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Letter from the Assistant Vice President

Greetings,

Technology has transformed nearly every area of our lives, including education. In response to technology’s impact on and the potential to transform education, Excelling in eLearning was identified as a UC Third Century goal. Fueled by leadership from the Office of the Provost and enhanced by community involvement and partnership, we have begun to realize this goal.

Together, we accomplished many early successes, including:

- The foundation for shared governance
- The adoption of UC’s eLearning ecosystem ‘Canopy’
- Engaged college and unit partners
- Established the University-level eLearning team

In order to realize our goal of excelling in eLearning, we needed to develop a strategic plan to capture the collective voice of the campus and set us on a path of establishing UC as a leader in eLearning.

The strategic plan is a three-phase approach; this document outlines phase one. Phase two is the tactical plan, the implementation of this work. Phase three will include a detailed timeline and funding request.

Together, the eLearning Strategic Planning Committee has worked to build a large-scale, community-informed roadmap. As part of this process, the team reached out to the UC community to provide feedback through surveys, focus groups and interviews. The result of the Committee’s work is outlined in this document.

Together, we will build on the successes to date and make UC a national and international eLearning exemplar during our Third Century of excellence.

Special thanks to...

A heartfelt thank you to the following for contributing time, resources and support throughout this process: Peter Landgren, Interim Provost; Eileen Strempel, Senior Vice Provost; Gigi Escoe, Vice Provost; Nelson Vincent, Vice President and CIO; M.E. Clark Consulting, strategic partner; and all of the members of the eLearning Strategic Planning Committees and Sub-committees. I would like to also specially recognize the eLearning Strategic Planning co-chairs; Paul Foster, Director of eLearning Technology and Bryan Smith, Director for the Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (CET&L).

Christopher J. Edwards, MS
Assistant Vice President for eLearning
University of Cincinnati
Executive Summary

Electronic learning, or eLearning, at the University of Cincinnati is broadly construed and refers to all types of education that leverage technology-based products and services, including but not limited to face-to-face, flipped, hybrid, blended and fully online courses that employ technology.

Through the Strategic Planning process, the eLearning community developed a collective identity and voice, resulting in the following vision, mission and objective.

Vision
Inclusive, flexible, engaging and transformative learning for everyone

Mission
To create a learning and teaching environment that promotes student success

Objective
Cultivating an innovative, collaborative and evolving community of learning

As part of the university’s Third Century goals, UC strives to further establish itself as one of the leading higher education institutions excelling at eLearning. In order to realize this goal, the university has developed this strategic plan that captures the collective voice of the UC community and will serve the needs of all faculty, staff and students.

eLearning has already grown substantially at UC—over 90 percent of courses use some form of eLearning technology. Coupled with UC’s emerging eLearning ecosystem and the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) phenomenon, students are immersed in an “anytime, anywhere” climate that facilitates their learning and success. In fact, eLearning has grown so quickly, that over 17 percent of UC students are enrolled in a fully online program.

The work of the Strategic Planning process identified four broad focus areas that serve as guideposts for our Third Century eLearning journey.

1. Student & Faculty Experience
2. Foundations of eLearning
3. Building Community
4. eLearning Ecosystem
Community Observations

Relevant observations were obtained through analysis of data collected in:

- over 1300 surveys of students, faculty and staff
- five focus groups to validate the survey data
- in-person interviews and discussions to probe additional details and data points

The below key observations from the data collected were then used to develop and map the four major focus areas and accompanying strategies:

- Flexibility/access is the top reason eLearning is important to the UC community.
- Reliable 24/7 technology support is important to students, faculty and staff.
- Students and faculty believe faculty development is crucial to student success.
- Student access to appropriate technology impacts their experiences with eLearning.
- High quality eLearning can be achieved by adequate investment, innovative pedagogical strategies, instructional design and rewarding effective teaching practices.
- Analytics should be used to measure, monitor and predict the effectiveness of student engagement/success.
- Effectively communicating eLearning opportunities and successes is crucial to fully realizing a shared culture of eLearning.

