Tech Snacks: Student Survey, Spring 2025

This Spring, OTLE conducted a student survey in Canvas asking questions regarding the student experience during the Canvas transition. Although the survey only provided us with 48 responses, many of the students did provide some interesting feedback. There were two overall themes in most of the responses: navigation and communication.

Theme 1: Navigation

When asked the following questions, students overwhelmingly discussed navigation:

1. What were your greatest challenges when first using Canvas?

finding ANYTHING and getting lost easily
Learning that most of the content is under modules. I did prefer the way Brightspace had everything broken up into categories like having an individual assignment tab.
My greatest challenges for using canvas was not knowing how to maneuver around in there.
Figuring it all out and where everything is located
All of it; it was really hard as a student who has been at MSUN for 5 years. I couldn't find anything, I didn't know when assignments were do. Even my professors were having trouble with these things.

2. What have you DISLIKED about Canvas so far?

Learning the layout/navigation has been much slower than I hoped.
The learning curve was steep to learn how to navigate in it
the challenges of keeping up and awareness of assignments
The organization and the headings that are unused but cannot be removed not having a way to find things I need

Overall, it appears that students have been generally struggling with the navigation differences between Brightspace and Canvas. Some of this is expected after a switch in learning platforms, but there is one key difference between the two platforms that could potentially be causing confusion.

Navigation Menu: Some faculty and students are used to navigating to a "quizzes" or "discussions" tab in Brightspace, but Canvas defaults to leaving this setting off. Canvas pushes

faculty to link every activity under Modules, but if activities are not linked, and the activity's tab is disabled, students often struggle to locate their assignments.

➔ It's recommended to link all learning activities and assessments under Modules. However, it might also make sense (in some cases) to enable the "Discussions" or "Quizzes" tab in addition to linking activities.

➔ Students have also commented that they appreciate when their instructors use due dates in Canvas, because their assignments will then appear in the "To-Do List" and in their Calendar.

Theme 2: Communication

Many of the students who responded to the survey also commented on the communication in Canvas. It appears that many students have been struggling with how to properly communicate with each other and their instructors inside of Canvas, but some students have also found the Canvas Student App to be helpful.

1. If you could highlight something specific about Canvas during Orientation in the Fall, what would it be?

The message system and working with Vlog assignments. Also TurnIt In training for reading results
Use the app, teach us where everything is going to be and how to email.
Navigation and communicating with instructors
Communticating with instructors has been difficult.
How to communicate with professors or instructors.
Communicating with classmates!

OTLE will make sure to highlight the best ways to communicate with classmates and instructors during the new student orientation in the fall, but it may also be helpful for faculty to incorporate this into the beginning of their courses. Here are a few ideas:

➔ In the beginning of the semester, specifically state the best way to communicate with you to your students, whether that be walking them through how to do it in Canvas, or explaining how they can email you outside of Canvas.

➔ Encourage students to use the Canvas Student app. The app allows students direct access to the Canvas Inbox from their phones, which may be easier for them.