Taft College

# Newsletter

Spring, 2025 | February | Distance Education

“There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work and learning from failure.”

Colin Powell

## Canvas Updates

Stay up to date on the latest Canvas rollouts, updates, enhancements, and new Learning Tools (LTI) additions in this dedicated section of our newsletter. Here, you will find brief summaries of recent changes, new features, resources, and tips to help you make the most of Canvas.

### Announcements: Disabling Comments

Enabling the "Disable comments on announcements" setting in Course Settings will automatically disable all comment and threaded reply options on the Announcements Edit page for consistency.

Read more about [Disabling Comments (Canvas Guide)](https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Releases/Canvas-Deploy-Notes-2024-12-18/ta-p/628037#toc-hId--987487242): https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Releases/Canvas-Deploy-Notes-2024-12-18/ta-p/628037#toc-hId--987487242

### Announcements: Respond Before Reviewing Replies

A new checkbox has been added to the Announcement Edit page, requiring participants to respond to the topic before viewing other replies.

Read more about [Respond Before Reviewing Replies (Canvas Guide)](https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Releases/Canvas-Deploy-Notes-2024-12-04/ta-p/627071#toc-hId--987516915): https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Releases/Canvas-Deploy-Notes-2024-12-04/ta-p/627071#toc-hId--987516915

### Discussions: Peer Review Text Update

The label for the date when automatic peer reviews are assigned in Discussions has changed from "Reviews Due" to "Assign Reviews" to ensure consistent language with peer-reviewed assignments.

Read more about [Peer Review Text Update (Canvas Guide)](https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Releases/Canvas-Deploy-Notes-2024-12-04/ta-p/627071#toc-hId--1796863541): https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Releases/Canvas-Deploy-Notes-2024-12-04/ta-p/627071#toc-hId--1796863541

### New Quizzes: Reduce Answer Choices

Instructors can moderate a student’s quiz by removing one answer choice from multiple-choice questions with four or more options to decrease the cognitive load. This feature has been delayed in production as of December 18, 2024.

Read more about [Reduce Answer Choices (Canvas Guide)](https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Releases/Canvas-Deploy-Notes-2024-12-18/ta-p/628037#toc-hId-879440176): https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Releases/Canvas-Deploy-Notes-2024-12-18/ta-p/628037#toc-hId-879440176

### New Quizzes: Student Analysis Reports

Instructors can now generate a Student Analysis Report for New Quizzes, offering detailed insights such as time elapsed, submission attempts, student responses, and points earned. A future update will include all attempts by students.

Read more about [Student Analysis Reports (Canvas Guide)](https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Releases/Canvas-Release-Notes-2025-01-18/ta-p/626856#toc-hId--1330349115): https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Releases/Canvas-Release-Notes-2025-01-18/ta-p/626856#toc-hId--1330349115

### Rich Content Editor: Immersive Reader

The Microsoft Immersive Reader is now available in the Rich Content Editor across Canvas, providing improved accessibility and reading support. This tool enhances readability with features such as text-to-speech, customizable font sizes, background colors, and line spacing adjustments.

Read more about [Immersive Reader (Student)](https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Student-Guide/How-do-I-use-the-Microsoft-Immersive-Reader-in-a-course-as-a/ta-p/446): https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Student-Guide/How-do-I-use-the-Microsoft-Immersive-Reader-in-a-course-as-a/ta-p/446

Read more about [Immersive Reader (Instructor)](https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Instructor-Guide/How-do-I-use-the-Microsoft-Immersive-Reader-in-a-course-as-an/ta-p/901): https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Instructor-Guide/How-do-I-use-the-Microsoft-Immersive-Reader-in-a-course-as-an/ta-p/901

### Canvas Integration

Atomic Search has been successfully integrated into Canvas, enabling users to perform advanced searches across courses, discussions, files, and more. This tool improves content discoverability, making it easier for students and instructors to find relevant materials quickly.

Read more about [Atomic Search](https://www.atomicjolt.com/atomic-search): https://www.atomicjolt.com/atomic-search

## Student Tips for Success

These tips are designed to empower educators in guiding students towards their fullest potential. We can create a supportive environment where every student can succeed and grow!

