

A Secret Too Good to Keep



Cidi Labs Customer Since:
2017

Website:
<https://case.edu/>

Industry:
Higher Education

Institution Demographics:
5,300 undergraduate students

6,400 graduate and professional students

3,695 full-time faculty

Background

When the Teaching & Learning Technologies Team at Case Western Reserve University saw a demo of DesignPLUS, they couldn't believe there was a tool that could enable them to do so many things with Canvas that they hadn't previously been able to do. In addition to the advanced styling elements, they were excited about developing a template that could effectively apply some key instructional design principles to courses that would leverage the template.

DesignPLUS in Action

As the instructional designers and instructional technologists began using DesignPLUS, they fully embraced the many ways that the tools helped them do their jobs much more effectively. In leveraging the various design elements such as themes, tabs, accordions, and module lists, they rapidly elevated the visual aesthetic of the courses they designed, resulting in a much more engaging and user-friendly experience for students.

The Teaching & Learning Technologies Team found that this more intentional, professional design they were able to achieve with DesignPLUS gave many constituents across the University more reason to seek their services. They felt empowered in having a greater ability to show instructors what's possible and to make impactful suggestions that were backed up with examples. Using the Multi-Tool has been a huge time-saver as they sit down with faculty and are able to put up a full skeleton of what a course could look like in a matter of minutes, and then rapidly move forward on the course design from there.

While the DesignPLUS tools were initially the Teaching & Learning Technologies Team's "secret superpower", this began to change in the Summer of 2020. At a faculty training known as Summer Camp, they used a course that had been built with DesignPLUS, and over 350 faculty members got to see what a difference it made. This sparked a great deal of interest among faculty members and incited the Teaching & Learning Technologies Team to not only make a template available based on the Summer Camp course design, but also to start building training that would enable instructors to begin using DesignPLUS. Essentially, they realized that DesignPLUS was too good of a secret to keep!

The template they developed provided a combination of beautiful styling along with a framework for faculty who have never taught a remote course or aren't familiar with Canvas, prompting them to provide information to students that they may not have considered previously. For example, the template has a placeholder to provide Zoom office hours and to set expectations for communications and classwork during remote learning.

“DesignPLUS has been a game changer and allowed our small team of instructional designers to dream big. With our institution’s growing online and remote presence, DesignPLUS allows us to create a consistent look and feel across courses. The tool has been invaluable as we establish our team’s identity on campus.”

- Lauren Rogers, Case Western Reserve University Instructional Designer

In addition to information about contacting Disability Resources and the University’s Academic Integrity policy, the template also allowed the instructional designers to embed some technology information that was key during the pandemic, such as minimum technology requirements for students, how to navigate Canvas, and how to get extra support while off-campus. The template also played an important role in helping faculty transition to remote teaching at the onset of the pandemic.

Impact

Dozens of faculty members across the institution have now completed the DesignPLUS Basic training that the Teaching & Learning Technologies Team developed to begin putting the power of the DesignPLUS tools in their hands. Faculty who have participated in the training are able to launch the tool inside their courses, apply a template developed by the instructional designers, add content blocks to create new content or update existing content, apply themes to improve the look and feel of their course content, and finally, to check and improve the accessibility of their course pages.

The Teaching and Learning Technologies Team have been seeing more faculty who are excited by the possibilities DesignPLUS opens up to improve the way they are teaching their courses. For example, the ability to easily embed knowledge checks (formative assessments) throughout a Canvas course helped a math instructor better support her students in learning a particularly challenging concept. Other instructors have been more willing to ask students for feedback now that they feel like they have a way to continuously improve their courses. For the instructors who have a clear vision of how they want to teach their online courses, DesignPLUS has become the way to turn those visions into reality.

The Teaching and Learning Technologies Team plans to develop additional training opportunities for faculty to empower them to use additional features of DesignPLUS. In the meantime, they will keep using it as a superpower within their team in order to deliver instructional design services to their constituents that they never dreamed possible!



Significantly improved instructional design offering



Easier transition to Canvas during pandemic



Faculty empowered to improve course design