

From: Henry Torres
Sent: Tuesday, May 24, 2016 1:36 PM
To: ASUJFaculty <AllFaculty@astate.edu>
Subject: LMS Review May 2016 Update
Importance: High

Dear Faculty,

I hope that this email finds you well and that you are enjoying your summer break. I am following up on the email that was sent out on May 2nd titled Learning Management Review/Survey.

Please accept my apology for sending that email out with all the faculty names listed in full detail versus using a listserv address and also for not assuring it contained full details of the purpose and reasoning behind the LMS review/survey. ***We are merely in the initial stages of review and contrary to rumors, a decision has not been made to move away from the Blackboard LMS.***

This email and other subsequent emails to come this summer (and in the Fall semester) are intended to continue this dialogue and will include invitations for you to participate in this important process. In addition, an icon and link titled LMS Review is now accessible within the MyCampus portal for all faculty to have access to all information and documentation related to this process.

In attempt to further clarify and provide full transparency of this review, I offer the following details:

- 1) BlackBoard has been utilized as AState's Learning Management System (LMS) since the University's first entry into the online environment in 2004. Since that time faculty and student usage has expanded dramatically as well as the marketplace of LMS systems. While BlackBoard has evolved, during this time several other systems have been developed and are widely accepted in the higher education community.
- 2) As with all IT systems, it is prudent to periodically review current technologies not only for new functionalities but also to ensure that we are receiving the best value for our investment. Currently the annual cost for the Blackboard LMS is near \$300k and it requires an additional \$250k plus of add-on software and hardware to create the whole LMS environment. Full annual expenditures can be found within the MyCampus portal icon titled LMS Review.
- 3) The purpose and rationale for the LMS review is comprised of many factors such as pedagogical, technology management, organizational administration, faculty and student ease of use, best practice integration, mobile and emerging technology integration, and the overall costs involved.
- 4) Criterion for assessing the existing Blackboard LMS and comparing it to others in the marketplace requires much thought and inclusion of what we use, what we need, what is easy to use or not, and of equally high importance what will happen to existing work or materials if a change is pursued. If a change is recommended it would need to be based on an "Apples to Apples+" comparison with the "Apples+" taking the lead. The following is a short list (not all inclusive):
 - a. Provide a robust environment for content authoring.
 - b. Support AState's teaching and learning needs.
 - c. Support social presence, interaction, collaboration, and group work.
 - d. Provide a wide variety of grading, assessment, and grade management tools.
 - e. Possess an intuitive interface with a contemporary look and feel.
 - f. Be mobile optimized, device compatible, and work on all major browsers.
 - g. Be ADA compliant and meet accessibility needs.
 - h. Allow for labor scalability and efficiency in administrative setup.
 - i. Support learning and administrative analytics and outcomes.
 - j. Be "future proof" and able to evolve with educational and technological developments.
 - k. Support IMS Global standards.
 - l. Be available as close to 24/7/365 in order to meet the needs of AState's increasing distance learning audience.

- 5) Current utilization survey – we are very interested how often and in what method you use the Blackboard LMS. To better assess this, a self-reporting survey will be sent out. Coming soon.
- 6) Demonstrations with question/answer sessions – one vendor demonstration was held mid-Spring 2016 semester with low attendance. For this reason, vendors will be asked to demonstrate their software once again in the Fall 2016 semester.
- 7) Timeline for this review process is estimated to continue through the Spring 2017 semester in order to assure all interested parties and all pertinent concerns, issues, comparisons, etc. are fully represented and considered.
- 8) Evaluation team – a non-formal evaluation team is being assembled and at this point has not officially had any meetings or gatherings. If you are interested in participating, please email Margaret Watson at mwatson@astate.edu

It is with high hope that this email assists in clarifying the approach and rationale behind the LMS review. If you need more information and/or additional clarification, please feel free to contact me directly.

Henry Torres
Information Technology Services
Arkansas State University