TRAINING FACULTY LIKE STUDENTS

How Coastal Alabama Community College obtained 'extreme adoption' for proctoring technology

Coastal Alabama Community College has undergone significant changes the past few years, beginning in 2017 when three colleges consolidated to form the new institution. Administrators and staff were tasked with a range of duties, including the establishment of new policies and the selection of technology for instructors and students.

A rapidly growing distance learning program led to early adoption of LockDown Browser® and Respondus Monitor® for online proctoring. But a challenge for the Distance Education team remained: getting faculty to trust the effectiveness of online proctoring technology, and having them try it in their online courses. Initial uptake was slow.

WALKING IN THE SHOES OF A STUDENT

About a year after the consolidation, the college's distance education department launched a certificate training course for instructors of distance learning courses. As part of the training program, they decided to have participants use LockDown Browser and Respondus Monitor as if they were students.

"Before taking the course, some instructors felt that online testing would result in a lot of cheating by students," says Ann Strickland, Distance Education Director at Coastal Alabama. "Their initial inclination was to require students to come to campus or go to a testing center to take exams." During the training course, they quickly realized how effective LockDown Browser and Respondus Monitor were at preventing cheating, explains Strickland. They also realized how easy it would be for students to use the applications.

"Putting instructors in the shoes of students instills confidence in online testing. It allows them to see that the entire course - including assessments - can be delivered effectively online when you use applications like Respondus Monitor," she said. "It was fun to watch their transformation during the course."

EXTREME ADOPTION AND PLANNING FOR GROWTH

Getting faculty excited in a training course is one thing. The proof is seeing how newly acquired skills and technologies are put to work in real online courses.

To the surprise of the Distance Education team, use of LockDown Browser and Respondus Monitor skyrocketed after the first training cohort. "We experienced extreme adoption," says Strickland. Over 85% of course participants chose to use the applications in their online courses. Student exam sessions using Respondus Monitor increased 98% from the prior year.
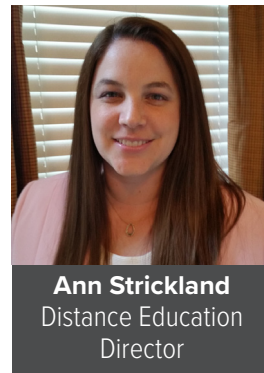
Ann Strickland
Distance Education Director

Success is being felt across many levels of the institution, from faculty to administrators. "Our administration is pleased because it enables them to show that fully-online versions of college courses do not have less rigor than their face-to-face counterparts," says Strickland. That's important for accreditation, she adds, but it's probably even more significant for faculty morale. "Faculty who've completed the training tell me: 'I have a whole new perspective. I feel confident students aren't cheating during online tests, and I feel good about my ability to use these tools.' It's completely eye-opening for them."

Coastal Alabama is poised to expand their instructor training program and their use of Respondus Monitor. As a first step, they are switching to an "unlimited" license for Respondus Monitor, which is a more cost-effective option for institutions making heavy use of the system. They are also planning to incorporate other instructional technology into their training course. "Having instructors use technology like a student is extremely effective," says Strickland. "We'll definitely be doing more of that."

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