Have You Gotten to Know Brightspace?
Broad Engagement & New Implementation Guides, Cohort 1 Announced, and Remaining Teams Launch!

Getting to Know D2L and Brightspace

As of this writing, just over 4,000 SUNY faculty and staff, representing nearly every SUNY campus, have gotten an inside look at D2L's Brightspace learning management system, the hub of SUNY's new digital learning environment. The SUNY community has begun to actively engage in this important effort. My thanks to everyone who shared good feedback and questions, and to the many dedicated campus and SUNY System staff participating in our planning and implementation teams. With the selection of implementation cohorts underway (see page 2), the schedule for each campus transition is beginning to take shape. We hope you will help us to share the good news about available resources and next steps.
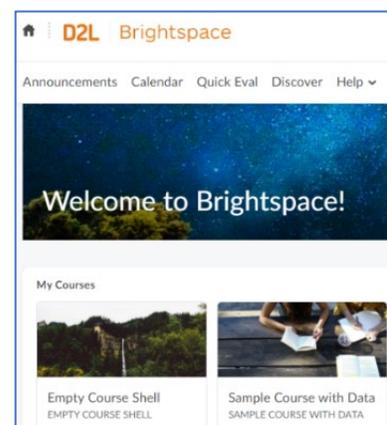
Webinar Recording Available

The first *Intro to D2L's Brightspace* webinar garnered 802 registrants from 57 campuses. Registrants at the October 28 session included faculty (268), campus administrators (187), instructional designers/instructional technology (148), professional staff in IT, student services (147), distance learning leaders (29) and librarians (23). If you missed this session, or the one that followed on November 5, with another 500 registrants, we encourage you to view the recording today (use your campus log-in credentials to access)! The presentation includes a detailed virtual tour of the Brightspace platform by D2L's Senior Solutions Engineer Phil Voll, focused on priority issues for SUNY faculty—accessibility, faculty-student communication, use of rubrics, grading, assessment creation, features for faculty and students to track progress, and more. Responses to the demonstration were overwhelmingly positive. A sampling of comments includes the following:

- "LOVE the integrated captions"
- "Love this video note function!!"
- "Drag and drop files!! Yes!"
- "…Yes, we have a preferred name option in the profile." RESPONSE: "…wonderful news!"
- "These templates are amazing."
- "Neat, clean -- not using 50 different fonts!"
- "I love that I can get captions in French or Spanish as needed!"
- "That is super awesome, our accessibility people are going to be really happy."
- "So awesome! I love this."
- "Great presentation – Looking forward to Brightspace."
- "I can't keep coming up with ways to say I'm over the moon impressed."

Playing in the Virtual Brightspace Sandbox

Designated contacts on each campus also received instructions for accessing a 'virtual sandbox' (pictured at right) for use in planning. Featuring Brightspace's basic functionality, the sandbox was established so that those who will support faculty and use Brightspace have a chance to try out its various features now, as planning continues. The sandbox is populated with two course templates: the first is essentially an empty shell; and the second contains sample course data. To date, 1,081 individual accounts had been created.

Note that the sandbox allows users to experience the core functionality of Brightspace. The final production platform will feature campus-specific branding, include access to third-party tools, etc.

Check Your Upcoming Meeting Agendas

To date over 1,600 faculty, staff, and administrators have heard at least one DLE progress report at conferences and regularly scheduled events including the University Faculty Senate and Faculty Council of Community Colleges plenaries; meetings of Chief Academic Officers, Chief Information Officers, SUNY Registrars, SUNY Business Officers, online learning directors, learning management system leads; gatherings like the FACT2 Summer Retreat, a Communications with Program Reviewers Monthly Meeting, the Early Alerts Community of Practice; and, more. A dashboard of meeting activity will be posted soon to DLE.SUNY.edu.

What Options are Included in the SUNY Contract?

