



Keeping students from falling behind

Organization: George Brown College
Founded: 1967
Division: School of Architectural Studies & ADZ School of Construction Management Centre for Construction and Engineering Technologies
Location: Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Size: 3 campuses and 5 separate schools in construction management, apprenticeship and trades, architecture, mechanical engineering and computer technology

Teaching busy young Architectural and Construction Management students is a challenge. At George Brown College, Architecture and Construction Management Programs Chair Clint Kissoon found a persistent problem amongst students learning Autodesk software programs such as AutoCAD and Revit Architecture, which the college uses throughout the architectural and construction management programs.

“Many of our students work part-time and coming to school full-time can at times be challenging,” he says, “but in reality their work may take priority instead of coming to a class when the AutoCAD teacher is demonstrating.” If students busy with work and other commitments or students with a disability accommodation missed a class session that included a hands-on demo, Kissoon says, they fell behind. Often, it was the start of a downward spiral that led to the student earning a poor grade or even flunking out of their course. Kissoon was searching for a way to supplement classroom learning with on-demand online training students could use to catch up.

“Flipping the classroom”

Discovering Global eTraining’s on-demand, online trainings for Autodesk products opened up a new era in George Brown’s construction and Architectural programs, Kissoon says. By introducing GeT’s online trainings in Fall 2013, the college could use the online learning for AutoCAD and Revit to support in-class training. This allowed the college to use a cutting-edge learning model known as “flip the classroom” to help keep students on track.

Instead of the traditional college model of seeing an in-person classroom demonstration and then puzzling out questions on their own, with GeT’s solution, students do the online training on their own time, and then attend class to ask professors their questions and learn more through hands-on project work.

“GeT enables us to have students view a demo prior to coming to the classroom. Now, students have a resource to keep them from falling behind.”



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Acceptance – and results

If you think professors might balk at having their lectures supplemented by online courseware or students might resist the change, you'd be mistaken.

"We found faculty are really learning how to complement the GeT material with their own, to enhance student learning," Kissoon says. "Our vision at the college is to seek out innovative ways in teaching and learning. That's why blending online courses with classroom instruction is a strategy we've embraced here. And students are quite happy to have this additional resource."

The forward-thinking college will soon complete its first full year of GeT training and undertake an assessment of retention rates and grades for the classes using online training compared with traditional classroom-taught versions of the same courses. But so far, the evidence is strongly positive that the addition of GeT's online courseware is making a difference in student success, Kissoon says.

"We're finding they're not falling behind in submitting assignments. That's a change. Instead of having outstanding assignments, they're able to catch up now, knowing they have this secondary resource they can check. That should make a big difference – the main reason for failing the courses in the past was that the student wasn't there for the demonstration or felt that the teacher was going too fast.."

As of early 2014, George Brown had 1,000 licenses for students to take GeT trainings, ranging from beginning to advanced levels. "It's great to not have to re-create instructional material like this," Kissoon says. The college plans to continue using GeT trainings through the spring and summer 2014 semesters, he adds.

To learn more about implementing eTraining in your organization, contact Global eTraining at getstarted@globaletraining.ca



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