



Vision in Action

How Pearson Custom Publishing Works
in Higher Education Instruction

BY MICHELLE D. SPECKLER • SPRING 2008

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Special thanks to Lee Bauknight, University of South Carolina–Columbia; Tadd D. Belden, Centralia College; John Beyers, University of Maryland University College; Norma Carr-Ruffino, San Francisco State University; Richard A. Ford Jr., Florida A&M University; Ken Reeves, San Antonio College; William Rivers, University of South Carolina–Columbia; and Carol Scarafiotti, Rio Salado College.

Vision in Action: How Pearson Custom Publishing Works in Higher Education Instruction

By Michelle D. Speckler
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Introduction

According to the Spellings Report,¹ the U.S. higher education system requires dramatic improvement in the areas of access, affordability, quality, and innovation. The most recent National Assessment of Adult Literacy indicates that the percentage of college graduates deemed proficient in prose literacy has declined from 40 to 30 percent in the past decade. And NYTimes.com reports that nearly half of the 14.7 million undergraduates at two- and four-year institutions never receive degrees.² Institutions are looking to their faculties for answers. But how much control do instructors have over student success? With custom publishing, more than they think they do.

Custom publishing is about more than just changing textbooks. It's how instructors at institutions across the nation are taking control. Custom publishing enables instructors to design instructional and learning materials that accommodate what traditional textbooks cannot: exactly what and how individual instructors want to teach, how much it will cost, and whether instructors want to supplement their teaching with technology solutions.

A survey of nearly 800 instructors³ revealed that the majority had reason and opportunity to employ custom publishing—but were held back by common misperceptions. Pearson Custom Publishing customers set the record straight.⁴

Myth: Creating a custom-published textbook or media solution is a time-consuming process.

In truth, a custom-publishing project can be as large or as small as the instructor dictates. “The process was quick and easy,” says a previous Pearson Custom Publishing customer. “I had plenty of time to meet my deadlines,” says another.

Myth: Custom-published textbooks and materials are of poor quality. In truth, Pearson Custom Publishing textbooks and other materials meet or exceed quality standards for traditionally published texts. “The book really looks like it belongs to our university,” says

one instructor. “I’m pleased to have a nice-looking product to give students,” says another.

Myth: The custom-publishing process is complicated. In truth, most instructors find the process easier than they expected. Pearson’s survey of previous customers reveals that 91 percent clearly understood how the process worked and any questions they had were answered. “The process was simple,” says one instructor. “My publishing representative walked me through everything,” says another.

Myth: Custom publishing is expensive. In truth, although not the primary reason most instructors custom publish, cost reduction is a secondary benefit for both institutions and students. Combining multiple texts or removing unused chapters from textbooks both decreases student dissatisfaction with purchasing a textbook they don’t completely use and reduces the cost of the book. “It’s a headache when students tell you they paid \$150 for a textbook and \$120 on a lab manual and you’re using only half of the book,” says one instructor. Pearson’s survey finds that 92 percent of Pearson Custom Publishing customers thought their custom book was either better than or the same value as a new textbook; 88 percent thought their custom book was better than or the same value as a used textbook.

Simply put, instructors who custom publish gain greater control over the types of material included in their courses and how that material is presented. They provide their students with the most-current material, eliminate surplus text, combine texts from multiple sources, and include their own content. Instructors who custom publish have control over the quality of their teaching materials, the application of technology in the course, coordination of the textbook and curricula, and cost to the student.

Read on to learn more about how the custom-publishing process is changing—and improving—the way instructors teach today.

Vision in Action

As higher education evolves in unexpected ways, its new landscape demands innovation and flexibility from the institutions that serve the nation's learners. . . . We urge postsecondary institutions to make a commitment to embrace new pedagogies, curricula, and technologies to improve student learning.⁵

Pearson Custom Publishing is a division of Pearson Education, the world's leading college publisher, educating students through such brands as Prentice Hall, Allyn & Bacon/Longman, and Addison Wesley/Benjamin Cummings. A proven track record of leadership and an impressive presence in the industry mean that Pearson has what instructors need to feel sure their custom textbook or media solution will be a perfect fit: pedagogically, technologically, visually, and financially.

The secret to Pearson's success lies in obsessive attention to customer service. From field staff on up to the president, Pearson employees go the extra mile to transform every contract from a business deal to a relationship. What's more, Pearson Custom Publishing editors are located throughout the United States. Every editor who is assigned to an instructor is a locally based, hands-on partner; some even call them friends.

