



Robert Black, M.A.

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MindTap™ Proves to Be a Natural for Preparing Students for the Maritime Industry

State University of New York (SUNY) Maritime College has been consistently rated a top-tier regional college by *U.S. News & World Report*. Robert Black, experienced in international business, and in management information systems and information technology (MIS & IT) that supports business, has taught for six years in the Global Business and Transportation Department.

An important dimension of the undergraduate curriculum is technology, its context, and its application. MindTap™ — an interactive, online, personalized learning experience built upon authoritative Cengage Learning content — is a natural fit as part of students' learning experiences at Maritime College. MindTap allows students to guide themselves through their course — combining readings, multimedia, activities, instructor-provided content, and assessments into a personal Learning Path, with all relevant resources instantly accessible at any time and without the need to access another application.

Robert calls his recent “maiden voyage” with MindTap “an unmitigated success” for the way it improved student engagement and allowed students to earn higher grades at a competitive, affordable price. “So far as I can tell, nothing comparable is out there yet.”

COURSES AND PARTICIPANTS

Robert was drawn to MindTap when he was seeking ways to improve the engagement of time-pressed freshmen in an introductory course. He selected MindTap for his blended section of Introduction to Business and Economics — a classroom section also on the SUNY Learning Network (SLN), with the ANGEL® LMS. More than three-quarters of his 40 students were in the section as cadets seeking a B.S. degree, in addition to a Merchant Marine license from the U.S. Coast Guard.

He recognized MindTap as a resource that could be readily integrated with the traditionally structured course. In addition to using MindTap, students accessed some class materials on ANGEL, including Robert's Microsoft® PowerPoint® lecture slides and information related to the required collaborative student projects (which play an important role in the school's business courses).

THE CHALLENGES

Finding time to provide individual attention to students, especially in larger classes, is a continuing challenge given Robert's many teaching and state maritime domain training and security obligations. “There just isn't enough time in the day for me to be a personal mentor to each one of my students, as much as I'd like to be,” he says.

Students can be particularly difficult to engage. “They typically don't like to read, and shy away from questions when I attempt to draw them into class discussions,” he says. “If you don't require students to do something, they generally won't do it.”

CHALLENGES

- **Reticent first-year students** often don't participate in class, and consequently miss learning opportunities.
- **Workloads and time constraints** leave little time to mentor students one-on-one. Maritime students have time-demanding courses/programs, so they need tools to help them learn efficiently and effectively.
- **Improving outcomes and facilitating efficient assessment and evaluation of student progress** are ongoing concerns.

SOLUTIONS

- MindTap Introduction to Business with Selections from *Business*, 11th Edition, by Pride, William M., Robert J. Hughes and Jack R. Kapoor.

RESULTS

- **MindTap engages students** with a consistent learning path, interactive activities, and apps that make learning more enjoyable — and invites students to explore concepts on their own, without the reticence they may feel in class.
- **Instant access to a variety of learning resources**, including quizzes with feedback, allows students to receive immediate guidance outside of class.
- **Students received better grades** in the SUNY Maritime MindTap intro course — and gave higher course ratings — than students in the traditional intro course.

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THE RESULTS

Robert used the MindTap Reader for core readings, assignments, and case studies and as a resource for supplemental activities to support students before and after class sessions. “The structure of MindTap™ makes it easy for instructors to put their imprimatur on each unit and chapter, which enhances the online relationship with each student,” he says. Because my MindTap course is subordinate to and dependent on our common syllabus, it is not textbook driven but textbook supported, a very important feature in my situation. I can easily monitor student progress with MindTap.”

While MindTap delivers a suggested Learning Path right out of the box, instructors are encouraged to personalize it by changing or re-ordering chapters and activities, removing activities, adding instructor-provided content, and re-naming content to match a syllabus.

MindTap Learning Apps give students additional tools to prepare for a course or exam. “Freshmen can get intimidated if they can’t understand something right away. With the MindTap glossary, they don’t have to be stymied by an unfamiliar concept — they just click on a term and a definition comes right up.” The easy-to-navigate MindTap Reader also allows students to make notes, highlight text, and save and aggregate their annotations.

Cengage Learning Engagement Services, particularly those services designed to get the course and students up and running, were a plus for Robert. “The client services team thoroughly handled my issues. It was an eye-opener, given my considerable experience with customer service globally.”

For the first time ever, Robert received no negative comments in student course assessments submitted prior to the final exam. Almost two-thirds said they would recommend MindTap™ to other students. “I was awed because so many of my students earned an ‘A’ or ‘A-’ on the final exam. And students gave the MindTap intro class higher ratings than they gave my traditional intro class. I’m convinced that the higher course ratings and grades were, in large part, a result of students’ engagement. It was an unmitigated success.”

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