



Microsoft® Office Specialist

Ensures Students Have Excel® Skills to Help Drive Success in the Classroom

Discover more 

Case Study



A.B. Freeman School of Business Tulane University

Location:

New Orleans, LA

Number of Students:

1,895

Success Metrics:

Implementing a Microsoft Office Specialist Certification program for Excel® resulted in:

- Improved student performance
- Achievement of industry-recognized credential
- Enhanced institutional reputation and recruiting power



TULANE'S FREEMAN SCHOOL OF BUSINESS STUDENTS USE THE POWER OF INDUSTRY CREDENTIALS IN MICROSOFT OFFICE TO ENHANCE LEARNING, ATTRACT POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS

CHALLENGE

As students of Tulane University's highly regarded business program, Freeman School of Business MBAs are required to know and use Microsoft Excel. But because Excel knowledge and skills varied between students, 50% of incoming MBA students could not pass a test of basic Excel skills during entry orientation. Lack of Excel skills meant some students couldn't keep pace with their more proficient peers.

SOLUTION

Freeman professors decided the students needed not only better tools than internally created tests to measure and enhance Excel skills, but also a credential that would be recognized by the business world.

"Knowledge of Excel has to be defined," said Dr. Suman Banerjee, assistant professor in the business school. "If you allow many people to define this... some will come up with really low standards [and] some will come up with really high standards of knowing Excel, and that will create a problem."

Microsoft® Office Specialist

"In the past, using Excel for statistics lab sessions was a problem because students didn't have the same Excel skill levels. Since they now must complete Excel certification before taking the class, they can focus on learning statistics rather than how to use Excel."

– **Priscilla Hagebusch**
Clinical professor
A.B. Freeman School of Business
Tulane University

Freeman chose Microsoft Office Specialist—the official Microsoft Office certification program—delivered by Certiport. The industry-standard certification program includes online learning to support classroom instruction, practice tests and exams with retake opportunities. The initial launch of the program yielded 60 MBA-certified students in less than a month and a 97% pass rate. Freeman then expanded the program to include business undergraduate students. Developing validated Excel® skills early in their academic careers helps business students prepare for higher-level courses where lack of proficiency can impede learning. The Freeman undergraduate certification program grew to include Word, PowerPoint® and Access®, as well as Excel.

RESULTS

Today, more than 1,900 students have achieved Microsoft Office Excel certification. "In the past, using Excel for statistics lab sessions was a problem because students didn't have the same Excel skill levels," said Priscilla Hagebusch, clinical professor at the business school. "Since they now must complete Excel certification before taking the statistics class, they can focus on learning statistics rather than how to use Excel."

Students have noticed their improved levels of skill in the classroom as well as the marketability of the certification. "Looking back, I wish I would have had [Excel certification] in the beginning, so that I had that certificate to take with me for my internship between first- and second-year," said Bradley Breeding, Freeman MBA graduate and financial analyst for Wal-Mart®.

Breeding, who was one of the first MBAs to take and pass the Excel certification course, said his certification impressed prospective employers. "The bottom line is that today's job market is extremely challenging, and there are a lot of qualified candidates out there. Being competent at Microsoft Office Excel, being certified, really gives you an advantage in landing the good job."

The Microsoft Office Specialist program has paid dividends in building student Excel skills while asserting Tulane's Freeman School as one of the top private business schools in the country and around the world. Says Associate Dean Peggy Babin, "It's a great advantage to be able to guarantee corporate recruiters that each and every student walking out of the A. B. Freeman School of Business has had to attain a common level of Excel skills—and those skills are extensive. This certification naturally improves the marketability of the students."

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