As we continue to work to map out SUNY's new Digital Learning Environment, we understand that campuses want to know what tools and services are part of the basic license agreement. A new resource document, the Summary of Brightspace Core and Performance Plus for SUNY has been posted to the DLE website. Brightspace Core includes a complete suite of easy-to-use teaching and learning tools: course management and design, collaboration and communication, assessment, reporting, and more. Performance Plus provides the data analytics tools faculty need to support student success. Note that everything included in the Summary document is available to SUNY campuses as part of the base license.

Cohort Selection Has Begun

We understand that a key question on everyone's mind is timing—for training, for planning, for when it all starts on your campus. It is the selection of 'implementation cohort' for your campus that sets the transition timeline. We recently issued a call to campus Chief Academic Officers and Chief Information Officers asking them to select their first and second choice of "cohort" and are pleased here to announce Cohort 1 campuses:

- Adirondack
- Alfred State
- Brockport
- Canton
- Columbia-Greene
- Corning
- Downstate
- Empire State
- Erie
- Farmingdale
- Finger Lakes
- Fulton-Montgomery
- Genesee
- Herkimer
- Jamestown
- Monroe
- New Paltz
- Niagara
- Old Westbury
- Onondaga
- Orange
- Oswego
- Potsdam
- Schenectady
- Stony Brook
- Suffolk
- Sullivan
- Tompkins Cortland
- Upstate
- Westchester

Note that each cohort will move through a three-phase process (see page 3 for details), and begins with a four-month planning process.

PHASE I: Planning & IT/Academic Prep *Four Months*	**PHASE II:** Training & Pilot - Early Adopter Faculty *One Full Semester*	**PHASE III:** Production Cutover - "Go Live"– All Courses/Faculty *One Full Semester*

We recognize the significance of this transition and that each campus will have specific needs to be addressed. Know that the staff from SUNY System and D2L are experienced in similar large transitions and bring that expertise to this project.

The first cohort will run from January/February of 2022 through December 2022; the second from May 2022 to April 2023; the third from September 2022 through August of 2023; and the fourth from January 2023 to December 2023.

In order to support campuses in making the decision about which cohort to enter, known cost comparison data was shared and SUNY worked together with D2L to create a Campus Implementation Preparation Guide, that includes additional detail on each of the three phases described at right. This Guide is a good resource for those involved in the planning as well as end-users; we encourage your review.

Final Two Teams (and related work groups) Launch

From the beginning, planning for the transition to a unified digital learning environment has been collaborative, involving multiple teams with broad campus and SUNY System representation.

Moving into the cohort planning process, recommendations from the Academic Policy, Security, and Technical Architecture Workgroups were key.

These recommendations, informed by the DLE Campus Advisory Team and DLE Core Strategy Team—and established within the framework set by the DLE Steering Committee—set strategic parameters for the DLE transition:

Each Cohort Moves Through Three Phases
(planned to take between 11-13 months)

- **Phase 1: Planning & IT/Academic Preparation:** During this time, we will plan out the project scope, timelines, roles, and responsibilities. We will identify the important and unique academic and technical considerations and outline the appropriate implementation actions that need to take place. SUNY will provide "Train the Trainer" workshops for campus Instructional Designers and identified campus faculty leads/pilot faculty that will cover instructor tools, migration strategies, and administration.

- **Phase 2: Training and Pilot:** In addition to resources provided by D2L, SUNY will provide asynchronous training modules to each campus. Early adopter faculty will be the first to fully transition their courses to Brightspace and deliver their courses during this period. During this time, feedback will be collected, and any updates or changes will be made to the environment. Additional planning and preparation for the full production cutover (Phase 3) will continue during the pilot period.

- **Phase 3: Production Cutover "Go Live":** The full transition begins when everyone has the tools and knowledge they need to succeed. SUNY System and D2L will be with your campus throughout, answering questions and troubleshooting any issues that arise.

- Options for campus SIS Integration with the DLE;

- Required use of the SUNY System issued Global ID for faculty, staff, and students; and

- Security requirements for sign-in access to Brightspace including multi-factor authentication and SUNY federated authentication.

