

# VIRGINIA TECH

Blacksburg, VA

## Case Study

**Connect® Marketing Has a Positive Impact on Student Learning by Engaging Students and Impacting Learning Outcomes in Face-to-Face Classrooms with Hundreds of Students and Learning Remotely During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

For the past six years, Professor Donna Wertalik analyzed learning outcomes, students at-risk, and overall class performance data in her in-person classes. Often her classes were filled with hundreds of students who were there physically but who were often distracted. She wanted to provide opportunities for engagement and ensure solid learning outcomes for all of her

**Digital Product in Use:** *Connect® Marketing*

**LMS Integration:** Canvas

**Course Name:** Introduction to Marketing

**Course Type:** Face to Face / Transitioned to Online (due to COVID-19 Spring 2020)

**Credit Hours:** Three

**Program in Use:** *Marketing: The Core* by Roger Kerin and Steven Hartley

**Instructor:** Donna Wertalik

**Enrollment:** Approximately 600 students per section; 2 sections

**Implementation Study Term:** Comparing Fall 2019 Face to Face and Spring 2020 (Face to Face moved to online due to COVID-19 in Spring 2020)

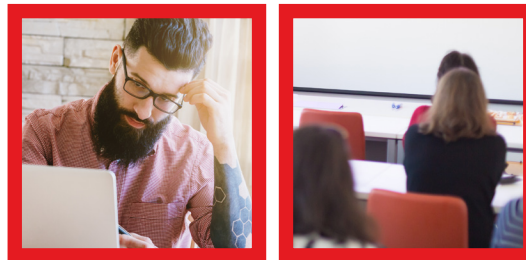
students, especially those who were at-risk. Wertalik strived to track individual student performance and to keep students engaged no matter where they are and how they are taking the class.

*Connect* Marketing provided Wertalik with those advantages during her in-person classes and made switching to an online-only remote learning semester as easy as it could be under the circumstances. Wertalik says, “*Connect SmartBook* homework, and the online Application-Based Activities/Marketing Mini Sims offered through *Connect*, provide tools to help students learn effectively in the classroom and online.”

### Implementation

The following determines the course grade:

- 3 Exams (15 pt, 15pt, 20pt) 50 points
- SONA Labs (Required—Alternative options if conflicts exist) 5 points
- *SmartBook* Homework (17 total; 2 get dropped) 15 points
- 3 Application-Based Activities/Marketing Mini Sims 15 points
- Participation 15 points
  - Poll Everywhere Responses In-Class (5 points)
  - Participation PowerPoint (10 points)



At the beginning of the Spring 2020 semester, hundreds of students attended Wertalik’s classes face-to-face twice a week. The course content was presented in class with relevant videos, class activities, guest speakers, and interactive polling questions for students in which they would be graded for participation. Wertalik says, “Content conversations are encouraged through granting participation points. The remainder of specific grading was based on their performance using McGraw Hill Application-Based Activities (ABAs)/Marketing Mini Sims as well as answering the adaptive questions in *SmartBook* to guide students in the concepts.”

Wertalik covers two chapters assigned in *SmartBook* per week, our assignable, adaptive reading product within *Connect*. She weaves in the ABAs/Marketing Mini Sims to compliment the *SmartBook* homework, which is three assignments weekly in *Connect*. Students spend about thirty minutes on *SmartBook*, and the

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Keeping students **engaged** and providing **authentic** and real-world experiences is a constant challenge. The flexibility and the feedback in *SmartBook* assignments were critical to continuing engagement and learning within the class. Students used chat features, moved step-by-step through simulations, and engaged in key aspects of the course. Overall, thanks to *Connect*, class engagement remained high during our COVID-19 Spring 2020 semester.”

ABAs are provided over a week before the deadline, so students have time to ask for help. Wertalik adds, “The ability to select the percentage or specific topics in each *SmartBook* chapter for homework is critical and so beneficial.”

*Connect* integrates directly into Canvas and has helped Wertalik increase her productivity. “In the past, I would spend hours on lectures, developing test banks, and considering class exercises, and I used to spend days grading.” However, with *Connect*, **Wertalik says she was not stressed when COVID-19 upended the semester.** “Over 30% of the class was already online through *SmartBook* assignments, so I was able to focus on students’ success in the class and help deal with the environment around us.”

