Proposed Learning Management System Review
Action Plan

Section 1: Project Plan Goals.

Background

Several reasons have inspired a Learning Management System (LMS) review, including the imminent upgrade to Blackboard Learn Ultra,the time lapse since the last review, infrastructure issues, and support issues.

There has been a significant time lapse between LMS reviews. Ferris has had two LMS reviews in the last 20 years. The first LMS review would have been completed in 1998 when Ferris adopted WebCT. Ferris began the migration process from the WebCT Campus Edition to WebCT Vista Enterprise in 2006, but it is not clear that an LMS review was done to see if there were better technology. In February 2006, Blackboard acquired WebCT. The second LMS review was performed in 2010, twelve years after adopting WebCT, and included Blackboard Learn, Moodle, Sakai and Desire2Learn. After piloting Blackboard and Moodle, Ferris decided to upgrade from WebCT Vista to Blackboard Learn. It is now 2018 and after 20 years of LMS upgrades, it is time to seriously review and consider other LMS technologies.

Concerns

Blackboard Learn has a lot of issues that are rooted in an old infrastructure. Features such as Virtual Classroom/Chat, Equation Editor, Multiple Files and Folder Upload use Java Applets and do not work since Java is old technology. Because Blackboard has not updated these features to work in Learn, Ferris has implemented Blackboard Collaborate to replace and enhance the functionality we lost with Virtual Classroom/Chat. In the past six years, Blackboard has fixed some known issues only for them to reoccur during the next upgrade. One example of this when the left menu item does not stick to the place that we drag it. This is frustrating to busy faculty members because they have to log into another web browser to get the item to stick. Another example is when text in the text editor changes font, font size, or spacing when saved. The text issue is alarming to faculty members who are trying to model professional quality and to students who are trying to turn in quality work. Often, Blackboard responds to reported problems stating that "it is working as designed" or that it is a "known issue." Every day, the eLearning team asks faculty members or students to clear cache, which resolves the issue. The most recent and compelling issue is the discontinuation of Crocodoc and the implementation of Box, which had inadequate functionality that has sporadic issues. The solution to one of the Box issues to enable

3rd-party cookies on each web-browser. These are just a few of the issues, which are too numerous to list here. Faculty members and students are very frustrated with using Blackboard, calling it clunky, cumbersome, and glitchy. It is time to seriously review and consider other LMS technology tools that will allow faculty and students to be more efficient and confident.

The support model for Blackboard is restrictive and cumbersome, which is a problem when using a system with many issues as mentioned above. Blackboard allows two people per institution to have access to their support staff. If students or faculty members have trouble, they call the Technology Assistance Center (TAC), who transfers them to eLearning, who troubleshoots the problem and reports it to IT E-Learning, who reports the problem to Blackboard support. When Blackboard support has a question, they contact IT E-Learning, who contacts eLearning, who contacts the faculty member or students. This process is inefficient, ineffective, inconvenient, and incessant. Support models for more innovative software companies has evolved to be more open and collaborative, allowing faculty and students to contact the software vendor directly for help. Examples of companies using this model includes Turning Technology clickers, Yuja lecture capture, Pearson digital textbooks, Canvas learning management systems, and Hoonuit video tutorials. It is time to seriously review and consider partnerships with other LMS technologies that offer comprehensive support.

What is the objective? How does the project connect to the University's strategic initiatives?

The quality initiative for online learning is to cultivate a culture of excellence in online course development across the institution. To do this, we must craft standards for faculty preparation and support for online instruction, with the goal of ensuring high quality of delivery and documented high-levels of student learning and success. This strategic initiative may appear to be online-focused, but quality delivery and student success is a University goal. Because 80% of courses taught are using the LMS with an average of 49 digital documents in each course, we can correlate technology to quality output.

What does success look like for this project?

The LMS review would be successful if there is a lot of faculty input. The last LMS review consisted of four faculty members and three technologists. The elearning Management Action Team (EMAT) will have an LMS Review sub-committee that includes an unlimited number of faculty members, however, there will be two representative faculty members from each college who will vote for the recommendation. This recommendation made by faculty members will direct the next steps, which would be to upgrade to Blackboard Ultra or to implement a new LMS of their choice.

Another success factor would be the ability to collect and assess qualitative and quantitative feedback accurately. We will need to develop a rubric or scale that would accurately rate our LMS needs as it correlates to the features. It is important to evaluate all aspects of the tool, including: design, migration, content authoring, organization,

course export, communication, analytics, integration, support, training, server requirements, etc. It is important to evaluate all tools, including: ePortfolio, collaboration, evaluation, feedback, assessment, calendar, grading, the integration of cloud-based tool, etc. The rubric must be holistic and measurable.

Finally, we must consider many, demo several, and pilot a few systems to be thourough.

Section 2: Process you envision for accomplishing this project.