The key observations were used to develop strategies that were organized into one of the four focus areas. The result is a strategic map for eLearning at UC.
# Strategic Map for eLearning at UC

## Mission:
To create a learning and teaching environment that promotes student success

## Vision:
Inclusive, flexible, engaging, transformative: learning for everyone

## Objective:
Cultivating an innovative, collaborative, and evolving community of learning

### FOCUS AREAS

1. **Student & Faculty Experience**
   - 1.1 Promote digital citizenship and prepare students to succeed in the rapidly evolving digital world.
   - 1.2 Create a 21st century digital eLearning environment that promotes evidence-based learning and teaching.
   - 1.3 Provide affordable, quality, consistent and easy to use eLearning resources to remove barriers and increase access.
   - 1.4 Exceed industry standards for eAccessibility and quality in order to deliver an inclusive, world class eLearning environment.
   - 1.5 Support & help provide faculty professional development that highlights pedagogical best practices for existing and emerging technologies.
   - 1.6 Ensure appropriate and adequate resources are available across the university for student and faculty success.

2. **Foundations of eLearning**
   - 2.1 Deliver a high quality, 24/7 support environment that is effective and responsive to the diverse needs of the UC community.
   - 2.2 Leverage eLearning analytics to improve student success and support continuous quality improvement.
   - 2.3 Ensure eLearning strategies are aligned with the university’s five-year enrollment plan to forecast technology and related staffing needs.
   - 2.4 Benchmark UC’s eLearning environment to monitor and compare our performance against ourselves and peer institutions.
   - 2.5 Collaborate in the development of models to identify, develop and launch new online programs.

3. **Building Community**
   - 3.1 Engage the student voice in building the eLearning community.
   - 3.2 In partnership with CET&L, promote a shared understanding of eLearning pedagogies to further encourage academic excellence at UC.
   - 3.3 In partnership with CET&L, grow communities of practice to promote and advance the adoption of eLearning pedagogical best practices.
   - 3.4 Communicate effectively with the university community to increase awareness of opportunities and encourage engagement.
   - 3.5 Enhance and expand collaboration between central and distributed eLearning efforts to cultivate shared services and best practices.
   - 3.6 Leverage eLearning to enhance UC’s community partnerships by reaching new audiences and delivering diverse program offerings.

4. **eLearning Ecosystem**
   - 4.1 Align Canopy products and services with student and faculty needs and expectations.
   - 4.2 Create awareness of the shared set of Canopy tools while acknowledging UC’s distributed organizational structure and diverse instructional needs.
   - 4.3 Develop models that assist in selection of appropriate instructional tools that are supportive of pedagogical innovation, inclusive and accessible.
   - 4.4 Develop a strategy for the effective use of instructional tools to support teaching and learning.
   - 4.5 Develop a strategy for cloud-based services to provide for easy-to-access, secure and sustainable service delivery.
   - 4.6 Strengthen business relationships with critical vendors to ensure quality service delivery and promote UC as a leader in the industry.

### Shared Governance and University Partnerships

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University of Cincinnati eLearning Strategic Plan | 2017
Focus Area One:

Student & Faculty Experience

Current State

Over the last few years, there has been a strategic shift to standardize key eLearning resources at the university level. Enterprise-focused support and professional development opportunities are necessary for UC to meet the goals of UC’s Third Century plan. Consistency and availability of technology resources, as well as partnership with the colleges and units, are essential for driving innovation and growth at UC.

Strategies

1.1 Promote digital citizenship and prepare students to succeed in the rapidly evolving digital world.
1.2 Create a 21st century digital eLearning environment that promotes evidence-based learning and teaching.
1.3 Provide affordable, quality, consistent and easy to use eLearning resources to remove barriers and increase access.
1.4 Exceed industry standards for eAccessibility and quality in order to deliver an inclusive, world class eLearning environment.
1.5 Support & help provide comprehensive faculty professional development that highlights pedagogical best practices for existing and emerging technologies.
1.6 Ensure appropriate and adequate resources are available across the university for student and faculty success.

