

Howard University

Leading a Successful Canvas LMS Migration at a Private HBCU

 Washington, DC  12,500+ Students  Canvas Adoption: Jan 2023



At a time when uncertainty in higher education soared, Howard University was experiencing new heights in enrollment. Its growth as a leading research institution and Historically Black University did not deter its leaders from the massive undertaking of transitioning the university's legacy Learning Management System (LMS).

THE CHALLENGE

The decision to change its LMS was fueled by Howard University's goal of developing a comprehensive digital learning infrastructure that would not only support its academic programs but also integrate well with the Student Information System and Workday Student, the institution's new Enterprise Resource Planning software.

"It is our goal or intent to have all of our systems have seamless integrations and interactions to better serve everyone involved," said Dr. Morris Thomas, Assistant Provost of Digital & Online Learning at Howard University. "It's not technology for technology's sake, but it's aligned with our ultimate goal of enhancing academic excellence."

With growing interest in its programs, Howard University needed an LMS that would support the development and increase of its course offerings, and assist with its initiatives of excellence in teaching and learning, student success, and academic innovation.

Key Insights

- Howard University's LMS Committee reviewed several learning platforms and unanimously chose Canvas LMS.
- Canvas LMS was chosen for its easy-to-use interface, 24/7 support, and mobile capabilities that align with the university's goal of developing a comprehensive digital learning infrastructure.
- Howard University partnered with K16 Solutions to migrate more than 20k courses with no disruption to students, faculty, and administrators.
- The transition to Canvas LMS has been a positive experience thus far for Howard faculty and staff, many of whom requested Canvas.

THE SOLUTION

Howard University developed an LMS committee composed of a diverse group of key stakeholders that carefully considered its Learning Management System needs. After reviewing several learning platforms, the committee unanimously chose Canvas.

"Canvas provides an intuitive and easy-to-use interface," Dr. Thomas said. "The ability for Canvas to be accessed via various devices was important in the selection."



“In making this decision to change our LMS, there was a university-wide LMS committee that reviewed several platforms and ultimately chose Canvas. Many of the faculty at the university desired to use Canvas and were already adept at using it.”



– Dr. Morris Thomas, Assistant Provost of Digital & Online Learning, Howard University

A ROLLOUT WITH SUPPORT IN MIND

The LMS Committee wanted to ensure their administrators, educators, and learners felt fully supported in the transition. With the help of [K16 Solutions](#), an automated content migration service, Howard University began a phased implementation process that will be complete in January 2023 – just three semesters. The LMS committee designed a multi-faceted communication rollout that included a website dedicated to the Canvas transition. As the university fully adopts Canvas, the LMS committee will continue its training and communication efforts. Dr. Thomas will also continue meeting with faculty across Howard University’s schools and colleges to keep everyone informed, answer questions, and address any potential gaps.

“Another thing we did that I found to be very helpful was to convey [to faculty] that many of their current skills were transferable,” Dr. Thomas said. “We provided a roadmap to shadow the various signature features that were in our current LMS, what would be in the new LMS, and where there would be transferable skills. That helped a lot of people know they were not starting at ground 0.”

Howard University has maintained the use of its legacy LMS throughout much of the migration to ensure a smooth transition, especially for faculty needing to access course content. The onus of migrating course content, however, has not been on faculty. “We moved our content to Canvas LMS without any disruption or added work for the faculty,” Dr. Thomas said.

LMS TRAINING TO INCREASE ADOPTION

Howard University educators are expected to use the institution’s LMS regardless of course modality. Most faculty, nearly 100%, have been trained on the basics of using an LMS. Since many of those skills are transferable, during the Canvas migration, faculty are not required to go through training again unless they are new and/or desire training. They also are not mandated to play a role in migrating their courses, which allows them to focus on their individual teaching needs and LMS adoption.

To ensure as little impact as possible for its community, Howard University partnered with K16 Solutions, an automated content migration service, to move more than 20K courses from its legacy LMS to Canvas – without requiring help from its faculty.

THE RESULTS

During the height of uncertain times in higher education, Howard University completed an extensive LMS migration with impressive speed. Its LMS committee has received positive responses to the change, and Dr. Thomas believes they are a result of the university taking its time to inform everyone very early on and throughout its processes.

“Many people felt empowered that they had a choice and two semesters to use [Canvas],” he said.