The next step was appointment of campus volunteers to final two implementation groups: the Technical Implementation Work Group, and the Campus Implementation Planning Work Group. The latter established two sub work groups around Templates and Training.
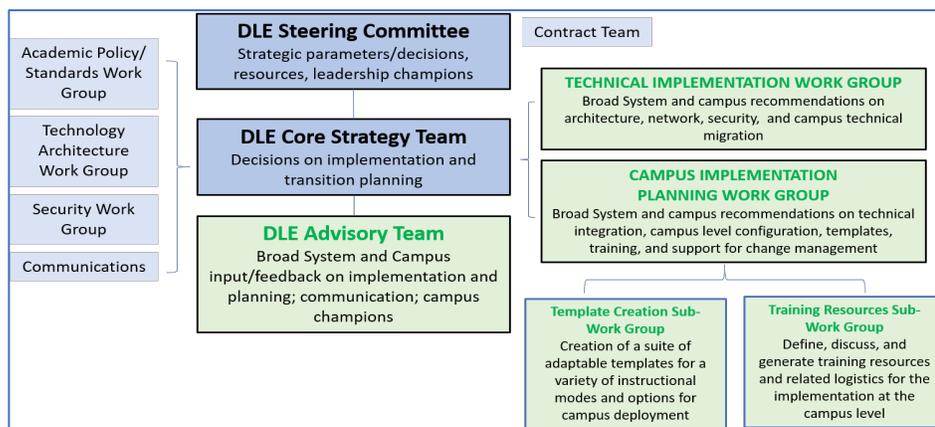
See charges to each group and sub work group in the SUNY Digital Learning Environment Project Structure graphic at right.

All four groups held their first internal meetings and a combined joint meeting with SUNY System and D2L in mid-December.

The SUNY Digital Learning Environment Project Structure:

Why Templates?

Templates help create an effective and efficient course design, and create consistency across courses in the learning management system to support navigability, accessibility, find-ability, ease of use, centralized supports, and to ensure consistency for faculty, students, and Help Desk support staff. Templates also offer the unique opportunity to share best practices by modality across course designs for all SUNY campuses, supporting faculty and instructional designers. The Template Creation Sub-Work Group will design a suite of research-based course templates to accommodate a variety of course delivery modalities:

- Primarily synchronous online, e.g., primarily via virtual meeting platforms such as Zoom®;
- Primarily asynchronous online, e.g., primarily fully online via Brightspace;
- Primarily face to face;
- Blended, for a combination of face to face and online (synchronous or asynchronous); and
- Hyflex, for a combination of face to face, online asynchronous, online synchronous.

These templates will serve as guidelines and recommendations based on what is known about how people can teach and learn well in technology-enhanced environments, and as always, defer to and respect campus academic oversight and academic freedom.

The templates will be flexible, adaptable, and avoid "cookie-cutter" concerns by allowing faculty and their content to drive the overall design of their courses, while maintaining institutional policies, and a consistent navigational look and feel for students accessing the new DLE across the system.

Templates will be made available to campuses to quick-start faculty into effective, efficient, accessible, and consistent course designs, and to meet a variety of course design models, needs, and use cases. The use of templates, adoption, and campus-specific adaptations will be driven by local campus policies.

When Does the Training Begin?

As noted above, the second phase for each cohort is focused on training. The goal is to provide training far enough in advance to allow sufficient preparation time, but not too far from the launch so that the information is still top of mind.

Training supports for Phases 2 & 3 of each cohort have been reimagined to facilitate scaling of professional development opportunities for all campuses and will use a variety of modalities tailored to accommodate all needs and user levels.

Each campus cohort will follow a similar training path with instructional support beginning first. Pilot faculty will follow shortly thereafter, and then non-pilot faculty; both will receive training with sufficient time to migrate and prepare their courses in the new platform. Students will then have access to user-friendly resources to help them succeed. All faculty will have the opportunity to earn a SUNY CPD Brightspace LMS Certificate, with an additional option to earn an "Enhanced" certificate after an OSCQR review of their migrated content.

*This is an exciting time as we prepare to launch Cohort 1 and put
the finishing touches on what will be SUNY's new Digital Learning Environment.*

Thank you for reading and for your continued engagement in this important process!

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