

## **Faculty Training for a Learning Management System: Canvas**

### **Howard Community College**

#### **Introduction**

Teaching and Learning Institute (TLI) at Howard Community College (HCC) supports faculty with all their technological needs. Recently, a new Learning Management System (LMS) Canvas has been introduced for online, hybrid and for face-to-face courses. After faculty survey and analysis, the director of TLI feels a need for a systematic training session for Canvas. A web-based training course is an appropriate form of instruction for busy faculty. This training course on Canvas will also give faculty an opportunity to earn professional development credits. Later, the same course will serve as a guidance course for Canvas. This paper briefly describes the current scenario at HCC regarding Canvas, the problem analysis and the proposed solution for an online training course.

#### **Organizational Context**

Howard Community College (HCC) is located in Columbia, Maryland. HCC is a government-funded community college and offers associate degrees and credit courses in various fields. Approximately 13,000 students attend HCC every year ([http://www.howardcc.edu/about\\_hcc/campus\\_profile/](http://www.howardcc.edu/about_hcc/campus_profile/)). HCC employs around 1000 full-time and part-time faculty. Recently, HCC has added a new nursing building on campus. The new nursing building provides more courses hence possibly more enrollment and more opportunity for additional faculty hiring.

Just recently, HCC switched from the old LMS Blackboard CE 6 to the new LMS Canvas. Canvas is a cloud-based learning management system with various Web 2.0 and other innovative features (<http://www.instructure.com/features-higher-education/>).

“Providing pathways to success” is HCC’s mission statement ([http://www.howardcc.edu/about\\_hcc/campus\\_profile/hcc\\_missions\\_and\\_vision.html](http://www.howardcc.edu/about_hcc/campus_profile/hcc_missions_and_vision.html)). A Canvas training course will be helpful for the instructors in teaching better with new LMS, as well as for the students in learning better from well-trained instructors. HCC offers a number of online, hybrid and face-to-face credit and non-credit courses. The primary mode of instruction for online and hybrid courses is HCC’s learning management system, Canvas. Many instructors also utilize Canvas in face-to-face courses as blended form of instruction. Thus, Canvas is becoming an integral part of most courses taught at HCC. The proposed instructional training course on Canvas will be useful for the newly hired faculty as well as for the existing faculty who are switching from Blackboard CE6 to Canvas.

### **Problem Analysis**

HCC offers a variety of courses in different academic areas and different instructional formats such as online, hybrid and face-to-face instruction. The primary delivery mode for online courses and hybrid courses is Canvas, but many instructors like to incorporate a learning management system in face-to-face courses as blended part of instruction. According to Rossett, (as cited in Morrison, Ross and, Kemp 2007), performance problem can be identified based on four points *viz.* introduction of a new product, existing performance issues, need to train people and strategy development. Training faculty about this new product is essential and required.

A problem can be analyzed based on needs assessment, goal analysis and performance assessment (Morrison et. Al 2007). Based on one or more above-mentioned approaches, a problem can be analyzed, which is a crucial step in course designing.

Needs assessment and performance assessment strategies are applicable for designing a web-based course for faculty training. Instructors are not familiar with the operation of Canvas. Therefore, a systematic training is required for the entire faculty on Canvas. Due to different teaching schedules, classroom unavailability and lack of sufficient Canvas trainers, a web-based training session is the best option. The faculty will not only find online training convenient and flexible but will also have an opportunity to earn professional development credits. The Canvas training course will be offered through HCC's LMS, which is Canvas. This is an added bonus, as the faculty (or the trainers) will have a hands on experience with Canvas while learning how to use it.

### **Audience/ Target Population Analysis**

The primary audience for the Canvas training course is HCC's faculty. HCC employs approximately 1000 full-time and part-time faculty combined. The faculty has different backgrounds, different instructional areas and cultural and technological diversity. Some of the key characteristics of the target audience are as below

- The faculty has at least a Bachelor's degree in his or her respective field.
- The faculty has a basic knowledge of computers and Windows 7
- As a pre requisite to this course, the trainees should have completed Canvas Basics, a face-to-face course offered by Teaching and Learning Institute.