The objective of this LMS Review is to allow Ferris to strategically leverage teaching and learning for quality and innovation so that we will be well-positioned to adapt to the changing needs in education.

What are the strategies needed to accomplish your goals?

There are several strategies needed to ensure that the final recommendation for LMS adoption is strategic and comprehensive. We need to analyze our current teaching and learning landscape, imagine our future landscape, consider how technology is evolving (e.g. artificial intelligence and quantum computing), and determine what we need our LMS to do. As we look at our current landscape, we must be holistic and include face-to-face, hybrid, online, statewide, and corporate training. As we look into our future, we must think futuristically and envision where education is going by considering potential partnerships how we might evolve as an institution. We must be mindful of the kind of data we will need from the LMS and be strategic in our LMS selection to ensure that we will have access to the information necessary for Ferris to thrive.

What is the timeline for accomplishing your goals?

The LMS Review should take one year. Within this timeline, the following must occur:

- **April 2018**: EMAT votes to explore an LMS Review.
- **April 2018**: Send the call for faculty volunteers for LMS Review Subcommittee.
- **May 2018**: Communicate product review schedule and expectation to subcommittee.
- **May 2018**: Create LMS Review Action Plan.
- **June 2018**: Research learning management systems and create an LMS feature comparison chart. This chart should include costs and features (see Section Three below) so that eLearning can do a cost analysis to determine the feasibility of migrating to a new tool.
- **July 2018:** Attend LMS conferences to gather information.
- **July 2018:** Create tentative qualitative and quantitative rubric / feedback form.
- **August 2018:** Meet with LMS Review subcommittee to analyze feature comparison chart and to identify which learning management systems bring on campus for informational meetings and product demonstrations.
- **August 2018:** Contact vendors to schedule informational meetings and product demonstrations.

- **September 2018:** Meet with LMS Review subcommittee to analyze qualitative and quantitative rubric / feedback form and determine a systematic process for collecting feedback.
- **October 2018:** Product demonstration/pilot #1.
- **October 2018:** Meet with LMS Review subcommittee to compile and analyze feedback data.
- **November 2018:** Product demonstration/pilot #2.
- **December 2018:** Meet with LMS Review subcommittee to compile and analyze feedback data.
- **January 2019:** Product demonstration/pilot #3.
- **February 2019:** Meet with LMS Review subcommittee to compile and analyze feedback data. If a college has more than two people on the LMS Review subcommittee, they will need to select two to serve as representatives for their college to vote at the next meeting.
- **March 2019:** Product demonstration/pilot #4.
- **April 2019:** Meet with LMS Review subcommittee to compile and analyze feedback data. Two subcommittee members from each college will vote for the LMS they believe would strategically serve the University based on the feedback data. Votes are compiled.
- **May 2019:** LMS Review subcommittee presents the recommendation to EMAT with support data.

What are the first 3-5 tasks you need to accomplish to help you get started?

Before we can get started, we need to:

1. Create the LMS Review Subcommittee of EMAT.
2. Create a project hub using Microsoft Teams.
3. Identify the main objective or strategy for this project.
4. Research learning management systems and create a comparison chart.
5. Present this data to the LMS Review Subcommittee for their feedback about LMS vendors we should include in the review.

Section 3: Barriers you foresee to accomplishing this work

List your barriers. Can these barriers be avoided?

Barrier: Looking at past mistakes, issues, processes, etc. **Avoid Barrier:** There are a couple of ways we can avoid this barrier. First, we can design and communicate the process for this review so that everyone is clear about what the plan is. Second, we can continuously communicate the objective of this LMS Review, which is to allow Ferris to strategically leverage teaching and learning for quality and innovation so that we will be well-positioned to adapt to the changing needs in education. Consistent and clear communication is the key.

Barrier: Fixed mindsets. **Avoid Barrier:** We could establish ground rules for subcommittee work. We might talk about Carol Dweck's theory of Growth Mindsets in an effort to establish a culture that visualizes the future.

Barrier: There may be conflicting priorities amongst various groups across campus, such as Information Technology, administrators, support staff, students, etc. **Avoid Barrier:** We need to have open and transparent communication, weighted rubrics, clear goals, and we will need to be sure to seed input from various groups.

Are there legal or financial issues that must be addressed to accomplish this project? What are the strategies for overcoming these barriers?

Legally, we need to be sure to keep compliance issues in the foreground during the review. These issues include accessibility, identity, and verification of attendance.

While there are no financial issues that would prevent the LMS Review project, finances will be a key factor toward buy-in for the review. Faculty members will think the LMS Review is a waste of their time if they believe that Ferris will not move forward with their recommendation. The strategy would be to do a cost analysis and compare it with budget availability in FY 19-20 to determine the feasibility of migrating to a new tool.

Section 4: Campus Resources

Who are the champions, stakeholders, or decision-makers needed to facilitate this work and what influence do you have with them? Whose support is needed in order to accomplish the project?

