



San Antonio College

HIGHER ED SOLUTIONS

“Our custom book pulled from three different books. We could never have asked our students to purchase three books. Only through custom publishing could we offer them this kind of value for their money.”

—Ken Reeves
Professor of Mathematics

San Antonio College (SAC) was established in 1925 with an enrollment of 500 students. Today SAC is one of the largest single-campus community colleges in the United States and the largest single-campus community college in the state of Texas, enrolling more than 22,000 students. SAC’s student population spans from recent high school graduates through full- and part-time returning learners. Students are offered a breadth of on- and off-campus, distance, and online learning opportunities—each of them innovatively designed to help students reach their full academic and civic potentials.

The year 2003 marked profound change in SAC’s math department. After much deliberation, the department embarked on redeveloping the remedial course structure for Beginning, Elementary, and Intermediate Algebra; on restructuring the course sequencing so that two-dimensional graphing concepts were not taught until the intermediate level; and on rolling three textbooks into one.

SAC’s size—and that of its custom project—attracted the attention of the custom publishing industry. “All of the major publishers approached us to say they could do it in any number of ways,” says Ken Reeves, professor of mathematics at SAC and the driving force behind the project. “We chose Pearson for several reasons, the most striking being the support by the company at the highest levels: every major marketing person, and editor, on up to the president of the math and science division came to San Antonio and spoke with almost all 50 department members face-to-face. That made a tremendous difference. In addition, they offered us a huge variety of authors and assured us that the author of the book selected would be available to both rewrite old sections and write new ones.”

In April, SAC selected a textbook to adopt; by the end of May the completed manuscript—with repagination, rewrites, and additions—was due in production. “Pearson made sure I had everything I needed: books, photocopies, conference calls with the author, and contact with the president of the division,” says Reeves. “We used e-mail, fax, and overnight couriers. Pearson was amenable to all of it. Everyone communicated very well, and my editor took charge. He made sure that what I needed would happen. He exuded confidence and I trusted him completely. I knew that he and the produc-

tion team would ensure that everything, including page proofs, happened by the deadline. It was a Gargantuan effort—and they were right there with me.”

Some of SAC’s faculty had had a previous experience with another custom publishing company. “That previous project was just sloppy,” says Reeves. “This time around, many faculty were hesitant. They were concerned that, again, the quality wouldn’t match professional standards.”

The textbook exceeded everyone’s expectations. “When it first came out, one of my colleagues said, ‘This is fantastic! For the first time since I’ve been at SAC, my syllabus can say, ‘Read chapters 4 to 7.’ And we can do that—cover the chapters in order, no jumping around.’ The students didn’t even know the difference. When they found out, they were shocked. The book is seamless. And after four years of using it, there still aren’t any major complaints.

“Students and faculty are reaping the benefits of our custom textbook,” says Reeves. “It’s exactly what we need—no more, no less. It has all the references and resources we could ask for, without being unwieldy. The students don’t miss anything and aren’t confused by inclusion of material they don’t need. Most important, custom publishing has helped us maintain our academic standards. It enabled us to offer our students a more linear product and a more organized, consistent sequence of classes. We know exactly what each student is learning at every level.”

Reeves’s experience with his Pearson team was overwhelmingly positive. “I’ve never been this impressed with a group of people,” he says. “It’s made me want to work with them again.”

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