

Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania

How Wharton Online Makes World-Class Business Education Accessible with Canvas

 **Pennsylvania & Globally Online**  **10,000+ Students**  **Adopted Canvas & Catalog: 2018 & 2019 respectively**



With more than 10k learners and 100k certificate earners across the globe, Wharton Online at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania uses Canvas LMS and Canvas Catalog to administer and scale its programs.

THE CHALLENGE

As part of one of the nation's prestigious Ivy League institutions, Wharton Online makes high-quality business education available to learners anytime and anywhere. With such a broad global community, its team needed to serve learners with speed and ingenuity but struggled to do so with their previous LMS.

"We had no control over what we could do," said Jacqueline Howard, Associate Director, Custom Programs at Wharton Online. "It was very limited in terms of the technical capabilities, insight on the backend, and learner progress. The reporting wasn't where we needed it to be."

Unlike schools with dedicated faculty support, Wharton Online is managed by a small and mighty team of administrators who work with faculty to design the courses. "We consult with faculty on building the quizzes and readings, but ultimately, we do the work of hosting and running and building these experiences," said Erik J. Froelich, Associate Director of Platforms and Technologies at Wharton Online. With such a unique structure, Wharton Online wanted an LMS to support a scalable process that could be run solely by its team.

Key Insights

- Wharton Online, part of Wharton Executive Education at The Wharton School, is run by a small team of administrators who needed a strong LMS to be agile in their strategic efforts and decision-making.
- While The Wharton School was an early adopter of Canvas (2010), the Wharton Online team saw value in pursuing its own instance of the LMS.
- Having access to customizable templates and automation in Canvas LMS allowed the team to simplify its course design and enrollment.
- Through Canvas LMS, Wharton Online has been able to scale its executive education programs globally with a small team.

THE SOLUTION

Wharton Online had access to Canvas because The Wharton School was an early adopter of the LMS, but utilizing the school-wide account had its limits. "We needed to move faster," said Mike Marolla, Associate Director, Program Operations and Learner Experience at Wharton Online. "Having our own instance, we could work at our own pace and speed and have all the control we would want." After evaluations, Wharton Online adopted Canvas LMS for its team.



For our growth, Canvas has been extraordinarily stable, easy to build upon, and it's worked well for our needs.

– Erik J. Froelich, Associate Director, Platforms and Technologies, Wharton Online

EXTENDING THE REACH OF EXECUTIVE EDUCATION

For years, The Wharton School has offered business education through massive open online courses (MOOCs), but Canvas LMS is helping to extend its professionally-focused education to those wanting a more comprehensive experience. “Canvas has allowed us to fill that middle ground between the very high-touch executive education experience and the take-it-as-you-will experience in the MOOC space,” Froelich said. In addition to broadening its access, the ability to apply templates and automation in Canvas simplifies Wharton Online’s course design and enrollment. “To be able to cut out the work of building a course every single time a client wants a program and to be able to copy it, or copy parts of it, and customize it has been a huge time-save,” Marolla said. “And it’s quick and easy.” The Wharton Online team benefits from having Canvas because they have the flexibility to operate and organize courses in their own way. Instead of rushing to get announcements or reminders to learners in real-time, the team can schedule content well in advance.

“We’re not clocking in on a Sunday evening saying ‘alright, we’ve gotta get this out’,” Howard said. “We set it up so that the announcement goes out on its own. It’s just been a total game-changer.” The team believes Canvas has made communication more streamlined and effective for both educators and learners. “Reminders trigger higher engagement,” Howard said. “When we utilize these features in Canvas, we’re standing in that middle ground, where we’re providing enough communication. We’re not under- or over-communicating.”

OPTIMIZING EXPERIENCES THROUGH CANVAS CATALOG

Following their migration to Canvas LMS, Wharton Online decided to improve its course storefront with Canvas Catalog. Institutions can centralize their continuing education programs or professional development offerings through Canvas Catalog, an attractive online marketplace. “Catalog solved a huge workflow problem for us, and the reports are helpful,” said Marolla. “We thought, ‘there’s no way it works the way they’re telling us it does,’ and it did!”

Canvas LMS provides The Wharton School with a robust platform to grow its executive programs without requiring an on-campus presence from potential learners or an increased workload from its small team.

THE RESULTS

When it comes to feedback, ease of use is a common theme for Wharton Online learners. “That’s feedback I’ve heard – that it’s easy to navigate,” Marolla said. “And that’s what we like to hear because [our learners] are oftentimes busy.” Wharton Online credits much of its ability to scale so well to the [Instructure Learning Platform](#). “I think that we owe a debt of gratitude for not just the process that’s been developed, but the way that Instructure’s tools have supported that,” Froelich said. “Uptime and reliability have been stellar. It’s not caused us to look elsewhere for technical reasons.”