Instructors who custom publish trust Pearson. According to an August 2005 survey,⁶ 40 percent of instructors

chose Pearson over 16 other custom-publishing companies. That's 36 percent more than Pearson's closest competitor. And that's no accident. Pearson proves itself every day through company-wide professionalism, industry expertise, and a long-standing commitment to the needs of educators.

Eighty-eight percent of Pearson customers report that they would recommend Pearson to a colleague. The reasons speak for themselves:

- Detailed information about the custom-publishing process
- Ongoing communication about the status of the project
- On-time delivery of the textbook or media solution
- Textbooks and media solutions that meet or exceed industry standards for quality

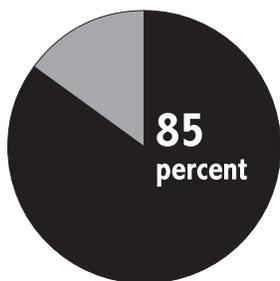


Chart 1. From an August 2005 survey of Pearson Custom Publishing customers, the percentage who report that they would use Pearson again.

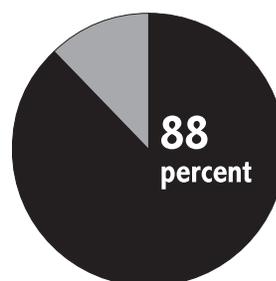


Chart 2. From an August 2005 survey of Pearson Custom Publishing customers, the percentage who report that they would recommend or probably recommend Pearson to a colleague.

Pearson textbooks and media solutions are more than just classroom tools. They're personal projects, working proofs of independent teaching models, and sources of institution-wide pride. Custom-published textbooks and media solutions can also lead to greater recognition through publishing—an important aspect of an instructor's career path.

Professor-Controlled Content

Authorities in their field turn to custom publishing for up-to-the-minute, quality teaching materials that reflect their unique expertise and pedagogical style. Unlike the traditional textbook canon, with custom publishing the professor controls the content.

Pearson offers a wider and more flexible range of options than does any other publisher in the industry. Instructors can draw from an extensive, worldwide database of copyright material to create a textbook that exactly suits their teaching needs and budgets. Those seeking to consolidate several texts, condense a textbook, or write their own textbook are in complete control of the type of material included, of the order of the material, and of how the material is conveyed. They get exactly what they want: every word relevant and no surplus.

Pearson has more experience than any other publisher in securing copyright clearances. Instructors needn't hassle over a lengthy and complex rights and research process, because Pearson handles all of it.

Pearson-Approved Quality

Even the best teaching material is wasted when sloppy, unprofessional packaging inhibits students from using it or when students are effectively locked out of their textbooks through the depersonalized and abstract prose used within them.⁷

The award-winning designers at Pearson ensure that your textbook gets noticed—and read—cover to cover, inside and out. Every Pearson solution includes:

- Quality equal to or higher than that of off-the-shelf textbooks
- An aesthetically pleasing cover and layout
- A clean design and readable type
- Well-written copy
- Appropriate language for level of learning

Student-Driven Satisfaction

Today's students are frustrated by having to spend substantial amounts of money on textbooks their professors don't fully cover. Custom publishing can reduce the cost of teaching materials—and thereby reduce student dissatisfaction. Custom publishing that removes unused chapters makes students happier with their investment in the text and more willing to engage with the material that is presented.

Pearson enables professors to integrate new and innovative technology into their courses. According to an EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research (ECAR) study of more than 26,000 students at 103 colleges,⁸ 98 percent of today's undergraduates own a computer and spend an average of 18 hours per week actively doing online activities for work, school, or recreation. The ECAR study indicates that undergraduates today are "positive in their views about information technology's [IT's] contribution to their academic success."

More than 60 percent of respondents agree that IT in courses improved their learning. When asked to explain, students observed that technology:

- Facilitates organization and control in the learning environment.
- Facilitates communication with faculty and classmates.
- Can make content more accessible, including class materials and Internet resources.
- Is valuable in courses when directly linked to applications useful to future employment.

Today's undergraduates not only embrace technology; they expect it. Custom-published media solutions enhance student engagement by offering them the kind of interactive and online tools they know best.

