

Goodbye Sakai, hello Canvas

BC to transition to new LMS software starting summer 2020

Sakai, Brevard College's learning management software for more than 10 years, is soon to be no more as the college switches to a different LMS, Canvas.

The decision was actually made before the rapid transition to online classes during spring break, but the experience of online classes—and the possibility of more online or hybrid classes this fall, depending on how the pandemic proceeds—makes all the more important the need for a reliable and robust learning management software.

To explain the switch to Canvas and what students and faculty should expect, The Clarion conducted an email interview with James Brooks, the campus educational technologist, who is taking the lead in the college's transition to Canvas.

When does BC's switch to Canvas begin?

The switch to Canvas has already begun. Faculty and staff are already using Canvas and they're crafting courses in Canvas right now. Students should have access within a few weeks if not sooner.

What do you see as the main benefits of BC's switch to Canvas?

Canvas is better than Sakai in many ways. First, Canvas helps organize classwork so it is easy for students to at a glance see exactly what needs to be done for all of their classes. It's

simple to navigate and easy to personalize. In addition, Canvas has an app that allows access to class from a mobile device.

What are some key ways that Canvas will help BC students, whether in online, hybrid, or face-to-face classes?

I think students are really going to love the calendar. All course assignments will be listed there so a quick glance can give you insights into what is due when. The calendar easily integrates with their personal calendar.

What factors led to the decision to drop Sakai in favor of Canvas?

Last November, we started with an analysis of exactly what we wanted out of an LMS (learning management tool). Then, we researched a large variety of LMS's and narrowed our options down to two. In February, faculty and the student government were invited to view demos or each LMS and vote on which they preferred. Canvas was the clear winner.

How is Canvas an improvement over Sakai?

Besides the streamlined student experience

and their app, Canvas has proven itself to be innovative. One place of innovation is their implementation of LTI tools. You can think of LTI tools as similar to apps for a phone. Anyone can create an LTI tool that can seamlessly be added to Canvas. So, Canvas is constantly becoming better.

With access to Sakai ending on June 30, what should BC students do if they want to save their submissions or graded work in their Sakai courses?

This is important. After June 30, faculty and students will no longer have access to Sakai. There is no way to bulk export student work, so if something exists within Sakai that a student wants to use in the future, they'll need to download it now.

What, if anything, should BC students do to prepare to use Canvas in the summer or fall?

Within the next few weeks, students are going to all receive an invitation to the "Passport to Canvas" course within Canvas. It'll show students how to set up the app, personalize their notifications, and use Canvas's tools.

If there is anything in Sakai you would like to save (e.g., graded exams or papers, Forums posts, and the like), **you must do so BY JUNE 30. Sakai will not be accessible after June 30.**

Update: Fall semester to start, finish early

BC will emulate other schools to finish before Thanksgiving with no fall break in hopes of avoiding COVID-19 outbreak or having to switch to online classes

Like many other colleges and universities, Brevard College is adjusting its fall semester academic calendar in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that has disrupted virtually every aspect of life around the world, including the rapid transition to online classes here after spring break.

As of right now, the college plans to have in-person classes this fall, but the semester will start and finish before Thanksgiving with no fall break in an attempt to end before the traditional start of cold and flu season in December.

Brevard College has been working with all the residential colleges and universities in the region to coordinate fall semester opening plans and provide recommended protocols to keep our students, faculty, staff,

and community safe during the pandemic. In addition, area colleges have been working with the Mountain Area Health and Education Center (MAHEC) to come up with a customized and comprehensive protocol in the next few weeks for implementation on each of our campuses.

Specific plans for the fall semester right now are as follows:

- Classes begin on Aug. 17, 2020 and end on Nov. 20, 2020.
 - Fall Semester exams will begin on Nov. 21 and end by Nov. 25, 2020.
 - Due to the condensed semester, there will be no fall break
- Check-in days in August will also be staggered:
- Students will be notified over the summer as to their individualized check in date.

New students will be scheduled to move in between Aug. 9-12 and Returners will be scheduled between Aug. 13-16.

- Students need to limit their guests to two persons on check in date and time.
- Volunteers will assist students with moving into the residence halls.

Faculty and administration are looking at options for the starting and ending dates for the spring semester.

Plans are still being made for student-athletes for the coming school year. The USA South athletic conference is developing a plan for the 2020-2021 athletics schedule following the NCAA guidelines to minimize opportunities for exposure to the Novel Coronavirus.