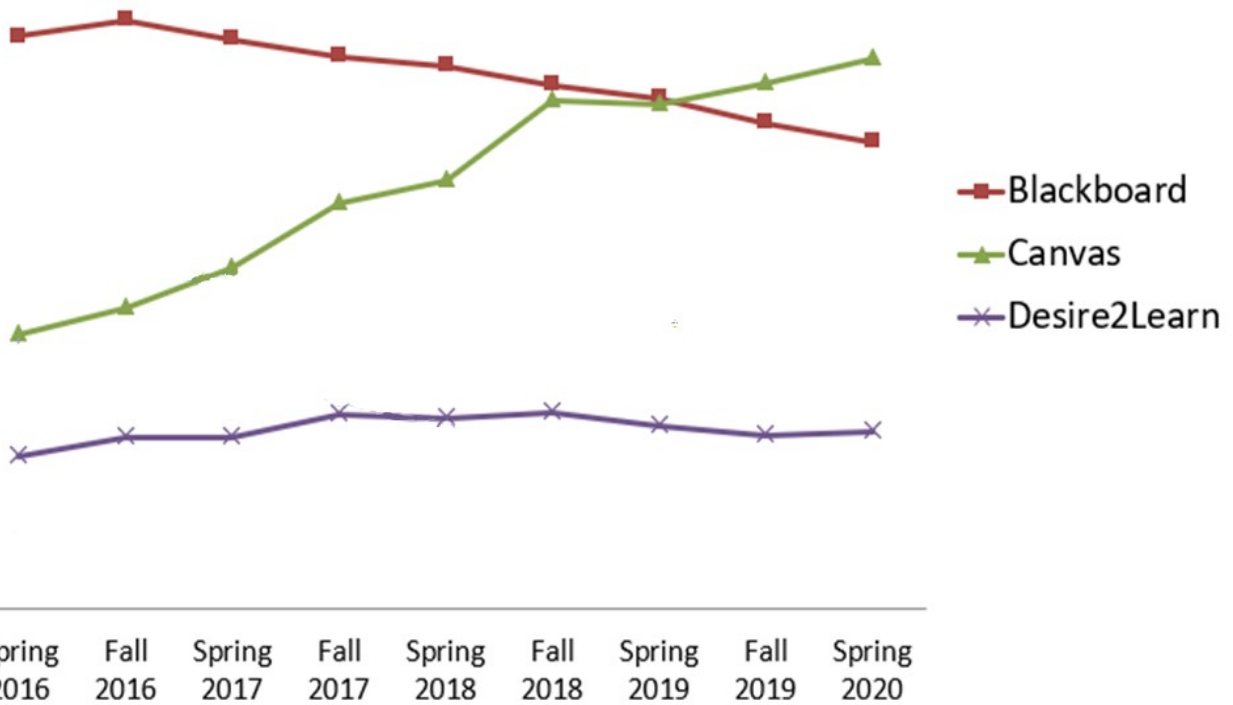
According to the latest data, Canvas is now the leading LMS and has been gaining market share away from BlackBoard. Blackboard has consistently lost customers to Canvas since the mid 2000s, at the rate of roughly 27 – 36% each year. One of the most remarkable stories is that Instructure, parent of Canvas, has not lost a single Canvas higher education client due to an LMS switch. Brightspace/D2L has lost a relatively

small number of clients over the years, but their LMS decommissions/conversions ramped up in 2018 and 2019, largely due to campus closures.

Figure 7: LMS Customer Migrations 2017-2019 in North America



	Canvas	Blackboard Learn	D2L Brightspace	Other
Institutions	1147	973	369	889
	33.4%	28.4%	10.8%	25.9%
Enrollments	6,982,189	5,552,761	2,029,401	3,209,076
Average Size	6092	5707	5515	4438
Spring 2020, aggregate 500+ FTE students, www.edutechnica.com				



US HE; aggregate 500+ FTE, www.edutechnica.com



Canvas: Supporting Data

A review of institutions in New Jersey includes the following NJ Institutions using Canvas today:

- Rutgers University
- Princeton University
- New Jersey Institute of Technology
- Montclair State University
- Rowan University
- Ramapo College
- The College of NJ
- New Jersey City University
- Rider University
- Berkeley College
- New Jersey Council of Community Colleges
 - Brookdale CC
 - Camden CC
 - Union CC
 - Ocean CC
 - Hudson CCC
 - Raritan Valley CC

Sussex CC
Middlesex CC

The Kean LMS Evaluation Committee

The committee includes 32 faculty, staff, and students, listed below. There is a broad disciplinary representation as well as varying levels of online and face-to-face teaching experiences with learning management systems at Kean and elsewhere. Faculty members represent our Union, Ocean and China campuses. The committee is chaired by Dr. Craig Donovan and has met weekly throughout the Summer 2020 to discuss, analyze, and undertake the following activities:

- Solicit input from faculty colleagues at Kean and beyond
- Examine LMS feature sets and evaluation rubrics
- Participate in demonstration sessions from representatives from Canvas, Brightspace, and Blackboard (as well as Ment.io and Ponopto)
- Consult the findings of other universities' experiences with Canvas, Blackboard, and Brightspace

These activities are required in order to make a well-informed recommendation to the campus about the future of the LMS.

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Next Steps

The LMS Task Force recommends that Kean begin a Phase 2 operation in the Fall consisting of the following:

1. Develop a set of criteria to evaluate and compare the three different LMS solutions.
2. Invite the three leading LMS vendors to demonstrate their solutions to a campus wide audience:
 - a. Canvas
 - b. Brightspace/D2L
 - c. Blackboard Ultra
3. Conduct a sandbox/demo period for each LMS open to all faculty and students allowing Kean community members to create free, temporary accounts on the systems, letting users explore the systems' various features and options.
4. Provide the same demonstration and sandbox approach for the LMS tools Ment.io and Panopto.
5. Evaluate each solution and tool based on the developed criteria.
6. Select an LMS (and any chosen tools) by the end of Fall.
7. Begin Phase 3 conversion process during Spring 2021.