

Success Story



Portales: Online Spanish learning that speaks students' language

Three years ago, Raul Galoppe, Chair of the Department of Spanish and Latino Studies at Montclair State University (MSU) began researching the best content for teaching online language courses. When the university announced shortly thereafter that it planned to offer a Bachelor of Arts exclusively online, he was ready with a recommendation to fulfil the program's language requirement — **Portales 1** from Vista Higher Learning.

"I was looking for a course that was attractive, appealing and as non-stereotypical as possible. I wanted something that spoke more to the students' language, not only in the content, but in terms of technology. I was really impressed with the **Portales** platform — the content and how easy it was for our instructors to use."

While originally intended as a component of the online BA program, Galoppe's satisfaction with **Portales** led to its implementation into existing Spanish courses. "We started with two sections using Portales, and little by little, added more." And while some students were hesitant of the new technology, Galoppe says, "Portales is so user-friendly that they're able to adapt very quickly."

- **The number of online sections has doubled from 15 to 30**
- **Montclair State now offers online classes all year, including an intensive 4-week winter session**
- **Online and face-to-face curricula are completely aligned**

Setting a new standard for language learning

With the introduction of Portales, Galoppe's department has been able to standardize the online and face-to-face sections of Montclair State's Spanish courses — a huge benefit for students who may toggle from one to another while earning their degrees.

Professor and Spanish Program Coordinator Antonella Calarota-Ninman agrees. "With Portales, students can seamlessly move from an online course to face-to-face the next semester. The assignments are the same, so the transition is easy. There's no major difference — same system, same features. With online classes, we're able to put more emphasis on activities to promote interaction."

"What I like about Portales," adds Galoppe, "is that you can adjust the course — the entire syllabus — for online or face-to-face. Even if the course is face-to-face, we have an online module-based delivery for students so we can unify both types of classrooms."

It's easier for students to know what you're expected to do in a class when you're following the same format. And for instructors, the program is very smooth in terms of adding your own activities into the sequence lesson."

Galoppe finds that many MSU students prefer online coursework. "It's very convenient because there's no conflict with schedules — especially if they need to work or have to juggle various activities. The online classroom allows them to use their time more efficiently."

From an initial workshop to ongoing support, Galoppe and Calarota-Ninman both credit their Vista Higher Learning representative, Dan, for the easy transition and set-up of Portales. "If we ever have a problem, Dan is always there," Galoppe explains. "We work as a team and that is something I truly value."

Says Calarota-Ninman, "Vista is amazing. They've offered multiple trainings, group trainings, individual trainings — whatever is needed. At this point, all 30 MSU instructors are using Portales. Everyone is mastering the program."

The results: **Proof in numbers**

In the past two years, Galoppe has noticed a huge jump in enrollment in Spanish courses — creating the need for more. "We normally offer about 15 sections of Spanish I in the fall. Now, we have close to 30. The growth has been incredible."

And for the first time ever, the university can offer Spanish classes four times a year with the introduction of winter session courses. The convenient online or hybrid format lends itself to an intensive four-week winter session — a huge benefit to students, helping them complete their degrees sooner and ultimately advance their careers.

Galoppe gauges the program's success on many factors, including the enrollment numbers, student evaluations and the faculty's training and assessment of their own difficulties and challenges. But students' grades also speak volumes. "The number of students failing has greatly decreased, and the number of students dropping a class has also decreased. Normally, those who think they're going to fail will often withdraw from the class. But that number has gone down considerably — another measure of Portales' success here at MSU."

About Vista Higher Learning

Vista Higher Learning (VHL) has a singular focus — developing effective, accessible print and digital learning solutions to help raise the teaching and learning of world languages to a higher level. As a specialized world language publisher, 100 percent of our resources are dedicated to preparing the students for a world in which mastering a second language is a necessity rather than a luxury. Our programs make language learning fun and rewarding, while driving positive outcomes for educators and students.

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