

STUDENT SUCCESS STORY

Amanda Whitworth

Student, Columbus State University

Enhanced WebAssign® Alleviates Math Phobia in Returning Student

Amanda Whitworth is a full-time student and part-time history tutor at Columbus State University in Georgia. As a former pre-kindergarten teacher with the goal of becoming a high school teacher, she is particularly tuned in to the needs of learners. “Students need people who believe in them and give them better study skills,” she says. When Amanda took Mathematical Modeling in the spring of 2012, she learned that students also need — and benefit from — resources other than “people,” such as Enhanced WebAssign® (EWA).

Having been out of school for 17 years before returning to college, Amanda was particularly anxious about taking mathematics. “I walked into class and saw a computer on every desk, which was daunting,” she recalls. “I was math phobic and very intimidated by computers. I’d never used Excel® or a graphing calculator. Now I use Excel all the time, and am sure I’ll use it in the future.”

ONE-ON-ONE GUIDANCE FOR EVERY PROBLEM

Although the Mathematical Modeling course had an instructor who presented concepts and offered guidance, all homework, review materials, and tests were in Enhanced WebAssign. The online resource immediately alleviated Amanda’s anxiety. “The whole format of EWA was outstanding. If you didn’t understand something presented one way, there was always another way to learn it,” she says. “When you worked a problem, you could watch an instructor walk you through it step by step. EWA tutorials were helpful, too. If you wanted an auditory version, EWA read the material aloud to you.” Amanda explained that because she has ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and short-term memory loss, EWA was particularly helpful because she could go back, review, and do problems as many times as she wanted. “I liked that you could practice a similar problem before doing the assigned problem, and I had multiple chances to get the problem right. It eliminated a lot of stress,” she says.

ANALYTICAL THINKING, RETAINED MATH SKILLS

Many of the Enhanced WebAssign problems were word problems, which Amanda says fostered development of critical thinking. “The problems helped us understand how math can be used and applied in the everyday world; for instance, when shopping or when discussing salaries. EWA teaches you how to break down problems — how to critically analyze them in more depth. In history, we do the who/what/where/when/why, and the same theme applies to math.”

In addition to overcoming her anxiety, Amanda received a grade that helped her GPA. “I never made higher than a ‘C’ in math before, and I got an ‘A’ in the class. Cengage is successful in helping students learn and fully understand the material,” she says. More than a year later, she was able to take an economics class as a result of having the skills that she learned in math. “I was wondering anxiously if any of the math skills were still going to be there for economics, and they were.”



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Source Code: 15M-MA0054