

# CASE STUDY:

How William Carey University College of Osteopathic Medicine Improved student productivity, plus, average first-time pass rates for the COMLEX Level I with Cram Fighter



**CRAM FIGHTER**

## BACKGROUND:



### SCHOOL OVERVIEW:

#### **William Carey University College of Osteopathic Medicine (WCUCOM)**

was founded in 2010 and is located in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. WCUCOM is the state's second medical school with a total enrollment of just over 400 medical students. WCUCOM aims to offer medical students pursuing a Doctorate of Osteopathic Medicine "the knowledge, skills, and understanding to provide compassionate healthcare wherever they choose to practice." It is also the mission of WCUCOM to focus on training osteopathic physicians who are committed to provide services "to the medically underserved and diverse populations of the state, region, and nation."

### CRAM FIGHTER OVERVIEW:

**Cram Fighter** is an automated study scheduling solution used by thousands of medical school students to prepare for medical board exams such as the USMLE Step 1 and the COMLEX Level 1. Cram Fighter allows medical students to easily create and manage daily study schedules to keep them on track and accountable, so they get through all the materials they've chosen to prepare for the boards. Cram Fighter also allows students to add course syllabi to student study schedules, to help them manage the ongoing deliverables that come with their med school coursework.

## THE CHALLENGE:

- ✓ Find a solution to organize both curriculum and board prep
- ✓ Support academic content, plus board prep resource organization
- ✓ Facilitate self-sufficiency, plus allow for faculty monitoring



Organization and study strategies can have a strong impact on student academic performance. In medical school the depth, breadth and volume of information can be overwhelming and student ability to access and organize material can be a challenge. In addition, the focus on high-stakes exams such as medical boards adds confounding factors to organizational skills for academic success.

Numerous tools exist for curriculum mapping and organization, as well board study and preparation. However, WCUCOM wanted an innovative solution that combined both curriculum and board prep, to help improve and maintain the study skills and organization for all of WCUCOM's medical students, not just those who required remediation. The solution needed to support all

school-driven academic content, including lectures and suggested and required resources, as well as popular student-driven commercial study resources for both coursework and medical board preparation. In addition, the solution also needed to allow flexible structure that enabled creation of an evolving study plan which could foster practice in organization, advanced planning, spaced repetition, interleaving and metacognition. Finally, the solution needed to facilitate self-sufficiency and allow for faculty monitoring to foster student success and maintain a level of continuity and familiar structure when failure occurred and remediation was required.

## THE SOLUTION:

- ✓ Monitor individual students with administrative dashboard feature
- ✓ Create sample study plans to help students take control of their own schedules
- ✓ Empower and support students over the entire school year



**WCUCOM** wanted to improve overall study skills/organization for students, using the theory of adult learning with a guided scaffolding approach. WCUCOM believed that the school could improve students' overall study skills by helping them take control of their own study planning from the outset, instead of only when they became academically at-risk, needing help and intervention from learning specialist staff.

After a thorough review of available products, WCUCOM chose Cram Fighter because the company was open to working with WCUCOM to create innovative curriculum map and medical student preclinical structures that empowered students to build and manage study plans for coursework, plus supported their study schedules through the entire school year.

An administrative dashboard provided by Cram Fighter allowed WCUCOM's academic counseling and faculty to access and monitor individual student study plan performance, to make suggestions, and to create sample study plans that could be shared with students. In addition to the dashboard, Cram Fighter's student success team worked closely with William Carey's administrators to make sure students stayed on track with their study plans.

WCUCOM first purchased Cram Fighter in 2016 for first-year students, to be used as an aid for their coursework. Second-year students were surveyed and if they requested, they also received Cram Fighter accounts, so they could use the product to build and manage study schedules as they worked toward their COMLEX Level 1 board exam and if they chose, their USMLE Step 1 board exam.

## RESULTS:



- ✓ WCUCOM saw an overall 11.04% increase in the first-time COMLEX 1 pass rate
- ✓ Students reported satisfaction, feeling connectedness and support during remediation
- ✓ Even after a natural disaster, Cram Fighter maintained structure for affected students

For the 2016-17 school year, WCUCOM saw an increase in student-reported ability to manage coursework using Cram Fighter. One metric WCUCOM tracked was the number of students who built and managed their work in Cram Fighter study schedules. WCUCOM saw over 62% of students using their Cram Fighter schedules on a near-daily basis.

In addition, WCUCOM was pleased to see the results from the second-year class who were using Cram Fighter to manage their study plans for the COMLEX Level 1 and USMLE Step 1. Sixty-seven second-year students asked for and used Cram Fighter. Though no statistical analysis has been completed at this time, WCUCOM saw an overall 11.04% increase in the COMLEX 1 first time pass rate for this second-year student cohort.

Qualitative results also demonstrated student satisfaction in the quality and usefulness of the study plans created with Cram Fighter. Students reported satisfaction with the feeling of connectedness and support from the school as they completed their remediation

process in coursework, or to retake the COMLEX 1 board exam. With the added guidance on building detailed daily study plans with Cram Fighter, which kept these students on track as they worked toward their exam, WCUCOM achieved the highest first time pass rate for the COMLEX Level 1 exam in the history of the school.

It is also important to note that on January 21, 2017, Hattiesburg, MS was hit with an F3 tornado. This significantly damaged the WCUCOM campus and displaced students and curriculum. Our school relocated to University of Southern Mississippi and began classes in less than a week following the tornado. It was assumed that student performance might suffer due to disruption in location, as well as due to the unintended additional stress commonly experienced with any natural disaster. Though the impact of this event could not be statistically analyzed, the resources provided by Cram Fighter provided a greater value and utility than we could have anticipated - maintaining organization and structure in study plans for students.

## **SUMMARY:**

Through the implementation of an integrated automated study planning and management solution, with a back-end administrator dashboard/monitoring system from Cram Fighter, WCUCOM facilitated a significant improvement for their first-year medical students' efficiency and productivity.

WCUCOM also improved second-year medical student first-time pass rate for the COMLEX Level I Board Exam with students achieving the highest first time pass rate for the COMLEX Level 1 exam in the history of the school.

***“WCUCOM facilitated a significant improvement for their first-year medical students’ efficiency and productivity.”***