

Changing Hearts and Minds with a Humanistic Approach to Change Management

Leading with empathy and making faculty feel part of the process, Georgian College successfully upgraded to Blackboard (Ultra) at all seven campuses in a single year.



Georgian College is a community college in Central Ontario, Canada. Established in 1967, it has expanded to seven campuses across the region, serving a diverse learning community of over 12,000 full-time students, including more than 6,300 international students from 86 countries speaking over 52 languages.

The college is focused on accelerating success in a tight-knit, inclusive community. In fact, Georgian was the first college in Canada designated as a Changemaker Campus by Ashoka U for its role as a leader in social innovation and changemaking in higher education.

INSTITUTION TYPE:
FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC

LOCATION:
ONTARIO, CANADA

POPULATION: 12,000+

ANTHOLOGY PRODUCT:
Blackboard 

Our process for change management, moving from Blackboard [Original] to [Blackboard] Ultra, was really instructor-centric.

We were putting the needs of our instructors first and foremost from day one.

-Liam Squire
Instructional Design Technologist
Georgian College





The Challenge

Georgian College has been a Blackboard® campus for over two decades. While the Blackboard (Original) course view served the college well, leadership recognized it was time for an upgrade to align with its strategic priority of digital innovation.

With 77% of students being 25 years old and younger, along with a large international population, there was a clear need for a modern LMS that was mobile-friendly and offered greater consistency and accessibility of course content.

Being a multi-campus college, the transition to a new LMS posed a challenge as it required the involvement and support of widespread faculty.

Going that extra mile and showing flexibility can really create lasting relationships that will impact the project along the way in ways you wouldn't even anticipate.



-Faith Visentin

*Digital Learning and LMS Technologist
Georgian College*



The Solution

After exploring all their options, Georgian College decided that Blackboard (Ultra) was the ideal choice for learners' preferences and expectations. However, the institution recognized the importance of addressing the faculty's concerns during the transition.

With the backing of leadership, a small but mighty contingent from the Center for Teaching and Learning was assembled and dubbed the Move2Ultra Team. From the onset, the team embraced a humanistic approach to change management.

Georgian's strategy hinged on authentic communication and going the extra mile (quite literally) so that faculty felt supported throughout the transition. It also positioned the change as an opportunity for faculty to upskill and improve their ability to meet learners' needs.

During what they affectionately referred to as their "traveling roadshow," the Move2Ultra Team met face-to-face with faculty. This entailed traveling to different campuses and presenting at faculty portfolio meetings to articulate the plan and address misinformation.



We didn't sugarcoat things. When we felt that faculty were bringing things to us that we saw as maybe a real gap that we could address, we would come alongside them and say, 'Yeah, we totally see how that's a challenge or an area where we can grow.'

-Liam Squires

*Instructional Design Technologist
Georgian College*

The institution-wide communications strategy was anchored by a microsite written in a voice that connected with faculty.

"We made sure that it was our language," said Liam Squires, instructional design technologist at Georgian College. "It wasn't marketing, it wasn't communications using their corporate language. It was us using real language that the faculty were using and making sure they felt heard and responded to—and that we were there as allies to support them through that journey."

Other communication efforts included a section on the vice president of academics' website, email updates, and staff news articles. These tactics ensured that all faculty members received consistent and accurate information throughout the transition.

The institution divided the course migration into three cohorts. This sequenced approach allowed the institution to manage the transition efficiently. In the end, Georgian College successfully upgraded their Blackboard instance in one year.

For their impressive efforts, the Move2Ultra Team was recognized with the 2023 Award of Distinction by the Georgian College Board of Governors.



Insights Delivered

Enhancing Both Learning and Teaching

Blackboard delivered the modern, streamlined experience that the college was seeking. "I think the most exciting part about Ultra is the consistency that it gives students and faculty when they move from one course to another," Squires said.

The platform's user-friendly interface makes it easier for faculty to create, organize, and make content available to learners. As a result, learners found it easier to navigate their courses, and faculty found it less time-consuming to manage their course content. Georgian received positive feedback from both faculty and learners, indicating an overall improved experience.

Built-In Accessibility

Blackboard's integrated accessibility features advance the institution's strategic priority of equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging. In particular, the Anthology® Ally tool provides enhanced screen-reader compatibility, customizable font options, and consistent templates across all courses. This eliminates the manual creation of alternative materials, a task that previously burdened the instructors.

Additionally, Georgian College found that the ability to control data consumption is particularly beneficial for their international students.

A Cohesive Team Effort

The Move2Ultra Team credits its productive working relationship with Anthology as a key to an effective implementation. “Our relationship with Anthology has been nothing but positive,” said Visentin. “We can always expect quick responses, efficient responses that are really helpful and put what’s best for our institution first.”

Additionally, the college actively participates in the Anthology Idea Exchange, an open online community where users communicate feature suggestions or issues experienced in the Blackboard environment. This direct line of communication to Anthology ensured that the faculty’s voices and ideas were consistently heard.

EASIER FOR FACULTY

to create, organize, and make content available

LESS TIME-CONSUMING

to manage course content

EASIER FOR LEARNERS

to navigate their courses



Epilogue

For those at other institutions considering upgrading their Blackboard instance, Visentin's advice centers around organization and communication.

Focus on the impact on faculty, communicate the necessity of the change, and foster excitement about the future.



Flexibility and support are crucial for creating lasting relationships and ensuring the success of the project.



Hear more from the Georgian College team at anthology.com/georgian-college

Discover more about

Blackboard 

Learn more at anthology.com

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