

Harding University

Building a Robust, Reliable One-Stop-Shop with Canvas LMS

 Searcy, AR  4,617 Users  Adopted Canvas LMS: 2012



Located in the town of Searcy, Arkansas [Harding University](#) is home to just under 5,000 students. Seeking to transform their passions into professions that serve others, students come from across the globe to attend Harding. Allison Case, Harding's LMS support specialist, recently shared the impact of Canvas LMS.

THE CHALLENGE

Harding's previous learning management systems came with challenges. When describing one of their old systems, Case said, "It was clunky. It was hard to add on or make changes. It was just a lot of clicking, and we could only keep two years worth of courses. Teachers were responsible for downloading and keeping a backup."

When the news broke that a new update for their previous LMS was on the way, Harding began exploring other options. In order for a new LMS to be successful, it had to be easy to use and flexible, including robust LTI integrations with limited downtime and ample storage for course information. Having encountered Instructure at a recent conference, Harding was initially interested in Canvas's [Speed Grader](#), a rare tool in 2012. Harding then coordinated volunteer groups of faculty and students to test both the updated version of their previous system and Canvas LMS and voice their preference.

Canvas LMS was preferred by many testers and ultimately chosen as the next LMS. Initially, Case described concerns from faculty surrounding a new learning management system, but as time went on, these fears were eased, and Harding grew accustomed to and reaped the many benefits of Canvas.

Key Insights

- Initial fears around switching LMS were eased once faculty realized the benefits like increased student engagement with features like Discussions in Canvas LMS.
- Increased storage in cloud-based Canvas LMS provides ample space to house historical course data without the burden of having to manually backup any critical resources.
- Accessibility checker allows faculty to quickly meet the needs of all students in their online courses.
- Harding's relationship with their customer support manager, who provides ongoing support and resources from Instructure, has been vital.

THE SOLUTION

Over the course of a year, Harding ran both their previous LMS and Canvas LMS to give faculty the chance to gradually switch their courses over to the new platform. Additionally, Harding hosted training sessions focused on acclimating faculty to Canvas LMS.

Case also described the creation of an [E-Learning Help Desk](#) and a [Learning and Teaching Toolbox](#) to provide ongoing support for faculty and students.

“...We gained a lot with Canvas LMS. Features like Speed Grader and Discussions were features that we didn’t have before, and to have the space to not have to do course backups all the time made it worth it to spend a little extra money.”

Allison Case, LMS Support Specialist at Harding University

ROBUST & RELIABLE: CANVAS LMS

Like so many other higher education institutions, Harding’s students and faculty rely on a variety of tools to be able to stay up to date with and complete their course work online. Having all those vital tools together in one place has streamlined the digital experience, resulting in a more robust learning management system.

“There are so many LTI integrations that help us make Canvas better,” Case said.

Some integrations commonly used at Harding include [Zoom](#), [Echo 360](#), [VoiceThread](#), [Cisco Webex](#), [Google Meet](#) and more. Being able to access these vital communication tools without having to leave Canvas LMS has allowed students and faculty to stay connected even when in-person classes have closed.

Additionally, integrations like Proctorio and Honorlock have provided students a secure place to take assessments online and granted faculty a peace of mind that students are being monitored when testing remotely.

“Now [with Canvas], there’s a lot less little things that I have to do as an administrator,” Case said. Some of these “little things” include rebooting the server on campus when the system goes down and reminding teachers to backup their course information since Canvas LMS is both cloud-based and automatically houses course information for faculty. This also frees up instructors to focus less on administrative tasks and more on developing instructional materials that improve student success.

A CONNECTED COMMUNITY

At Harding, building strong relationships is a core pillar of their community. This desire to connect is also present with any vendor that the university partners with.

“Part of what has really helped is the relationship that we’ve had with Canvas. Especially our CSM, we didn’t have that [before Canvas]...we meet monthly and that has really helped us to make sure we’re on top of things. [My CSM] is my person if I need to get the inside scoop on something,” Case said.

Mobility & ease of use grows in importance daily for students and faculty at campuses like Harding. Being able to easily access course information whenever and wherever is a key benefit woven into [the Canvas Mobile app](#).

THE RESULTS

Finally, when asked about the greatest benefit Harding has seen since switching to Canvas, Case says that it’s “hard to choose,” but that both mobility and ease of use stand out.

“Compared to other learning management systems, Canvas is definitely easier to use and doesn’t require as much training as we did in the past. And with mobility, the Canvas app is great and is just expected now. We’ve come a long way with accessibility too.”