Custom-published textbooks and media solutions keep course information focused, organized, and streamlined. They send the messages to students that their professor is catering to them via both cost and content, that the material is important, and that students' success in the class is important to the professor.

A Partnership for Success

Recent technology-industry predictions cite the ability to build relationships based on mutual respect and integrity as a key indicator of reliability and success. According to a report by Gartner, Inc.,⁹ “Information technology vendors and service providers should position themselves as business partners that offer strategic competencies to help institutions achieve academic and business goals that support the mission of the institution rather than being only providers of software, hardware, or services.” Hallmarks of the Pearson business culture, solid relationships are at the foundation of the custom process.

Every instructor is matched with an experienced custom-publishing editor in the instructor’s field of study. The editor guides the instructor through the entire process—from copy editing to copyright clearances—and ensures that the final product exceeds market standards.

Pearson editors are seasoned professionals with an average of 15 to 20 years of editorial experience in the publishing industry. They intimately understand the custom process and how to keep it running smoothly. From the moment content is submitted, through production and the first day of class, Pearson editors protect instructors from undue worry by keeping them informed about where their projects are in the schedule. They work closely with instructors to meet instructors’

I’ve worked with every major U.S. publishing company. The team at Pearson is the best team I’ve ever worked with. They have the most expertise, they’re the most responsive, they’re the most accommodating, and they’re the most friendly!

—Ken Reeves
San Antonio College

goals and timetables by making recommendations, managing production and distribution details, and helping with compilation and editing tasks. In short, editors are key to a simple, smooth, and seamless custom experience—and they’re producing just that. A November 2006 independent survey of existing Pearson customers¹⁰ indicates that 90.8 percent think the explanation of the custom-publishing process was clear and questions were answered quickly and clearly. “I had absolute confidence in my field editor,” says one instructor surveyed. “It was easy,” says another instructor. “My custom-publishing editor walked me through everything, was clear about expectations, and delivered as promised. I had plenty of time to meet my deadlines and had no surprises on the final product.”

Hands-On Training and Responsive Customer Service

Every custom media solution comes with in-service training for faculty and campus IT staff. Further on-campus training is offered for setup, for registration, and for the first day of class. Throughout the year, instructors and their students receive top-notch customer service for their technical questions. Technical support is available by e-mail 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Support is available by phone Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. eastern time and on Sunday evenings—when students turn to it most—from 5 p.m. to midnight.

I give their customer service five stars.

—John Beyers
University of Maryland University College

Solutions That Inspire: Rio Salado College

When most publishers talk about customer service, partnership, or working together toward common goals, what they're usually saying is that if they've done it before and it worked to their advantage, then they'll consider doing it again. No risk taking. No creative problem solving. No thinking outside the box. Pearson isn't most publishers. To prove it, Pearson has partnered with one of higher education's most innovative institutions: Rio Salado College.

We never heard the word no.

—Carol Scarafiotti
Rio Salado College

Rio Salado College, one of the Maricopa Community Colleges, is a fully accredited, largely virtual college dedicated to fulfilling the educational needs of working and adult students. Serving more than 60,000 students annually, with more than 27,000 of them enrolled in a wide range of online and distance-learning programs, Rio offers high-quality learning in a unique format emphasizing choice, access, flexibility, and affordability. “We made a conscious choice to shoot for the moon,” says Carol Scarafiotti, executive consultant for online learning at Rio Salado. “We asked Pearson to create a solution that would satisfy our top three goals: reduction of textbook costs across the entire college by 50 percent, reduction in the number of edition-driven online course

changes, and better alignment of our textbooks with course curricula. To our surprise, Pearson didn't balk. They explored the options—and came back with a model that satisfied all three requests. We were thrilled.”

At the heart of this revolutionary new model is the Textbook Savings Program, whereby Pearson will exclusively publish custom textbooks for all of Rio Salado's classes, thereby significantly reducing students' overall upfront expenses for brand-new textbooks. The custom textbooks will contain content specifically selected by Rio Salado faculty, specifically customized for Rio Salado courses, and specifically tailored to the needs of Rio Salado students.

Rio Salado, which offers opportunities for course enrollment every week versus on a semester basis, is particularly pleased with the increased control over textbook edition updates that custom publishing provides. “Weekly enrollments represent one of the ways Rio fulfills its commitment to being truly student centered,” says Scarafiotti. “But it gets complicated when textbook editions are updated randomly. Custom publishing means our textbook editions can be driven solely by pedagogy.”

