Susumu Kasai

Professor of Computer Science
and Information Systems,
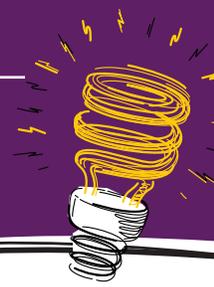Salt Lake Community College

Challenges

- SLCC wanted to pilot a course with all materials and digital solutions accessible through its Canvas LMS, but staff were not sure if the publisher would deliver the support necessary to ensure seamless integration.

Solutions

- SAM (Skills Assessment Manager) integrated with Canvas

Results

- Cengage Learning's tech team worked with SLCC staff to enable the integration of SAM into the college's Canvas LMS.
- The integrated solution allowed all course materials to be accessible in one place, including an eBook, videos, hands-on Excel and Access tasks in SAM, and instructor-created content.
- Students gave the integrated course high approval ratings: 80% liked the videos and eBook accessible through SAM, and nearly as many had a favorable impression of the auto-graded Excel and Access tasks in SAM.

Cengage Learning Tech Team Assures Smooth Integration of SAM and Canvas at Salt Lake Community College

Susumu Kasai, Professor of Computer Science and Information Systems at Salt Lake Community College (SLCC), knows both the importance and the value of collaboration. Although the institution uses the Canvas learning management system (LMS) as its primary vehicle for course design and delivery, its educators also recognize the advantages of digital solutions in teaching and learning. Until recently, however, no one at SLCC had attempted to integrate a digital product into Canvas. For the "inaugural" attempt, selecting the right digital product wasn't enough: Susumu's department also wanted the right publishing partner. They selected SAM (Skills Assessment Manager) from Cengage Learning and are pleased with their choice. "I feel rewarded by this experience because it has been a testament to the importance of teamwork," says Susumu. "This integration would not have happened if the people at Cengage Learning hadn't been willing to collaborate with us."

Cengage Learning Team Rises to the Integration Challenge

Susumu's department had been using another publisher's digital solution in Introductory Software Applications Using Excel® and Access® (the course selected for the integration pilot), but the faculty were unable to use the publisher's digital solution in Canvas because no support was available to integrate it. "This was our first attempt to integrate our LMS with a digital product. Integration adds more complexity to the implemention of a publisher's digital product, and we were not sure if the publisher would be willing to work in the partnership," says Susumu. "We were very excited when Cengage Learning worked with us so easily."

SLCC professors know that they and their students can benefit from the convenience and learning support provided by digital solutions such as SAM; however, the importance of using instructor-developed materials is ingrained in the college's teaching culture. "I have used SAM periodically, but didn't want to use it to run the entire course because I knew Canvas was going to become the main vehicle for designing courses going forward," explains Susumu. "When a digital solution is very easy to use, as SAM is, some instructors stop trying to develop their own materials. We believe that the quality of the courses we teach is driven by instructors' sense of ownership. Creating and using their own materials plays a key role in the development of that sense of ownership."

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With Cengage Learning's assistance, SLCC developed a course that achieved the college's objectives. SAM offered Susumu and her colleagues a flexible solution that integrated perfectly into Canvas while enabling professors to incorporate their own content, including materials relevant to the two customized editions of textbooks used in the course. "At SLCC, instructors are expected to create a Canvas platform for each course, bring materials in, and manage it. Integrating SAM into Canvas gave us the material we needed and allowed us to customize and personalize the course."

Positive Student Feedback Echoes Instructor's Experience

About 50% of the course grade in the pilot course was tied to SAM. Students' gave the course, which was taught in three sections, high approval ratings. "They liked it and reacted positively: 88% said they would recommend the course to other students," says Susumu. "When asked to rate the videos and eBook used in the course (accessed in SAM), 80% of the students had a very favorable impression. Nearly 80% had a favorable impression of the auto-graded assignments, which consisted of Excel and Access tasks in SAM, and more than 90% gave a favorable rating to application problems (also available in SAM) that were graded by the instructor."

Susumu's "approval ratings" of the integration are high as well, and he says he would definitely recommend Cengage Learning solutions to others. "This type of integration solution requires constant communication between Canvas, faculty, and Cengage Learning tech support. You have to be willing to partner. That's what happened in this case with Cengage Learning, and as a result we were able to develop more meaningful courses that help students learn. We were also able to develop a strong sense of community through SAM and Canvas. Students were more satisfied in their course experience, too."