

From LMS to learning ecosystem: Enabling student success, faculty support, and institutional agility

Anthology's *2025 Thrive Faculty Survey* reveals strong interest in innovative teaching—signaling an urgent need for institutions to reimagine how their LMS can elevate learning and drive meaningful impact.

The strategic shift

Higher education is facing mounting pressure to improve student outcomes, empower faculty, and deliver learning experiences that align with workforce needs. In this environment, digital learning platforms are no longer optional—they are essential infrastructure. However, while learning management systems (LMS) are nearly universal, too many campuses still treat them as passive repositories rather than dynamic engines for student engagement, instructional innovation, and equity.

To truly transform outcomes, institutions must reimagine the LMS as the **core of a connected learning ecosystem**. This system aligns course design, faculty development, student support, and credentials into a cohesive strategy for digital success.

Anthology's *2025 Thrive Faculty Survey*, which captured insights from more than 2,500 US faculty members, reveals an urgent need for that shift. Faculty reported both high interest in new teaching methods and significant barriers to adoption. While LMS tools exist to support innovation, faculty often lack the time, training, or confidence to use them effectively. Addressing this gap is no longer optional—it is a matter of institutional strategy.

Understanding the needs: What faculty and students are telling us

The survey surfaced key challenges for both faculty and students that underscore the limits of current approaches and point to opportunities for change:

- **Only 18%** of faculty regularly explore advanced LMS features
- **26%** say a lack of time is the primary barrier to improving instruction
- **33%** report strong support from their institution to re-engage students
- **40%** believe student motivation has declined
- **41%** cite mental health as a significant barrier to student success

These findings reflect a post-pandemic reality in which instructors are overextended, and students are struggling to cope. Faculty members are interested in personalized learning, project-based experiences, and even AI, but they need tools that are **intuitive, time-saving, and seamlessly integrated into their daily workflows** (Anthology, 2025; Tyton Partners, 2024).

Building the ecosystem: A strategic role for the LMS

Transforming the LMS into a connected learning ecosystem requires more than adopting new technologies. It requires rethinking how digital tools support faculty and student needs across the whole learning experience.

Anthology's platform delivers that integrated support. **Anthology® Blackboard** offers a streamlined and intuitive course experience that reduces administrative burden and connects instructors to meaningful student analytics. The **AI Design Assistant in Blackboard** enables faculty to generate learning modules quickly, embed formative checks, and iterate on content using generative AI—all while maintaining academic control. **Anthology® Ally** ensures accessibility is embedded by design, not added after the fact, and **Anthology® Milestone** supports discoverable microcredentials and learning pathways tied to skills-based outcomes.

Together, these tools support an ecosystem that connects instruction, support services, analytics, and credentials—helping institutions break down silos and create cohesive digital experiences.

Institutional impact: Efficiency, equity, and outcomes

Transforming the LMS into a connected ecosystem yields tangible benefits for institutions. When digital learning tools are integrated thoughtfully, student success becomes more actionable and faculty innovation more scalable. Institutions can see **improved retention and completion rates** by leveraging analytics and early alerts that surface actionable insights before students fall through the cracks (Corrin et al., 2019; Tyton Partners, 2024). Faculty gain time and clarity through **efficiency tools that automate routine tasks**, surface course-level engagement trends, and support real-time adjustments to instruction (Anthology, 2024b). Ecosystems like Anthology also promote **compliance and equity**, with accessibility embedded at every level, ensuring that all learners can fully participate without requiring one-off accommodations (EDUCAUSE, 2024b). Finally, institutions gain agility through **skills-based credentialing pathways** that better align academic programs with workforce expectations (Coursera, 2025; Jobs for the Future, 2025). These benefits reflect more than product capabilities; they demonstrate what is possible when institutions treat the LMS not as a tool, but as **core strategic infrastructure** supporting the institutional mission, scale, and sustainability (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

The path forward

Modernizing the LMS is no longer a technical upgrade—it is a strategic imperative. With the right tools, institutions can expand access, support teaching excellence, and deliver high-quality, inclusive learning experiences that scale.

The survey indicates that faculty members want to innovate. Students need more relevant, supportive, and motivating learning environments. Institutions have the opportunity to make digital learning work for everyone—if they are willing to transition from an LMS to an ecosystem.

A call to action for academic leaders

To realize the promise of a connected learning ecosystem, academic leaders must lead with intentionality. The findings from the *2025 Thrive Faculty Survey* and supporting research point to four key priorities:

1. Champion a strategic vision for the LMS

Reposition the LMS as core academic infrastructure—central to student success, faculty support, and institutional agility. This shift requires cross-functional collaboration and a shared commitment to using digital tools strategically, not just operationally.

2. Invest in practical faculty enablement

With only 18% of faculty regularly using advanced LMS features and 26% citing time as a key barrier, leaders must support scalable, time-saving tools and integrated professional development—like AI-assisted design and built-in accessibility.

3. Connect ecosystem tools to learning outcomes

Ensure tools like analytics, microcredentials, and AI support real-time instruction and skills-based learning. Faculty and students are open to innovation—what's needed is alignment between platform capabilities and meaningful academic goals.

4. Lead with equity and student motivation in mind

With 40% of faculty seeing declining motivation and 41% highlighting mental health barriers, academic leaders must prioritize inclusive design, early alerts, and learning pathways that re-engage and support the whole student.

Learn more at anthology.com or [contact us](#).

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