Increasing student success and instructor efficiency with the McGraw-Hill Connect integration for Blackboard Learn

Winston-Salem State University (WSSU) | wssu.edu | Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Winston-Salem State University students and instructors make the connection to learning with McGraw-Hill Connect through Blackboard Learn

Colleges and universities increasingly recognize that today’s learners demand more from their courses than what was provided in traditional “stand-and-deliver” classrooms, where the course materials were static, photocopied handouts. Today’s students are looking for course content that is rich and dynamic – and digital, so that they can access it wherever they are, and on whatever device they’re using. They’re also looking for an integrated environment that supports all the online aspects of their learning experience. Many instructors at North Carolina’s Winston-Salem State University (WSSU) are meeting emerging learner requirements by incorporating course content from McGraw-Hill Connect, a web-based learning, assignment and assessment platform that helps instructors connect their students to their coursework. And they make the connection through deep integration with Blackboard Learn.

By combining McGraw-Hill Connect with Blackboard’s learning management system, Blackboard Learn, WSSU offers students and instructors a single point of access for courses, content, and learning tools. This integration enlivens educational content, equips instructors with tools that let them engage all learners – whatever a student’s learning style is – and improves academic outcomes.
Moving to a more lively and engaging learning environment

One instructor who was an early adopter and advocate of McGraw-Hill Connect, and its integration with Blackboard Learn, is Manju Bhat, Associate Professor of Physiology in WSSU’s Department of Biological Sciences. Professor Bhat teaches anatomy and physiology to allied health pre-majors. “When I first came to WSSU in 2007, we were using McGraw-Hill textbooks, and Blackboard Learn for our LMS. Along with the textbooks, McGraw-Hill provided cartridges that contained a limited set of digital materials and question banks, but it wasn’t all that rich, and it wasn’t all that exciting. And it wasn’t integrated with Blackboard Learn, which is the learning environment that instructors live in.” The caliber of and access to online materials improved once Professor Bhat was introduced to McGraw-Hill Connect in 2011. With McGraw-Hill Connect, course content is enlivened with videos and interactive elements. After a successful pilot with 38 students, in which outcomes were improved and student feedback was positive, Professor Bhat decided to require his students to have access to McGraw-Hill Connect. The following year, with the integration with Blackboard Learn, wider adoption of McGraw-Hill Connect occurred. All seven instructors in anatomy and physiology are now using McGraw-Hill Connect, engaging hundreds of students.

More time for instructors to focus on course content and instruction, not mechanics

Professor Bhat teaches two large sections – each with more than 90 students. With so many students, time is at a premium, and efficiency is a must. With the integration of Blackboard Learn and McGraw-Hill Connect, setting up assignments is made simple, saving time and effort. “All I need to do is set things up once, deploy it to multiple sections and sync with Learn,” Professor Bhat says. “I don't have to do anything manually and repeatedly.” Setting up courses for a new semester is equally simple. “All I need to do is copy and voila! I’m done.” Grades also transfer automatically to the Blackboard Learn Grade Center.

Professor Bhat uses Blackboard Learn and McGraw-Hill Connect for assessments, quizzes, homework assignments, additional learning materials, and extra credit work. He uses Connect Insight to gauge how students are progressing through the course. “I can see whether a student isn’t progressing, and intervene before they fall too far behind, or drop the course. Overall, I’ve seen the DFW rate – students receiving D’s, F’s, or withdrawing – decrease by 10-15% in my courses.”

Manju Bhat, M.V.Sc., Ph.D.
Co-Chair, Department of Biological Sciences, Associate Professor of Physiology, Winston-Salem State University
in my courses.” With Blackboard Learn and McGraw-Hill Connect, Professor Bhat can focus on improving the content of his course, and his way of instructing, rather than get bogged down in the mechanics of making content available.

**For students, improved learning and confidence**
Students are also benefitting from having assignments, grades, and so many course resources in one simple, easy-to-use environment. With single sign-on, students don’t have to connect with separate login info. Nor do they have to remember multiple URLs to access McGraw-Hill Connect content: it’s all there are with the click of a button. McGraw-Hill Connect also facilitates the way students learn best, says Professor Bhat, “through small, snack-sized bites rather than one big meal. With this approach, I’ve seen class participation increasing, and a dramatic improvement in student confidence.”

**Letting students learn how and where they want: on their mobile devices**
One of the key benefits for Professor Bhat is being able to provide his students with multiple modes to access course information. Today’s students expect to do their learning the same way they conduct so many other aspects of their lives: online and available 24/7, wherever they’re located. Through Blackboard Learn, McGraw-Hill Connect content is available whether students are using a desktop, laptop, tablet, or smartphone. Professor Bhat makes all his assignments through McGraw-Hill Connect, and often assigns short readings through SmartBook®, the adaptive reading and learning reading experience in McGraw-Hill Connect, to be done before a class. “Students still wait until 30 minutes before an assignment is due,” Professor Bhat reports, “But with mobile access via Learn, they can complete their assignment while they’re waiting for the campus shuttle bus, so they’re more likely to complete those pre-class assignments.” Further, he’s able to see what topics students are having difficulty with, and pinpoint the topics he needs to focus on during his lecture.
With such clear benefits, adoption grows

The integration’s single sign-on feature provides seamless access to all course resources: no more need to keep track of multiple login information and URLs. By accessing the McGraw-Hill Connect content link within Blackboard Learn, instructors can easily discover and embed content within their regular course workflows, making for more engaging courses. The overall result of the Blackboard Learn-McGraw-Hill Connect integration is that students are more engaged and confident, and instructors are able to improve their courses.

Professor Bhat has become a real champion for the Blackboard Learn-McGraw-Hill Connect integration, as have his students. “Students these days have more power,” Professor Bhat says, “And they’re using it to advocate for further adoption of the Blackboard Learn-McGraw-Hill Connect framework.” Faculty adoption is occuring in a number of different departments: chemistry, music, business, and Spanish. Other departments are evaluating it as well.

Increased adoption is no surprise to Professor Bhat. As he says, “I’m amazed at how I used to teach. I’m constantly looking for ways to deliver the “content” outside the classroom so I can engage my students in meaningful discussion using real-life situations while in class. With the Blackboard-Connect integration, I’m now much more effective, and student performance shows it. Since I began using the Connect-Learn integration, the number students with grades A-C increased from 62% to 76.”

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