



Bismarck State College

INSTITUTIONAL SOLUTIONS

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Pearson LearningStudio gives Bismarck State College peace of mind

THE SITUATION

Bismarck State College (BSC) is located in the heart of North Dakota at the state capitol, situated on the east bank of the Missouri River. Home to over 4,000 students, the college has come a long way since it started as a junior college in 1939. The school's original purpose was to be a transfer college. Due to North Dakota's abundant coal resources, several power plants were built, creating many job openings to support the industry. Born out of these power plants was a huge demand for workforce training.

To meet this demand, BSC developed a program called Power Plant Technology in 1976. The college now offers the power plant program for on-campus, fully online and blended students. In addition, BSC has developed energy technology programs in the areas of process plant, electric power, nuclear power and electrical transmission systems. A Bachelor of Applied Science in Energy Management was also developed to support the energy industry.

All of BSC's energy programs are available online. BSC has online students in all fifty states, as well as a growing number of foreign countries. Because of this national footprint and its high quality programming, in 2007, United States Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman designated BSC as the National Power Plant Operations Technology and Education Center. This official designation recognizes BSC as the premier national center of education and training for operators and technicians in the energy industry.

Although BSC is a small institution, the college has been able to deliver high-quality education and a top-notch online learning program by choosing a turnkey learning management system – Pearson LearningStudio – that offers 24/7 technical support and an intuitive platform for all its users.

BISMARCK STATE COLLEGE'S CHALLENGES

BSC offers approximately 250 courses online with almost 300 sections. Of the college's over 4,000 students, 1,800 take at least one online class each semester, and 900 of those students are fully online. As almost 50% of its students take at least some courses online, finding a reliable platform was a prerequisite to choosing a learning management system.

Prior to adopting the Pearson LearningStudio platform, BSC was plagued with excessive and unpredictable server downtimes, and an unreliable help desk with limited hours. If a problem sprung up late on a Friday evening, a student who had to turn in a term paper or an instructor trying to load a test online would sometimes have to wait until Monday morning for the problem to be resolved. For a school that has over 1,800 online students, 24/7 access is a must and anything less is unacceptable.

Additionally, the previous platform did not provide an intuitive interface for faculty members, which resulted in low usage and a poor return on their technology investments. Ease-of-use and an intuitive platform interface were huge priorities when considering the adoption of a new learning management system.

"We were looking for a turnkey solution that would allow our institution to teach rather than run servers, install software patches and staff a help desk," said Larry Skogen, President of Bismarck State College. "It's a huge relief to work with a platform where we don't have to worry about the technology – we simply plug into Pearson LearningStudio, and Pearson handles everything from maintenance and updates to training – saving us time, money and headaches while improving our image as an academically vigorous and technically sound institution."

A FULL SERVICE TURNKEY SOLUTION FOR SUCCESS

BSC found the full-service solution it was searching for when they signed a five-year contract with Pearson eCollege for Pearson LearningStudio. Backed by Pearson, a global leader in education, technology and services, Pearson LearningStudio is a full service, SaaS-based platform that provides a comprehensive, flexible and fully supported environment for blended and online learning in higher education. Pearson LearningStudio guarantees 99.99% uptime, which gave BSC the peace of mind it needed and eliminated any fears of future server crashes and unplanned system downtime.

"This has been a huge confidence-builder for us," said Skogen. Bismarck State College is part of a statewide system made up of 11 colleges, three of which are using the Pearson LearningStudio platform. "Ideally, I would love to see a statewide implementation of Pearson LearningStudio as there is a lot of synergy that can be created in this environment."

Starting in May 2010, BSC will begin using Learning Outcome Manager, part of the Pearson LearningStudio Assessment and Analytics Suite. This gives faculty and administrators a set of tools for writing and organizing learning statements – helping them nurture of culture of assessment.

"We have seen huge benefits from our investment in the Pearson LearningStudio platform," said Skogen. "Our relationship with Pearson has been an easy one – very personal and helpful from the outset. The comprehensive solution, easy-to-use interface and reliable IT support has enabled us to provide better academic programs without creating undue burdens for our staff."

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—Larry Skogen,
President, Bismarck State College

*In addition to getting 24/7 user support for administrators, faculty and students, Bismarck State College is currently using nearly all the tools available within **Pearson LearningStudio** to deliver blended and online courses including:*

- **MyMathLab**

MyMathLab is a text-specific, easily customizable online course that integrates interactive multimedia instruction with textbook content. MyMathLab gives instructors the tools they need to deliver all or a portion of their course online, whether students are in a lab setting or working from home.

- **iSupport**

By participating in iSupport, BSC instructors can contact a member of Pearson's Academic Services team with course development or course design questions.

- **Enterprise Reporting**

A business intelligence solution that provides Bismarck State College administrators with data and reports related to student achievement and success, faculty effectiveness, enrollment data and course completion rates.

- **Academic Support Services**

A dedicated staff of professionals to support the daily and operational needs of BSC's fully online programs, as well as a Client Services Consultant who serves as a single point of contact for their ongoing, day-to-day management and operational responsibilities.

- **ExamGuard**

ExamGuard provides peace of mind for faculty and administrators about the security of their online assessments. This tool is essentially a browser within a browser that limits a student's ability to print pages, navigate the Web and access other programs while taking assessments.