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# Page title (H1): Improvements

Hundreds of institutions have been flocking to Canvas each year.[1](https://www.edsurge.com/news/2015-09-14-blackboard-s-lms-rivals-instructure-schoology-score-big-clients)Here are some of the most fundamental reasons:

### Section sub-heading (H3): Canvas gets out of the way.

Canvas took Apple and Google’s approach, making it as simple and obvious as possible to do what you’d expect, while keeping all of the advanced stuff out of the way. Because of this, it takes fewer clicks to do just about everything, and it’s easier to find what you’re looking for. One global navigation bar on the left, one large open space on the right, and all of the same bells and whistles as Blackboard.

### Section sub-heading (H3): Canvas has connections.

Canvas allows you to attach files from Google Drive, use Office 365 for assignments and feedback within the LMS (coming soon), and embed Twitter feeds into your site as an instructor. It’s also super easy to send friend requests to other users in Canvas once you connect it to your social media accounts (including LinkedIn). This is neat, too: In Canvas, [you can opt to be notified](https://guides.instructure.com/m/4152/l/73162-how-do-i-set-my-notification-preferences) about important Canvas events (e.g., a deadline or personal message) via email, text message, or on your phone or tablet through Canvas’s mobile app. These notifications can be sent immediately or as a daily or weekly digest.

### Section sub-heading (H3): Canvas truly cares.

Canvas has a much faster development cycle than Blackboard’s, constantly rolling out updates based on what the [Canvas Community](https://community.canvaslms.com/) asks for—no downtime required. If you want a new feature or if you find a bug, get enough Canvas users on board and you can escalate the request straight to their software development staff. Last year, Instructure, the company that owns Canvas, allocated 20 percent of its development budget to the top 40 participants on their community page.

### Section sub-heading (H3): Canvas embraces openness.

Canvas is [open-source](https://opensource.com/resources/what-open-source), meaning anyone can look at its code, understand how it works, and find creative ways to improve it. Because of this, they have created a powerful network of partners through [EduAppCenter.com](http://eduappcenter.com/), which works like an app market for learning management systems. In fact, it’s better to think of Canvas more as a framework for learning and less as a traditional learning management system. Florida State believes this makes it more versatile than its competition.

For these reasons, Canvas represents a major, much-needed paradigm shift for Florida State.

## Section heading (H2): Canvas feature improvements (as compared to Blackboard)

### Section sub-heading (H3): Speedgrader

Speedgrader is Canvas’s equivalent to Blackboard’s inline grading tool, but better. Both Crocodoc and rubrics display in Speedgrader much like what you are used to in Blackboard. What’s unique to Canvas is that Speedgrader offers media comment options, which means that you can add audio/video comments directly to student assignment submissions via a microphone or webcam. You can sort submissions by student name, and track grading progress, and “mute” assignments to hide grades from students while you are busy grading. The Speedgrader app is also available for both iPad and Android systems.

### Section sub-heading (H3): Gradebook

Canvas’s Gradebook has a user-friendly interface, so we think that you will find it to be much more intuitive than what you are used to in Blackboard. For starters, the spreadsheet frame on the Gradebook page is *much* larger than it was in Blackboard, so you are no longer stuck with a tiny frame for viewing the actual numbers in your Gradebook. No more wasting time trying to find a specific student’s grades – Canvas allows you to search individual students so you can find their information quickly. When it comes to organizing your Gradebook, Canvas offers several options to fit your workflow needs: sort by assignment due dates, student names, total scores, or group scores (if applicable). You can also easily message students who haven’t yet submitted an assignment directly from the Gradebook page. Like Blackboard, Canvas automatically creates columns for gradable items, including a column for attendance that syncs with the built-in attendance tool. There isn’t quite the same level of customization that Blackboard offered, but with Canvas’s more intuitive Gradebook tool that shouldn’t be any problem!