The program launched with the January 2008 term. It will be phased in by stages as new textbooks get added, and it is expected to be complete by October 2009. The first round of customized textbooks is offered in a variety of courses, including Biology 201 and 202, History 103 and 104, and Communications 110, for a total of 32 courses.

“The textbooks look great: they're color coded by discipline and include a letter from the president of the college explaining the program and its benefits,” says Scarafiotti. “The bookstore had to order twice as many biology books to keep up with the demand. Reduced cost, targeted content, course standardization, and curricular consistency—it all adds up to a product that really makes sense for students.”

Case Studies

Florida A&M University

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) was founded in 1887 with 15 students and 2 instructors. Today, as one of the nine institutions that compose Florida's State University System, FAMU serves the citizens of the state of Florida and the United States through preeminent educational programs, academic excellence, a legacy of caring, and a commitment to meet the challenges and needs of future generations. And it shows: an October 2007 study sponsored by the National Science Foundation and featured in *Business Week* magazine named FAMU as one the country's Most Innovative Colleges and Universities.

Richard Ford, laboratory coordinator and chemistry professor, embodies the kind of innovative thinking and student-first mentality that are the hallmarks of FAMU. As early as 1998, he knew that the key to a more productive lab session—and thereby to more learning—was a thorough, easy-to-follow, and clearly written lab manual. So he wrote his own. And sought a publisher. “I was using another company,” says Ford, “but about a week later, met with a representative from Pearson. They were simply more professional. The quality of the products was higher, they offered more options, and the end cost to the student was lower. I switched to Pearson.”

Ford has dealt primarily with the same Pearson custom editor since then—and has nothing but praise for her and his professional experience with her. “She’s the highest-quality person I’ve ever worked with in the chemistry materials and textbook fields,” he says. “Whatever she says comes to pass—no question. And it’s been that way since day one. She makes all the arrangements and ensures that all the deadlines are met. Everything is clear. Nothing is left hanging.”

Ford’s latest project bundles a lab manual and a DVD. The new product benefits students and faculty in a variety of ways. “The most obvious benefit is that the

There’s a big difference between what I used to do in class and what I do now. The video has lightened my load. I can now do a three-hour lab in one and a half to two hours.

—Richard A. Ford Jr.
Florida A&M University

lab is now in sync with the book,” says Ford. “Most lab manuals aren’t in order; they don’t correlate chronologically with what is being taught in the classroom. Creating a class-specific lab manual reduces confusion for students and enables them to do timely applications that support classroom theory. Learning is contextual and, therefore, easier.”

Prior to each lab session, Ford’s students are required to preview the upcoming assignment on the DVD. They see how to set up, and they learn exactly what techniques will be used. “The DVD clarifies the assignment for the students,” says Ford. “Knowing what to expect reduces the pressure on them. They arrive more relaxed and more receptive to the learning experience. It also reduces the number of questions they ask, and that means more time for hands-on learning and being there for them in a productive way.”

Instructors also appreciate the customized lab manual from an assessment standpoint. “Before working with Pearson, we were using modules,” Ford says. “Students tore out and completed modules that later were never changed. When we taught those modules the next semester, the answers could have been passed on by previous students. Customization enables us to change the questions to more accurately track and evaluate student learning.”

The most surprising benefit was cost. “Even with all the benefits and with its being packaged together, it costs less now,” he says. “And that works for everyone.

“We’re on our fourth edition and couldn’t be more pleased,” says Ford. “Both the lab manual and the DVD are excellent. Everything Pearson did was done well—from production to deadlines, to details like sending extra copies to certain instructors. It’s all been so great that it inspired our biology department to create customized materials. I’ve personally promoted it so much that I’m thinking of asking Pearson to hire me when I retire from teaching! Selling their product is that easy.”

San Antonio College

San Antonio College (SAC) was established as University Junior College in 1925 with an enrollment of 500 students. Today, San Antonio College is one of the largest single-campus community colleges in the country and the largest single-campus community college in the state of Texas, enrolling more than 22,000 students. SAC provides for the educational and lifelong learning needs of a student population spanning recent high school graduates through full- and part-time returning adult learners. Students are offered a wide breadth of on- and off-campus, distance, and online learning opportunities, each one innovatively designed to help students reach their full academic and civic potentials.

