Boosting student achievement

La Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia embraces Competency-Based Education with D2L

La Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia (UCC) aimed to enhance its graduate and undergraduate programs with a competency-based approach to learning. To realize its goal, UCC is using D2L's Brightspace platform to deliver highly personalized learning experiences and analyse student progress to help raise the overall level of academic achievement.

At a glance

Client: La Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia
Learners: 40,800 undergraduates, 1,400 postgraduates
Industry: Higher Education
Website: ucc.edu.co

Platform/Features:
• D2L's Brightspace platform
• Competency-Based Education

Interviewees:
• Angelica Ricaurte Avendaño, National Deputy Director of E-Learning

Highlights:
• Enabled UCC to implement competency-based education quickly
• Gained rapid buy-in from students and staff
• Unlocked new ways to analyse student performance
• Boosted student attainment through personalized learning
Challenge

Targeting a bold new approach to learning
La Universidad Coorperativa de Colombia began in 1958 as an Institute of Education and from that moment created different university campuses in various regions of the country with little access to higher education. UCC now has 16 headquarters located in different capitals of Colombia and offers 109 undergraduate majors, 67 postgraduate majors and the support of different academic spaces such as 29 libraries, 210 practical learning environments and a technological ecosystem made up of more than 100 platforms. The university has approximately 42,000 thousand students among all its campuses.

UCC is always looking for ways to enhance learning outcomes for its students. The organization realized that embracing a competency-based approach to learning would be a powerful way to prepare students for success in the next stage of their academic or professional careers.

Unlike traditional approaches to university education, in which all learners move through a single set of course materials at the same time, competency-based education (CBE) allows learners to progress toward individual skills or learning outcomes at their own pace. In this way, CBE empowers students to devote more of their study and contact time to the areas of the course that they find most challenging.

As a first step in its CBE journey, UCC recognized that it would be crucial to secure buy-in from its students and teaching staff. Angelica Ricaurte Avendaño, National Deputy Director of E-Learning at la Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia, says: “We knew that were embarking on a major transformation of our approach to learning. We wanted to bring our learners and lecturers with us every step of the way and provide all our stakeholders with the tools they needed to make a successful transition to CBE.”

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Angelica Ricaurte Avendaño, National Deputy Director of E-Learning, UCC
Selecting a world-class LMS
After a rigorous, three-month evaluation process involving multiple learning management systems (LMS), UCC selected D2L’s Brightspace platform as the foundation for its new CBE-focused programs.

“The combination of the Brightspace Core and a dedicated Competency-Based Education module was one of the key reasons that we selected the D2L solution,” comments Angelica Ricaurte Avendaño. “The Brightspace platform enables us to deliver a virtual campus experience for UCC students. Thanks to the D2L solution, we can augment face-to-face teaching with digital course materials, and create fully virtual classrooms in which all communication and learning takes place online.”

Close partnership, rapid deployment
Working closely with an expert team from D2L, UCC began the process of configuring the Brightspace platform to support the CBE model that it had developed in collaboration with students and teaching staff.

“Transformation projects can be difficult, since they demand changes to ingrained habits and cultures within an organization, and overnight changes are especially complicated,” explains Angelica Ricaurte Avendaño.

“Every step of the way, D2L supported us with the technical resources we needed to integrate the Brightspace platform into our teaching process.”
Angelica Ricaurte Avendaño, National Deputy Director of E-Learning, UCC

Today, UCC is using the D2L solution to deliver its new CBE model to thousands of learners across the University. Teaching staff from across the organization have now made the Brightspace platform an integral part of their courses, and are continually adding rich, multimedia learning materials to the platform.
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Result

Preparing students to succeed
With the Brightspace platform driving its new approach to teaching, UCC is achieving its goal of delivering more personalized learning experiences. By enabling its students to work at their own pace and make more effective use of contact time with teaching staff, the University is promoting better educational outcomes.

One of the most powerful tools at UCC's disposal is the ability to measure and analyse student progress through digital courses. Traditional approaches to teaching rely on exams taken at the end of a semester or year to measure student progress, which makes it difficult to recognize and help students who are struggling until it's too late. With the Brightspace platform, UCC gains a near-real time view of student progress, enabling teaching staff to take proactive steps to support learners who may be falling behind.

Since implementing the D2L solution, UCC has seen benefits from its CBE transformation faster than it ever expected. Teachers and students alike have embraced the platform rapidly, and most stakeholders in the university log into the platform daily. Crucially, UCC is measuring significant improvements in learning outcomes for its students—helping to give them the best possible start to their lives after university.