Capturing the Student Experience:  
Fall 2019 Canvas Pilot Survey Synopsis

Fast Facts:
- Number of Canvas Faculty: 22
- Number of Courses/Sections: 28
- Students enrolled in Canvas Classes: 1,608

Figure 1: The Fall 2019 Canvas Evaluation included 16-item pre- and post- semester user experience surveys sent to all students who were enrolled in pilot courses.

Users were not identified, so respondents were not matched between the early and late semester surveys, although respondents at the beginning and end of the semester had similar characteristics.

Approximately half of the respondents:
- attended SDSU exclusively, with the remainder having attended at least one other 2- or 4-year institution.
- were enrolled in face to face (F2F) courses with the remainder enrolled in hybrid or fully online classes.
- possessed prior Canvas experience.
Big Takeaways:

- According to Fall 2019 student survey and focus group respondents, the Canvas Learning Management System has not significantly impacted student users’ experiences in their classes.

- Course Modality: Course delivery method is not a critical factor in how well students acclimate to Canvas.

- Prior Canvas Experience: Students without Canvas experience acclimated quickly.

- LMS Preference: After semester-long use a) many Blackboard-prefering students favored Canvas instead, and b) Canvas-prefering students seemed to have expectations of course design and performance that may not have been met. Internally, we referred to this insight as the *honeymoon effect*, and is common when new software or systems are introduced.

Figure 2: Responses to the question stem: “At this point in the semester, which learning management system do you prefer?” Note: this was not a matched survey sample, but the responses demonstrate that students continued to answer favorably at the end of the pilot semester.
Big Takeaways continued:

- Three themes emerged from students’ responses regarding Canvas functionality and their course experiences using the LMS. These included: Transactions, Communication, and Performance (Figure 2). These themes were discreet in some instances and overlapped in others. Students were able to navigate Canvas transactions with ease (e.g. finding the syllabus), while communications were more difficult for others to manage; a combination of setting Canvas notification preferences (Transactional) and interacting with other students or faculty in the course (Communications).

![Diagram showing three themes emerged from the Fall 2019 Canvas Evaluation](image)

Figure 3: Three themes emerged from the Fall 2019 Canvas Evaluation, grouping functionality and user experiences into Transactions, Communications, and Performance feedback.

Open-ended Responses

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| Students saw Canvas as a factor in boosting their confidence and actual performance; it helped them manage the learning experience. | “The “To Do” feature on the dashboard has always been convenient for me; keeping me on top of assignments, quizzes, reminders, etc. Another thing I appreciate is the option to test a different score in the “Grades” section in order to calculate my grades.”

“Hyperlinks on the home page were useful; my professor made it easier to find things like a syllabus instead of going through folders.” |
### Positive Themes | Examples
---|---
Students resonated with the overall design or structure of a Canvas site, as well as how Canvas performs. | “Canvas has a modern look and an aesthetically pleasing user interface (very clear).”
“I felt comfortable uploading assignments; it didn’t crash or delete my work.”

### Negative Themes | Examples
---|---
Some students (especially those with prior Canvas experience) felt that their professors needed additional training. | “The professor didn’t “title” [the] PowerPoint slides -- only date them, so I couldn’t figure out the “content”/subject matter ahead of time.”
“We really just used it to turn in assignments; our professor definitely had more trouble with it than the students did.”
“The professor doesn’t know how to fully utilize Canvas, drawing from my prior experience with Canvas in community college.”

Some students couldn’t easily locate the information they were specifically seeking; they also mentioned sites that seemed cluttered or overcrowded. | “I would love to see a powerful search engine tool to help me find certain assignments, due dates, information, links and videos. Sometimes it can be really difficult to find exactly what I am looking for.”
“There were multiple times the modules were either out of order or difficult to find. This made it hard to find assignment due dates also.”

### Next Steps
We are testing the outcomes discovered during the Fall Pilot throughout the Spring 2020 semester; this phase of the Pilot features:
- 141 course sections
- 78 faculty
- 5,907 students (with the student #s finalized at Census on February 18)

The Fall data also help guide preliminary decisions around implementation, should Canvas be selected as SDSU’s next learning management system. Some of the data will inform decisions focused on messaging/communications with faculty and staff (content populating an informational website), ongoing coordination with the PeopleSoft transition team, training, and assets that will support faculty as they engage in course migration.