The year 2003 marked profound change in SAC’s math department. After much deliberation, the department embarked on redeveloping the entire remedial course structure for beginning, elementary, and intermediate algebra, including the restructuring of the course

sequencing so that two-dimensional graphing concepts were not taught until the intermediate level, and the rolling of three textbooks into one.

SAC’s size—and that of its first custom project—attracted the attention of the custom-publishing industry. “All the major publishers approached us and said they could do it in any number of ways,” says Ken Reeves, professor of mathematics at SAC and the driving force behind the project. “We chose Pearson for several reasons, the most striking being support by the company at the highest levels: every major marketing person, editor, up to the president of the math and science division came to San Antonio and spoke face-to-face with almost all 50 department members. That made a tremendous difference. In addition, they offered us a huge variety of authors and assured us that the author of the book selected would be available to both rewrite old sections and write new ones.”

SAC selected a textbook to adopt in April; by end of May the completed manuscript—repagination, rewrites, and additions—was due in production. “Pearson made sure I had everything I needed: books, photocopies, conference calls with the author, and contact with the president of the division,” says Reeves. “We used e-mail, fax, and overnight UPS—Pearson was amenable to all of it. Everyone communicated very well, and my editor took charge. He made sure that what I needed would happen. He exuded confidence, and I trusted him completely. I knew that he and the production team would ensure that everything, including page proofs, happened by the deadline. It was a gargantuan effort—and they were right there with me.”

Some of SAC’s faculty had had a previous experience with another custom-publishing company. “The previous project was just sloppy,” says Reeves. “This time around, many faculty were hesitant. They were concerned that the quality, again, wouldn’t match professional standards. So they didn’t want any indication on the book that it was custom and didn’t want the students to know either.”

The textbook exceeded everyone’s expectations. “When the book first came out, one of my colleagues said, ‘This is fantastic! For the first time since I’ve been at SAC, my syllabus can read, ‘Read chapters 4–7.’ And we can do that—cover the chapters in order, no jumping

Our last book pulled from four different books. We could never have asked our students to purchase four books. Only through custom publishing could we offer them this kind of value for their money.

—Ken Reeves
San Antonio College

around.’ The students didn’t even know the difference. When they found out, they were shocked. The book is seamless. And after four years of using it, there still aren’t any major complaints.

“Students and faculty are reaping the benefits of our custom textbook,” says Reeves. “It’s exactly what we need—no more, no less. It has all the references and resources we could ask for, without being unwieldy and without having to skip around. The students don’t miss anything and aren’t confused by what they don’t need. Most important, custom publishing has helped us maintain our academic standards. It enabled us to offer our students a more linear product and a more organized, more consistent sequence of classes. We know exactly what each student is learning at every level.”

Reeves’s experience with his Pearson team was overwhelmingly positive. “I’ve never been this impressed with a group of people,” he says. “It’s made me want to work with them more. Next time, we’re going beyond customizing the text, to customizing MyMathLab to go with it. We’re going to create a customized portal for students to gain online access to the textbook, ancillary materials, and references. Thousands of lives will be positively impacted because of these efforts.”

San Francisco State University

Founded in 1899 as San Francisco State Normal School, San Francisco State University (SFSU) is one of California State University’s 23 campuses and a leading U.S. public urban university. Promoting respect for scholarship, freedom, and human diversity, SFSU’s faculty and administration encourage students to ignore traditional barriers: students design their own majors, take part in research projects with senior faculty, collaborate with classmates, and learn by solving real-life problems.

SFSU’s population of nearly 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students represents a range of ethnic groups, cultures, ages, values, and life experiences. Sixty percent of undergraduates are students of color, as are 40 percent of graduate students. Some students have extensive professional experience; others are right out of high school. It’s the kind of environment that engenders unconventional thinking—and attracts faculty who embrace innovative methods.

Norma Carr-Ruffino, professor of management, is just such a professor, so it should come as no surprise that she’s also a veteran of custom publishing. “I used a predecessor of Pearson 15 or 20 years ago,” says Carr-Ruffino. “They offered me a short-term contract for a little book called *The Business Student’s Guide*. It did well. Then I republished it on my own and realized immediately that self-publishing wasn’t how I wanted to spend my time.”

Working with my editor and the staff at Pearson Custom inspires me to keep writing.

