

Digital Course Solution Improves Student Success and Increases Instructor Efficiency

Professor Amy Smith used *Connect Personal Health* to convert her face-to-face course to an online, asynchronous course in Spring 2010. She found it to be a perfect solution for teaching her large enrollment classes of up to 700 students, and her students have shown significant improvement as a result. In fact, Professor Smith has seen a 12% increase in exam scores and a 14% increase in pass rates since implementing *Connect Personal Health*.

Institution Profile

Virginia Polytechnic and State University (Virginia Tech), located in Blacksburg, Virginia, enrolls 30,000 students a year. In addition to face-to-face classes, Virginia Tech offers more than 978 online courses through the Institute for Distance and Distributed Learning.

Implementation

Course Description:

This online course is designed to provide students with health information based on scientific principles that will enable them to make sound decisions regarding their health. The major emphasis is wellness and the importance of individual responsibility for health-related matters through health-promotion efforts. Selected major content topics include mental health, drug abuse, consumer health, communicable diseases, chronic diseases, nutrition, human sexuality, environmental health, aging, death, and dying. Each content area is examined in an overview manner.

Course Grade:

- 85% of the final grade is based on exams within *Connect Personal Health*
- 10% of the final grade is based on assessments within *Connect Personal Health*
- 5% of the final grade is based on additional assignments

Digital Product in Use:

Connect® Personal Health

Course Name:

Personal Health

Course Type:

Online

Credit Hours:

Three

Textbook in Use:

iHealth: An Interactive Framework by Sparling, 1e

Instructor Name:

Amy H. Smith, Ph.D.

Enrollment:

700/year (instructor total)
1,500/year (university total)

Case Study Term:

Spring 2011

“Connect Personal Health allows me to have a completely online class with good support and materials. It also enables me to have a large number of students in this elective course.

My students really like the online version of the textbook, and they find the self-assessments interesting and helpful.”

- Professor Amy Smith

Implementation of McGraw-Hill *Connect*

Professor Smith's course can be taken completely online by students who do not live on campus. For residents, attendance at a one-time, on-campus workshop is required. For non-residents, the workshop content is completed in *Connect Personal Health*.

The course is self-paced, but students must adhere to deadlines for five personal health assessments, one assignment, and four exams to ensure that they complete the course by the end of the term. Each exam covers three or four chapters in the textbook. Students may access sample exam questions to prepare for the graded exams.

Grades are transferred from *Connect Personal Health* to Scholar, a Virginia Tech proprietary data system. Professor Smith uses individual *Connect* reports and assignment reports to monitor student activity and keep abreast of any issues she needs to address with students.

Results Achieved

"The online resources in *Connect* are helping students," Smith states. As a result, she saw increases of up to 12% in exam scores (see Figure 1). These higher scores led to a 14% improvement in pass rates for the course (see Figure 2) and increases of more than 30% in the number of A's students received in the course.

Figure 1 - Exam Averages

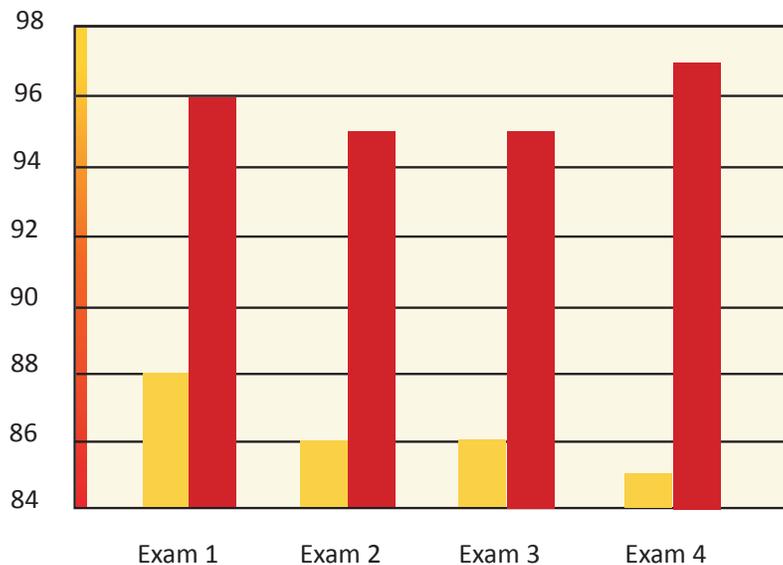
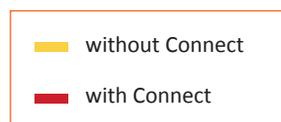
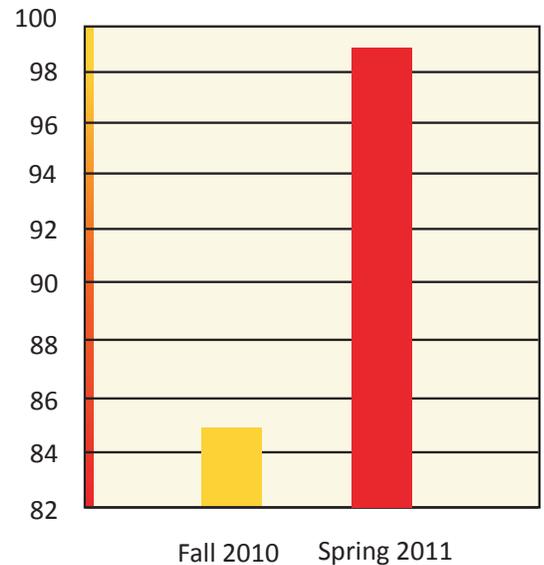


