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CASE STUDY



Cochise College achieving educational, organizational, and financial success through **blended and online courses** with Moodle

Cochise College is a community college located in southeast Arizona, USA. With a student population of around 12,000, the faculty focuses on engaging learners and building personal relationships with students through both face-to-face and online interactions.

Being able to offer both these types of interactions are integral to Cochise College's organizational objectives and to remain innovative in education.

For the 2015 and 2016 academic years, Cochise College has ranked 3rd as one of the best Community Colleges in the USA. Their online learning and education programs play a key role in this achievement. [1]

[1] Online College Plan. "Top 20 Online Community Colleges with the Best ROI." Online College Plan, 2016. 3 Oct. 2016, onlinecollegeplan.com/online-community-colleges-best-roi/

Problem

To keep in line with today's fast-paced technology advances in all parts of our lives - study, work, professional development - many organizations are shifting from traditional face-to-face to a more blended and online learning approach.

With any change, there is always considerable amount of time, effort and key concerns involved. A change from the traditional face-to-face learning environment to an online space is no exception.

Within the school classroom setting, a key concern that can impact a successful transition is that not all teachers are experienced in delivering courses and teaching online.

From first-hand experience, Adam Woodrow, Assistant Director of the Cochise College Virtual Campus, can testify to the difficulties that lie with successfully engaging learners and building personal relationships through blended and online learning.

At the College, Adam's main responsibility is to work with the faculty to provide engaging online courses. "Supporting staff by giving them time [to develop, manage courses and associated administration on top of everyday teaching] and training is one of the many challenges within a modern college or university," Adam shared.

"Another ongoing issue is the cost of student text books."

"This is something that Cochise College has recognized as a cost that students struggle with year after year, which often results in large debt that needs to be repaid."

Hence, a major part of the College's digital strategy going forward is to create Open Education Resources (OER) that can reduce this financial burden on students.

Action

To facilitate their digital strategy, Cochise College chose Moodle in 2012 as the learning platform to help them deliver engaging online courses. When the College began with Moodle, the platform was embedded with so many educational tools they later recognized that they started at Step 10 out of a 10-step process. The College's Moodle site became a complex system that was confusing to navigate and took up too much time to utilize effectively.



As a result, when every course at the College used Moodle and needed to have an online presence to facilitate their blending learning and digital objectives, a lot of planning and consideration of implementation was needed.

The College realized they needed to hit the "reset" button on their Moodle site to ensure that it effectively supported both teachers and students in the delivery and receiving of education, respectively. Cochise chose to work with Moodle Partner eThink Education and tapped into their hosting services and expertise in start-to-end project solutions.

Through a comprehensive initial analysis, eThink helped Cochise realize that there was too much choice for staff in the College's Moodle site. eThink's suggested solution for this was to simplify the onboarding experience for staff so that educators and administrators would receive a good foundation of skills and the knowledge to best use Moodle.

Following this suggestion, Adam worked with eThink to develop an online Level 1 Moodle training course. The course helps instructors learn to manage Moodle and to develop good content within the learning platform.

This course allowed all Moodle users to initially focus on the basic functions of Moodle and build from there.

Adam stated that, "From those basic patterns that utilize core features of Moodle, we then allow the user to dive deeper into functionality."

"My personal tip [from this simplification exercise] is to master the basics and if you can pick up the patterns, Moodle starts becoming smaller," Adam shared.



Results

Result: Increased teachers' confidence and skills in digital learning

By getting back to basics, Cochise College has seen a strong and steady progress in staff's understanding and utilization of digital learning.

A few teachers at the College have even used their learnings to pilot the delivery of OER content through their Moodle courses.

Result: Reduce cost of resources for students through the use of OER

A project involving OER content via Moodle is in the initial planning and delivery stages. The intention is to learn from the pilot and eventually roll the program out across the whole college.

The initiative is estimated to save students \$4.1 million or more over a three-year period.

Result: All courses are now available online

All courses have some form of online presence, with some accreditation being delivered fully online to distance learners.

Result: Move from basic functionality into deeper aspects of Moodle

Outside of providing accredited education to distance learners, the College is also considering data analysis to create a more personalized learning experience for their students.

The next step is to run reports to help teachers determine where students are succeeding and struggling within their courses. That data can then be used to help place students in the appropriate classes or to pinpoint areas where teachers may need to provide additional education.

Overall, by working with eThink Education in a back-to-basics approach and simplifying the use of their Moodle site, Cochise College has been able to see many results that both empower the College's educators and benefit their students.

Cochise College

Cochise College provides accessible educational opportunities that are responsive to a diverse population and lead to constructive citizenship, meaningful careers and lifelong learning. For more information, visit www.cochise.edu



eThink Education

eThink Education is a Certified Moodle Partner providing implementation, cloud hosting, integration, and management services for the Learning Management System Moodle. Open-source Moodle is the most widely used Learning Management System in the world. When implemented and managed by experts, Moodle is an extremely dynamic platform capable of surpassing the functionality of competing systems. eThink's Moodle cloud hosting services offer unrivaled performance and exceptional value. For more information, visit www.ethinkeducation.com