—Norma Carr-Ruffino
San Francisco State University

Carr-Ruffino intimately knows how good—and how bad—the custom-publishing experience can be. “I’ve had terrible experiences with other publishers,” she says. “An author can get into some pretty hairy situations. On one book, I had no control, no power at all. Editors came and went, some weren’t even in my field, and none were geographically near me. Worst of all, I wasn’t kept informed and wasn’t consulted on the cover art or other details. My editor was editing the book—changing not just my words but also my meaning—without telling me. When I complained, no one responded. They didn’t back me. I felt like I was out there like a lost lamb. It was incredibly stressful.” In the early 1990s, Carr-Ruffino returned to Pearson.

“Pearson has total integrity,” says Carr-Ruffino. “I’m always happy. I feel heard. It’s the polar opposite of my other experiences.” She praises Pearson for just about every aspect of the publishing process. “My editor is geographically close to me. I always know what is going on. It makes me feel very taken care of—she’s really on

my side. She accommodates me, including getting my books published in the shortest possible time.”

Carr-Ruffino rates her satisfaction level with Pearson Custom Publishing as high. “The results are wonderful,” she says. “My books have all the appearance of a national, off-the-shelf textbook. And that matters to me. Some really prestigious, Ivy League colleges have adopted this book; it’s important that it meld with their curricula in every way: quality, content, tone, and aesthetics. I’m proud my book is usable and feasible for the whole spectrum of educational institutions: from community colleges to the Ivy League.

“Where they’re needed, my books are sold,” says Carr-Ruffino, who appreciates that Pearson’s work doesn’t stop at book production but continues through promotion, distribution, and reprints. “My textbook on diversity is required reading at more than 40 colleges. I’m doing very well. Anytime I want to update, there’s no problem, and it happens very quickly. Some companies take years to update. With Pearson, it’s as fast as you’re able to make it happen: in one case, three months! I don’t think I could find that kind of speed anywhere else. Especially with such quality.”

As someone whose topics have historically forged new areas of academic research—from women’s leadership in 1980 to workplace diversity in 1990, to creativity and innovation in 2000—Carr-Ruffino understood early on the benefits of custom publishing. “The courses that I develop tend to be leading-edge, so there weren’t books available to start with,” she says. “Cobbling text together and using handouts were unsatisfactory. The solution for me was to write my own books. Now, instead of buying two or three books and using a little of each, students purchase only one book with all the information they’ll need. On the faculty side, it streamlines the teaching process, saves time, and in general, simplifies matters.”

Carr-Ruffino knows that custom publishing is about more than convenience and personal gain. She understands its direct connection to student success. “When faculty members are able to teach what and how they want to teach, students are better off,” she says. “Why should students care about a subject if their instructor doesn’t? When an instructor is passionate about teaching a subject, students take notice. The college experi-

ence comes down to students and faculty working together to learn something and go into the world and achieve something. Custom publishing facilitates that process, thereby leading to institutional, faculty, and, most important, student success.”

University of Maryland University College

Founded in 1947, University of Maryland University College (UMUC) is an accredited institution focusing on the unique educational and professional development needs of adult students. From classroom locations in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, Europe, and Asia, UMUC offers a broad range of award-winning classes. The school’s innovative educational options—including online instruction, accelerated academic programs, and classroom-based courses taught during the daytime, in the evening, and on weekends—afford maximum convenience to working adults, military personnel, and others around the world who balance the demands of full-time jobs, family, and community responsibilities.

Pearson Custom Publishing is a best kept secret. More academics should be involved in spreading the good news about it.

—John Beyers
University of Maryland University College

John Beyers, director of mathematics and statistics at UMUC, first met with a Pearson representative in 2004. Responsible for approximately 2,000 students, Beyers envisioned growing UMUC’s mathematics program even further via fully customized online courses comprising custom textbooks, solutions manuals, a distance-tutoring program, MathXL, additional Web-based content, and a Web portal. “Several publishers wooed me, but the Pearson rep sold me,” says Beyers. She was phenomenal. She immediately

amassed a team of key people—anyone and everyone we might need, including consultants, managers, and vice presidents from a variety of departments. She allowed me to be the one to dictate the goals of the project. And then she devised the most timely and customer-focused way to achieve them. She made me feel confident in Pearson’s ability to match all of my department’s customization needs, and it panned out: we put together a tremendous course.”

