Rowan College at Burlington County

Case Study: Driving Student Success with Sharpen™

Study Specifics

Course Name
Principles of Microeconomics

Program
Microeconomics by McConnell/ Brue/Flynn with McGraw Hill Connect® and Sharpen™

Educator
Dr. Daniel Summers

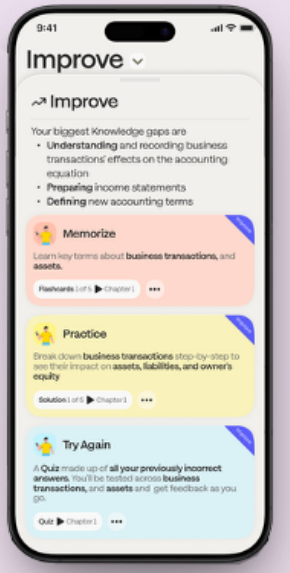
Enrollment
75 students

Timeframe
Spring 2025

> **I wanted to give my students an effective, flexible way to prepare—something beyond office hours and tutoring sessions. Sharpen helps students meet their learning goals and gives me a trusted tool to recommend—without restructuring my course."**
>
> –Dr. Daniel Summers



Dr. Daniel Summers
Professor of Business at Rowan College



The Study

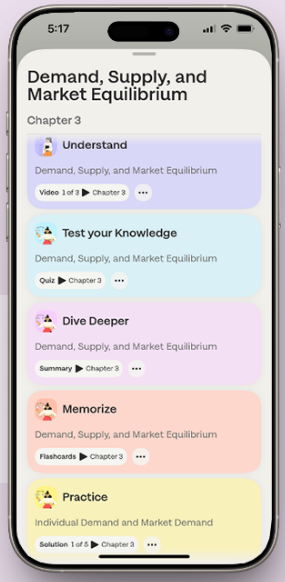
In Spring 2025, Dr. Daniel Summers piloted the Sharpen study app with Connect in his Principles of Microeconomics course of 75 students. Students were given complimentary access to Sharpen premium content, which included concise chapter summaries, brief videos, practice quizzes, flashcards, guided solutions, and AI-powered personalized study recommendations.

Dr. Summers chose to share Sharpen with students and let students decide if they wanted to use the study app. “I wanted to see how students would naturally engage with Sharpen without any influence,” he explained. About 60% of the class used Sharpen, and all students were surveyed, 73 at midterm and 53 near finals*.

Dr. Summers noted, **“Economics is a rigorous subject, and not all students feel comfortable asking for help until it’s too late. Sharpen gave them a way to review on their own schedule and build confidence without pressure.**

“Sharpen fits naturally into students’ study habits, letting them prepare efficiently without requiring structured integration into coursework.”

“Students were excited to have a mobile tool where they could reinforce concepts without feeling overwhelmed.”

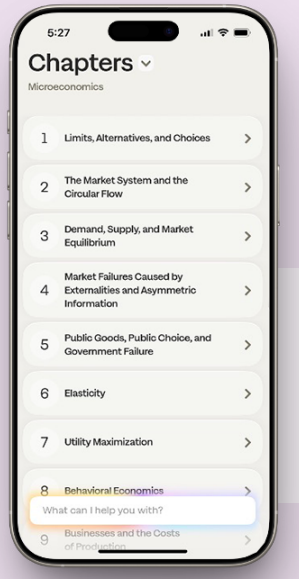


Solution: Sharpen

Sharpen is a mobile-first study app designed to empower students to learn on the go with AI-powered tools that make studying simple, personalized, and efficient.

Students spent an average of 60 minutes on Sharpen during the semester, often in micro-learning bursts of 4-6 minutes at a time. The chapter summaries and quiz banks were the most frequently used features, giving students concise explanations of key concepts while reinforcing comprehension through self-assessment.

Sharpen’s AI-powered tools, **Ask Sharpen** and **Improve**, personalize the study journey by helping students identify knowledge gaps, review challenging material, and access new recommendations.



“Students using Sharpen scored nearly 50% higher on their final exams, showing its power as a complementary study tool.”