Future State

Future focus will shift to a holistic, centrally coordinated eLearning experience at UC that embraces college and unit innovation while realizing the opportunity for efficiencies and scale. eLearning will be enabled by 24/7 technology support that is effective and responsive. We will provide professional development opportunities that drive adoption of a flexible, 21st-century digital campus, while creating an environment that encourages and rewards faculty to explore evidence-based eLearning strategies. The eLearning ecosystem will be inclusive and accessible, promoting learning for everyone. The eLearning experience at UC will become fully mobile, integrated and flexible; this shift will remove barriers to access.

On the Horizon

- Increasingly innovative and relevant models of technologically-enhanced education that drive student success.
- Flexible and personalized education that match the needs of the UC eLearning community.
- Augmented and virtual reality relevant to student learning.
- Physical “tech hubs” that support all aspects of student and faculty devices.
- Support eLearning practices that are informed by learning theory.
A champion for the student and faculty experience, Gigi Escoe, Ph.D., Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs, acts as the primary liaison between undergraduate education and UC faculty, staff, students and other campus organizations. Dr. Escoe seeks to leverage undergraduate teaching and learning resources to help the university further realize its goal of Excellence in eLearning—it’s not surprising then, that IT@UC works closely with her to deliver support to undergraduate students and instructors.

In partnership with the Center for Excellence in eLearning, Dr. Escoe helps to lead key initiatives like focused faculty development; Great Gateways, which seeks to improve student success by more fully supporting the teaching and learning environment; the Blackboard Observer role, which facilitates academic advisors in supporting student-athletes; UC Athletics’ iPad initiative, which gives athletes and coaches access to state-of-the-art eLearning technologies on the go; and the eTextbook Project, which supports and encourages faculty in creating their own multi-touch eBook to replace or augment the existing textbook for their course.

UC Athletes receive iPads to use on the field and in the classroom
Focus Area Two:

Foundations of eLearning

Current State

The University of Cincinnati has established itself as an eLearning leader with over 90% of all courses utilizing some form of eLearning technology. Like most higher education institutions, UC has a decentralized eLearning organizational structure. While there are advantages and strengths in this structure, it introduces potential challenges. eLearning support is delivered through a hybrid model consisting of both college/unit and university-level resources. Problem resolution and tracking is not well coordinated making trend analysis difficult. eLearning’s focus has shifted to an enterprise-wide approach that reflects the diverse needs of the colleges and units — including the introduction of the eLearning ecosystem, Canopy. The ability to leverage eLearning analytics to inform decision making, track performance, and improve student success is an emerging capability.

Future State

eLearning will be a strategic enabler that is student-centered and focused. Resources will be strategically deployed, informed by a deep understanding of the business, academic functions across the university, and market forces. Strategic approaches that capture the efficiencies and advantages of the enterprise will be embraced. Fully leveraging learning analytics will be part of UC’s daily operations. A robust, unified, 24/7 support environment that is both responsive and effective will serve as a key driver for eLearning at UC. There will be coordinated online growth allowing for appropriate and adequate resource allocation that anticipates the needs of students and faculty. Active internal and external benchmarking will help inform future strategy and ongoing quality improvement.

On the Horizon

- Predictive eLearning analytics.
- Increased integration between IT-based systems that support student success.
- An increased emphasis on affordability by taking an enterprise approach to strategies and resources.

Strategies

2.1 Deliver a high quality, 24/7 support environment that is effective and responsive to the diverse needs of the UC community.

2.2 Leverage eLearning analytics to improve student success and support continuous quality improvement.

2.3 Ensure eLearning strategies are aligned with the university’s five-year enrollment plan to forecast technology and related staffing needs.

