"Canvas Plus" Overview

Problem

During their study workflow, students today rely on many apps throughout the semester at Georgia Tech. The central one here is Canvas Student, which allows them to keep track of courses, announcements, assignments, course files, and Canvas messages. However, Canvas Student provides only basic and foundational functionality, and students end up using other apps to complete this workflow. For example, many students use separate calendar and to-do list apps to prioritize tasks; apps like Notability, GoodNotes, OneNote, and Apple Notes are often used for handwritten notes, and Google Docs/Microsoft Word for typed notes; GroupMe, and iMessage are used for communicating with other students in the class.

The scattered workflow process today creates inconsistencies and can become hard to manage. Furthermore, a decentralized source of communication often leads to many students remaining uninformed of such sources.

"Canvas Plus"

"Canvas Plus" would offer a singular workflow that allows students to accomplish common tasks, all in a single place. It would be linked to their GT account, fetching course information directly from Canvas, including all the related course content (including announcements, assignments, files, etc.) We would design a simple, elegant, Apple-like user interface that is easy to work with. The integration of features such as messaging, file management, assignment submission tools, and more would allow for this workflow. For example:

- Students automatically have access to the "messages group" for each course they are in, which allows them to communicate with everyone else in the class without searching through different platforms.
- "Canvas Plus" would offer in-built file management tools. That means students can store relevant course materials, files, notes, etc. within a "course folder" inside the app, so they don't need to look through different platforms/drive folders. For editing documents, we could offer in-built note-taking tools, or directly link to other apps they might already be familiar with.
- In-built calendar and to-do lists collate all assignments from all classes, showing notifications when necessary and helps students prioritize.

This already enables a singular workflow that makes it easier for students to work during the semester. However, we can elevate this experience using several "intelligence" features.

Intelligence

"Canvas Plus" would integrate with a third-party LLM to offer smart capabilities that help with common issues students face during the semester. For example:

- We could offer a "Summarize Recent Announcements" feature which collates important information from course announcements.
- Automatically read through the course syllabus, enabling:
    - Extraction of important dates for quizzes, exams, and assignments, and auto-populating the student's calendar
    - An interface that allows students to view grading policies easily.
- "Catch-up" view that puts together recent announcements, upcoming to-dos, etc. from all courses in a single view.
- Calculate grades based on assignments or what a student needs on a final to get a certain grade in the class
- More…

Potential Challenges

- API limitations
- ???

Impact

"Canvas Plus" could be a motivating step for iOS Club in terms of its depth of projects and community reach. During the first semester, this would be an exploratory project internal to the club and its officers. If we see potential, we can open this up to members the following semester.