### Section sub-heading (H3): Conferences

Blackboard doesn’t have any built-in feature analogous to Canvas’s Conferences – Bb Collaborate is not a “built-in” feature and is only available to online-only courses at FSU. Conferences are built into Canvas’s interface and can be used for synchronous class meetings, virtual lectures, virtual office hours, and are available to student groups. Best of all, Conferences are available to *all* courses! Conferences can accommodate a maximum of 50 users at one time, and do not require any additional software downloads, unlike Bb Collaborate Classic. However, please note that if you choose to record a conference, the recording will only be available for 14 days after the conference has been concluded. After this point the recording is automatically deleted.

### Section sub-heading (H3): Rubrics

Canvas rubrics are an upgrade from those offered in Blackboard. Canvas rubrics can be adapted to your preferences - you can use rubrics for both grading and feedback, or for feed-back only.

### Section sub-heading (H3): Modules

In Blackboard you organized your course content by Content Areas and Content Folders, but in Canvas you’ll be organizing your content using [Modules](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2808). Canvas Modules are basically a streamlined version of Blackboard’s Content Areas and Content Folders. Individual modules function like a folder that contains the individual items (such as files, weblinks, assignments, [pages](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-1916), etc.) relevant to that particular topic or unit of study, and all modules are contained on the same page. This effectively keeps all the course content in one place, which makes it easier to keep track of from an instructor perspective and easier to navigate from a student perspective.

When it comes to determining how you want your students to progress through your course, Canvas offers more logical and user-friendly options than Blackboard. If you’ve ever used Blackboard's adaptive release settings, then you know they are clunky and confusing. Canvas offers adaptive release-mimicking options for both entire modules and individual module items called [prerequisites](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2861) and [requirements](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2862). Prerequisites and requirements can be used together in a course to create the desired course progression. For example, you can create prerequisites that make students complete each module in a specific order, which means they must complete Module 1 before they are able to access Module 2. You can also create requirements within a module to ensure that students complete each Module item in a specific order. For example, students must view a lecture video before they can access a quiz assessing their understanding of that lecture video.

### Section sub-heading (H3): Discussions

Canvas Discussions are discussion forums done right. You can have students ask some questions in the course, or easily have students use video responses rather than typing out text. Best of all, it’s a simpler structure than Blackboard’s Discussion Board tool: Each “Discussion” is its own entity on your Discussions page, so you won't get bogged down in any “forum, thread” semantics.

### Section sub-heading (H3): Groups

The best word to describe Canvas’s Groups tool is “upgrade”: Canvas offers an improved group workspace that better facilitates communication and collaborative work. In Canvas students can create pages, announcements, collaborations, discussions, calendar events, and chat in real-time within their groups. This is a vast improvement over Blackboard’s group workspace that only offered file exchange, group blog, group discussion board, group journal, group tasks, group wiki, and send email to group members. The blog and journal options were in some ways redundant and not used by most faculty, and group tasks was almost never used. Canvas’s pages are like Blackboard’s group wiki - but better - and offer the same ability to share files as the Blackboard group file exchange tool.

### Section sub-heading (H3): Canvas Conversations

Canvas has its own built-in messaging system which acts like a built-in email inbox. This is better than our current system of sending emails because students will see all new messages sent via Canvas Conversations as soon as they log in to Canvas rather than having to go and log in to a separate FSU webmail account. Unfortunately, there is no way to integrate our current FSU webmail system with Canvas Conversations, so students and faculty will still have to log in to a separate interface to access their FSU webmail accounts. Though the Canvas Conversations and FSU webmail systems remain separate, Canvas Conversations may be ideal for sending a quick message to the entire class.

### Section sub-heading (H3): Better course site analytics

If you want to analyze student performance in your course and understand student interaction with your course, then you now have some great options. Blackboard’s performance dashboard and course reports were clumsy at best. Canvas offers so much more! You can [view broader course analytics](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-1793) to better understand overall student performance and trends in your course. For more specific information Canvas offers the following user-specific information: You can [view all the interactions between a student and yourself](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2887), [view the last time a student accessed your course](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-1796) and a [course access report](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2864), and [further student analytics](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-1796). However, please note that Canvas does not measure activity on mobile devices.