2.4 Benchmark UC’s eLearning environment to monitor and compare our performance against ourselves and peer institutions.

2.5 Collaborate in the development of models to identify, develop and launch new online programs.

2.6 Establish a sustainable eLearning funding model that promotes access to Canopy products and services across the university.
A complex eLearning ecosystem like Canopy cannot operate effectively without adequate technology support. Forming the Learning Technology Support (LTS) Team was an essential step in reimagining the eLearning support experience. The LTS Team provides support services to faculty and students for all the various features of Canopy. Serving as a “next step” from the Service Desk, the LTS Team helps to keep courses running smoothly, information flowing and the university’s educational systems optimized.

The LTS Team is a group of four staff members led by Director, Emanuel Lewis. In addition to phone and chat support, the LTS Team recognizes the need for community engagement and planning. Some of the team’s extended responsibilities include: creating knowledge base articles and other “just-in-time” (JIT) resources, assisting with Canopy Open Consultation Days, and serving on committees. The LTS Team has implemented the current support model, in which users are encouraged to utilize one of three support channels: the IT@UC Knowledge Base, 24/7 chat or 24/7 phone support.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

“Which of the following mechanisms is most important to your overall success with eLearning?”

Survey responses, Fall 2015

- TECHNICAL SUPPORT: 521
- 24/7 CHAT SUPPORT: 397
- SELF-HELP RESOURCES: 351
Focus Area Three:

Building Community

Current State

Successfully engaging the UC community in the eLearning conversation is critical to realizing our Third Century goal of Excelling in eLearning. Through resources and engagement tools like the Canopy eLearning Newsletter, Canopy Speaker Series and our eLearning Champions, members of the UC community can stay engaged and current on the latest eLearning initiatives at the university. In addition, several communities of practice, such as the eLearning Backpack Program, have been established to share best practices and promote innovative use cases.

Strategies

3.1 Engage the student voice in building the eLearning community.
3.2 In partnership with CET&L, promote a shared understanding of eLearning pedagogies to further encourage academic excellence at UC.
3.3 In partnership with CET&L, grow communities of practice to promote and advance the adoption of eLearning pedagogical best practices.
3.4 Communicate effectively with the university community to increase awareness of opportunities and encourage engagement.
3.5 Enhance and expand collaboration between central and distributed eLearning efforts to cultivate shared services and best practices.
3.6 Leverage eLearning to enhance UC’s community partnerships by reaching new audiences and delivering diverse program offerings.

Future State

We will purposefully engage the student voice and collaborate with the colleges and other university departments to create a greater sense of context and community. We will stay engaged with community leaders and alumni to create a cultural shift that is targeted, pervasive, and forward-thinking. We will be focused on sustainable and consistent approaches to help our communication practices stay relevant.

On the Horizon

- Leverage digital marketing tools to create targeted, individualized communication.
- Explore beacon technologies as a way to trigger and target student communication.
- Continue to strengthen the connections between continuing education and eLearning to reach new audiences.

“I am a better teacher now because of the backpack program, and not only that, the program enabled me to meet and engage with amazing people at this University. I don’t think I would be where I am today as a UC Faculty member without the program.”

—Todd Foley, PhD, Assistant Professor, Educator
Creating Meaningful Change through Community: Dr. Daniel Waddell

Organic chemistry can be a difficult subject for students to grasp. However, Daniel Waddell, Ph.D. makes the subject more animated with tools from his eLearning Backpack and support from the Great Gateways initiative.

Dr. Waddell, who was part of the first cohort of Backpackers, uses a Wacom Cintiq tablet to create video tutorials and Camtasia studio software to edit the videos. Using the other tools in the Backpack, he has also created interactive practice tests and problem solving sets, piloted online homework tools and polled students about which teaching methods work best for them.

Dr. Waddell carefully implements new technologies in a meaningful way, as he knows using technology just because it is there can actually turn students away from learning. This intentional approach has led Dr. Waddell to the right balance of technology in his courses that increases student engagement and success.

