



The Media Resources Center worked in partnership with the Registrar's office to identify the master classrooms that would be upgraded. These prioritized criteria were used to select rooms

Wichita State's Blackboard Learning Management service needs to be replaced with a more modern system. Based on feedback from an LMS review conducted years ago as well other crucial considerations like financial costs and the ease of transition, Blackboard's Ultra product was selected.

- Migrating to Canvas would have to be done in a single, high-impact, expensive move. It would require paying for both platforms during an overlap period, a great deal of time and expense in trying to prepare all classes simultaneously for the migration, and a huge training program that would have to get everyone up to speed on Canvas at the same time.
- Ultra, on the other hand, presents a much more gradual, easy to swallow migration. We can make changes gradually, over the course of 1-2 years, which gives us time to work with early adopters, identify problems, and provide more complete support for faculty making the switch
- Because of our other contracts with Blackboard for things other than the learning management system, we are better able to leverage our bargaining position, and in the end the Blackboard Ultra-based solution is less expensive than the Canvas-based solution.

So, given the financial realities we face now, and have been facing for years, a solution that does not present us with major additional expenses for the migration was the only solution that made sense to consider.

The process has already started.

Over the holiday break we moved our Blackboard hosting service from the Managed Hosting environment to their Software as a Service or SaaS environment.

The SaaS environment puts us in the right place for switching to Ultra – we are on the servers that deliver Ultra for Blackboard, and it is a much more modern, robust environment. Because these servers always run on the most recent code base, we will not have to schedule downtime for upgrades in the future the way we have in the past.

We're there now, and while we did have some bumps in the road right after the holidays with the integration with the university's Banner student information system, those have been worked through and we should not need to adjust those again.

Carolyn Speer, Director of the Office of Instructional Resources, has put together a group of early adopters who are experimenting with Blackboard Ultra on a test server, learning how to use the tools and build classes in that environment. These early adopters will help us work through some early challenges and make sure that our training later this summer is as good as it can be.

The participants in the Ultra pilot have been giving the platform rave reviews, and they're all excited to teach in the new environment.