Wertalik says the analytic reports behind the scenes are crucial to helping students. “The reporting in *Connect* is phenomenal. During Covid-19, with eight weeks left in the semester, I was able to track my students across the board and pull up reports, such as **Assignment Results** to determine how many students were still connected to the class and learning at the pace we established.” She also used the **Progress Overview** to see where the class stands in “a quick snapshot,” and she loves all the filters and ways to pull student data for her course.

**“THE REPORTING IN CONNECT IS PHENOMENAL.”**



In *Connect*, she lists the following useful reports, specifically: Assignment Results, Student Performance, Assignment Statistics, Item Analysis, and At-Risk Report. In *SmartBook*, she utilizes Progress Overview, Student Details, Metacognitive Skills, and Most Challenging Learning Objective.

### Results Achieved

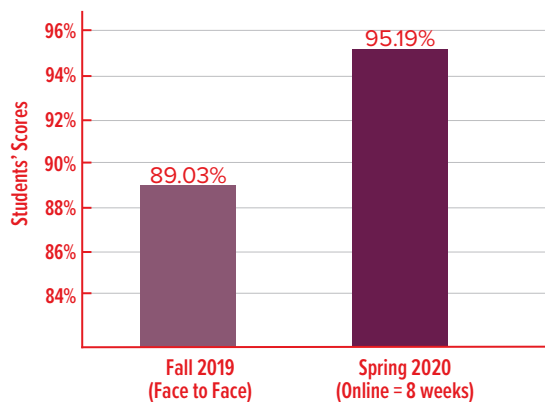
With the help of Teaching Assistant Paige Rathburn, Wertalik compared student performance data from Fall 2019, when the entire course was an in-person, on-campus classroom course, to Spring 2020, when the course transitioned to an all-online course with eight weeks left in the semester.

Wertalik’s data shows an increase in student performance using *Connect/SmartBook* during the Spring 2020 semester in the areas of **Overall Second Exam Score** and the **Average Final Exam Score**, **Overall Section Performance**, **Adaptive Simulation Scores**, and **At-Risk Student Analysis**.

## Overall Second Exam Score and the Average Final Exam Score

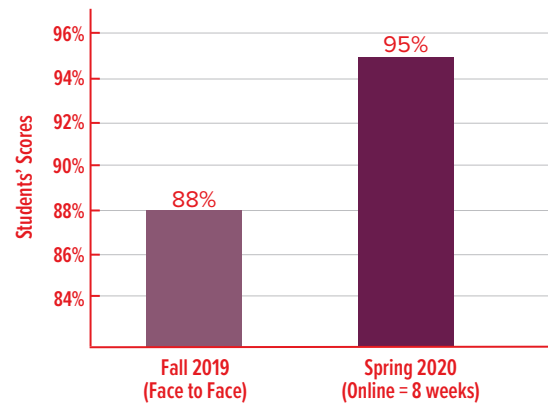
When Wertalik's class had to adapt to an online-only mode of delivery, students relied on *Connect* as their primary interface for learning. After going online, students still needed to take scheduled second and third exams. Despite the pandemic, students' scores increased in a variety of course outcomes. The Fall semester average grade on the second exam was 89.03%. In Spring 2020, the average grade on the second exam was 95.19% (Figure 1).

**Figure 1:**  
Overall Second Exam Score



The results continued to improve for the third and final exams. Overall, the average final exam score in Fall 2019 was 88%; in the Spring, the average final exam score was 95% (Figure 2).

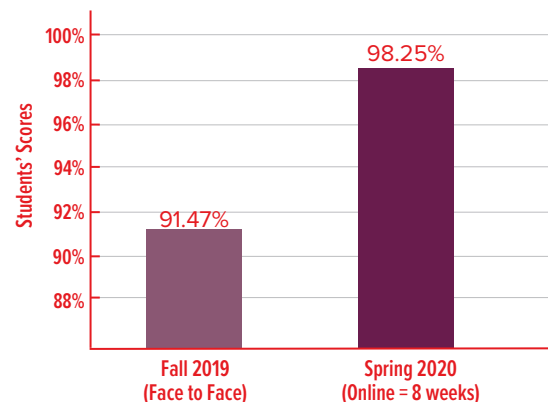
**Figure 2:**  
Overall Final Exam Score



## Overall Section Performance

Overall, students' grades improved when the course moved to remote learning by an increase of 6.78%. In Fall 2019, students earned 91.47% in the section; in Spring 2020, students improved their overall section scores to 98.25% (Figure 3).