“Not only has the eLearning Backpack Project given me access to exciting technological tools to develop pedagogy, but it also has allowed me to become part of a community of innovation,” Dr. Waddell said.

Communities of Practice promote adoption of eLearning pedagogical best practices and promote innovative use cases.
Focus Area Four:

eLearning Ecosystem

Current State

Canopy, UC’s eLearning ecosystem, includes the tools, resources, and people vital to excelling at eLearning. Students and faculty are increasingly using video in support of instructional activities, utilizing tools such as WebEx, Kaltura and Echo360, not only in online courses, but in traditional and hybrid courses as well. Echo360’s new Active Learning Platform is being adopted across the campus. The VitalSource eTextbook platform has been adopted by UC to support pedagogical strategies and affordability efforts. ePortfolios, personal response systems (clickers) and online test proctoring solutions are being evaluated for enterprise application.

Strategies

4.1 Align Canopy products and services with student and faculty needs and expectations.
4.2 Create awareness of the shared set of Canopy tools while acknowledging UC’s distributed organizational structure and diverse instructional needs.
4.3 Develop models that assist in selection of appropriate instructional tools that are supportive of pedagogical innovation, inclusive and accessible.
4.4 Develop a strategy for the effective use of instructional tools to support teaching and learning.
4.5 Develop a strategy for cloud-based services to provide for easy-to-access, secure and sustainable service delivery.
4.6 Strengthen business relationships with critical vendors to ensure quality service delivery and promote UC as a leader in the industry.

Future State

Continuing into our Third Century, eLearning will support accessible and emerging models of education through initiatives that create deep partnerships where faculty can come together to share best practices, use cases and challenges. Our services will be fully integrated and actively maintained; UC will move toward a single sign-on portal and outline clear policies and procedures around eLearning tools. Sustainable practices, such as the availability of unlimited cloud storage through Box, will serve as a model for self-sufficient, cross-platform service integration. Existing eLearning systems will be embraced and supported to secure UC’s place as a leader in eLearning excellence.

On the Horizon

- Implementation of shared services models to promote affordability and efficiencies.
- Seamless integration of eLearning systems.
- Comprehensive approach to online student assessment and evaluation.
- Enterprise approach to ePortfolios.
- A personalized Canopy portal that offers students and faculty an Amazon or Netflix-like experience.

Community Insight

“When you think of the 21st-Century Learning Tools, which of the following tools are most critical to your path forward?”

Survey responses, Fall 2015
Facilitating Student Success through the eLearning Ecosystem: Anton Harfmann, M.Arch

Over the 30 years Anton Harfmann, M.Arch., has been teaching architecture, the profession has changed to rely on digital tools. Mr. Harfmann uses Canopy to equip students with essential software skills, allowing him more time to cover the key material during lecture.

3D software such as Revit has replaced architects’ traditional methods of drawing building plans, so most employers expect graduates to already be proficient in using the software. However, Harfmann recognizes that he cannot spend too much class time teaching the software, as he must also teach students how to design buildings.

That’s why he uses Echo360 and the flipped classroom approach, creating video lectures and software tutorials as well as PDF learning modules for students to view outside of class. Students come to class with working knowledge of software, ready to learn and practice design skills. The video and PDF lectures also reduce the number of questions students have, as they can easily go back and reference the material as much as necessary.

“Lecture Capture has been a godsend for me because it relieves me of the obligation to do an intense amount of software trainings,” Mr. Harfmann said. “I’m still learning and that’s one of the reasons why I love teaching. We’re all on a learning curve somewhere.”
Internal Strategic Scan

The focus of the last two years of eLearning at UC

eLearning Governance

250

Faculty, Staff and Students from across campus are involved in eLearning Governance.

eLearning Committees:
- Accessibility
- Online Learning
- Learning Management System
- Instructional Design & Pedagogy

Engaging The Community

Open Consultation Days
Canopy Speaker Series
Workshops & Programs
Canopy eLearning Newsletter

