



Contract Update, DLE Advisory Team Meets and Discusses Key Issues, and Website Updates

Introduction

We are pleased to share the third in a series of monthly bulletins from my office about the upcoming changes to SUNY’s Digital Learning Environment (DLE), this includes transition for all campuses to D2L’s Brightspace Learning Management System.

**** Please note that because we are still in a “restricted contract period” this bulletin and any related information are considered confidential, for SUNY employees only. ****

Contract Update

We highlighted in our last bulletin that the contract between SUNY and D2L’s Brightspace was approved by the NYS Attorney General’s Office on August 8, 2021 and that the final step in the process is review and approval by the Office of the New York State Comptroller (OSC). The review by OSC is still ongoing and we don’t yet have a date certain when the process will conclude.

As more time passes, we understand that our timeframe for implementation at the campus level necessarily gets pushed back. Still, we remain committed to an implementation in the best interest of campuses, faculty, staff, and students—a cohort approach with options for a pilot before full campus implementation bring campuses online in the new system in an order aligned to specific campus needs. We want to assure everyone that we continue to plan internally for a wide range of contingencies, including if necessary additional contract options with Blackboard that take us beyond the current December 2022 contract period. SUNY’s regular meetings with Blackboard continue as they have throughout the contract period.

Importantly, we are not letting this time idly pass, with internal planning underway every day across multiple teams. Staff across System Administration are meeting to outline initial parameters, existing policy/standards around academic programs and courses, information security, and technology architecture. September also marked the first meeting of the campus/System DLE Advisory team.

DLE Advisory Team Meets and Discusses Key Project Goals and Top Questions

Kim Scalzo, Interim Executive Director, Academic Technologies and Information Services, and project lead, highlighted the end vision for this project (see box at right) during the DLE Advisory Team meeting.

She talked about the benefits of all campuses being on a uniform DLE, positioning campuses to close compliance gaps with key SUNY Trustee policies, System guidance and

Project Vision

- All campuses on a comprehensive DLE environment, with non-redundant functional tools to support technology-enhanced education;
- Standardization of LMS environments and non-redundant LMS tools allow SUNY campuses to maintain or expand their DLE while reducing the overall licensing costs across SUNY;
- Consistent data structures and data elements to allow for a more efficient ways to support and aggregate/collect critical data for strategic decisions; and
- Standardized approach supported centrally enhances the student experience from campus to campus as well as within an individual campus.

standards. Kim explained that a unified DLE supports students as they move across the system, allowing campuses to meet electronic and information technology (EIT) accessibility goals more easily, better support students in cross-registration and seamless transfer, meet critically important information security standards, and allow for more coordinated faculty and student supports. Kim underscored the ability to better leverage System-wide resources—SUNY Online, Center for Professional Development, System Office of Information Technology, System Office of Open Educational Resources, ITEC, and SICAS—when the digital environments are uniform.

Members of the Advisory Team raised good questions and we wanted to share key responses here:

Campus Control

Each campus will have a dedicated tenant, which would allow a campus to see only their courses and accounts and use local campus administrators to take operational actions within their tenant (while students and faculty will be able to see any courses from any campus they are enrolled in). Campuses will have their own URL and branding opportunities.

“All Campuses” Defined

Discussion about the ultimate vision for this project and the benefits that come from all campuses on a common digital environment led to a request for clarity about whether “all campuses” meant campuses beyond those on the current contract. Consistent with the recommendations of the DLE Steering Committee, this plan does in fact, include *all* campuses making this transition:

- Campuses with Blackboard hosted by ITEC or Blackboard;
- Campuses with self-hosted Blackboard;
- Campuses with Moodle; and
- Campuses that have contracts with other LMS providers (including current D2L campuses).

The Path Forward

Recognizing that the transition means something distinct depending on the campus’s current platform, there is a real understanding that there is much work ahead to get to our desired state, including:

- Implementation planning that is inclusive of the campus voice;
- Working with each individual campus on timing, coordination, training, support, etc.; and
- Support of D2L (once the contract is signed), SUNY, and the campus community.

Members of the DLE Advisory Team stressed the importance of planning that aligns with and considers the campus calendar. There were recommendations made about training, having both a ‘train the trainer’ model and direct access to centralized training. Once the contract is signed, providing access to a virtual “sandbox,” a test environment of D2L’s Brightspace where faculty and staff can experience and test the new platform was deemed necessary.

It's clear the DLE Advisory Team recommendations will be invaluable as the transition moves forward. Minutes from this team's meetings will be posted to the Progress page at [DLE.suny.edu](https://dle.suny.edu).

Keep Questions Coming

The FAQ section of the [DLE.suny.edu](https://dle.suny.edu) website was updated this week. New questions are welcome via email to: DLE@suny.edu. Note that answers to some questions are pending the contract approval or additional work by planning teams. As soon as information is available, the website FAQ will be updated.

Visit **DLE.suny.edu** today!

Questions welcome to:
DLE@suny.edu

Thank you for reading and for your engagement in this important process.