

# Champlain College

Canvas LMS offers adaptability for upside-down, outside-the-box learning

 Burlington, VT  2,100 Students  Adopted Canvas: 2013



Ranked one of the most innovative colleges in the country by U.S. News and World Report for five years in a row, Champlain College needed an LMS to match its ambitions. With Canvas LMS, Champlain is “setting themselves up for the future” — both online and on-campus.

## THE CHALLENGE

In 2012, Champlain College knew it was time to switch learning management systems. The Burlington, Vermont campus used an LMS with a clunky interface and no mobile app. Faculty struggled to organize content and the lack of a modern API limited their ability to move data. But most importantly, it didn't allow the college to stretch.

“We pride ourselves on being an innovative school,” says Champlain’s Director of Academic Technology, Josh Blumberg. “We needed an innovative product that we could push and wouldn't break. We needed a company that was going to keep growing along with us.”

Champlain’s student body is split in two — half on-campus and half online. As such, the school needed a robust platform to deliver content seamlessly agnostic of location. No lecture halls and career-focused majors mean Champlain students learn by doing. Their innovative “upside-down” curriculum prepares students for the workforce from the very first semester. To deliver this experience, faculty needed a reliable LMS to offload the busywork of content management and free up time for hands-on learning.

## Key Insights

- High priority needs for Champlain's LMS included a mobile app, open API, and intuitive interface — features their current LMS lacked.
- Champlain prides itself on an "upside-down" curriculum that prepares students for their career from the first semester. Champlain's learn-by-doing mentality required a dynamic LMS easily customizable to faculty needs.
- InSpace, a classroom conferencing platform built by a Champlain College professor, complements the asynchronous features of Canvas LMS with powerful video tools that mimic the natural flow of classroom interactions, hallway socialization, and on-campus meetings.

## THE SOLUTION

Champlain led a full search for a new LMS but very quickly it became obvious that Canvas was their best option. “First in class” is how Blumberg described Canvas. “No one even comes close in terms of an asynchronous experience and structure and organization of courses.”

Their timing was right. A successful implementation meant Champlain was poised and ready for the pivoting the pandemic required.

**“By moving to Canvas, we knew we were setting ourselves up for the future. We pride ourselves on being an innovative school. We needed a platform that could match us, that could grow with us.”**

**Josh Blumberg, Director of Academic Technology, Champlain College**

## THE LMS TO PIVOT WITH

Champlain College administrators picked Canvas LMS in 2013 to set themselves up for the future. Little did they know the future meant a global pandemic. Having a “critical mass” of courses and faculty on Canvas LMS made for a seamless transition to remote learning. Now as Champlain shifts to hybrid learning, Canvas LMS pivots with them.

Champlain’s focus post-pandemic is on community building and rekindling the connection between students and faculty. Blumberg said Canvas LMS frees up classroom time for just that, providing powerful tools to organize readings, assignments, and discussions.

But Champlain's definition of hybrid learning isn't a clear-cut balance of in-person and virtual. Blumberg said synchronous learning can still occur online, thanks to Champlain’s own video conferencing platform, InSpace, that allows students to virtually move freely about a classroom and campus.

"We've taken what was previously only doable in the classroom — office hours, study spaces — and now you can do it outside the classroom as well," Blumberg said.

The combination of Canvas' strengths with asynchronous learning and InSpace's innovative synchronous tools means Champlain can create a digital campus that closely mimics an on-campus experience.

That's the kind of innovation Champlain is known for.

## A CULTURE OF CONTENT SHARING

Blumberg noted the positives of Canvas’ easy content collaboration. “Being able to copy course content is a multiplier for your campus. Every single semester, you can get better than the semester before.” During the pandemic, Blumberg said two-thirds of Champlain's course content was copied from a previous semester. Less time reinventing the wheel meant more time for faculty to build authentic relationships with students and focus on hands-on learning.

**In surveys, Champlain College students said they liked Canvas' organizational features, like modules, the most. Powerful tools for asynchronous learning free up faculty's time for the hands-on professional learning Champlain is known for.**

## THE RESULTS

Less than a quarter of Champlain’s on-campus faculty leveraged their previous LMS. With Canvas, over 80 percent do. Adopting Canvas LMS gave Champlain College a solid foundation for pandemic remote learning and an essential tool in hybrid learning moving forward.

“The key to being innovative is being willing to experiment and fail,” Blumberg said. For Champlain, Canvas LMS provides the adaptability needed for an upside-down and outside-the-box teaching philosophy.