INSTRUCT™ HAS STUDENTS TALKING AT CAIRN UNIVERSITY

When Cairn University's librarians began preparations for Middle States Accreditation they realized that many of their information literacy tutorials had fallen out of date. Building new materials from scratch was a daunting proposal, while creating and editing instructional videos required time and resources they did not have. They decided they would need a standards-based solution that was engaging for students, and could be implemented across campus to achieve their ultimate vision of a research skills course for credit. Instruct (formerly InfoLit Modules) became their first step toward that goal.

BACKGROUND

During the Fall 2014 semester, Teri Catanio, an instructor and Director of the Career Center at Cairn University, decided to implement Instruct with her Critical Reading and Writing course (INT331D), a class attended mostly by nontraditional students who are working to complete their degree. This seven-week, once per week class is designed to assess students' baselines in terms of information skills while teaching them how to practice the high level of academic research they will need to earn their degree.

SOLUTION

Catanio assigned on-demand videos and tutorials, along with reflective questions, to the students before each class, taking advantage of Instruct's flexibility to integrate resources into her already existing syllabus. She immediately noticed a change in the way discussions unfolded. Students seemed more engaged, voicing more comments and questions than before. Using the Credo videos to teach the basics, Catanio was now better able to focus on bigger issues. The increased classroom participation also allowed Catanio to identify gaps in her students' knowledge and assign further videos and tutorials as the course progressed. Catanio was able to use Instruct's pre-test during the first class along with the post-test to show her students the many ways in which their knowledge had improved over the seven weeks.

> "[This] is a great product for smaller schools who might not have the resources to make these materials on their own, but have faculty members who want these kinds of tools for their students."
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> —Stephanie Kaceli, Assistant Director at Cairn's Masland Library

RESULTS

The positive effects on the students were obvious in both the short and long term. Catanio had always worried that lectures alone may have left her visual learners at a disadvantage. Adding PowerPoint presentations during class time proved a minimal fix at best. Now both auditory and visual learners were able to access materials that taught them the research skills they needed on-demand, reinforcing what they learned in class and allowing them to replay any sections that gave them trouble. If students found that they were still struggling, now there was time in class to discuss issues with their professor and peers, to ask questions and to learn from others' examples.

> **"I refuse to go back to the way I used to teach this class!"**

Catanio noticed that not only did the in class pre- and post-tests show a marked improvement, their grades compared to previous courses were the highest to date. Catanio noted that measured writing skills on four critical analysis essays increased by 50% from her 2013 classes to the 2014 class that used Instruct. "Students showed a significant improvement in writing skills," she explained, "possibly due to additional class time spent on discussing the topic and their understanding of the requirements for the essay analysis." Students research comprehension increased by 70% when Instruct was introduced. "This class seemed more confident and better prepared with the delivery of their final project and presentation," Catanio said. Having taught this class three times, Catanio was emphatic that this most recent semester was by far the one she enjoyed the most. With the materials already made, she was able to focus on instruction, and with the students learning concepts on-demand, class time became a give and take of information in ways that fostered understanding and afforded her

a better view of what her students were experiencing. Catanio found that there was something for each of the diverse needs of her class. For example, students with strengths in writing were able to build better research skills, while those who needed more help with writing found helpful activities to cultivate those competencies.

Catanio also benefited by saving 12 to 16 hours per week that had previously been spent reading assigned books and other source materials, preparing PowerPoint presentations, gathering materials for handouts, lecturing her class on information literacy topics and responding to feedback.

BENEFITS FOR LIBRARIANS

Teri Catanio wasn't the only person at Cairn University to notice a difference in the students who used Instruct. Stephanie Kaceli, Assistant Director at Cairn's Masland Library, had hoped that the implementation would be successful, but what she saw far exceeded her expectations. Instruct has laid the groundwork for students to master research basics, which then freed up time for librarians to spend on more advanced hands-on activities when they visited classrooms. Students became more familiar with research concepts and library resources before encountering librarians (in class or at the library), and they were able to ask more informed questions.

EVERYBODY WINS

Kaceli and Catanio envision a future where all freshmen can take advantage of what Instruct have to offer. The ability to embed it into a school's Learning Management Systems makes it easy to do just this. "Laura Saloiye and I presented Instruct to our School of Education last semester," Kaceli said. "The Dean who had previously taught a course similar to Teri's commented that she wished she'd had this for her class."

2017 UPDATE: Kaceli reports that they were able to expand use of Instruct beyond Catanio's pilot class. Instructors have enjoyed the versatility of being able to use different pieces of content according to their specific needs.