

How El Paso Community College Improved Learner Success and Retention While Meeting Grant Goals

Upon receiving a CARES grant during the COVID-19 pandemic, EPCC turned to Anthology Services to redesign their online courses.



With five campuses located across El Paso county, El Paso Community College offers over 130 academic programs and 350 continuing education courses, offering learning opportunities to a wide variety of students in the community. EPCC has been recognized for its service to Hispanic students and veterans, and also offers college credit to local high school students as part of its Dual Credit enrollment program.

INSTITUTION TYPE:
TWO-YEAR PUBLIC

LOCATION:
EL PASO COUNTY, TEXAS

POPULATION:
24,000+

ANTHOLOGY PRODUCT:

Blackboard 

Anthology Course Design Services



Luz Cadena, Director of Distance Learning Support,
El Paso Community College on Anthology Blackboard
and Course Design Services



The Challenge

Improving Online Courses and Meeting Grant Stipulations

EPCC knew that revamping their online courses was a necessity, especially during a period when nearly all education went remote. “We were facing low retention rates and students not being as successful in some core courses, specifically online courses,” said Luz Cadena, director of distance learning support at EPCC. “And that became even more apparent because of the pandemic.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, EPCC was a recipient of a CARES grant, part of a bill passed by Congress in 2020 to provide economic development money to communities and regions to aid in recovery efforts. “This grant was meant to help us address that,” Cadena said. “The grant initially provided us funding to hire instructional designers, but we struggled with that.”



The Solution

Leveraging a Trusted Partnership to Achieve Goals

In looking to meet the goals of the grant and also improve their online course offerings, EPCC turned to Anthology. “[Anthology is] already our partner because we use Blackboard,” said Cadena. “So it made absolute sense.”

EPCC chose Anthology Services, and specifically the Course Design offering, to optimize the institution’s courses within Blackboard®. “We looked at those courses that had high failure rates and low retention rates and we focused specifically on those core courses,” Cadena said. “And I explained that to the [Anthology] instructional designers, so they knew exactly what our goal was.”



Cadena and her team met with the instructional designers from Anthology to go over what EPCC was ultimately looking to achieve as well as the parameters the institution envisioned for consistent course design. “[The Anthology team] knew exactly what our goal was and they worked in great partnership with the faculty to address those goals,” Cadena said. “The faculty had nothing but positive things to say. And we have seen increased student success numbers.”

With Anthology’s assistance, EPCC was able to meet both its grant requirements and its aims for student success and retention. “The partnership certainly has helped us with our retention rates, and also meeting those grant goals,” Cadena said. “It’s important for us to report our success with grant goals to the Department of Education, so we had no trouble documenting the success.”

“The instructional design services helped us meet the goals of the grant to help improve student success and a specific number of online courses.”



—Luz Cadena

Director of Distance Learning Support, El Paso Community College





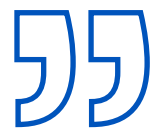
Insights Delivered

Building a New Foundation for Core Courses

In addition to meeting the CARES grant goals and improving student success and retention, through its partnership with Anthology Services EPCC has set a framework for their courses that is still being actively utilized. “It’s been almost two years since we wrapped up the project, but those courses we developed are still in use,” Cadena said. “We built, as a result of this project, a library of 35 core area courses that any faculty have access to. And they’re especially helpful when we hire brand new faculty who have never maybe taught at community college. They have a foundation from which they can build their courses.”

Cadena recommended Anthology’s course design services as well as the practice of reviewing and revising courses periodically, both for content as well as for ways in which new technology can improve the learning experience. “For example, Blackboard has made strides in some of the tools that are available, like AI Conversations,” she said. “So faculty have new tools which can help them meet their goals, but they may not see how to do that. And that’s where instructional designers can come in and help them fit the technology to meet their objectives.”

“Our partnership with Anthology Services has been wonderful...if I had to describe Anthology’s Services in three words, I would use dependable, communicative, and supportive, because they proved all of those.”



—Luz Cadena

Director of Distance Learning Support, El Paso Community College



Epilogue

Anthology would like to thank Luz Cadena for her time in speaking to us about her experience with Anthology Services. We look forward to seeing continued learning success at El Paso Community College, and to supporting that success in any way we can!



Ready to find out what Anthology Services can do for your institution? [Discover more today](#)

Product highlighted in this customer case study: [Blackboard](#)

Learn more at anthology.com

