Rose State College Case Study

Midwest City, Oklahoma

Challenge

Sustainable and current materials to support student learning.

Solution

Connect and SmartBook® with *The Unfinished Nation* by Alan Brinkley.

Result

Improved engagement, efficiency, and student outcomes.

I wanted sustainable professional assignments that would be easy for all instructors to access, while ensuring consistent materials for students across the department.

— Professor Aaron Bachhofer

Challenge

Prior to adopting Connect, Professor Aaron Bachhofer relied on Open Educational Resources (OER) as the primary materials in his U.S. History course. While cost-effective, OER lacked the consistency and long-term sustainability needed for a growing department. With multiple instructors teaching the same course, the absence of a standardized framework made it difficult to ensure students received equitable learning experiences across sections.

Bachhofer's goals for implementing Connect were threefold:

- To establish reliable, professional-quality assignments that could be used long-term
- To make high-quality materials easily accessible for both full-time and adjunct professors
- To standardize assignments and course content across all History sections

Solution

Connect directly addressed the challenges Professor Bachhofer identified by providing sustainable, professional-quality assignments that were consistent across all sections of U.S. History. **“The assignments we use, SmartBook and Polling, for instance, allowed us to provide standardized content to all U.S. History students. This proved to be a significant help with assessment of student learning,”** he explained.

To support ease of access, Bachhofer and his colleagues developed login instructions and utilized McGraw Hill support videos. **“Student access to Connect has been a breeze,”** he noted, adding that integration with Rose State’s Canvas LMS means students have single-sign-on access to all assignments. **“The ease with which professors can access Connect and integrate the assignment links and login/registration links saves considerable time when prepping classes. Students also mention how nice it is to have one login (Canvas) that allows them to access all assignments.”**

Bachhofer also relies on **McGraw Hill’s Evergreen**™ delivery model, which ensures content and tools remain up to date. **“The Evergreen update system used by McGraw Hill made professorial integration of new content into existing courses a snap,”** he emphasized.

Polling has further enhanced classroom engagement by giving Professor Bachhofer real-time insights into student comprehension, enabling him to adjust instruction and provide targeted support as needed.

Course grades are structured to emphasize both content mastery and critical thinking: 35% SmartBook, 35% written exams, and 30% primary source written reflections. SmartBook assignments are tied to each chapter, discussion posts and peer replies deepen engagement, and in-class breakdowns of primary sources build connections between course content and historical inquiry. As Bachhofer explained, **“I find the primary documents available in Connect, supplemented with my own materials, really allow students to connect to the past.”**



Results Achieved

Increased Student Engagement and Preparedness

One of Professor Bachhofer's central goals was to increase student engagement with history content. Connect has delivered. "Students come to class better prepared to discuss the materials and course concepts thanks to SmartBook assignments," he explained. By tackling key concepts before class, students arrive ready for thematic discussions rather than simply reviewing facts.

> **For me, the classroom 'lecture' becomes more of a 'discussion' with my students. Because SmartBook exposes them to key concepts outside of class—the 'what', I can focus on the 'so what' of History."**

Significant Time Savings in Grading and Preparation

Efficiency in grading and preparation was also a priority. Previously, Bachhofer spent approximately 90 minutes per course section each week responding to written discussion prompts in Canvas to assess reading comprehension. SmartBook's autograded assignments have eliminated that weekly time burden, saving about 90 minutes per section, while providing a more comprehensive view of students' mastery of learning outcomes.

> **"Since the SmartBook assignments are graded by the system, my direct screen time for grading weekly has declined. I can spend more time engaging with my students on the discussion board or via Zoom."**

Enhanced Visibility into Student Performance

Connect's reporting features also enhanced his ability to monitor student progress. Assignment results and Statistics reports offered instant insights, while the At-Risk report helped him reach struggling students early.

90 **Minutes Saved Weekly Grading with SmartBook**

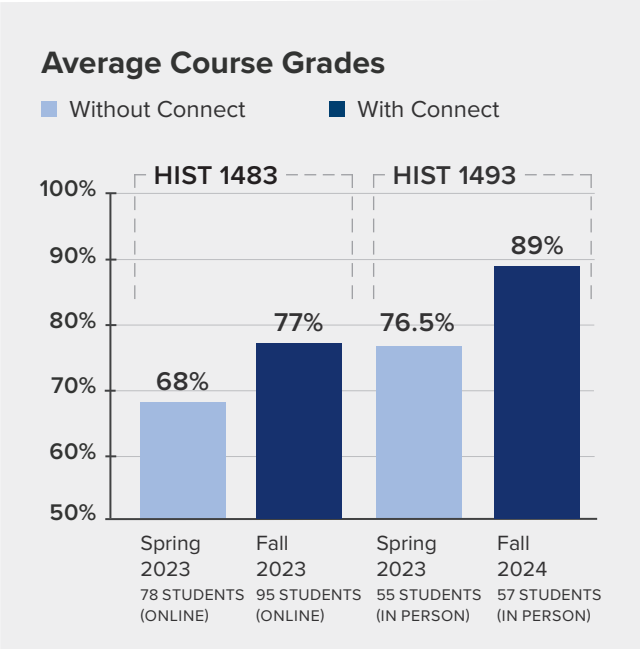
> **"These reports can be accessed at any point after the assignment opens, and a student has made a submission. The ability to 'teach, evaluate, and reteach' is enhanced dramatically. The At-Risk Report pinpoints students who are struggling over time in the course. Being able to reach out and offer guidance is extremely important."**

Measurable Gains in Student Performance

The most compelling evidence of impact is the measurable improvement in student performance. Since adopting Connect, Bachhofer has seen meaningful gains in average course grades across both U.S. History survey courses. HIST 1483 has experienced a 9-point increase in its overall course average, and HIST 1493 has seen an even larger 12.5-point increase.

"These tools have shifted more students from Bs and Cs into the A and B range," Bachhofer explains. "Fewer students fail—and when they do, it is because they have not completed the assignments, not because they are unable to master the content."

The alignment between SmartBook engagement and student success is clear; students who complete the assignments demonstrate stronger comprehension, greater confidence, and more active participation in class.



Conclusion

Professor Bachhofer's experience demonstrates how Connect with SmartBook can drive consistency, engagement, and stronger outcomes in History courses. He emphasizes that faculty considering Connect should begin with SmartBook assignments, as they provide the clearest path to improved preparation and comprehension. He also encourages instructors to be intentional: select assignments that align directly with course objectives and avoid overloading students with unnecessary work.

For Professor Bachhofer, Connect is not only a resource but a catalyst—shaping more meaningful classroom discussions and deeper student learning.

> **Students come to class better prepared, having read and understood the textbook, and are more capable of bringing everything together into a strong understanding in either the online or hybrid format.**
>
> — Professor Aaron Bachhofer



Instructor Bio

Aaron Bachhofer, PhD, is Program Coordinator of History at Rose State College. He holds a BA in History and Political Science from Oklahoma City University, an MA in History from the University of Central Oklahoma, and a PhD in American History from Oklahoma State University.

About Rose State College

Founded in 1970, Rose State College is a public community college in Midwest City, Oklahoma, serving over 6,500 students annually. The college offers a wide range of academic and professional programs and is committed to accessible, high-quality education and student success.

