

Campus weighs in on the transition to Canvas

“I am confident that we have delivered a solid foundation for a successful rollout of Canvas”

BRENNA KELLY

STAFF WRITER

The transition to the Learning Management System (LMS) Canvas has been a topic of conversation for Arkansas State University students, faculty, and staff for over the past month.

“In September 2022, I was tasked with being the project lead over this Blackboard to Canvas transition, with the anticipated ‘go live’ date of July 2023. I am confident that we have delivered a solid foundation for a successful rollout of Canvas across our campus both from a faculty and student perspective,” said Chris Boothman, senior associate vice chancellor for distance education and technology.

A-State Online (AOS), Information Technology Services (ITS), and the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) worked together to train and provide support to faculty, staff and

students during the transition.

Carmen Lanos Williams, PhD., a professor for the College of Liberal Arts and Communication, said CETL’s faculty and staff training allowed the implementation of Canvas to succeed. Because of this training, she said Blackboard and Canvas are incomparable and instead should be looked at and judged separately.

“I don’t have an expectation that this platform is going to be identical to what I just used. If you modify your expectations that this platform isn’t going to be exactly like the other, then, it’s really not that hard. Just learn what it does and do the things that work for you.”

For Williams, these “things” are stackable course building tools, the ability to communicate in a singular platform, and the delayed announcement feature.

Students share a similar perspective to the new LMS. Of the students that were informally polled, 70% of

students preferred Canvas, while 30% preferred other LMS, referring to Google Classroom, Blackboard, and Moodle.

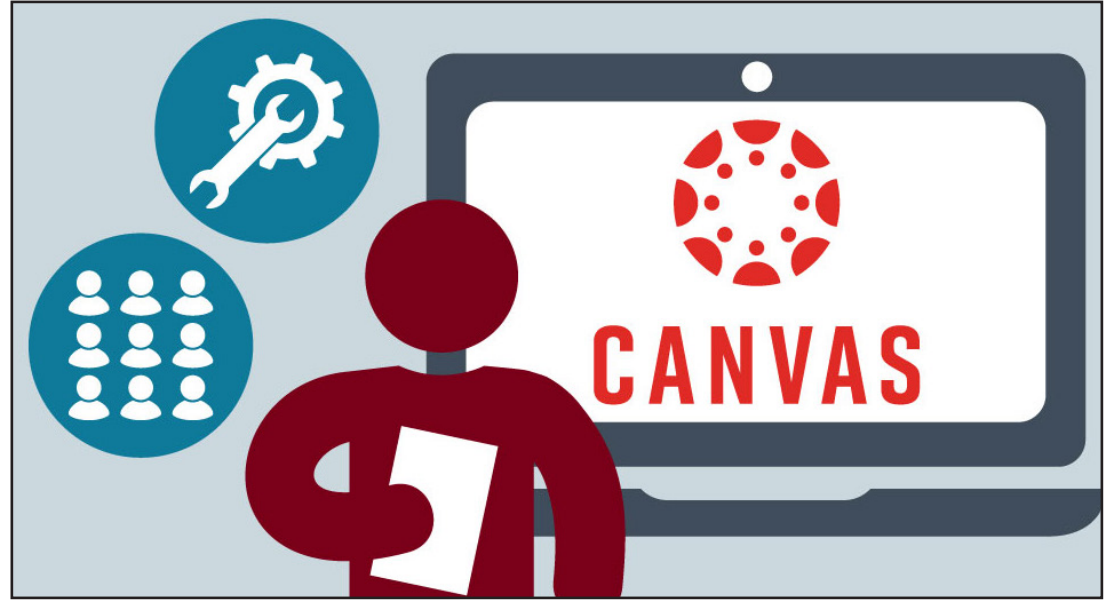
Taylor Sims and Wren Watson are two first year students majoring in nursing and interdisciplinary studies. While they used Google Classroom in high school, they found Canvas to be very similar, due to the easily accessible and organized interface.

Seventy percent of students in the informal poll had similar responses, with the software described as “user friendly,” “easy to use on the go,” and “easier to keep up with.”

Some students even reported having better grades due to the organization and overall aesthetic of the software, specifically mentioning the mobile app.

However, this is not the opinion of the entire student body.

Lake Summers, a sophomore art major from Marion, described the software as “cluttered,”



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF CANVAS

A-State officially made the transition to Canvas in July of 2023. Campus response has been mixed.

