# Success Story

## Cuyahoga Community College



### Challenge

Improving Student Access While Increasing Engagement

### Solution

McGraw Hill Connect and Business Law with UCC Applications by Paul Sukys with Affordable Access and the Evergreen™ delivery model

### Result

Greater Efficiency, Improved Preparedness, and Strong Student Outcomes

> **Connect and Affordable Access allow my students to hit the ground running on day one. Instead of overcoming barriers to access, they can immediately focus on learning, engaging with the material, and building the analytical skills they need to succeed.**



**Dr. Michele Hampton**
Professor, Business Management Department

## The Challenge

Teaching Business Law in a fully online environment requires more than providing students with digital content—it requires creating meaningful opportunities for students to apply legal concepts, fostering an engaging learning environment, and ensuring every student has the resources they need to succeed.

> **"My primary goals were to improve student access to course materials, increase student engagement, and better prepare students for success throughout the course,"** Dr. Hampton explained.

Before implementing Affordable Access with Connect, delayed financial aid often meant students found themselves having to wait days or even weeks before they were able to obtain textbooks or access codes. Others chose not to purchase course materials at all because of cost, creating significant barriers during the critical first weeks of class. Administrative challenges related to access codes, multiple logins, and manual grade management also consumed valuable instructional time.

Dr. Hampton sought a solution that would remove these barriers while supporting a more active learning environment. Connect's adaptive learning technology, diverse assignment options, and seamless LMS integration aligned closely with those objectives.

Rather than relying primarily on traditional reading assignments and exams, she wanted students to engage with legal concepts through multiple learning experiences that promoted analysis, application, and continuous feedback.

## The Solution

Dr. Hampton intentionally designed her course around a scaffolded learning progression using four to six Connect assignments each week.

Students first complete SmartBook® assignments that introduce foundational concepts through adaptive learning. Hot Seat Videos reinforce those concepts by connecting legal principles to authentic business situations while providing immediate explanations and feedback.

Students then transition into Application-Based Activities (ABAs), You Be the Judge assignments, and Connect exams that require increasingly sophisticated analysis and application of course content.

"I intentionally scaffold assignments so students move from learning concepts to applying and analyzing them," Dr. Hampton said. "That progression helps students build confidence while developing stronger critical-thinking skills."

Connect assignments account for a significant portion of the course grade:

- SmartBook – 17%
- Hot Seat Videos – 5%
- Application-Based Activities – 20%
- You Be the Judge – 9%
- Connect Exams – 43%

Outside of Connect, students engage in discussion activities that examine legal issues featured in current news headlines, reinforcing the connection between course concepts and real-world events along with a short biography assignment.

Two assignment types have proven particularly valuable. Application-Based Activities require students to solve authentic business law scenarios, while You Be the Judge immerses students in courtroom cases where they analyze evidence, interpret legal principles, evaluate competing arguments, and determine appropriate legal outcomes.

> **"These assignments move students beyond memorization,"** Dr. Hampton said. **"They encourage students to think critically and apply what they've learned in situations that feel relevant and realistic."**

Adaptive learning further personalizes instruction by directing students toward concepts requiring additional practice. Rather than passively reading textbook chapters, students actively engage with material until mastery improves.

LMS integration also simplifies the learning experience. Students access assignments, readings, and assessments through a single sign-on within the LMS, while automatic grade synchronization eliminates duplicate administrative work.

Connect reporting tools further support instructional decision-making. The Student Performance Report provides a comprehensive view of student engagement, while the Item Analysis Report identifies assessment questions that may require revision or reveal concepts needing additional instructional emphasis.



## The Results

Connect has improved both instructional efficiency and the overall student experience.

Automatic grading for SmartBook assignments, quizzes, and exams significantly reduces grading time while providing students with immediate feedback. Grade synchronization eliminates manual grade entry, allowing Dr. Hampton to devote more time to instruction, student support, and course improvement.

> **"I can spend less time managing grades and technical issues and more time focusing on teaching and supporting my students,"** she said.

Affordable Access has also transformed the beginning of every semester.

Students receive immediate access to digital materials through the LMS on the first day of class, with the option to purchase a low-cost printed textbook for those who prefer a physical copy. As a result, students begin reading, completing assignments, and participating in discussions immediately rather than waiting for financial aid or resolving access-code issues.

> **"Students can hit the ground running on day one because they already have everything they need to begin learning."**

Dr. Hampton has observed noticeable improvements in student preparedness and engagement since adopting Connect and Affordable Access.

Students consistently comment that the variety of assignment types makes the course more engaging than traditional online classes.

**One student shared:**
"Even though I struggled with the Hot Seat Videos and the ABA assignments, they are so cool and interesting because they teach real-life scenarios. Please don't drop those from future classes."

**Another student reflected:**
"I really liked the case-based learning where I acted like a judge to make decisions. It helped me understand the material much more clearly."

Although years of continuous course refinement make direct pre-Connect comparisons difficult, approximately 80 percent of Dr. Hampton's 240 students (in an academic year) earn a grade of C or better on course exams. Student retention averages 87 percent or higher, and she consistently observes that students who actively engage with Connect resources perform better throughout the course.

Equally important, Affordable Access has reduced administrative challenges for both students and instructor. Instead of spending valuable class time resolving textbook access issues or granting extensions due to delayed materials, Dr. Hampton can maintain consistent pacing while focusing on learning outcomes.



## Conclusion

Reflecting on her experience, Dr. Hampton encourages instructors new to Connect to begin with core assignment types before gradually expanding their use of the platform's more advanced learning activities.

She recommends starting with SmartBook assignments, quizzes, and exams before incorporating Application-Based Activities and You Be the Judge exercises. Equally important is leveraging LMS integration early to simplify course navigation and reduce technical barriers for students.

Regularly reviewing Connect reports can also provide valuable insight into student engagement, concept mastery, and assessment effectiveness while informing continuous course improvement.

For Dr. Hampton, however, the greatest impact has been creating a learning environment where students have immediate access to affordable resources and multiple opportunities to practice higher-order thinking throughout the course.

By combining Affordable Access with scaffolded assignments that progressively build analytical skills, Connect has helped create a more equitable, engaging, and efficient online learning experience.

As Dr. Hampton summarized, **"When students begin the course with immediate access to their materials and meaningful opportunities to apply what they're learning, they're better prepared to stay engaged, persist through challenges, and ultimately succeed."**

## About Dr. Michele Hampton

Dr. Michele Hampton is a Professor of Business Administration at Cuyahoga Community College, where she has taught Business Law, Introduction to Business, Macroeconomics, and Microeconomics for more than 27 years. Her teaching and research focus on adaptive learning, online instruction, student engagement, and the ethical use of artificial intelligence in education. Before entering higher education, she worked as a manufacturing engineer, management consultant, and business owner. Dr. Hampton holds degrees from Case Western Reserve University, Northeastern University, and Capella University, and has been recognized for her commitment to teaching excellence and innovation, including being named Ohio Association of Two-Year Colleges Teacher of the Year.

## About Cuyahoga Community College

Cuyahoga Community College serves students throughout Northeast Ohio with a commitment to accessible, high-quality education and workforce preparation. The Business Administration Department offers flexible learning opportunities that prepare students with practical knowledge and career-ready skills across a variety of business disciplines.