**Figure 3:**  
Overall Section Performance



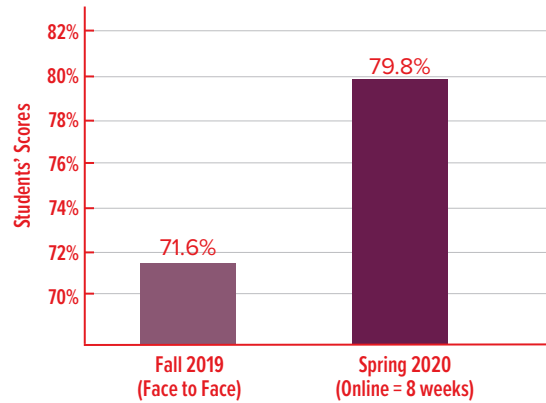
Wertalik says, “It is clear that the students had a much larger engagement with the course in the Spring rather than the Fall. With the increased usage of *SmartBook*, came the increased engagement with the marketing course itself.”

### Application-Based Activities/Marketing Mini Sims

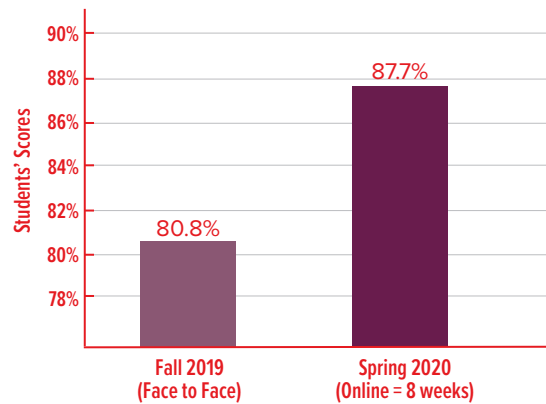
Wertalik believes one example of increased engagement in the course is reflected through their submissions of their ABA/Marketing Mini Sim assignment. She says, “We did the exact same assignment in the Fall, with in-person teaching, and then Spring, where we adapted to an online format.”

In the Fall, the average score of the students’ first attempts completing the Market Research ABA/Marketing Mini Sim was 71.6%. In the Spring, the students’ first attempt average score was 79.8% -- an increase of 8.2% (Figure 4). The same was true for the students’ first attempts at the Retail Strategy ABA/Marketing Mini Sim. In Fall 2019, students’ first attempt average score was 80.8% compared to 87.7% in Spring 2020 (Figure 5).

**Figure 4:**  
ABA/Marketing Mini Sim Scores - Marketing Research Simulation (Average First Attempt Score)



**Figure 5:**  
ABA/Marketing Mini Sim Scores - Retail Strategy Simulation (Average First Attempt Score)



### At-Risk Student Analysis

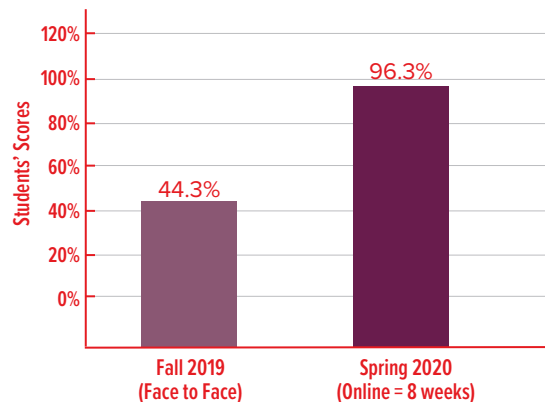
*Connect / SmartBook* also helps manage students who may be struggling in the class. Using the At-Risk Student Analysis Report available in *Connect*, Wertalik was able to check on her students' progress through the course. The analysis, using data such as frequency of logins and assignment submissions, determines at what level students are engaging online with the assignments. This tool was invaluable in the last half of the Spring 2020 semester when students were no longer in the classroom.