Results Achieved

The **Rowan College at Burlington County** pilot were clear: students who used Sharpen performed significantly better than those who didn't.

Final Exam Scores
+47% Higher for Sharpen Users

Students who used Sharpen achieved final exam scores averaging 47% higher than non-users. The concise summaries and targeted quiz practice helped students prioritize high-value concepts and close knowledge gaps before comprehensive assessments. As Dr. Summers noted, **"Students used Sharpen right before class and exams to focus their studying, which measurably improved outcomes."**

In-Class Quiz Performance
+27% Higher for Sharpen Users

Sharpen users outperformed non-users on class quizzes by 27% on average. Students cited Sharpen's Quiz Bank as a fast way to check understanding and reinforce terminology between lectures. One student shared, **"The videos on Sharpen allowed me to effortlessly prepare for my in-class lectures, and the quiz bank made it very easy to study for quizzes."**

Overall Course Grades
+21% Higher for Sharpen Users

Across the semester, Sharpen users earned overall course grades 21% higher than non-users. Students credited Sharpen's simplified explanations and repeated exposure via summaries and quizzes for improving baseline knowledge. According to Dr. Summers, **"Students came to class better prepared, engaged more actively, and built a stronger foundation for higher-level learning."**

Student Learning Experience
96% Would Recommend

Students embraced Sharpen: 96% of users said they would recommend (or had already recommended) Sharpen to peers.

Student feedback emphasized flexibility and clarity:

"I could get a fresh reminder of a topic before class and take a quiz to see how I am doing in that chapter."

"The videos on Sharpen allowed me to effortlessly prepare for lectures, and the quiz bank made it very easy to study for quizzes."

"Sharpen's quizzes helped me focus on the terms I struggled with most."

"Even when I read the chapters, the app helped me understand the terms and what they mean so I can apply them to class and everyday life."

"The primary benefit received from Sharpen is a deeper understanding of the concepts in simpler terms."

"The quiz does a good job of giving you more challenging questions that help you improve on terms you aren't as strong with."

"The chapter summaries saved me when I didn't have time to read the entire chapter in depth."



Conclusion

The Rowan College pilot shows that **Sharpen and McGraw Hill Connect are a powerful combination that faculty can leverage** to deliver measurable improvement—especially in rigorous, concept-dense courses like Microeconomics—**without adding instructor workload.** Mobile-first studying supported stronger comprehension, more consistent review, and higher performance.

Student and instructor feedback directly informed platform improvements. Sharpen can now be added to the Connect platform with an offering called **Sharpen Companion**. This allows students to log in to Connect, select the Sharpen activity, and gain instant access to premium study content for their course. In addition, Sharpen has expanded AI capabilities with safety guardrails. Further, **Sharpen Advantage** is a new offering for institutions, helping them scale responsible AI for students and equipping administrators and faculty with real-time, actionable insights into student performance so that can drive early intervention. **"I'm looking forward to Advantage and pushing to have this product both scaled and funded by our college,"** said Dr. Summers.

> **"Sharpen is now my go-to recommendation for students who want extra help—and the outcomes justify it."**

**Data Set Details: 53 total students provided access. 41 students deemed appropriate for the data set included 30 non-users and 11 users. Excluded from data was 11 non-users for being Top Tier students (A average) and 9 excluded for non-attendance.*

Instructor Bio

Dr. Daniel Summers is a professor of business at Rowan College at Burlington County, where he teaches marketing, economics, and management information systems. A former CPA and brand manager with over a decade of corporate experience at PricewaterhouseCoopers and Church & Dwight, he brings practical expertise into the classroom through experiential learning and industry partnerships. His doctoral research focused on improving undergraduate employability and addressing skill gaps to strengthen career readiness.

School Profile

Rowan College at Burlington County is a community college serving over 7,000 students in southern New Jersey with a diverse study body that emphasizes workforce readiness and transfer success. Principles of Microeconomics is a gateway course within the business curriculum that demands steady practice, concept mastery, and exam preparation.

Learn More

Sharpen Companion, visit mheducation.com/sharpen/faculty

Sharpen Advantage, visit mcgrawhill.info/SharpenAdvantage

