

Blackboard®

Finding the right formula for student success at Ohio University with Blackboard and McGraw-Hill Education



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Challenges



Today's students are tech savvy, yet Ohio University students – especially incoming freshmen – were struggling to get on board with registering for homework, assessment, and assignment systems with multiple components. With students trying to manage multiple URLs, passwords, and procedures, instructors found themselves acting as tech support for their numerous questions.

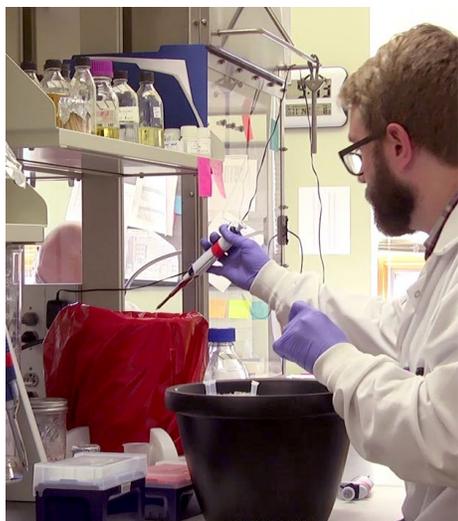
Solution



The Chemistry Department fully integrated McGraw-Hill Connect – a homework and learning management solution – within Blackboard Learn, the university's learning management system, providing both students and faculty with a unified, easy-to-use learning environment. The department also recently implemented ALEKS, an assessment and learning system focused on STEM courses, and plans for close integration between Learn and ALEKS as well.

When Professor Shadrick Paris, Ph.D., joined the faculty at Ohio University, the Chemistry Department was using a variety of learning systems. In addition to working with multiple unconnected products, instructors relied largely on paper handouts distributed in class. The approach presented a substantial challenge to both students and instructors. Students had to juggle many moving parts – different interfaces, sign-ins, URLs – for each class they were taking. When multiplied across four to five classes, things could quickly become overwhelming, especially for freshmen. Instructors found themselves devoting too much time – time better spent on coursework itself – to helping their students navigate the systems that would enable them to receive assignments, take assessments, and view their grades.

The paper handout approach was also problematic. As Professor Paris observed, “As instructors, we need to grow with our students. If we're still living in the 1960s and 1970s, using transparencies on overhead projectors and handing out reams of paper in class, we're not doing that growing. Student expectations have changed, and we need to make sure that our students have the right set of tools for learning. And that, as instructors, we have the right set of tools for teaching and communicating.”



“The combination of Blackboard Learn and McGraw-Hill Connect (and, coming soon, ALEKS) really does let me work smarter, not harder. There is no reason for me to spend time on organizational duties when I can better spend that time on content and communication with students. I want to become a better teacher. This frees me up to do that.”

Dr. Shadrick Paris,
Associate Professor,
Ohio University

The “right set of tools” for learning, teaching, and communicating with students

For the Chemistry Department, Blackboard Learn, with its close integration with McGraw-Hill Connect, has become the centerpiece for the “right set of tools.” This combination is used by hundreds of students enrolled in the services courses – Prep Chem and General Chem – that all chemistry students take during their first two years of college, as well as the courses taken by nursing students. It is also used for the university’s Supplemental Instruction program, implemented for STEM classes with high student withdrawal rates, and for its Peer Lead Team Learning initiative.

“We teach our students, ‘when in doubt, go to Blackboard Learn,’ which we load up with everything they need,” Professor Paris said. “We don’t want to erect a barrier by having too many sites and URLs. We want our students to focus on the content, not on accessing the content.”

When students need to access Connect for their assignments, just one click from Blackboard Learn takes them directly to the Connect platform. The Chemistry Department is also planning to integrate ALEKS with Blackboard Learn. ALEKS focuses on the mastery of core concepts in Math and Chemistry, while the Connect features adaptive learning tools and assessments for subject mastery across multiple disciplines.

- › Tight integration of Connect with Learn provides students with a seamless, hassle-free learning environment
- › Students can concentrate on learning, not on navigating multiple systems that enable that learning
- › Instructors, with a central, unified environment for course creation, grading, materials, student communication, etc., can work more efficiently.

McGraw-Hill integration with Blackboard benefits both students and instructors. Professor Paris said that anecdotal evidence suggests that, with these tools in place, students perform better on exams and that the class withdrawal rate – typically a problem in difficult STEM classes – has decreased. For Professor Paris, the right technology helps him become more efficient, allowing him to focus on his teaching and his students, not on administrative work.

“Blackboard plus McGraw-Hill is a winning formula for the Chemistry Department at Ohio University,” he said.

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