



Case Study: Georgia College and State University

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Georgia College and State University (GCSU), founded in 1889, gained a new mission in 1996: to provide students with a private liberal arts college experience at a public university price. Academically competitive and student centered, the university currently offers 36 undergraduate degrees and more than 25 graduate programs on a campus lauded as one of the top 50 wireless campuses in the United States.

Since GCSU currently uses WebCT, Noland White, assistant professor of psychology, was well versed with online courseware when he sought a product for his Introduction to Psychology class. Despite a variety of competitors, White chose MyPsychLab (MPL). “MPL offers all the components I need in a single resource,” he says. “It’s all there for me, already created and ready to use. I can link easily and directly from WebCT to MPL materials; more important, so can my students. That kind of ease of use increases the likelihood that they’ll use it.”

White includes MPL as a required component of both homework and a hybrid lecture format. “MPL supplements my style of teaching,” he says. “The interactive model facilitates more communication—between professor and student and between students—and actively promotes a student-focused model of teaching and learning.”

White recognizes that most freshmen are tremendously challenged by the concepts of time management and taking responsibility for their learning. “It’s very different from their high school experience, in which many of them were told exactly what to do and when to do it,” says White. “MPL offers students a structure in which they experience that making an effort achieves results. They learn how to approach deadlines and what it means to be accountable for their own learning.

“Students who use MPL are more invested in their performance,” says White, “because they can get immediate, individualized feedback and know someone is paying attention to what they’re doing [via the Gradebook]. The immediate feedback keeps students motivated to improve—either from an individual perspective or when needed—like

a pat on the back that the professor can’t always be there to give. This interactive component is critical to the process of learning. Before a big test comes along, students using MPL are aware of what they haven’t mastered and of exactly what they need to do to gain mastery. This forewarning enables them to get help before it’s too late.”

The majority of GCSU’s students are technically savvy; they were neither upset nor challenged by the concept of online courseware or a Web interface. “I received lots of positive feedback,” White says.

White also had compliments for MPL’s instructor benefits. “I like that MPL shifts learning time from inside the classroom to outside the classroom,” he says. “It promotes the students’ interacting with the material as much as possible and doesn’t limit their learning experiences to the class period. When students are involved with the material outside of class as well, I can engage them in more-productive classroom discussions, and they retain more.”

Technical support was responsive and quick. I’m very impressed both with the individuals themselves and with Pearson in general.

One of MPL’s unique features is that it enables instructors to acknowledge and respond to a range of educational goals and learning styles. “MPL gives me the freedom and the flexibility to assign text materials by chapter or by module depending on which is more appropriate for the class,” says White. “Its variety of modalities taps into the individual learning style of each student: some respond to the simulations; others, to the reading; and still others, to the visual cues. MPL is effective with all of them and should work equally well in a large classroom or a small one, in distance learning, or on-site.”

What is his favorite MPL feature? “It gives me an opportunity to do my job better,” says White, a professor whose students are clearly his number one priority.