



# Bunker Hill Community College

## HIGHER ED SOLUTIONS

*“Students today are more comfortable using technology than not. They find it in other classes, use it in their personal lives, and know that it awaits them no matter what their chosen career path.”*

—Mike Puopolo  
CIT Professor and Chairman

Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC) is a multicampus institution comprising two main campuses and five satellite campuses in and around the Greater Boston metropolitan area. Founded in 1973, BHCC enrolls more than 8,900 students in day, evening, weekend, Web-based, and distance-learning courses and programs. Through more than 65 associate degree and certificate programs, the college prepares students for both immediate employment and transfer to four-year colleges and universities.

As early adopters of technology-based learning systems, Mike Puopolo, professor and chairperson of BHCC’s Computer Information Technology (CIT) department, and his colleagues were familiar with the benefits of delivering learning via online and multimedia venues. But by spring 2006, they were looking for online courseware that was more comprehensive than that which they were then using.

In March 2006, Puopolo began working with a Pearson team on customizing the entire course series—from content to delivery. “All of BHCC’s myitlab courses share a common portal, navigation theme, and user interface,” says Puopolo. “Students log in once and never have to go anywhere else. Customized course content, plus all of the resources they could ever need—podcasts, sound bites, demo documents—is available through myitlab in one centralized location. We even integrated YouTube into it.”

The myitlab application provides Puopolo and the other CIT instructors with the full learning system they’d been seeking. “We love the Gradebook, the discussion features, the textbook-based training, the pre- and posttests—all of it; myitlab has enabled us to streamline our teaching and present more material in a more coherent fashion,” he says.

After examining the changing learning habits of the more and more technologically savvy students entering his classroom, Puopolo decided to tailor his course offerings with those students in mind. “We’re piloting a customized eBook in six sections of the course,” he says. “It reduced the price of the textbook, and the

students seem to prefer it. If end-of-semester surveys indicate, we’ll move all 40-plus sections to eBooks in the spring.”

myitlab’s customized eBooks enable Puopolo’s students to do universal searches of the book for individual terms—and thereby facilitate their test taking. Other benefits include the integration of custom multimedia simulations directly into the eBook.

Puopolo’s custom simulations show students, step-by-step, exactly how the applications work together. By conveying the material in this manner—within the online learning space of the content itself—learning is seamless and contextual. Students never need break pace from the learning environment.

Puopolo was one of the first to volunteer for the testing of myitlab’s new Grader. “It’s a great addition for both instructors and students,” he says. “It gives me a definite advantage in terms of being able to assign projects. My students are receiving much more detailed information about what they’ve done right and what they’ve done wrong than I could offer them in the same amount of time.”

BHCC’s enrollments are up 25 percent from last year. The result is an exponential increase in the number of sections and the times they are offered. “Our president is committed to not turning away students,” says Puopolo. “Some departments are even running midnight courses. myitlab enables us to handle this increased scale without losing integrity. All instructors, whether full-time or adjuncts, whether on-site or online—are presented with a fully populated course,

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including assessments, PowerPoints, demos, multi-media features, and all the assignments. We train adjuncts to deliver this course in a quality fashion in about six hours.”

Many of Puopolo’s newest students are returning for workforce retraining and were priced out of four-year schools. “myitlab offers these students the kinds of real, on-the-ground skills they’ll need regardless of career path,” he says. “You need these skills everywhere.”

BHCC is part of the National Science Foundation’s Boston-area Advanced Technological Education Consortium—a consortium of colleges and universities promoting workforce development in information technology in the Boston region. Fulfilling the consortium’s mission required commissioning a cross-industry workforce study in 2006. “We learned that small and large companies alike assume that graduates have the requisite technical skills to succeed,” says Puopolo. “What they look for above and beyond that are soft-side skills: the abilities to work in teams, to problem solve creatively, to write clearly, and to communicate verbally. Pearson’s vast wealth of content meant that we could respond to what we learned by further customizing our myitlab Web portal with Pearson’s Self-Assessment Library<sup>1</sup> and thereby creating our ideal learning system.”

Puopolo’s myitlab course folder also includes (1) a customized Pearson text entitled Professionalism: Real Skills for Workplace Success, (2) a group running case culminating in two formal presentations of the collaborative work done by each group, and (3) links to online meetings and collaborative workplace tools, such as Office Live.

Off campus, BHCC leverages myitlab to further its commitment to providing computer and information technology training for community-based organizations

in its service area. The college is able to provide elsewhere the same myitlab courses offered on its main and satellite campuses: on-site at organizations, including Action for Boston Community Development, Jewish Vocational Services, the New England Center for Homeless Veterans, and the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts. During the past two years, this kind of community outreach has benefited more than 300 students, who receive full college credit for courses taken in their own community settings.

“Partnering with the Learning Solutions group has enabled us to extend our use of technology beyond the realm of grade point averages,” says Puopolo. “By converging highly targeted content, flexible delivery models, and ease of use, we’re able to positively impact lives. Those who otherwise would not have access to learning are benefiting from the same high-quality courses offered at BHCC. Thanks in large part to our ability to offer fully intact course templates off campus, one young military service veteran was able to transition from being homeless to being a student, obtaining a part-time job, and ultimately obtaining Section 8 housing. That man is out of a shelter and on his feet again; he knows he is capable and has a future ahead of him.”

It’s been a learning experience for Puopolo as well. “Pearson software and learning tools are much more flexible than I previously thought,” he says. “We’re still a computer department and a computer course, but through customization we can now provide our students and the community at large with all of the 21st-century skills they need to get and keep good jobs. That’s just invaluable.”

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*1. Pearson’s Self-Assessment Library is a series of online, interactive surveys designed to enable students to assess themselves in regard to a wide range of personal skills and abilities, including self-motivation, leadership skills, and team-building skills.*