



CASE STUDY SOLANO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Digital Course Solution Improves Student Success

Professor Maghoney sought to help her students develop a deeper understanding of economics principles through increased retention of key course concepts. She turned to *Connect® Economics*, with its embedded graphing tool and interactive assignments, which helped to ultimately accomplish this goal and, in the process, improved student performance in the course. Professor Maghoney was also able to use the time she saved on grading assignments to prepare for high-level interactive discussions during class.

Institution Profile

Solano Community College is part of the California community college system, which seeks to successfully prepare a diverse student population to participate in today's local and global communities. Solano Community College enrolls more than 11,000 students annually with 36 certificate, 39 associate and 35 job-direct programs at its campuses in Fairfield, Vacaville and Vallejo, California.

Implementation

Course Description:

The Solano Community College Principles of Economics 1 course focuses on macroeconomic course concepts and is offered in both traditional (3 credit hours of a combined lecture and online homework) and online course formats. The average course enrollment is 30-40 students per section.

Course Grade:

Traditional Course

- 85% of the final grade is based on exams
- 10% of the final grade is based on one current events project
- 5% of the final grade is based on *Connect Economics* assignments

Digital Product in Use:

Connect Economics

Course Name:

Principle of Economics 1
(Macroeconomics)

Course Type:

Traditional

Credit Hours:

Three

Textbook in Use:

Macroeconomics by
McConnell, Brue and Flynn,
18e

Instructor Name:

Laura Maghoney

Enrollment:

440/year

Case Study Term:

Fall 2009 and Spring 2010

“Connect Economics is a tool that gets at how students like to work and forces students to take an active approach to learning.

I think that for today's student, the interactive learning available in Connect is more engaging than a book.”

- Professor Laura Maghoney

"I want students to be able to apply what they have learned to the 'real world.' With Connect, the students definitely seem to understand economics better, so that helps them make that leap to the real world. They have a stronger grasp of how events might be related to each other."

"The auto-grading features in Connect have significantly decreased the amount of time that I have spent grading homework assignments. Since students are able to check their own work, they can get instant feedback about their progress and understanding, saving me time in the classroom because I don't have to go over the homework questions. This has given me more time to have classroom discussions about the current economy."

- Professor Laura Maghoney

Online Course

- 73% of the final grade is based on exams and threaded discussion responses
- 27% of the final grade is based on *Connect Economics* assignments

Implementation of McGraw-Hill Connect

Professor Maghoney has taught online courses for ten years, and has used a variety of online homework platforms, including *Aplia*. For her traditional course, she needed an online solution that would help students to deepen their retention of key course concepts through a better understanding of economic relationships referenced in graphs and models.

In early 2009, Professor Maghoney decided to implement *Connect Economics* given the wealth of features made available to students, including a robust graphing tool, an eBook, and media rich materials. The graphing tool specifically allowed students to practice shifting economic curves, helping them to further evaluate relationships between economic variables. The integrated eBook provided "just-in-time" access to conceptual material.

Further, Professor Maghoney was able to assess student retention of economics principles more efficiently by assigning graphing questions online as homework or tests. Each question provided immediate feedback to students, so they could better understand economic concepts while having an immediate record of their progress. Professor Maghoney was also able to free up valuable class time to focus on more challenging course topics.

Results Achieved

Overall test averages have increased substantially since implementing *Connect Economics* (see Figure 1). Professor Maghoney attributes this outcome to a better understanding of course concepts, saying, "Students earned better grades and more students passed

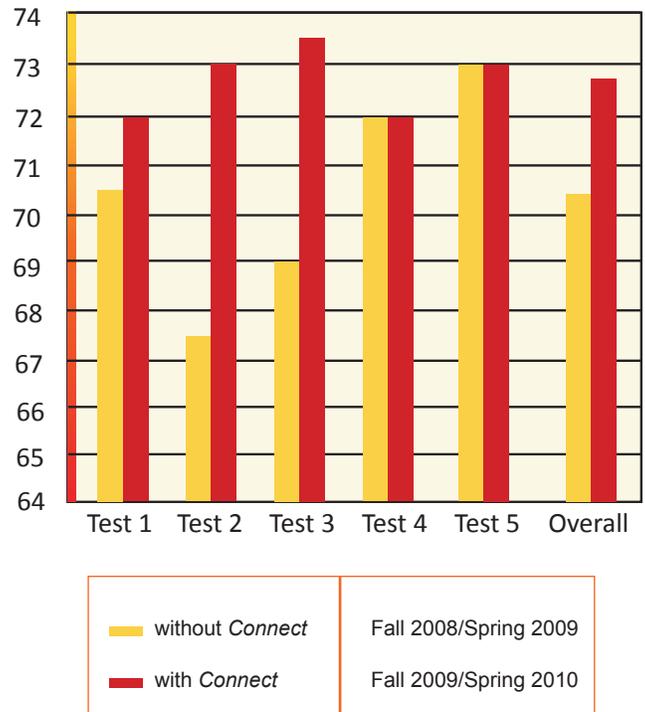
the class compared with previous semesters where I didn't use *Connect*. I think that *Connect Economics* has helped them to actively learn the material rather than learn it passively, so understanding and retention of the material has improved."

In Professor Maghoney's lectures, students are more prepared for course discussions and have an understanding of their progress through the immediate feedback they have been given on their *Connect Economics* assignments. Through this feature, Professor Maghoney has seen students work more independently by evaluating their answers and inquiring about economic concepts in course lectures for better retention of key concepts. "Students have a better understanding of the concepts in economics, so they are better able to apply them to the real world," she says. "This application to the real

world is definitely the primary student learning outcome, and *Connect Economics* has helped them to achieve that.”

For Professor Maghoney’s online students, *Connect Economics* provides a way to easily complete homework electronically. Additionally, *Connect Economics* has helped students in the online course to gauge their learning more accurately and more immediately using the “Check My Work” feature. Students no longer have to wait for Professor Maghoney’s feedback to determine their understanding of conceptual material. “I feel that the process of answering a question wrong and then figuring out how to get the correct answer is one of the best ways to learn the information.”

Figure 1 - Student Test Score Averages from Macroeconomics Courses



Conclusion

Connect Economics gave students in Professor Maghoney’s Principles of Economics courses a deeper understanding of critical course concepts, improving their retention and success. *Connect Economics* also enabled Professor Maghoney to spend more time reinforcing the material, creating a more active and engaging course environment for students. Based on her positive experience, she would recommend *Connect* to other faculty. “In the future, I plan to expand my use of *Connect Economics* to better take advantage of all of its features,” she says.