Case Study

Ozarks Technical Community College

Digital Course Solution Motivates Students to Read and Engage in Course Content

Tim Rogers wanted to improve overall scores and pass rates in his traditional and online courses. Connect / LearnSmart has made that possible. After implementing Connect / LearnSmart, Rogers noted that his final exam scores increased by an average of 10% and his student pass rates have increased by almost 5%. Further, 13% more students earned As and 8% more students earned Bs while 5% fewer students earned Ds and 4% fewer students failed the course. Rogers was also able to spend more time prepping for lecture and identifying topics students struggled with and less time grading and reviewing homework by using Connect / LearnSmart.

Institution Profile

Ozarks Technical Community College (OTC), located in Springfield, Missouri, was founded in 1990 to promote student learning through accessible, high-quality, and affordable workforce training and technical education opportunities. Over 15,000 students enroll in OTC every year and can earn associate’s degrees in art, science, and education. Other programs of study include biological clinical sciences, allied health, business, marketing, and accounting.

Course Description

The course objective is for students to have a basic understanding of business terms and principles including entrepreneurship, management, human resources, marketing, and finance. Various aspects of business are covered including: economics, production, personnel, accounting, data processing, laws/regulations, and international trade. Experience toward the things the student doesn’t know rather than what the student has already grasped is incredible, especially when there are huge numbers of students involved. This experience allows the course to be individualized for each student rather than offering a one-size-fits-all, 'canned' course experience.

Course Grade: The grade is determined by: Exams (60%), Connect (20%), Business Plan (15%), and Other (5%).

Digital Product in Use: Connect® Introduction to Business

Course Name: BUS 110 Principles of Business

Course Type: Traditional and Online

Credit Hours: 3 hours


Instructor Name: Tim Rogers

Enrollment: 30 students per section; 750/ year (university total)

Case Study Term:
Spring / Summer 2009 (without Connect / LearnSmart) and Spring / Summer 2014 (with Connect / LearnSmart)

“Less time spent grading homework assignments by far. My time has gone from about 8 hours per week on average to 2 hours per week now...love LearnSmart!”

- Tim Rogers

Implementation of McGraw-Hill Connect / LearnSmart

Before switching to Connect / LearnSmart, Rogers used a textbook that had no digital component. He was manually making up assignments, worksheets, and quizzes to try to engage students and keep them progressing throughout the semester. He wanted to find a digital tool that provided meaningful homework assignments to help provide a foundation of major concepts and terms in the course. Connect / LearnSmart is that tool. “Learning the vocabulary of business is one of our major objectives in this course, and Connect has helped make that possible," Rogers said. Now, when Rogers teaches a traditional seated class, he requires a 30-40 minute LearnSmart module completed for
each chapter prior to coming to class. For his online classes, he requires one LearnSmart and one to two other Connect assignments completed for each chapter. These assignments are due prior to taking the unit exam. Rogers uses the “Most Frequently Missed Questions” report the most. He tailors his lecture directly to his real classroom data making his lectures more efficient and immediately useful for the students.

Results Achieved
Before using Connect / LearnSmart, 18% of Rogers’ students earned As, 27% earned Bs, and 36% earned Cs (see Figure 1). After implementing Connect / LearnSmart, the students earning As increased to 31% -- a growth of 13%. The number of students earning Bs jumped from 27% to 35% -- an increase of 8%. Five percent (5%) fewer students earned Ds and 4% fewer students failed.

Rogers believes LearnSmart / Connect has made a positive impact in how he is able to prepare a lecture and in how the students are able to study for exams. Since implementing Connect / LearnSmart, he’s noticed that more students actually “shout out” answers to his questions during lecture. “Anytime this happens it’s earth shattering to me!” Students are engaged and learning more in his lectures because Rogers tailors his lectures to the topics the students are struggling to understand. “I do not focus on the vocabulary nearly as much since using Connect and LearnSmart. The students are getting that aspect of the class through the modules in LearnSmart, so I tend to just try to actually apply the information during my class time. This has been a significant improvement in my opinion.” Student scores show the results: Final exam scores improved by an average of 10% (see Figure 2) and the number of students who passed the course expanded by nearly 5% (see Figure 3).

“Connect / LearnSmart helps move the ball forward, and this is working where what I was doing before was not.”

Additionally, because Rogers spends less time outside of the classroom grading homework, he can spend more time prepping for lecture (see Figure 4). He now has the time to research articles and discover more innovative learning techniques to bring to the classroom. “This has been a large plus!” Rogers said.

Conclusion
The pass rate for Rogers’ course increased by nearly 5% and the number of students earning As and Bs improved by 13% and 8% respectively because more students are engaged in the homework and in the lectures. Students say they “actually really like LearnSmart” because the learning modules help them feel better prepared for exam questions. As a result, final exam scores have increased by an average of 10%. Further, Rogers doesn’t have to spend hours reviewing homework or grading any longer; instead, he can choose to spend more time researching innovative techniques that will continue to engage students and, as a result, improve test scores and passing rates.