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Challenges

- University professor wanted to promote active learning that would motivate students, enable them to succeed in the course, facilitate their learning, and build 21st century skills.

Solutions

- Pathbrite

Results

- Instructor assigned a comprehensive project in Pathbrite that successfully engaged students in their coursework while helping them develop their research, critical thinking, writing, and presentation skills.
- Students gained proficiency in a new digital resource. All but two students who were initially hesitant about using Pathbrite experienced complete turnarounds in their appreciation of the tool; technically savvy students honed their skills.
- Pathbrite makes it easy for students to create compelling, visually striking exhibits for their coursework.

Pathbrite Engages Students in Learning History and Practical Technology Skills

Dr. Melissa Jordine teaches history at California State University (CSU), Fresno. Like many educators, she sees value in using technology in the classroom, and has been doing so for years. Melissa recently integrated the Pathbrite e-portfolio tool into her teaching in order to more effectively implement project-based learning. Instructors like Melissa use Pathbrite to create engaging learning experiences, deliver instructional content, facilitate the exchange of student-created artifacts for assignments, and review student progress. “There are many advantages to Pathbrite,” she says.

Pathbrite Fosters Development of Important Skills

Melissa uses Pathbrite in her holocaust course and 40% of the course grade is based on a multi-faceted assignment that actively involves students in their learning. Students are assigned a topic (or can request a subject of special interest) on which they conduct research, write a paper, and create a presentation to showcase pertinent artifacts. “Students build a museum-quality exhibit in Pathbrite of 10 artifacts (images and videos). Each artifact has to relate to the topic and to the other artifacts,” explains Melissa. “Students really have to think carefully about the story they want to tell. They have to capture the most relevant images and videos — and select the order in which to present them — to best convey their message.” Students also have to include research citations and incorporate an image representative of an architectural element.

Melissa can easily review her students’ Pathbrite projects, and students can share their work with each other. “I really like the showcase feature,” she says. “Students create a portfolio with six of the required artifacts by a particular date in the term and other students can view them and make comments, so they get peer feedback before submitting their final project.” If they wish, students can share their work with a non-Pathbrite user such as a family member or potential employer.

Students “Buy In” to Online Portfolios

Change can be intimidating, and such was the case for some of Melissa’s students. “When I announced that they were going to do a Pathbrite portfolio, about half of them were lukewarm to the idea, and six students petitioned me to use poster board, the format we used previously,” she recalls. “By the end of the course, the students that had been lukewarm were completely on board. The students that had been excited at the prospect of using Pathbrite were even more tech



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savvy, and of the six that were opposed, four were converts and one admitted its advantages, giving it a begrudging ‘OK.’ Only one student still disliked it.”

The transformation is understandable given how easy it is to use Pathbrite to create striking portfolios. “You can organize the artifacts in a design template, and Pathbrite sizes them automatically,” says Melissa. “You can tag an artifact with a title, description, and category. Pathbrite offers a brilliant way to organize materials digitally, and the results are dynamic, not static.” Coursework is stored automatically, so each student is constantly building a portfolio of work just by completing assignments.

Melissa has seen positive results since integrating Pathbrite into her teaching. “I think my students are more engaged. They certainly seemed to spend more time creating their exhibits, and students reported that they were more engaged in the process of arranging their presentation digitally. The students also said they had to think more about their topic to complete the written reflections. In addition, being able to view others’ exhibits gave them ideas on how to better organize their own.”

A Bright Path Going Forward

The word about Pathbrite’s benefits is spreading at Fresno State. Some students maintain a personal profile for two or three years as undergraduates and students in a nursing doctoral program get a leg up on their future careers by using it to showcase their accomplishments and skills. Additional programs are planning to have students use Pathbrite to create a portfolio documenting their knowledge and skills.



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