SIIA
EDUCATION

ED TECH
SUCCESS STORIES

During the 2020 pandemic America's colleges and universities needed to immediately transition from in-person learning to virtual. SIIA's Ed Tech members products help schools across the country bridge the gap keeping students and instructors engaged and learning. Here are their stories.

ExamSoft®
Part of the Turnitin family

TRANSFORMING HBCU INTO DISTANCE LEARNING

ALABAMA STATE UNIVERSITY AND THE SEARCH FOR AN ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION

Famed historically Black university Alabama State University's College of Health and Sciences, located in the capital city of Montgomery, serves a vital role for the surrounding community and the students it educates. With the switch to remote learning, the college needed to make adjustments to maintain the same level of access to services available in person.

Administrators and faculty knew they had to maintain access to services, but also find alternative methods, namely administering paper-based exams.

After looking at students' test scores on paper exams versus graduates' performance on computer-based board exams and speaking with graduates about their experiences, the College of Health and Sciences discovered a disconnect between their top-performing students and those students' scores on board exams. Since graduates had only taken paper-based assessments in school, they weren't comfortable with the computer-based exams and scored lower-than-expected pass rates.

PROVIDING GREATER ACCESS

With much of the student population living in rural areas, access to reliable internet was limited and those students didn't have the same level of access to computers for digital testing as students from metropolitan areas. Students were not accustomed to taking digital exams, and the detriment showed in their scores. As a result, the College of Health and Sciences needed an alternative to paper-based exams that would meet the needs of their students, while also considering their realities of internet connectivity.

ExamSoft, a digital assessment platform, provided the perfect solution for students preparing to take their board exams online. By using a computer-based testing environment, the College empowered students to become familiar with the digital exam format prior to taking their board exams.

Dr. Susan Denham, Chair of the Department of Physical and Occupational Therapy, noted the importance of using ExamSoft commenting,

> *"A big reason for implementing ExamSoft was to get our students accustomed to a board-like scenario during testing."*

With curricula adjustment and the switch from paper-based exams to digital exams through ExamSoft, graduates increased their board exam scores by 18% in Physical Therapy and 7% in Occupational Therapy.

ExamSoft was especially useful during the pandemic as it allowed for flexibility with administering exams. While paper-based exams required students to be physically present, ExamSoft meant students and faculty no longer needed to commute to campus, and exams were administered and taken from homes. Exams were also available for download prior to test time, meaning students did not need a WiFi connection while taking the exam. This allowed students with limited access to internet services the ability to take the exam with more ease.

SUPPORTING TEACHERS

The switch to ExamSoft also relieved burdens on teachers. The College of Health Science is unique in that they offer an interdisciplinary approach to their students, meaning students from Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Prosthetics & Orthotics programs participate in coursework together during their first year of training. With an interdisciplinary program, class sizes are larger and teachers have more exams per class to grade. With the built-in faculty portal in ExamSoft, instructors are able to automate some elements of the grading process, reducing one instructor's grading time from 30-40 hours to around 3-4 hours. They can also import existing exam content or use the portal to build new exams.

In addition to quicker grading times, instructors gained insight into psychometric analysis, gauging how well assessments measured student knowledge and focusing on redesigning question banks based on what would best serve students.

LOOKING AHEAD

ExamSoft was able to provide two important solutions for students: (1) to increase their level of familiarity and achievement on board certification exams, and (2) to provide access to the exam in digital format by downloading it and taking it offline without WiFi.

By providing steps toward hybrid course learning, ExamSoft offers much needed flexibility to structure exams around the needs of a course and to accommodate changes for students and teachers.

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