

Client Story

National University Partners with LearningMate to **Enhance & Build Online Programs** in Extensive Curriculum Scaling Initiative

INDUSTRY

Higher Education
University

SOLUTION

Course Development
& Enrichment

PROJECT SIZE

300 Courses

PROJECT DURATION

4 Months

Background

As the COVID-19 pandemic fast-tracked efforts to move towards hybrid and online education, many institutions held out hope of resuming on-campus classes. While very few were entirely in-person as of October 2020, many institutions were trying to adopt primarily online models.

Following an evaluation of the preparedness for a fully asynchronous environment, the quality of resources, and the ability to allow students to progress through materials as quickly as their schedule allows, National University (NU) recognized a need to scale 51 asynchronous programs nationwide. NU's Center of Innovation (CIL) and faculty partnered with Learningmate to ensure high-quality, engaging, career-focused online programs for students.

Leveraging LearningMate's course development experience, the team enhanced 29 existing programs and built 21 new programs in four months. This curriculum scaling effort included converting 300 courses, 120 hours of interactive student-engagement content, and 2,500 discussion boards.

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The Solution

First, a small group of faculty worked closely with NU's CIL and LearningMate to test the curriculum scaling effort with a proof of concept (POC). Together, the POC team developed a 3-week update plan for the 13 groups of faculty.

Next, LearningMate and the CIL team planned a collaborative initiative where faculty updated course content, and LearningMate updated key components for a consistent online learning experience. Following Quality Matters HE standards, the team worked together to address several course update areas, including course and weekly learning outcome mapping, discussion board text, a centralized, built-in rubrics, and a getting started section.

The team also created new materials utilizing LearningMate's frameworks, including developing interactives, a faculty success guide, and course introduction videos. Faculty are most excited about the new student-facing interactives, which enable the practice of key learning objectives with 7–10 minute pathways. One lead faculty shared, "The interactives are excellent reviews of the weekly material and should aid students in their understanding of the subject matter and encourage critical thinking." The asynchronous courses ensure substantial academic experiences with key course components with interactives, reinforced by signature assignments and

the new discussion boards, which follow a pattern of at least two posts per week and common guidelines.

All courses were subjected to critical review for required readings, content, alignment with learning outcomes, assessments that reflect attainment of learning outcomes, and the addition of more dynamic content, resulting in technically sound, up-to-date course material.

Some courses have replaced traditionally required textbooks with open educational resources, including academic articles from the NU library and alternative media such as videos and podcasts that offer students various ways to internalize and use content to demonstrate their learning in assessments. NU also provides relevant programs with completion certificates that students can add to their professional resumes. For most courses, weeks are organized by learning objectives, readings, lecture content, learning activities, student interactives, assignments, and quizzes/exams.

There was a strong emphasis on aligning learning outcomes, competencies, curriculum, and assessments to career skills and communicating this information to students. Essential items such as digital rubrics and course-specific curriculum maps show how students achieve skills at the course and program levels.

Impact & Outcomes

LearningMate's close collaboration with program directors, faculty, and adjunct faculty helped National University align online course material, goals for asynchronous courses, and student collaboration methods in the short four-month timeframe. Faculty noted the benefits of having outcomes clearly stated with assignments tied to them, and in the courses that are currently active, students also emphasized the value. Faculty also appreciated how the customized rubrics would assist instructors in assigning grades and help students with core skills, such as improving their writing.

"LearningMate was a collaborative, diligent partner in our effort to convert 21 programs to asynchronous offerings. At first, the task seemed insurmountable; however, with LearningMate's assistance and ongoing interactions, we were able to update our courses quickly while still holding a high standard of quality," shared Shannon McCarty, Vice President, Teaching and Learning, National University. "Our success is thanks to our faculty effort and LearningMate's hard work."

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