Beyers was particularly impressed with the customer service he received. “From our very first meeting, communication was consistent, clear, and ongoing—on all levels, from the staff to the president of the company,” he says. “I felt I had the entire company working toward making my product the best it could be. It was empowering. What’s more, they didn’t drop their professionalism when the key deals were over. They maintained their integrity all the way through. That’s one of the things that really clinched it for me when it came time to decide whom to trust with a long-term relationship and our international contracts.”

As the size of Beyers’s mathematics department grew both in the United States and abroad, so did his reliance on more than 250 adjuncts. “Customization helped me focus the content and clarify UMUC’s Beginning-Intermediate-College Algebra sequence,” he says. “I can’t monitor every section all the time to ensure that every adjunct is teaching to the course objectives. I can offer the adjuncts guidance in the form of custom products by focusing the content of existing texts and providing clear vision for our faculty. Adjuncts can now cover exactly what’s in the book—nothing more, nothing less—since we’ve customized the text to meet the needs of our students and the program. It’s a form of quality assurance.”

Retention data for introductory and intermediate algebra indicates that the benefits of customization extend to student performance. D/F/W rates for introductory and intermediate algebra classes traditionally averaged about 35 percent. Within a year of switching to the customized format, the attrition rate fell to 22 percent. “I believe custom products played a role in improving student retention,” says Beyers. “Custom helped us standardize the curriculum scope and sequence. By reducing the variability of course content, particularly in the large sections, students were consistently better prepared.”

Consistency is a key ingredient in achieving academic rigor and quality. Customization has enabled UMUC’s mathematics department to boast of both. “A lot of colleges project an image of academic rigor,” says Beyers. “We embody it. Our math department evaluated the grade distribution among disciplines. We found that the math department had the most closely normal distribution of grades in the university. I think in part that it’s due to the clarity of content and assessment efforts. Students and faculty know exactly what is expected of them, and those expectations speak directly to the assessment tool of the final exam. Customization is like a tailor-made suit, except it doesn’t only fit better; it costs less, too.”

Beyers isn’t concerned about the resale potential of custom products. “A custom product is a curriculum clarification for students’ need to succeed,” he says. “Rarely does a mathematics course cover every chapter in any given text. With customization, students get more of the content they actually need, and they get more resources—typically at a reduced price. Custom is more effective than traditional one-size-fits-all educational resources—and that means more value for students, more clarity for faculty, and more quality overall.”

Under Beyers’s direction, UMUC’s mathematics department is in the process of rolling out a global adoption in its U.S. Division, European Division, and Asian Division—three divisions for all courses, and all of them using the custom model. “I’ve had a chance to really get to know Pearson as a company—and they’ve had a chance to get to know me,” says Beyers. “It’s been productive. We have a great synergy.”

Custom meant I could focus the curriculum and instruction for a large department that has a high number of adjuncts. I knew the content was well designed. This gave me more time to focus on the professional development of my faculty.

—John Beyers
University of Maryland University College

University of South Carolina—Columbia

South Carolina College was founded in 1801 as part of an effort to unite South Carolinians in the wake of the American Revolution. More than 200 years later, the renamed University of South Carolina (USC) is a multicampus public institution serving the educational needs of the entirety of South Carolina through teaching, research, and service. USC's flagship campus in Columbia offers its roughly 25,000 full- and part-time undergraduate and graduate students more than 350 degree programs through 14 degree-granting colleges and schools.

Lee Bauknight helped shepherd USC's first forays into custom publishing, starting with an in-house textbook for English 101 in fall 2003. "We did all the work ourselves: editing, permissions, everything," says Bauknight. "We even printed it at USC. It was a lot of work and didn't look very good. But, for pedagogical and financial reasons, we continued that way for three years."

The department needed help, though—specifically with production and permissions. And although several publishers approached the department, talks shut down with every one of them when they learned what level of income the largish, USC English department needed. "None could get close to it," says Bauknight, "until spring 2006, when Pearson contacted us.

"Pearson was the first company to grasp the bigger-picture view of what we were doing, offer us relief from the onerous permissions aspects, and ensure we could make the money we needed to," says Bauknight. "Our Pearson representative created a way to spread the customized text over two semesters, which enabled us to save money while still tailoring the textbooks to our needs and ensuring consistency throughout the department. It was the creative thinking of the Pearson reps that made it all happen. We now have access to support materials and resources, and our textbook looks and feels professional.