### Your Instructors Want to Hear from You!

Effective communication with instructors is key to academic success in online learning. Reach out via Canvas Inbox or during virtual office hours - our Taft College instructors are here to support your learning! Proactive communication clarifies course materials, expectations, and assignments.

### Stay Engaged: Tag Classmates in Canvas Discussions

Actively contributing to Discussions in Canvas enhances your understanding of material and fosters a collaborative learning environment. Using the new @mention feature allows you to tag instructors and classmates, notifying them of new comments and questions.

View the [Canvas Discussion Guide for students](https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Student-Guide/tkb-p/student#Discussions): https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Student-Guide/tkb-p/student#Discussions

### Canvas Mobile App: Stay Connected on the Go

The Canvas Student App provides easy access to your course content. Check grades, participate in informal, ungraded discussions, and receive Canvas notifications from your mobile device!

Learn more about the [Canvas Student App](https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Basics-Guide/What-is-the-Canvas-Student-app/ta-p/31): https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Basics-Guide/What-is-the-Canvas-Student-app/ta-p/31

### Best Practices: When to Use Canvas in Google Chrome

Always use the Google Chrome browser on a laptop or desktop for high-stakes activities. These include taking quizzes, submitting assignments, participating in graded discussions, and accessing external tools like Access Pearson.

iPad users should open external tools via the Chrome mobile app rather than Safari.

## Accessibility Techniques

Explore practical techniques, tools, and insights on how to make your course content more accessible to our student population. Together, we can break barriers and build a more inclusive digital learning environment.

### Documents

All documents whether it is a Word, PowerPoint, Excel, or PDF filetype must be accessible or have an alternative accessible document if used for educational content. In doing so, it is important to keep in mind that documents should contain the following:

* Hierarchical heading structure
* Alt text for images (if applicable)
* Text formatting methods (Example: using semantic lists)
* Accurate reading order according to presentation
* High contrast text, backgrounds, and graphics
* etc.

If you need assistance making your documents accessible, do not hesitate to reach out to the Accessibility Technician at [jbush@taftcollege.edu](mailto:jbush@taftcollege.edu).

### Pope Tech

Pope Tech is an accessibility tool integrated into Canvas with the sole purpose of assisting you create more accessible course content. While using the Rich Content Editor in Canvas, select the Pope Tech tool labeled "Accessibility Guide" located in the footer. The Pope Tech Accessibility Guide side panel will open and allow you to fix any programmatically determined accessibility issues.

This is significant to our students' success in online courses as it can relieve students of barriers and prevent disengagement!

### Color Contrast

The biggest accessibility issue in our current courses is low color contrast at 37.88% of all issues (Spring 2025 PopeTech Dashboards). Content with low color contrast can result in illegible text or illegible significant images for people with visual impairments such as color blindness or low vision.

To improve the color contrast in your course(s), you can utilize the Canvas Accessibility Checker, the PopeTech Accessibility Guide, or the DesignPLUS Accessibility Checker:

* Learn how to [improve color contrast with Canvas Accessibility Checker or PopeTech](https://taftcollege.instructure.com/courses/9392/pages/text-and-contrast?module_item_id=683110): https://taftcollege.instructure.com/courses/9392/pages/text-and-contrast?module\_item\_id=683110
* Learn how to [improve color contrast with DesignPLUS](https://taftcollege.instructure.com/courses/9976/pages/getting-started-with-accessibility-with-designplus-2?module_item_id=744699): https://taftcollege.instructure.com/courses/9976/pages/getting-started-with-accessibility-with-designplus-2?module\_item\_id=744699

## Upcoming Events

Stay up to date on upcoming Lunch and Learns, Skill-Ups, workshops, and trainings. We invite you to connect, learn and grow!

Coming Soon!

## Feedback and Suggestions

If you have any feedback or suggestions for our department's semi-annual newsletter, please email or call our direct supervisor, Jaime Lopez, at [jlopez@taftcollege.edu](mailto:jlopez@taftcollege.edu) or call at (661)763-7845.