

Case Study:

Closing the feedback loop to inform evidence-based curriculum mapping

BACKGROUND

St. John Fisher College's Wegmans School of Pharmacy, which opened in 2006, is located in Rochester, New York, and was the first college of its kind to open in the Greater Rochester community. Beginning with 55 students, 9 faculty members, and 2 staff members, it has now grown to include more than 300 students in four classes and more than 40 faculty and staff. The school awards a Doctor of Pharmacy degree (Pharm.D.) to candidates who complete its four-year program.

THE PROBLEM

Faculty at St. John Fisher College Wegman's School of Pharmacy were leveraging bubble sheet exams with a scoring system that generated basic psychometric reports on a per-exam basis. This difficult system required faculty to administer Scantron-type exams and then run the answer documents through a series of machines to generate the very basic data. Additionally, several versions of each exam had to be generated in order to ensure the integrity of the exam, and students were issued cards for seating arrangements based on their test version. The system was time consuming and did not provide an efficient way to track learning outcomes to institutional and accreditation standards.

Wegmans administrators knew they wanted an efficient and effective way to track longitudinal student progress on meeting learning objectives. They generated a list of goals. If their existing system could meet these goals, they would keep it. If not, they would look elsewhere for another testing solution. Working through an active assessment committee, the school considered two options: creating an annual exam for documenting learning outcomes and leveraging existing assessments. Ultimately they decided that the embedded assessment approach would take advantage of the exams that faculty have already carefully created. Furthermore, mining existing assessments for data would not add any more exams to the students' schedule. Finally, the administration also wanted the ability to map curricula based on the metrics from embedded assessments so as to validate curriculum coverage as well as competently prepare students for their high-stakes professional exams. With these goals in mind, Dr. Souza and her assessment committee scheduled two presentations with testing platform providers: one with their existing provider, and one with ExamSoft.

RESULTS

- Successfully began generating real-time data needed to provide remediation and feedback
- Began tracking learning outcomes in accordance with institutional and accreditation standards
- Perform data-driven curricular mapping

“I'm showing my age here, but our old solution was like a mimeograph machine. It was so archaic to me. We had to run four versions of answer sheets through a machine and give students seating cards—and we were not coding learning outcomes to standards. It was basic pen and pencil tests, run through the system with the little bubble sheets.”

- Dr. Jane M. Souza, Assistant Dean of Assessment
St. John Fisher College

THE SOLUTION

After attending both presentations, Wegmans chose ExamSoft, saying goodbye to the archaic technology and hello to assessment and learning analytics software. It came an era of Wegmans School of Pharmacy leveraging ExamSoft's computer-based testing system that tracks student learning outcomes to accreditation and institutional standards. This not only creates a better blueprint of exams, but also helps faculty and administrators more effectively analyze student performance and make ongoing improvements to the curriculum.

To inform their curricular mapping, Wegmans uses ExamSoft's categorization functions to "tag" each existing student assessment to institutional, programmatic, and/or course-level objectives. Next, they mine the data from existing assessments, track the density of coverage of objectives, and directly map student performance to those same objectives. Finally, ExamSoft's longitudinal reports enable Wegmans to provide data-driven evidence that these objectives are met.

This system, enhanced by ExamSoft's robust and real-time analytics, also provides Wegmans with the necessary data to engage students with data-driven feedback for remediation. In short, ExamSoft gives Wegmans a more precise indication of student achievement. Additionally, ExamSoft enables Dr. Souza and her team to longitudinally assess Wegmans students. Faculty members, in turn, are better equipped to address learning needs much earlier in the semester, and to more accurately be able to predict student performance on future exams. And administrators can be sure that their institution is meeting accreditation standards. With ExamSoft, Dr. Souza and her team can "close the feedback loop."

“With ExamSoft, we are able to customize our feedback reports for the individual students. And at the same time, our administration is able to move the school where we want to go because we have evidence of our students' learning and the teaching that happens.”

- Dr. Jane M. Souza, Assistant Dean of Assessment
St. John Fisher College

Other Key Takeaways...

How easy was it to transfer your existing test questions into the system? What about generating the reports?

“The training we received was great. The actual use of the software, in terms of inputting the items and generating reports, is easy and intuitive. It is something that our faculty can easily do themselves.”

How do you see your institution growing with ExamSoft?

“I feel like we're really pushing the limits on what the software can do, and we have an open line of communication with ExamSoft. As we feel the need to expand our use of the software, ExamSoft has been attentive to those needs, and I don't see this trend waning.”

About ExamSoft

ExamSoft offers a market-leading exam management solution, which delivers powerful, actionable data to assess learning outcomes and improve student learning, engagement, and retention. Its software suite enables clients to more efficiently and practically administer exams and analyze resulting data to improve curricular design, test design, and accreditation compliance. ExamSoft has served hundreds of prominent academic, certification, and licensing institutions for more than 14 years and has successfully administered millions of exams.