B. Mitchell Peck, Ph.D.

University of Oklahoma

Challenges

- Instructor was dissatisfied with student performance and involvement.
- Keeping students engaged, motivated and succeeding.
- Instructor wanted a way to get students practicing social research.

Solution

- Cengage Learning's MindTap® for *The Practice of Social Research*

Results

- Students enjoy the interactive nature of MindTap and are more engaged with the topic.
- Instructor is confident students have access to activities and assignments.
- Improvement in student outcomes.
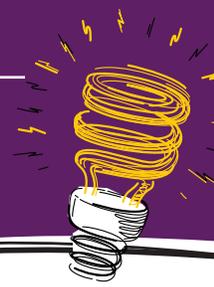
MindTap® helps students actually practice social research, decrease failure rate, and improve test results

Dr. Mitch Peck teaches several undergraduate and graduate courses in statistics and research methods, medical sociology, and stratification at the University of Oklahoma. In his research methods class, Peck points out that students learn by doing, and he felt that his students were not *doing* enough to master the concepts and excel. His students just didn't seem to be in full understanding of how to conduct social research, or familiar enough with the concepts to drive their own research studies.

"I didn't feel like students were getting a ton out of the class," said Peck. "I wanted them to be active social researchers, not watch someone stand up and talk. Short of asking them to do a long-term research project, I knew I had to find another way, something else so they could practice."

Peck, who welcomes the idea of new technology, decided to give MindTap a try in combination with the Cengage Learning social research text by Earl Babbie. "The main reason I decided to try MindTap is that I was dissatisfied with the way I was teaching the class. I wanted to improve and help my students experience social research."

After overcoming some initial technology obstacles ("Technology adds one more layer that I have to learn. It definitely adds an element of potential problems," said Peck) this seasoned instructor decided to do what's he's used to doing: taking a deep look at the data. "At the end of the semester, I analyzed the data. I looked at the MindTap quiz grades and the grades in the class," said Peck. "The correlation was exceedingly high—I believe it was .73. That is quite high, so when I saw that I decided that a little inconvenience in helping students get registered was probably worth it. The correlation was too high to ignore. So I am using MindTap again."

Increased engagement and better student preparation for class and quizzes

One of the benefits of MindTap that appeals to Peck and the goals he has for his students is increased engagement and better preparation. Knowing how interesting social research can be when it's truly understood, Peck wanted an online program that would get his students interested and involved.

"With MindTap, it was clear my students were more engaged, and they did come more prepared for class. I made the reading assignment required before class. By putting a hard deadline on the quizzes on the readings (they were due the day before class), it really improved participation and preparation," Peck explained. "I realize now that is

the single biggest reason students did better on the exams." Additionally, because so many students were using MindTap extensively, Peck increased the percentage of the course grade tied to MindTap from 5% to 10%.

Instructor saves time, improves efficiency, and is happy with improved student outcomes

The benefits of switching to MindTap go beyond student involvement, according to Peck. His job is now simpler, and he's able to work more efficiently since he began using the program. "The grading of the quizzes within MindTap really made my work life easier. Students got their grades, and they knew how they were doing on the MindTap part of the course. I didn't have to grade it," he explained.

Peck remains excited about giving his students more of a true social research experience because of MindTap, and is glad that his original skepticism about using an online program was for naught. "I started with a negative attitude and thought about how much work it would be. I thought there would be more system outages, more complaints, more difficulties getting people registered," he said. "So in the end, I ended up putting in less time than I thought I would. I was pleasantly surprised in that regard. "And student outcomes were WAY better than I expected. I never expected to see such a high correlation between the MindTap grades and the course grades."

Peck is 'beyond satisfied' with the reduction in failure rate since he began using MindTap in his social research methods course. "This course had about a 20% failure rate in the past. I was looking for a way to improve that. Short of making the exams much easier, I knew I needed to give students ways to reinforce concepts and present scenarios in which they would actually use the materials," he explained. "Initially, I am always reluctant, but willing to try anything to help the students. With MindTap, I saw the results. My failure rate this past semester is down to 8%."

"I would recommend MindTap to other instructors. It really seems to have made a difference. I was reluctant to use it at first—but then I saw the results."

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