SUMMER SCHOOL AND WORKING STUDENTS

HOW ALAMO COLLEGES DISTRICT SUPPORTS WORKING STUDENTS IN COMPRESSED SUMMER COURSES

Twenty years ago, the summer months on college campuses were a bit sleepy. But with the rise of online learning, summer term has become a peak time for delivering online courses.

Alamo Colleges District in San Antonio is a prime example. It offers more than 1,300 online courses during the summer, each of which is condensed into eight, five, or three-week periods. Because the timeline is compressed, students must dedicate significant time to courses each week. This is challenging because a large percentage of the district's students are "non-traditional."

"As a group of community colleges, our students have a lot of things to balance, like work, going to school, and managing families," said Cesar Hernandez, one of the District's Enterprise Instructional Technology Specialists. "Many of the students are adults returning to school, trying a different career, or learning something new. So they have a lot going on beyond school."

Nearly a decade ago, Alamo's colleges began using LockDown Browser**,** which is a custom browser that deters cheating during online exams. This worked well for proctored environments, such as classrooms and testing centers, but it wasn't sufficient for exams taken in their fast-growing online program.

"We offer all courses online – this makes it more convenient and accessible for our students who can't always come to campus for tests for various reasons," explained Cesar, particularly in condensed summer courses where an exam might be required every few days. Third-party testing centers were costly and inconvenient. Even live proctoring services that work over the internet were too expensive (often costing about $25 per exam).

Alamo Colleges District is always on the lookout for ways to save students time and money – and online testing seemed like an ideal opportunity. In 2016, the District implemented Respondus Monitor, an automated proctoring solution that records students with a webcam during online exams. It then flags suspicious behaviors during exam sessions and provides those to instructors. Respondus Monitor runs atop LockDown Browser, a combination that "instructors find very user-friendly, both to set up and to adjust settings for exams. Students also find them easy to set up, and after the first use they adapt quickly to the tools, which is helpful because they're used in many other courses on campus as well," says Cesar.

Cesar Hernandez
Enterprise Instructional Technology Specialist

"The applications also bring a lot of flexibility. Students can take tests from home using their Mac, PC, iPad, or Chromebook. And the tools launch straight from their Learning Management System, which is a great experience too."

Alamo Colleges District has an unlimited license for Respondus Monitor. This means students don't have to worry about an additional cost, and instructors don't have to limit their use of the system.

Most instructors use Respondus Monitor for more than 10 assessments in a course, preferring more frequent and smaller assessments when the entire course is online. Last summer alone, students across the District used Respondus Monitor with over 22,400 exam sessions.

For all of this to work, the technology must be simple and hassle-free. "Respondus makes it easy for us. The tools are reliable, the built-in chat for students is really helpful. Free training webinars are offered for faculty, along with an excellent Knowledge Base. And any time we've needed assistance, the company has just been very responsive."

For more customer stories, videos, resources, and transparent pricing, visit respondus.com/monitor

Respondus®