Good morning:

On behalf of the LMS steering committee, I want to provide an update on our ongoing work to identify and transition to a single learning management tool for the Montana University System.  As a reminder, our main goals in seeking a new and unified LMS are to:

* Provide faculty and students a better tool for teaching and learning
* Lower licensing and support costs for institutions in the long term, and
* Create a more seamless environment for multi-campus academic collaborations and for the growing number of Montana students who participate in dual enrollment or transfer between our institutions.

This Spring and Summer, the system has undertaken a broad needs analysis to better understand the current LMS marketplace and assess the needs, desires, and concerns of LMS stakeholders. This included:

* A faculty-wide survey (please see a [summary of responses here](https://www.mus.edu/che/arsa/LMS/LMS%20Faculty%20Survey%20-%20Report%20Out.pdf))
* A [request for information](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/14ZB72wDIzWu7qTrIL5ekH9h2QTkgqcQz) of LMS vendors, including information sessions
* Interviews with states and systems that have recently undertaken similar transitions (including SUNY, Wisconsin, Missouri, and the California Community Colleges).
* Gathering baseline data on LMS usage and key integrations

This work has informed a draft Request for Proposals, which is now undergoing an initial round of review. We will distribute a draft for your comment in January 2023 before a final RFP is issued for vendors to respond to.

We currently envision the RFP evaluation will proceed in three stages during Spring term 2023.

1. An evaluation committee made up of campus instructional design, academic leadership, and IT staff will evaluate basic functional, technical, and cost requirements.
2. Vendors who pass the initial functional and technical requirements will provide structured demos to evaluation subcommittees composed of LMS administrators, accessibility specialists, faculty, and students to assess their performance and usability.
3. Finally, a subcommittee of the MUS eLearning Advisory Council will perform migration testing to assess the effectiveness of  candidate LMS system’s course migration tools.

Once we have identified a vendor, campuses will have substantial time to transition. We anticipate that each institution, should they need to undertake a change, will have until Fall 2025 for a phased transition. We are very grateful to Governor Gianforte, who has shown great support of this effort by including a $3 million proposal in his budget submission to the 2023 legislature. If funded, these dollars will help support licensing, faculty support, and migration services during a transition.

We will be posting regular updates to our project website: <https://www.mus.edu/che/arsa/LMS/SingleLMS.html>. You all can also expect a monthly email update moving forward. Please do share both this website and updates with campus stakeholders, who we know may be anxious about this work and transition.

And, as always, please reach out to me directly if you have other questions, ideas, or concerns.

Kind Regards,

Joseph Thiel

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Montana University System