The results of an LMS Review would potentially affect most people campus wide and that is why it is so important for faculty members to drive the subcommittee and for students to be included in the demonstrations. We have to be sure to interview staff about data they need from the LMS. As always, it is imperative to include Information Technology.

- **Champions**: eLearning Team: Tracy Amalfitano, Amy Greene, Jackie Hughes, and Andrew Peterson
- **Stakeholders**: Academic Affairs, Information Technology, Faculty, and Students
- **Decision-Makers:** EMAT and the LMS Review Subcommittee
- **Support Needed:** Paul Blake, Provost; Jake Martin, Chief Technology Officer, Steve Reifert, Dean EIO

Who are the potential critics of this project? What are their concerns? Why? What influence do you have with them?

Critics might include people who were around in 2010 during the last LMS Review. Their concern would be that their voice is not heard and that administrators would make the ultimate decision. We will influence this concern by ensuring the process is documented, communicated, and followed. The process includes a large number of faculty members, few administrators, and is being over-seen by the EMAT team. Once the review is completed and the faculty make the recommendation to EMAT, a new project will be created with the LMS implementation plan.

Other critics might include people who struggle with change and cognitive lock-in. Talking about "Growth Mindsets" along with the future of Ferris might give them repetition over time to overcome the struggle.

How can critics be involved in the project to ensure perspectives are measured?

All faculty members will be invited to participate in the review. Some will participate on the LMS Review Subcommittee, while others will attend demonstrations and pilots. In both scenarios, their feedback will be collected. Students will also be invited to attend demonstrations and to give feedback. Information Technology will be involved in the review as well. We will include qualitative and quantitative feedback for the analysis.

What kind of time is required to accomplish this project?

The LMS Review should take a year and will be completed in Summer 2019 with a recommendation to EMAT.

Consider individuals' time as well as overall timeline. Are there financial resources needed to accomplish this project?

Most of the resources makes up of individual's time. Some people will attend conferences using funding budgeted for training. eLearning staff will allocate a large amount of time toward research and project management. eLearning staff will also create tentative qualitative and quantitative rubric / feedback form in which the LMS Review Subcommittee will modify and approve. Faculty members and students will spend time attending demonstrations and piloting learning management systems. The LMS Review Subcommittee will spend time compiling and analyzing feedback.

Are there implications for campus space to accomplish this project?

Yes. We would need to reserve rooms for the demonstrations.

Are there other resources needed to accomplish this project?

To be determined.

Section 5: Communication Strategy

Who or what groups on campus need to participate?

College Deans need to know what is going on. It is imperative that faculty members are aware of what is going on and are active participants in the demonstrations and feedback. We will also need a select student group to participate in the demonstrations and feedback. Information technology will need to participate in the demonstrations to ensure technical questions are asked and considered. The following departments may be interested in participation, so they can inquire about compliance issues: Educational Counseling and Disabilities Services, Registrar's Office, and Financial Aid.

What are their interests in the project and how can those be addressed through the communication plan?

College Deans need to know what their faculty members are doing, and they need to know about system changes since they collect accreditation data. Faculty members need to know about the changes that will affect them and what they need to do to participate in providing feedback. Faculty are interested in quality teaching. Students are interested in learning and would need to know what to do to participate in providing feedback. The other aforementioned departments are interested in compliance and data, though they may not be interested in the specifics of the software demonstration.

What methods of communications will be used during the different phases of the plan?

A representative from eLearning will mostly likely communicate on behalf of EMAT. Communication will be sent via Email to the Deans of colleges. Communication about the demonstrations will be sent via UWN to faculty and staff.   Communication about the demonstrations may also be sent by Email to students.

Who is responsible for initiating and following through on the communication plan?

Because eLearning staff is allocating a large amount of time toward project management on behalf of EMAT, it makes sense for them to be responsible.

Section 6: Short-Term & Long-Term measures to gauge success

What evidence will be collected to demonstrate progress/success?

If the instruments for collecting the qualitative and quantitative feedback are well designed, and if a large number of faculty members and students participated in providing feedback about the demonstrations, then we should have success in collecting the information needed for the LMS Review Subcommittee to formulate a recommendation. The final recommendation to EMAT is the ultimate goal, and therefore, the evidence of success.

How, when, and by whom will this evidence be collected?

The LMS Review subcommittee to compile and analyze the feedback data.

How, when, and by whom will this information be disseminated?

Two subcommittee members from each college will vote for the LMS they believe would strategically serve the University based on the feedback data. The votes will be compiled and the LMS Review subcommittee will present the recommendation to EMAT with support data in May 2019.

How and when will you celebrate your progress?

After each demonstration the LMS Review subcommittee will meet to compile and analyze feedback data. They could bring this report to the next EMAT meeting to inform them of the progress. While this may not necessarily be a "celebration," it is a way to show progress and to feel good about the work being done. Recognition could be made within the Provost's Post, The Scoop, or within the President's memorandum.