



Florida State College at Jacksonville

Reta Roberts, Ph.D., Professor of Criminal Justice

PEARSON PROFILES: ONLINE LEARNING

The Pearson technical team was wonderful. They knew exactly what I needed.

*Reta Roberts, Ph.D.
Professor of Criminal Justice
Florida State College
at Jacksonville*

Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ), formerly Florida Community College at Jacksonville, is one of the largest higher education institutions on Florida's First Coast. Established in 1965, FSCJ has grown from an initial enrollment of 2,500 to more than 80,000. Today, it boasts the largest workforce development program in Florida, as well as the state's largest online learning, military education, and information technology programs. The former community college began offering bachelor's degrees in 2007 and in 2009 earned state accreditation and the name Florida State College at Jacksonville.

Reta Roberts, professor of criminal justice, came to FSCJ in 2000 to translate the school's criminal justice program into online and hybrid formats. After successfully conveying the program across those formats, Roberts proceeded to teach—and observe. And while the new programs used the same book, covered the same material, and were taught by the same professor, Roberts had a nagging sense that something was missing. "I eventually realized that the missing piece was interactivity," she says. "In the on-site classes, I could see that the students were comprehending the information, integrating it, and synthesizing it into higher learning. In my online classes, I lacked cues about what the students were experiencing."

Roberts was already using Pearson textbooks and knew she wanted to keep them. So she asked her rep how else they might be used—and was introduced to CourseConnect. Pearson worked with Roberts to integrate the product and its myriad embedded media features into her course. It was a great success. Today CourseConnect is used in every available criminal justice course at FSCJ. The media tools help keep students engaged and interacting with her and each other. And through discussions and chats, Roberts is able to accurately gauge whether students are on track.

Roberts appreciates the streamlined and transparent collaboration and communication she experiences with Pearson. "I like Pearson's team approach. Both the technologists and the book representatives attend our meetings, and we all work together," she says. "It's one of the reasons I chose Pearson over the others. I feel confident knowing there's a team of people around me and that we're all always on the same page."

Most important, Roberts's students like CourseConnect and are experiencing academic gains as a result of it. "In student surveys, the overwhelming majority give CourseConnect's discussions and chats high marks," she says. "Of my fall 2008 online students, 94 percent responded that CourseConnect was the resource or activity that most helped them learn."

To support her observations of CourseConnect's positive effects on higher-level student learning, Roberts conducted a study comparing the grades and survey responses of students who used CourseConnect with those of students who did not. The resulting data confirmed what Roberts had already suspected: of those students who used CourseConnect's media tools, a higher percentage passed the course. What's more, 14 percent more students earned passing grades on the essays and discussions, and 36 percent more students earned As and Bs. "This is important," says Roberts. "Essays and discussions demonstrate an ability to synthesize course material—to integrate and apply it on a higher level than simple memorization."

By implementing eBooks with CourseConnect, Roberts created not only more-effective courses but also more-convenient ones. "The immediacy of eBooks really works for both me and my students," she says. "No more searching for books at the bookstore or shopping for cost; eBooks are instantly accessible. And that's what teaching today is about: access and choices. Pearson products provide that."

Roberts and her Pearson team are already working on plans for fall 2009: a customized Web portal that will integrate eBooks and access codes and thereby both reduce costs and streamline the student entry process.