“slow” and “frustrating.”

“Its mobile version is far more functional than its predecessor, however, the login process has many unnecessary steps. While it is a step up for Blackboard, it is a convoluted app and still just as dysfunctional of

a program,” Summers said.

Features like the lack of automatic deletion on completed assignments and a disorganized to-do list continually came up in conversations with the student body, as well as the frustration surrounding the

lack of familiarity professors are facing with the software.

“I don’t have the wealth of knowledge about this system that I had with the previous one, but I don’t feel like it is inaccessible to me,” Williams said.

A-State appoints interim assistant director of bands

JACK DOUGLAS

STAFF WRITER

The Arkansas State University music department has appointed a new interim assistant director of bands for the 2023-2024 season.

Nicolas Balla, who earned his doctorate in musical arts at the university of Michigan in 2023, has been hired as the interim assistant director of bands at A-State. He is filling the position after his predecessor, Steven Riley, was appointed interim director of bands earlier this summer.

“It was really apparent that it was a type of community I wanted to be a part of,” Balla said when discussing his interaction with other faculty members during his interview process. “I felt really welcomed,” he said, “it was just ‘we were all going to be in this together.’”

Other music department faculty members seem to echo Balla’s sentiment.

“Whether it’s our chair, Dr. Clark, all the way to, you know, our adjunct faculty, we have a wonderful team and I think he’s going to add to that team for sure,” said Steven Riley, the interim director of bands, and director of athletic bands, at the university.

Balla added he was impressed with A-State students.

“They’re very engaged and want to live up to a high level of expectation,” he said.

Balla said the music for the wind ensemble is the “newest and most challenging repertoire,” and that his students are consistently meeting the very high expectations.

Rike Robinson, a senior majoring in music composition, said of Balla “the level of artistry and collaboration

has been unmatched ever since he got here.”

Balla was hired on a one-year appointment for the 2023-2024 season. The music department hopes to seek out applicants to permanently fill the position soon.

“We hope to search for candidates for more permanent positions this fall,” said Lauren Schack Clark, interim chair of the music department.

The most important thing Balla wants his students to take away from his teaching is that growth comes from change and change comes from self-awareness.

“Creating a disposition of constant self-reflection to create that feedback loop of awareness, change, and development,” he said, “is one of the guiding principles with which I make my teaching decisions.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF ARKANSAS STATE BANDS FACEBOOK PAGE

The Arkansas state band “The Sound of the Natural State” will perform at this upcoming Saturday football game.

SGA 2023 freshman senators



PHOTO COURTESY OF LUCKY GILMORE

SGA freshman senators Kate Malone, Payton Maudin, Caden Kristofik, Alyssa White, Jake Williams, Jesslynn Hughes, Ian Butler and Chauncy Betts.

“I’m so honored to be elected by my peers and I’m excited to be able to advocate for the student body and freshman class specifically,” White said.

CAMPUS CRIME



REBECCA ROBINSON

NEWS EDITOR

Sept. 10 | 10 a.m.

Officer Chase Barnett responded to the report of an attempted bike theft at the rear of 1115 University Loop East Building 3. Victim one stated he secured his bike to the bike rack at 7 p.m. when he returned he found his front wheel detached from the bike with the bike lock still intact. Victim one believes it was an attempt to take the bike. The victim noticed while officers were on the scene the front and rear bike light was missing.

Officers attempted to review camera footage but no camera angles exist for the location.

Sept. 9 | 11:02 a.m.

Officer Caleb Lawson responded to a report of a private property accident at 801 University Loop E. Complainant one stated she was backing out of a parking space in vehicle one and hit vehicle 2’s by backing into it. Vehicle two was parked with no one in it at the time. Complaint 1 stated she had not hit it hard and just bumped it. Victim one came out to check her vehicle after the officer made contact

with her. She stated her bumper had not been sticking out the way it was prior to being hit.

Sept. 7 | 2 p.m.

Officer Keveon Day went to pick up the deposit bag from the Arena’s box office. When arriving, Day noticed the lights to the fire alarm going off. An arena worker told him one of the other workers had burnt a batch of popcorn. The fire panel showed it was the kitchen that set off the alarm. Day then went to the kitchen and saw lots of smoke coming from the popcorn machine. The fire department came and gave clearance to reset.