



# Clemson University

## HIGHER ED SOLUTIONS

Clemson College opened in July 1893 as an all-male military school. In 1964, in recognition of the school's expanded academic offerings and research pursuits, the college was renamed Clemson University. Today, Clemson University provides diverse learning opportunities and modern research facilities for the people of South Carolina, the United States, and around the world. The university's 19,000 students select from more than 80 undergraduate and 110 graduate degree programs, whose retention and graduation rates rank among the highest in the country.

*"If you have a technical component to your teaching, you need support. Pearson Learning Solutions immediately replies and makes any fixes necessary."*

—Cynthia Haynes  
Director of First-Year  
Composition and  
Associate Professor of English

With more than 15 years of higher education writing instruction under her belt—all of them actively using technology to enhance learning—Cynthia Haynes, director of first-year composition and associate professor of English, knows what works—and what doesn't. By 2008, she and her colleagues in Clemson's English department had been struggling with another company's textbook and Web portal implementation for several years. Unsatisfied with that existing model—largely a modified place to archive information, Haynes and her colleagues sought a more-robust, multidimensional, and multimodal learning tool, specifically for undergraduates who take freshman composition. They turned to Pearson Learning Solutions.

The *Envision in Depth* textbook and its partner handbook were initial attractors, but it was Pearson's wealth of technology options that ultimately tipped the scale. "The books were a better fit for my curriculum," says Haynes. "And I was already sold on MyComplab.<sup>1</sup> It was when the Learning Solutions representative said his team would work with me on a portal and get me whatever I wanted in terms of multimedia support that he completely won me over."

Haynes developed a wish list of customized features and content, including the creation of a custom handbook cover that she designed using Clemson-specific artwork. Multimedia requests included Flash tutorials, examples in HTML, videos, audios, podcasts, blogs, and access to social networks. Haynes gave her list to the Learning Solutions team, whose members immediately went to work on each item listed, as well as on the incorporation of images from the custom

cover throughout the Web portal to promote visual unity. "The synergy was there from the beginning," says Haynes. "Everyone was very supportive. Whatever ideas we had, they were totally willing to do. For me, that's a benchmark of people I want to work with."

Haynes's wish list sets Clemson's Writing portal apart from any other portal Clemson used before. "The customized features and multimedia resources transform our portal from simply a place to do and archive work and into an interactive teaching and learning tool that is engaging and productive," she says. "It was important to me that our portal include resources to help students learn multimodal technology in order to create multimodal compositions—incorporating blogs, for example, or any of the other free, interactive media out there today."

*"Although teaching with technology is assumed in many other fields, it isn't as widespread in the humanities. Fortunately, my administration recognizes the importance of technology in effective writing instruction. For me it's a given."*

—Cynthia Haynes  
Director of First-Year Composition and  
Associate Professor of English

To that end, the Clemson Writing portal focuses not just on writing but also on a wide variety of learning skills, including the abilities to collaborate and to

understand technology. Students reflect on their learning as it relates to the many resources available to them, and they use MyCompLab's Portfolio feature to summarize and record their learning experiences. "The essay used to be the dominant genre by which instructors gauged a student's ability to write," says Haynes. "What is an essay today? Is it a blog? Can visual arguments be made through associate imagery? I try to implement the changes in the field by asking the technology and the textbooks to help us implement these new theories."

Haynes's emphasis on training as a key aspect of the department's Web portal meant adding another tier to the portal's growing list of resources. The Learning Solutions team developed a host of Flash-enabled interactive tutorials to ensure that both instructors and students were able to use those tools easily and effectively. The result is a comprehensive site that's been adopted as a critical teaching and learning resource by the entire first-year writing program. "Now that teaching writing and rhetoric involves analysis of visuals, as well as using visuals to argue a point, incorporating the interactivity and visual resources offered by online media is, in my opinion, an industry imperative," says Haynes.

Instructor ease of use is a hallmark of the MyCompLab program, as are convenient, consistent grading and assignment creation. Haynes leverages those features to ensure the integrity of course delivery across the university's composition program. "Instructors possess a mixture of technological skill levels," she says. "Some are even behind the curve of our students when it comes to technology. Our new portal helps level the playing field, thereby ensuring that all students receive a consistently high-quality learning experience."

Because the whole bundle—consisting of the textbook, the handbook, MyCompLab, and the portal—is fun and intuitive, students use it and use it often. They're practicing more, and Haynes can challenge them to be more creative. "It all works together," says Haynes. "The tutorials enable more learning, the curriculum provides more options, and the textbook supports it all. The end result is more successful student learning."

*"MyCompLab is the best platform for teaching writing I have seen. I am so pleased that I made the switch."*

—Cynthia Haynes  
Director of First-Year Composition and  
Associate Professor of English

When Clemson's new MyCompLab/Web portal project was ready to launch, the Pearson Learning Solutions team conducted comprehensive, on-campus training sessions. Pearson will offer ongoing support in the form of phone- and e-mail-based customer support and yearly on-site trainings to ensure that every new faculty member, adjunct, and teaching assistant is up to speed and comfortable with the full spectrum of tools at their fingertips.

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*1. MyCompLab is online composition courseware comprising an interactive composition space and a suite of tools designed to foster student writing and critical thinking. Students compose—or upload previously written—documents into MyCompLab's interactive composing space, where instructors interact in context, directly within the document. This unique writing area is also connected to a comprehensive, writer's tool-kit: everything a student needs to write—and accessible where and when the student needs it.*