"Our working experience with Pearson couldn't have been better," says Bauknight. "The first year, we had very little time—only a couple of months to get a manuscript in. With our editor's help, then the designer's, we established deadlines, and they made sure we met them, including gently cracking the whip when we

needed it. They've been ideal partners ever since. Yes, it's a real partnership, with a team approach. They let us focus on what we do best, and they take care of the details. The process is streamlined: it enables us to be far more efficient and ensures that the overall strategy works in our curricular program and for our students academically and financially."

Bauknight knows that if he ever has any questions, he can call or e-mail his editor or the designer and that they'll be quick to answer. "My editors and I are always in touch," he says. "They're great. We haven't had any problems at all. The personal attention and the relationships we've built are real strong points.

The staff at Pearson made us feel like this project was just as important to them as it was to us.

—Lee Bauknight
University of South Carolina—Columbia

"We are extremely happy with both of our books," says Bauknight. "We're very happy with the content made available through Pearson and with the items for which they obtained permission. And we really like this year's modern covers. As for the students, I don't know that they pay attention to such things. But I do know that if you ask a student to buy a book, you'd better use it. Custom publishing enables us to create a textbook that is used cover to cover. What's more, by customizing our texts, we can be certain that our students are being offered all of the materials they need to succeed in the program, and we can provide our teaching assistants with specific kinds of support to further that goal. It's more value for the students any way you look at it."

Conclusion

A clear-headed exploration beyond the misperceptions of custom publishing shows unequivocally that custom publishing works. By providing a vehicle to control content, curricula, and assessment, custom publishing affords professors the means to proactively increase student success and save students money. By enabling the alignment of content with course objectives, custom publishing promotes consistent adherence to institutional standards and quality control. It saves professors time. And it streamlines the teaching and learning process for faculty, adjuncts, and students.

Increased student success. Customized lab manuals synchronize with class exercises, meaning less confusion for students. By adding a course-specific DVD for students to preview assignments, Richard Ford's (FAMU) students arrive to class "more relaxed and more receptive to the learning experience." They ask fewer questions, allowing more time for hands-on learning. Within one year of customizing the UMUC online mathematics program, John Beyers saw the attrition rate in introductory and intermediate algebra classes fall from about 35 percent to 22 percent. Custom publishing standardized the scope and sequence of his curriculum, thereby reducing the variability of course content. "I believe custom products play a role in improving student retention," he says. "Students are consistently better prepared."

More-effective assessments. Ford's customized lab manuals enable him to more accurately track and evaluate student learning. By changing questions each semester, he ensures that students don't receive answers from the previous semester's students. At UMUC, an evaluation of grade distribution among disciplines revealed that the customized mathematics program had the most closely normal distribution of grades. Beyers attributes this to the clarity of content and assessment that customization provides. "Students and faculty know exactly what is expected of them, and those expectations speak directly to the assessment tool of the final exam," he says.

Quality control. Custom publishing helps maintain academic standards. When class content is organized and sequentially consistent, administration knows exactly what each student is learning at every level. This is particularly important for institutions that rely on adjuncts. Custom products streamline content and provide a clear vision for faculty. Adjuncts cover exactly what is in the customized textbook—"nothing more, nothing less."

Time savings. Beyers's customized program gives him time to focus on the professional development of his faculty. For Lee Bauknight (USC), who was previously self-publishing, custom publishing means that the "onerous" tasks of production and permissions are a thing of the past. And for Norma Carr-Ruffino (SFSU), "Custom publishing streamlines the teaching process, saves time, and in general, simplifies matters."

Cost savings. Custom textbooks offer students exactly what they need. Ken Reeves (SAC) culled four different books to create his custom textbook. "We could never have asked our students to purchase four books," he says. "Only through custom publishing could we offer them this kind of value for their money." But the most exciting example of cost reduction to date is at Rio Salado, where the school's Textbook Savings Program is driven by customized textbooks and, once fully implemented, will reduce the costs of new textbooks across the entire college by a minimum of 50 percent per book.

All publishing companies are not created equal. When asked to summarize their Pearson custom-publishing experience, Pearson authors consistently reply: clear communication, total integrity, real partnership. "From our very first meeting, communication was consistent, clear, and ongoing—on all levels, from the staff to the president of the company," says Beyers. "They maintained their integrity all the way through." That approach is what sets Pearson apart—and is why more authors return to Pearson year after year.

For more information about the Pearson Custom Publishing difference, visit www.pearsoncustom.com.

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