In Fall 2019, out of a total of 582 students, six were at-risk, 318 were categorized as "keep watch," and 258 students were safe.

However, in Spring 2020, out of a total of 543 students, eight were at-risk, 12 were categorized "keep watch," and 523 students were safe.

Statistically, in the Fall of 2019, only 44.3% of the students were considered "safe"; whereas, in Spring 2020, 96.3% of students were considered "safe" (Figure 6).

**Figure 6:**  
Students Considered "Safe" in the  
At-Risk Student Analysis Report



## Wertalik offers the following suggestions to help improve student performance using *Connect / SmartBook*:

- Ensure every chapter you cover in your class is assigned for homework in *SmartBook* with a few additional post-reading *Connect* assignments. This ensures students have read the material and can apply what they have read. The depth of the textbook is very helpful.
- Do not be afraid to test out the multiple assignments and use the resources and tools that *Connect* offers. The *Connect* Content Matrix provides an excellent overview of all that is available for assignments within *Connect*.
- Simulations are proven to be one of the greatest tools in applying materials. The addition of the ABAs/Marketing Mini Sims to my course really had an impact.
- Align content with relevant examples in the marketplace today.
- Use a class period to walk through your first ABAs/Marketing Mini Sims assignment and point out simple key aspects that could impact a grade. This can also be done virtually. There are assignable videos and a student PowerPoint deck to help students become comfortable with the Mini Sim interface.

**“Online curricula, especially during a pandemic, present many challenges. Students learned online through *SmartBook* adaptive reading, ABAs/Marketing Mini Sims, live cases, and interaction with speakers virtually. *Connect* Marketing is an invaluable tool to keep students engaged and learning in the course.”**

### Conclusion:

After implementing *Connect* Marketing, Wertalik was able to track individual student performance and keep students engaged whether the student was one of the hundreds sitting in a classroom or one student sitting at home, remote learning, during a pandemic.

*Connect* Marketing gives the students the tools to learn, and the instructor the tools to track and analyze student progress through the course. Overall, students' scores improved from Fall 2019 to Spring 2020 in key aspects of the course, including exam scores, section performance, adaptive simulation scores, and at-risk student progression through the course.

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### **Instructor Biography:**

Donna Wertalik is the Director of Marketing Strategy & Analytics for the Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech. She has taught in all areas of marketing, including undergraduate, graduate and PhD Bridge Programs. She holds a bachelor of science in marketing from Fairleigh Dickinson

University, as well as a Master's of Science in Marketing and a Graduate Certification in Social Media and Data Analysis from Southern New Hampshire University. Donna has more than 22 years of industry experience and has worked for organizations such as Nestle Corporation, Schering Plough and Glaxo Smith-Kline, as well as key advertising firms such as Ogilvy, CommonHealth, and Pace, Inc., a division of McCann.

### **Instructor's Implementation Goals:**

- Provide opportunities for student engagement in large classes
- Track individual student performance
- Ensure solid learning outcomes for all students, including at-risk students

### **Issues for Instructor Before Using *Connect*:**

- Lack of solid learning outcomes for students
- Inability to track individual performance of students
- Difficulty in identifying at-risk students

### **Benefits to Instructor After Using *Connect*:**

- Easy transfer to all online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Student outcomes increased during online learning
- All students, including at-risk students, learned course material online

## **SPOTLIGHT**

### **Institution Profile:**

Virginia Tech (VT), ranked 48th in university research in the United States, offers 110 undergraduate majors and 170 master's and doctoral majors to 34,440 students on and off the main campus in Blacksburg, Virginia. VT has more than \$531 million in research expenditures and has 21 faculty members who belong to prestigious National Academies, advancing the pursuit of science, engineering, and medicine.

### **Course Description:**

Introduction to Marketing is designed to introduce the exciting world of marketing. The course emphasizes discovering what is marketing, the power of branding, and the influence of social media in the marketing world. The course objectives are: learn the vital role of marketing functions within an organization and how marketing creates value for organizations, individuals, and society; understand the key terms and fundamental concepts of marketing; understand important issues in planning and evaluating brand strategies; identify concepts and techniques to improve the long-term profitability of brand strategies; apply social media practices to enhance their personal brand; and understand social media fundamentals and basic social media etiquette.