Taft College

# Newsletter

Fall 2024 | September | Distance Education

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts”

Winston Churchill

## 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'll find brief summaries of recent changes, new features, resources, and tips to help you make the most of Canvas.

### Deleting (Assignment) Calendar Items

In the Calendar, when deleting an assignment event, the Confirm Deletion modal text is updated. In Files, when setting availability dates, instructors can also set availability times. In a user’s profile, if fields are empty, text indicates that the information is not.

### Course SIS ID on Global Toolbar

In the Global Navigation Courses Tray, SIS IDs display if available. In the Courses page, users can sort courses. Additionally, a Favorite header text is added. The student view button text is changed to View as Student. In Account Settings and Course Settings, the footer remains fixed on the page. When editing a profile picture, the profile picture modal is improved with a Picture Option drop-down menu. When enabled, users can include the phonetic pronunciation of their names on their profile. After recording media feedback using the new Studio recorder, the recording playback displays on the updated Studio player.

### Advanced Discussion Management

Instructors can now assign anonymous, ungraded discussions and configure inbox signatures and auto-responses. They can assign entire modules, module items, pages, and also set availability dates. A new Assign To button is available in Assignments and Discussions. The Rubrics page has been redesigned for easier management, allowing instructors to search and sort rubrics, view where rubrics are used, duplicate and archive rubrics, and easily edit existing rubrics. Additionally, Canvas has enforced the Discussion/Announcement Redesign, the New Course and User Analytics features, all of which can no longer be disabled. A Top Navigation LTI button is available when enabled by the institution.

These updates aim to enhance user experience and streamline course management!

## Student Tips for Success

* Free Microsoft 365 including Cloud Storage:
  + Access your free Microsoft 365 products and cloud storage! Utilize Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneDrive, and more. Work efficiently, store files securely, and access your documents from anywhere.
  + [How to Access Free Microsoft Office Products](https://taftcollege.instructuremedia.com/embed/e91e7686-666f-4237-9ad6-4c7d988ab115) (https://taftcollege.instructuremedia.com/embed/e91e7686-666f-4237-9ad6-4c7d988ab115) (web version), [Free Microsoft Downloads](https://taftcollege.instructure.com/courses/7883/pages/free-microsoft-downloads?module_item_id=542736) (https://taftcollege.instructure.com/courses/7883/pages/free-microsoft-downloads?module\_item\_id=542736) (app version)
* Borrow a Free Laptop and Hotspot!
  + Are you logging into your online courses from your phone? Taft College students can borrow laptops, Wi-Fi hotspots, and other resources at no cost. Visit the [Taft College Library Online Requests](https://lib.taftcollege.edu/HowdoI/MakeaRequestItemsonline) (https://lib.taftcollege.edu/HowdoI/MakeaRequestItemsonline) page for a step-by-step tutorial on requesting these free resources.
* Download Google Chrome Today:
  + Did you know that Canvas is optimized for Google Chrome and specifically designed to work with its features and extensions? Avoid page loading issues, lagging tools, and other technical challenges. Download today! Visit [Download Google Chrome](https://www.google.com/chrome/browser-tools/) (https://www.google.com/chrome/browser-tools/) and click the blue “Download Chrome” button in the upper right corner.

## Accessibility Techniques

### PDFs

PDF files can be very difficult to make high quality, accessible, and compliant with [WCAG 2.1](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/) (https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/) and [PDF/UA](https://www.adobe.com/uk/acrobat/resources/document-files/pdf-types/pdf-ua.html) (https://www.adobe.com/uk/acrobat/resources/document-files/pdf-types/pdf-ua.html) standards. You don't have to do it alone though. Schedule an appointment with Distance Education's Accessibility Technician to get started!

For now, here are some tips:

* Any content being exported to PDF must be natively accessible. Inaccessible content will not be tagged correctly.
* Download PAC2024 on a Windows device to get an accessibility and quality report on your PDFs. If you do not have a Windows device, you can also request a report from the accessibility technician.

### Canvas Account Tools

Within your Canvas account settings, you have a few accessibility tools that can enhance your learning and your Canvas experience:

* **Auto Show Closed Captions**: will automatically turn on any available closed captions for videos in your courses.
* **Disable Celebration Animations**: disables confetti animation in case it may be too distracting or disruptive.
* **High Contrast UI**: enhances the color contrast of user interface components such as text, buttons, tabs, etc. so it is easier to see.
* **Microsoft Immersive Reader**: allows you to read a Canvas page with an immersive reader which enables you to change text size, font, background color, increase text spacing, separate words by syllables, classify and mark parts of speech within text, enable line focus, picture dictionary for words, read aloud, and translation to other languages.   
  This tool will strip page formatting such as headings and links and there may be loss of content. Because of this, please be advised that this tool is not accessible.
* **Underline Links**: underlines all links on the page so it is more intuitive for you to find any linked content.

## Upcoming Events

Skill-Up Calendar

### Engaging Online Discussions

We'll explore best practices for encouraging student participation, promoting critical thinking, and creating a supportive online community. Don’t miss this chance to enhance your discussion forums and boost student engagement in your Canvas courses!

Friday, October 18th, 2024

## Feedback and Suggestions

If you have any feedback or suggestions for our department's monthly newsletter, please email or call our Director of Distance Education Jon Farmer at: ([jfarmer@taftcollege.edu](mailto:jfarmer@taftcollege.edu)) or at: 661-763-7945 directly.