

## STUDENT SUCCESS STORY



### Matthew Kisiel

Freshman, Northern Arizona University

## First Generation College Student Confronted with Challenges and Technology

Matthew Kisiel, a freshman at Northern Arizona University, is the first in his family to attend college. Despite being a Computer Information Systems major and tech savvy, Kisiel was a bit suspect of the technology that greeted him on campus. “I was a little leery,” Kisiel admits. “I didn’t know in advance this type of technology would be used in class.”

Kisiel is referring to Cengage Learning’s SAM Assessment/Training/Projects solution, a cloud-based digital learning platform that allows teachers to more easily configure coursework, manage grading, and provide instant and personalized feedback. Initially, Kisiel saw SAM as a challenge to be overcome just like the heavy workload, time management issues, and a demanding major with which he was already dealing.

However, Kisiel soon realized SAM was a friend rather than a foe.

### STUDENT CREDITS SAM WITH IMPROVING HIS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Kisiel was first introduced to SAM while struggling to learn the intricacies of the Microsoft Office Word application. After watching a video tutorial, Kisiel had trouble recalling some of the details in the video that made completing his homework assignment difficult. “It was SAM that refreshed my memory,” Kisiel boasted. “SAM lets me play back the videos as many times as I want, refresh my memory if I get stuck, and work at a pace with which I’m comfortable.”

The SAM platform, which allows students multiple attempts at answering a question correctly, has become a tool Kisiel relies upon for test preparation and success. “The actual tests are similar to the SAM website,” Kisiel recalls. “SAM helps you learn about the programs you’re studying, familiarizes you with the test format, and makes it more likely that you’ll succeed on the test and in the class.”

Kisiel’s favorite professor thus far, Brandon Jones, first introduced the SAM platform at NAU five years ago. Not only does the platform better prepare students like Kisiel, Jones insists, but it also frees up faculty members to provide the one-on-one attention some students require.

### SAM STIMULATES PERSONAL GROWTH AND PROVIDES INSTANT FEEDBACK STUDENTS DEMAND

“I like to know how I’m doing as soon as possible,” Kisiel admits. “I’m the type of student who wants to know my grade immediately after submitting a test.” Fortunately, SAM provides students like Kisiel with the immediate feedback they desire.

#### CHALLENGES

- First-generation college student finds adjusting to a university atmosphere to be more than expected.
- An increased workload, time management issues, and a demanding major.

#### SOLUTIONS

- SAM 2013 Assessment/Training/Projects with MindTap Reader

#### RESULTS

- While initially leery of SAM, Kisiel says the platform has improved his critical thinking skills, test preparation, and overall academic performance.
- Kisiel also credits SAM’s “learn at your own pace” features with helping him grow personally and become more independent.



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“With SAM I can work at my own pace, get immediate feedback, and better prepare for tests.”

**Matthew Kisiel**

Freshman  
Northern Arizona University

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[www.cengage.com/  
LearningSolutions](http://www.cengage.com/LearningSolutions)

In addition to allowing students five attempts at solving each problem, SAM automates the grading process, which enables teachers to focus more of their time on classroom activities and provides students with automatic feedback after each attempt at solving a problem. “It’s one of my favorite features,” Kisiel said.

Equally important, SAM empowers students by helping them hone their critical thinking skills. Besides teaching Kisiel how to “dig deep for meaning” and “think outside the box,” he also credits SAM with helping him achieve a greater level of maturity. “I’m definitely more independent,” Kisiel boasts. “The instructor no longer has to teach me everything. I’ve become more responsible by learning to figure things out on my own.”

### **SAM’S IMPACT IS GROWING AND LONG LASTING**

The luxury SAM provides allows students to work at their own pace, resulting in improved academic outcomes as well as student confidence levels. For instance, after using SAM to learn the Microsoft Office Excel application, Kisiel was a step ahead of his fellow students in his mathematics class. “I was actually excited,” Kisiel said. “When we started using Excel in math class I was ahead because I was already familiar with the program thanks to SAM.”

It’s no wonder students like Kisiel are quickly becoming advocates. “I’d recommend SAM to friends and students,” Kisiel said. “SAM has a way of presenting information clearly, makes it easy for me to follow, and lets me know immediately how I’m doing.”

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