



Overview

Teaching Challenge

Penn State professor Dr. Rick Harnish wanted to provide his Applied Psychology students with practical quantitative skills that would enable them to better compete in the job market. He looked for software commonly used in business that could make complex subject matter more accessible and easier to understand. He also wanted software that would help students understand how statistical research is properly applied to everyday problems and questions.

Solution

Harnish selected IBM SPSS Statistics Base as the software for his Applied Psychology courses.

IBM SPSS Statistics prepares students for the real world of research

IBM SPSS Statistics gives graduates the research skills employers seek most

Since its founding in 2002, Dr. Rick Harnish has overseen the Applied Psychology program at Penn State University in New Kensington, Pennsylvania. With a focus on applying theory to real-life experimental design, Harnish teaches upper-level psychology courses in Research Methods and Principles of Measurement.

Getting students job-ready and ahead of the competition

Drawing on his experience in the advertising industry, Harnish wanted to shape the curriculum for the Applied Psychology program to provide his students with practical quantitative skills that would help them get a leg up on their competition in the post-graduation job market.

To help students gain the skills employers seek, Harnish wanted them to work with the tools most commonly used in today's statistical research. The statistical software students would use should make the complex subject matter more accessible and easier to understand. And it should combine both the theoretical and practical, so students understand how statistical research is properly applied to everyday problems and questions.

Statistical analysis made easy with IBM SPSS Statistics

Realizing that other analysis packages that are popular in the classroom are rarely used outside of academia, Harnish selected IBM® SPSS® Statistics as the software for his two courses. IBM SPSS Statistics is used at commercial, government and academic organizations around the world to solve business and research problems.



Teaching Benefits:

- Gave students practical quantitative skills that would help them better compete for jobs.
 - IBM SPSS Statistics software is widely used in business, so students could continue to use the same software in their work life.
 - IBM SPSS Statistics software combines both the theoretical and practical, so students understand how statistical research is properly applied to everyday problems and questions.
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In addition to its stature as a popular and trusted tool, Harnish also appreciates the software's ability to make statistical research and analysis more comprehensible to his students.

"IBM SPSS Statistics' menu-driven way of performing analyses makes it simple to transform and compute," said Harnish. "The students find the software intuitive, and this makes analysis much easier for them to perform than if they had to learn and write syntax. And with each new version, the software gets easier and easier to use."

Putting theory into practice using IBM SPSS Statistics

Harnish also appreciates that IBM SPSS Statistics helps his students realize the application of research and analysis to address real-world problems and questions. He structures his courses so that students learn theory and then are asked to apply what they have learned by designing their own experiment, then analyzing and interpreting the results using IBM SPSS Statistics. "I'm drawn to IBM SPSS Statistics because it ties together the theoretical with the practical," said Harnish. "Statistics is traditionally a lot of grinding through numerous inputs to get to your outputs."

Harnish finds that using their own data in analyses engages students and opens their eyes as to why they have been learning these techniques. "This makes the application of statistics very real for the students. It ties all the pieces together so that they can see the bigger picture of how statistics apply in research," he says.



Smarter solutions for higher education

For more than 40 years, SPSS, an IBM Company, has led the way in helping colleges and universities teach statistics and data mining – as well assisting them in harnessing data to achieve their goals. IBM SPSS predictive analytics touches every point of the student lifecycle so that institutions can generate more value for their students and receive a higher return on their information.

From recruitment and retention to student success and institutional advancement, IBM SPSS predictive analytics provides the ability to direct and automate effective decisions. The result is a more efficient, successful and accountable academic environment.

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— Dr. Rick Harnish, Assistant Professor of Applied Psychology, Penn State University

IBM SPSS Statistics makes it easy to teach statistics

Because the IBM SPSS Statistics software is available in the campus computer lab, it is easily accessible to students and minimizes the cost of course materials. After more than five years of teaching with IBM SPSS Statistics, Harnish continues to use the software in his courses, as well as helping to integrate it into new and redesigned courses on campus.

IBM SPSS Statistics has helped Harnish convey the principles and application of statistical research to his students more quickly, efficiently, and effectively. IBM SPSS Statistics’ ease of use has reduced class time that would have otherwise been spent learning software functions. Students are able to develop hands-on expertise in the application of research methods to real-world problems and questions.

Most importantly, they leave with the practical quantitative skills that employers seek. Because analytical skills are ever more in demand and companies are constantly trying to trim budgets, the benefit of being trained in IBM SPSS Statistics is significant. “When I was in industry, the first area to be cut when times were tough was the training budget. As a result, I always looked to hire people who already had the necessary skills,” said Harnish.

Thanks to Harnish and IBM SPSS Statistics, his students are prepared with those necessary skills. “As a teacher, the greatest reward I receive is seeing students embark on their own journey of discovery. Using IBM SPSS Statistics can help students reach their destination,” concluded Harnish.

About SPSS, an IBM Company

SPSS, an IBM Company, is a leading global provider of predictive analytics software and solutions. The company’s complete portfolio of products - data collection, statistics, modeling and deployment - captures people’s attitudes and opinions, predicts outcomes of future customer interactions, and then acts on these insights by embedding analytics into business processes. IBM SPSS solutions address interconnected business objectives across an entire organization by focusing on the convergence of analytics, IT architecture and business process. Commercial, government and academic customers worldwide rely on IBM SPSS technology as a competitive advantage in attracting, retaining and growing customers, while reducing fraud and mitigating risk. SPSS was acquired by IBM in October 2009. For further information, or to reach a representative, visit www.spss.com.



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