

Melody Lehn

Assistant Professor, Speech Communication, University of South Carolina

Use of MindTap Leads to Increased Reading and Comprehension in Melody Lehn's Communication Course

Melody Lehn, Assistant Professor of Speech Communication at the University of South Carolina, teaches Speech Communication in three different areas: on campus through Extended University; at a local military base; and, beginning next year, in a fully online environment for Palmetto College. She currently uses MindTap in her on-campus Public Communication course.

STUDENTS RESISTANT TO COMMUNICATIONS TEXTBOOKS

Melody initially heard about MindTap from a colleague. "At first, I was interested in MindTap because I am developing fully online Communications courses. I thought MindTap may be useful as a digital hub for students to access all of their course content as well as to interact with me," said Melody. She liked what she saw of the solution and decided to adopt it for her on-campus course. Melody also hoped that MindTap would help her with a persistent and ongoing challenge – low student engagement with the textbook. "I have tried teaching this course with two previous textbooks, and I have tried teaching the course with no textbook," said Melody. "The challenge is that students believe that a class in public speaking is self-explanatory and there is nothing they can learn from. Therefore, they often conclude that a textbook is not needed for the course," she said. As a result of that conclusion, students tend to not purchase the textbook, which can negatively impact their performance in the class.

STUDENTS USING MINDTAP SHOWED HIGHER LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

Given her past experience, Melody was pleasantly surprised to find her students more engaged in the textbook once MindTap was introduced. "Student reading of the textbook has skyrocketed this semester," said Melody. "This is pretty much the first semester teaching this course where I have heard students quoting the textbook during discussions in class, and I attribute that to MindTap," she said. She believes part of this increase was due to how she integrated MindTap into the classroom. "I took everything we did in MindTap and brought it into the classroom," she said. She also believes having all of the course materials integrated into one solution was another reason for the increase in reading. "Students are accessing the textbook through MindTap, and I think that integration is a key part of it," she said.

Melody assigns chapter exercises to her students for a completion grade. "There are 12 chapters students are doing work on, and they're getting a completion grade for 10 of them. That gives them two "free" weeks in case they get sick or have heavy workloads



CHALLENGES

- Students fail to see the importance of the textbook for a communications course, believing the content to be intuitive. As a result, students do not engage with the content and the instructor spends extra time lecturing on content they didn't study.

SOLUTIONS

- Cengage Learning's MindTap

RESULTS

- Students now read more and engage with the textbook, and complete more exercises for every chapter.

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in other courses,” she said. Near the end of the semester, Melody was surprised to discover her students were going above and beyond on their MindTap assignments. “In both of my classes I had students ask if they could get extra credit because they had completed MindTap assignments for all 12 chapters they were assigned,” she said.

A COURSE TRANSFORMED

As with the student reading, Melody attributes this high level of engagement with how she has integrated MindTap into the classroom. “My goal was to incorporate their responses to different questions [within their assignments] into class discussion,” said Melody. In addition to students being more engaged with their assignments, Melody found this approach helped her transform her class. “We spent more time discussing, which translated to less time of me lecturing, which was due to [students] reading more and preparing better. That was one of the biggest successes [with MindTap] because it can be hard to get away from lecturing,” she said.

NEXT STEPS

Melody is looking forward to integrating MindTap into additional communications courses as well as integrating more of it into her existing courses. “I am excited because I know there is still more for me to explore and use in MindTap,” she said. Melody believes MindTap will be a great fit as she designs her fully online Communications course.

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