Figure 2 - Pass Rates

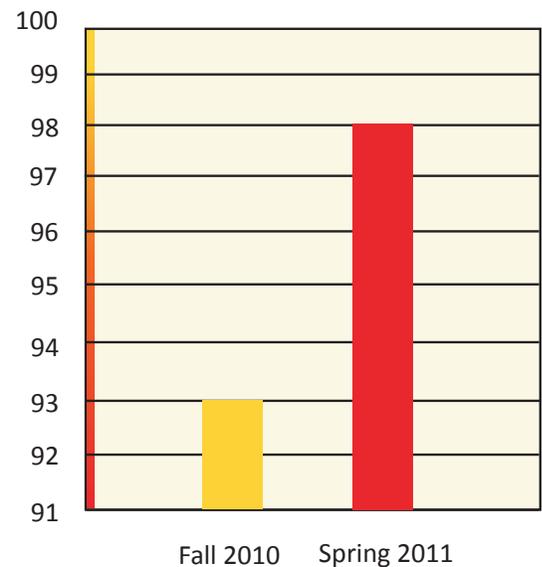


Professor Smith even saw a 5% increase in her retention rate (see Figure 3). She says, "Now that I'm using *Connect*, students who drop my class do so because of scheduling conflicts or because they miss the first exam and can't get an A in the class. They are not dropping the course because they are struggling with the material."

In addition to the benefits she saw for her students, Professor Smith reports that she has recovered a good deal of the time that she previously spent on all aspects of managing her course from lecture prep and delivery to holding office hours and answering emails and phone calls. Since *Connect Personal Health* provides students the opportunity to learn core concepts outside of class, she only spends about three hours each week communicating via email and answering student questions about the material. *Connect* has also eliminated the eight hours per class that she spent administering and grading exams, enabling her to use her time more efficiently. “*Connect* has reduced my time of preparation by providing a test bank of questions for assignments and exams,” she says.

Professor Smith now plans to use more of the available features in *Connect*, such as *Tegrity™* lecture capture to integrate recorded lectures into her next offering of Personal Health.

Figure 3 - Retention Rate



Student Comments on Self Assessments

“The assessments really got me thinking about the different kinds of drug issues occurring on campus.”

“It was good to be able to go through the assessments and really consider issues regarding myself that I wouldn’t typically consider.”

“I thought that they (the assessments) were very interesting, especially the test anxiety assessment because it explains that having some anxiety is healthy.”

“All the assessments really allowed me to evaluate myself.”

“They allowed me to think about things that I hadn’t really thought about before!”

“I generally like to take assessments/quizzes like that to see if the results match what I would have guessed for myself. Self-improvement is something I generally like to try to focus on. I tend to pick one or two small things and try to make changes to those habits and move on to new things if I am successful. So, I was very curious to see what these assessments turned up with. I plan on completing all of them.”

Conclusion

Professor Smith says that *Connect Personal Health* has been a win-win for everyone and would recommend it to other faculty. “It allows me to offer this elective class to about 600 students per semester and 50 during each summer session. It gives the students the opportunity for self-study, and I am there to answer questions about the material and the process. Without *Connect*, we could not offer the class to this number of students. It’s a popular class at Virginia Tech.”