- Approximately 60%-70% of faculty has the prior knowledge of some learning management system.
- The faculty has regular access to computer labs, workrooms or private computers on campus

### **Proposed Solution**

The Canvas Training Course will be designed based on ADDIE instructional designing model, which is a systematic approach towards a course design and a cyclic process that involves Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation and Evaluation. While designing a course, it is important to analyze learner readiness, faculty readiness as well as institutional readiness (Wang & Gearhart, 2006). HCC is well equipped with technological infrastructure and has funds available for new course development for the instructors. The faculty readiness is evident, as the trainers have attended extensive training workshops conducted by Instructure (<http://www.instructure.com/>). For learner readiness, TLI plans to give a survey to the trainee faculty to determine pre-course requirements.

### **The course designing team**

The team will consist of the following members

- The director of Teaching and Learning Institute of HCC; Project Manager
- Instructional designer
- Canvas coordinator for HCC; Subject Matter Expert (SME)
- Web-site designer
- IT / Technical person

- Three full-time/ part-time faculty members; as Evaluators

### The course designing time framework

The course will be developed based on ADDIE instructional designing model (Peterson, 2003). All five stages from the model will be distributed over a period of 3 months. Figure 1 shows a time-table for the entire process of course development.

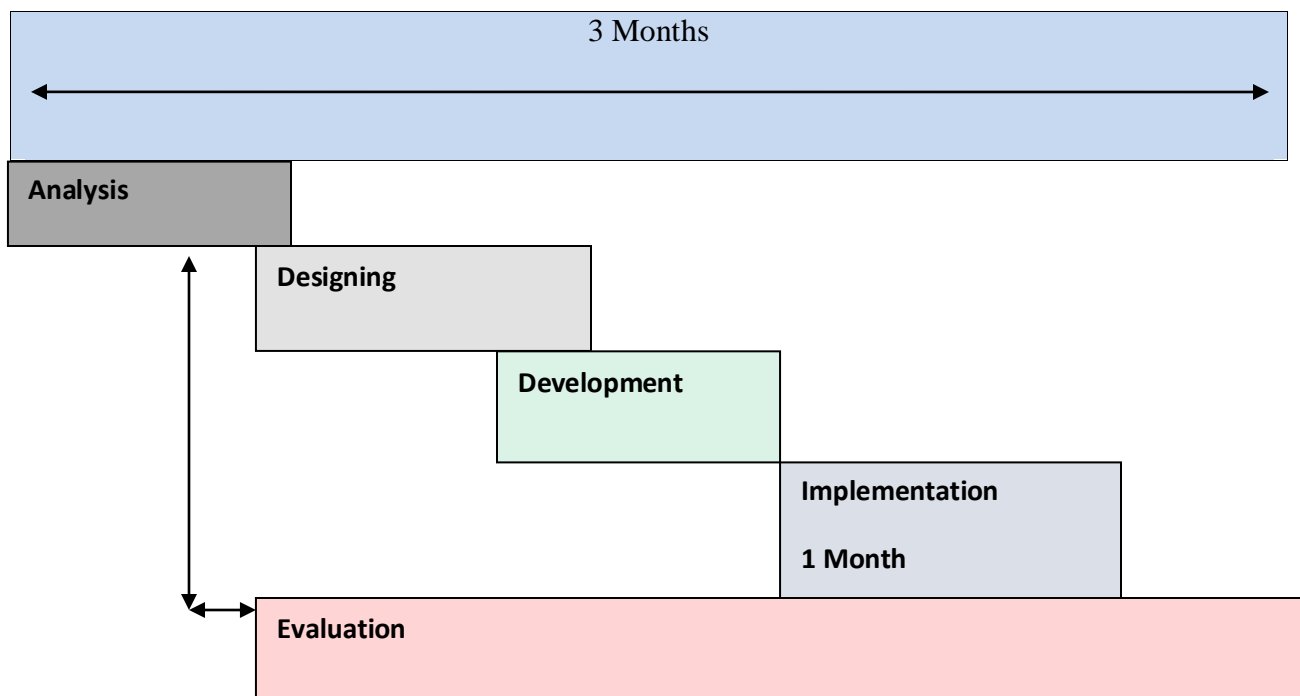


Figure 1

**Analysis:** The first task will be a thorough analysis. The team will conduct a college-wide faculty survey where learner readiness will be assessed. The survey will include the assessment of technical readiness, willingness and reaction to learn a new system and future concerns amongst the faculty.

**Design:** The design team will be put in place after the initial assessment. An instructional designer will work in collaboration with Canvas coordinator and a web site developer to create different modules for the training. The design team will construct these modules in compliance with the course goals and objectives. “Embed the reasons for learning into the learning activity itself.” (Lebow, 1993, p. 9) is one of the constructivist principles of instructional design. Therefore, the course design will have asynchronous activities, as well as plenty of hands- on activities. The learners will have an opportunity to learn about Canvas in depth through interactive training.

**Development:** The Canvas training course will be developed by the designing team, which includes instructional designer, web developer and a canvas coordinator. The team will develop the training course and will do a test run on volunteering faculty (formative assessment). Based on the response from the volunteering faculty, any changes if required will be made.

**Implementation:** The fully developed training course will be accessible to the faculty. The faculty will get one month to complete the course.

**Evaluation:** The faculty will need to complete a course completion survey (summative assessment). Based on the results of this survey, the team will suggest and incorporate modifications.

### **Course Goals and Objectives**

Upon completing the Canvas Training Course successfully, the learners will be able to:

- Access and log in to Canvas as an instructor. Locate and identify all the key features of Canvas such as assignments, announcements, files, and collaborative documents etc.

- Create text, pictorial and audio/video assignments, announcements and discussions using Canvas' built in Rich Text Editor
- Create different types of quizzes using Canvas' built in quiz creator.
- Add/ delete/ edit different people such as students, assistants, observers and designers
- Grade assignments using speed grader
- Manage Gradebook, file uploads, course calendars and user groups
- Create different course modules and add assignments and quizzes to each module
- Create and conduct conferences for asynchronous learning

### **Course Modules**

The Canvas Training Course will be a part of professional development for HCC's faculty. Upon successfully completing the course, four professional credits will be awarded. The course will have four modules. Each module will have different lesson plans, YouTube videos, PowerPoint slides, do it yourself activities, hyperlinks, discussion forums and a quiz. The learners will have to complete the previous module in order to move to the next one. At the end of the fourth module, a quiz for the entire course will be set up along with the post course survey.

### **Delivery Media Analysis**

The course will be delivered via Canvas: HCC's new learning management system. Although, the learners are going to learn how to use Canvas, designing a course with the same LMS will be slightly challenging. However, the faculty will receive basic training on how to log in to Canvas and basic navigation via face-to-face instruction. The TLI will have a number of training sessions to accommodate everyone's availability.

The Canvas Training course will be self-paced web based course. The learners will have one month to complete the course, one week for each module. As described above, the course will have four modules with different lesson plans, PowerPoint, videos, hyperlinks and hands on activities. The quizzes will be integrated in the modules along with the weekly discussions. The course will have a syllabus section with course modules and objectives. The learners will receive some instructions through live chats via conferences. The recordings will be saved for absentees or for the future reference. The primary communication will be through message boards or private emails to the course coordinator.

### **Conclusion**

The Canvas Training Course is one of the requirements in faculty development. A proper training on Canvas is not only essential for the faculty that teaches online and hybrid courses, but also very useful for the faculty that conducts face-to-face courses. Initially, this course will serve as the training course and later will be used as a reference for the faculty. Due to busy faculty schedule, irregular work hours, lack of sufficient training staff, an online training course is the best option. In addition to convenience and flexibility, the HCC faculty can earn professional development credits as well as hands on training with this course.



## References

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