

CASE STUDY

GREENVILLE TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Connect Improves Student Comprehension of Material and Increases Pass Rates and Quiz Scores

Professor Hanna needed a tool that would help engage students with low levels of reading comprehension. She found the perfect solution in *Connect Psychology*. The interactive activities and audio/video examples boosted student's confidence and freed up time for more active, dynamic discussions in the classroom. As a result, there has been better comprehension of the textbook and a positive impact on grades, test scores and self-efficacy.

Institution Profile

Greenville Technical College is located in Greenville County, South Carolina. Founded in 1960, it began operation in September 1962 and provides academic opportunities to over 14,000 students at four different campuses. The college offers over 100 courses of study with Associate Degrees in Arts & Science, Health Services, Technology and Business. Greenville is regionally accredited with many students going on to complete their four-year degree at Clemson, USC, and the College of Charleston.

"The LearnSmart modules have really engaged students with the subject matter. They are trying to understand the material rather than just memorize the material. This happens in face-to-face and online classes. My online students send me screenshots of the items they miss and ask for clarification if they still don't understand the concept after re-reading the book. In the past, students didn't know what they were struggling with until the test. Now they know ahead of time."

Implementation

Course Description:

This online course presents the topics and concepts in the science of behavior: scientific method, biological bases for behavior, perception, motivation, learning, memory, development, personality, abnormal behavior, therapeutic techniques, and social psychology.

Course Grade:

- 15% of the final grade is based on *LearnSmart* module Average (1/chapter)
- 15% Assignment Average (1/chapter)
- 20% Unit Quiz Average (5/semester, 4 highest grades count)

Digital Product in Use:

Connect® Psychology

Course Name:

General Psychology

Course Type:

Face-to-face and Online

Credit Hours:

3 hours

Textbook in Use:

Experience Psychology: Greenville Tech Edition by Laura A. King

Instructor Name:

Moira Hanna, Ph.D.

Enrollment:

100/term (instructor total);
2200-3000/year (college total)

Case Study Term:

Spring 2010 (without *Connect/LearnSmart*) and Spring 2011 (with *Connect/LearnSmart*)

"Prior to Connect, I was spoon-feeding, for lack of a better term, definitions to my students during lectures. Once they started taking a more active role in their learning with the LearnSmart modules, I stopped focusing on the basics."

- Moira Hanna, Ph.D.



- 25% Midterm Exam
- 25% Final Exam

Implementation of *Connect Psychology*

Professor Hanna needed a well-organized digital component that helped students comprehend the material in the textbook.

“Because our General Psychology class has very few prerequisites it is not uncommon to have a classroom of students who are not comprehending the reading,” she says. “We felt the *LearnSmart* module would help them understand what they were reading and at the same time free up some of our class time to concentrate on actually using the information being learned. Additionally, we were looking for a digital product that would work seamlessly with our LMS, *Blackboard*.”

She started with the *LearnSmart* module but eventually implemented other components of *Connect*. “In particular, I require many interactive activities as part of the chapter,” she says. “The students really jumped on board after using these. They could see how their work with the text, the lectures, and the *LearnSmart* modules were helping them apply what they were learning. As students become more comfortable and familiar with using online texts, I hope to incorporate more use of the Smartbook into my classes.”

Over the past few years, Professor Hanna has witnessed her students grow to appreciate the *Connect* tools. “I often ask my students for feedback. At the beginning of the semester they sometimes feel the *LearnSmart* modules are time-intensive, but as the semester progresses and they see how the tools should be used (as a supplement to reading - not as a replacement for reading), they begin to tell me that they have changed their minds about the modules. After the first test, I still have skeptics, but by the second test, they completely understand the benefits of using *Connect*.”

With *Connect* taking care of basic concepts and definitions, Professor Hanna has been able to change the content and structure of her lectures. “I spend more time going over practical applications of the theories and concepts rather than drilling definitions. It also allows me to spend more time on the really challenging concepts than I did in the past.” With *Connect* students are performing better on tests so she doesn’t have to spend as much time on definitions and basic theories. This has freed her to concentrate on the big picture, and the application of psychology in everyday life.

The auto-grading feature means she doesn’t have to spend as much time grading. Plus, integration with her school’s Learning Management System, *Blackboard*, also cuts down on the time entering grades. “I have been impressed with the accuracy of grade transfer from *Connect* to *Blackboard*. My students like knowing that they can check their grades in their full grade book on *Blackboard* rather than having to bounce back and forth between *Connect* and *Blackboard*.” Additionally, the single sign-on feature makes it easier for students and teachers to access assignments on a regular basis. Students don’t have to actively type in yet another username and password to work on their coursework.

The many advanced reports of *Connect* have helped Professor Hanna pinpoint students who need extra help. “By looking at the individual student performance report I can see if they are using all of the practice tools I have set up for them,” she says. “And the module reports helps me keep track of challenging concepts so I can offer additional resources and devote more lecture time to the concept.”

Results Achieved

Professor Hanna has observed students spending more time with the material, resulting in better understanding of the concepts presented in the text and lecture. After implementing *Connect/LearnSmart*, (Fig. 1) quiz scores of students who used *LearnSmart* module to those who did not show an average jump from 56.82% to 70% - more than a 13% increase. (see Figure 2). Student engagement in class has also improved. “Because students are required to read and complete *Connect* assignments prior to class, students are more engaged during class discussions and are more prepared to participate.” Further class attendance has improved. “Students have been more prepared for class using *Connect*, and therefore do not feel as though they have to miss for lack of preparation.”