Building The Team

Center for Excellence in eLearning
eLearning Analytics Team
Distance Learning Team
Learning Technology Support Team

eLearning Ecosystem

Kaltura
- Videos Played: 51,230
  (Summer 2015-Fall 2016)

Box
- Accounts Created: 8,419
  (Through Fall 2016)

Echo
- Captures Viewed: 216,766
  (Summer 2015-Summer 2016)

Webex
- Sessions Hosted: 18,342
  (August 2015-Fall 2016)
NUMBER OF ONLINE DEGREES, SPECIALIZATIONS, AND CERTIFICATES OFFERED

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Degrees</th>
<th>Specializations</th>
<th>Certificates</th>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2014</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>95</td>
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Over 90% of courses use some form of eLearning technology

MAX CONNECTIONS

- 2015: 5,310
- 2016: 6,990

AVERAGE KNOWLEDGE BASE VISITS PER MONTH

- 2014: 18,525
- 2015: 43,327
- 2016: 77,665

MOBILE DEVICES ON UC'S NETWORK PER DAY

- 2015: 54,900
- 2016: 55,959
“BYOD policies are enabling faculty to update the ways in which they deliver content and assess student learning, eliminating paper tests and using personal devices in class for digital exams.”

| Public institutions account for 72.7% of undergraduate and 38.7% of graduate online students | 8% of students own one internet connected device, 92% at least two and 59% three or more. | 48% of students regularly use their own mobile devices to study. | 59% of students say they use a smartphone for class-related purposes. |

45% of instructors say they could be more effective if they were better skilled at integrating laptops and tablets in their courses.

71.4% of academics rated learning outcomes in online education as the same or superior to those in face-to-face instruction, up from 57.2% in 2003.

74% of institutions predict costs to increase for providing IT services to support user-provisioned technology.

68% of students said that they are prepared to use technology upon entering the college/university. 64% say that it is very or extremely important to be better skilled or trained at using technology.

83% of students have used the learning management system in at least one course, but only 56% have used it in most or all of their courses.

Which of the following mechanisms is most important to your overall success with eLearning?

- Technology Support: 521
- 24/7 Chat Support: 397
- Self-Help/JIT Resources: 351
- Supplemental support/instruction: 346
- Support for innovative teaching: 330
- Support for course design: 328
- 24/7 Phone support: 274
- Student services/counseling: 227

When you think of the 21st-Century Learning tools and spaces, which of the following tools are most critical to your path forward?

- Blackboard: 747
- Active Learning: 510
- Adaptive Learning Technologies: 450
- Lecture Capture: 319
- Collaborative Learning Spaces: 311
- Video creation & streaming: 298
- Video conferencing: 289

What are the top 3 reasons why eLearning is personally important to you? Why is eLearning important to the future of the educational experience at UC?

- Flexibility: 605
- Expanded Access: 592
- 21st-Century classrooms: 213
- Textbook Affordability: 182
- Teaching & Learning Efficiencies: 147
- Active, Engaged Learning: 133
- Analytics: real-time feedback: 131
- Innovative/Engaging Content: 126
- Improved Student Learning: 103
- Increased Collaboration between students and faculty: 84
- Innovative Content Design: 80
- Enhancement of Service & experiential learning: 49

Select Data
Relevant observations were collected through a campus-wide online survey. Over 1300 responses were received from students, faculty, staff and other eLearning partners.
Strategic Planning Team

Committee Members

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College of Allied Health Sciences

Burton, Bruce  
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Clark, Lauren  
Learning Assistance Center

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Office of the Provost

External Facilitator (M E Clarke Consulting)

In order to create a data-driven, participatory process to define the future of eLearning, we engaged with our strategic partners at M E Clarke Consulting. In addition to supporting the strategic planning committee, this group played a pivotal role in designing the process, co-creating the survey, analyzing more than 1,300 survey responses, conducting the five focus groups, summarizing the findings from across the university and supporting the development of this strategic plan.