Pass rates from the Spring 2010 before *Connect* was implemented compared to Spring 2011 after *Connect* show a marked improvement. The average for the three sections jumped from 71% in 2010 to 78% in 2011 - an increase of 7%.

Figure 1 - Quiz Score Averages

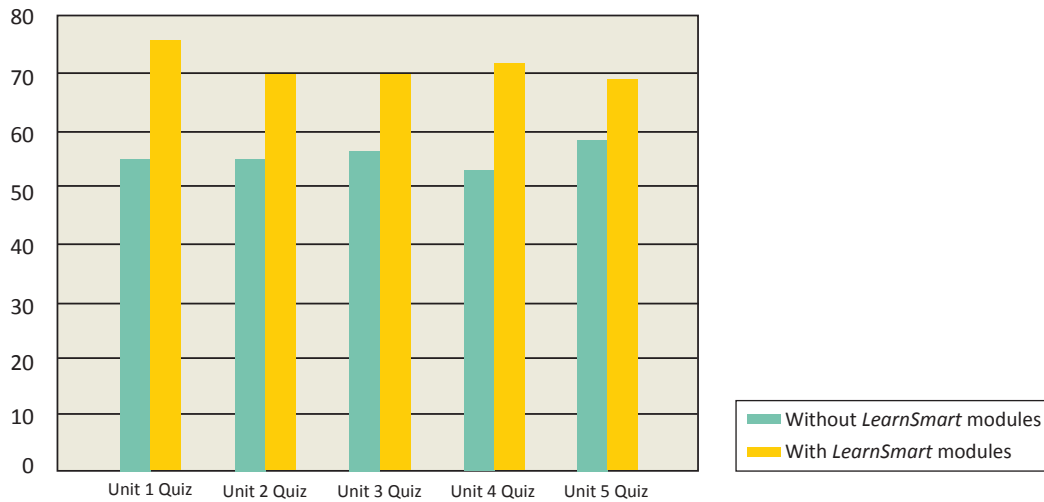
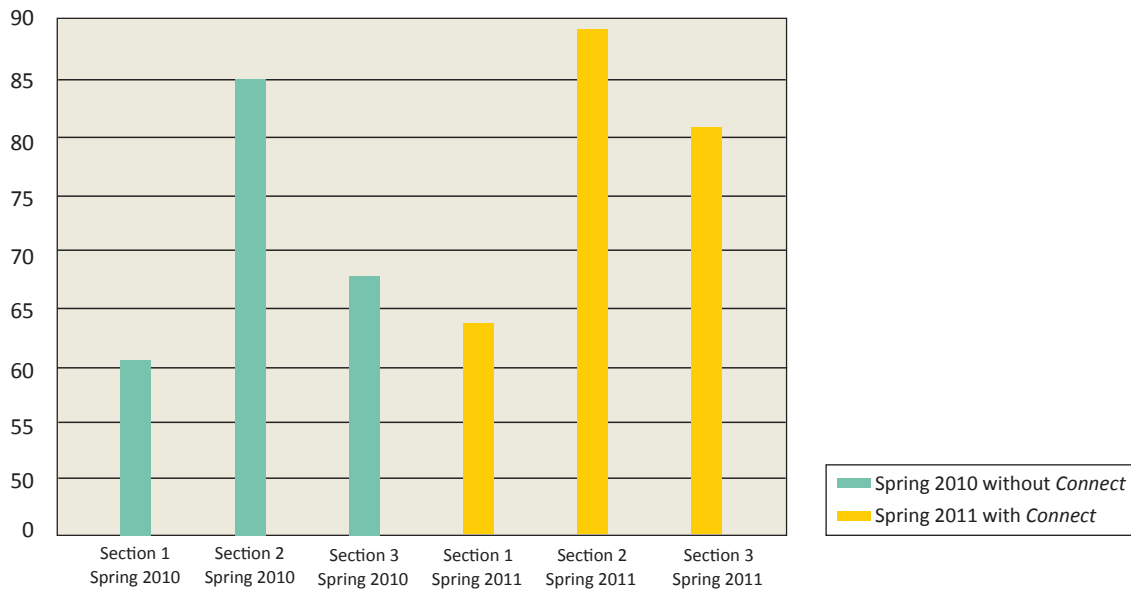


Figure 2 - Pass Rates



“Because I don’t have to spend nearly as much time on the basics, we have a lot more class activities, discussion, and projects to cement the concepts. The result is more engaging for my students and for me as an instructor. It makes the classroom dynamic.”

Conclusion

Professor Hanna is thrilled with *Connect Psychology* and excited to implement more digital learning into her classroom. “*Connect* has given my students confidence in their ability to succeed and has given me the ability as an instructor to help my students apply what they are learning to their own field or areas of interest.” *Connect* has greatly freed up her lecture time to create more discussions, activities, and interaction. As a result, Professor Hanna is going to continue to expand her use of *Connect* in the future and actively use more features.

“...I also have loved using *Connect* in my Honors level Human Growth and Development course. It is a great supplement to a discussion-based course. I can focus on peer-reviewed journal articles and debating controversial theories in class because I know the students have already delved into the concepts on their own through *Connect*.”