

Paradise Valley Community College's Success Keeps On Growing with Interactive Mathematics



Overview—Paradise Valley Community College, Phoenix, Arizona

- In three years, the program has expanded from one Interactive Mathematics section to 12.
- Nearly 300 students per term learn math with Interactive Mathematics.
- Interactive Mathematics is helping the college expand into distance learning.
- Flexibility keeps nonresidential students caught up.

Paradise Valley Community College (PVCC) has increased its offering of Interactive Mathematics (formerly delivered by Academic Systems) in an effort to continue providing students with alternative ways of learning. In three years, the program has expanded from just one section to 12, with nearly 300 students per term benefiting in courses from prealgebra through college algebra. The college is also now expanding into distance learning courses using Interactive Mathematics.

Students are increasingly requesting Interactive Mathematics math courses, especially for Introductory and Intermediate Algebra.

“The materials really help students succeed and do well,” said Phyllis Shaw, Ed.D., a mathematics instructor who uses Interactive Mathematics.

Instructors had spent a lot of time reviewing alternative technology solutions to give students more options for learning mathematics. But until Interactive Mathematics came along, the instructors weren't willing to make a commitment to a technology learning system.

A Truly Interactive Program

“I've been teaching 30 years and often received software systems to review that teach students mathematics,” Shaw said. “I'd look at it and find it was good for a classroom supplement, but not as a teaching tool. When I reviewed Interactive Mathematics, though, I got excited, and I'm still excited about it.”

In Interactive Mathematics, now part of PLATO Learning, Paradise Valley's mathematics faculty found what they were looking for: a program that was truly interactive and would help students learn mathematics.

“Interactive Mathematics doesn't just do a problem and show the answer—it takes the student through each step and gives them a chance to learn and

INSTITUTION: Paradise Valley Community College (PVCC) is one of 10 colleges and centers that comprise the Maricopa County Community College District in Phoenix. Today, the district's colleges and centers offer comprehensive educational programs in professional, occupational, special interest, and continuing education curricula to serve the needs of the rapidly growing county area. PVCC, which opened in 1982, is the ninth college to be established in the Maricopa County Community College District.

SIZE: The Maricopa County Community College District was established in 1962 with a single college and has since grown to serve more than 200,000 students in credit and noncredit programs, making it the largest provider of post-secondary education in the state of Arizona and one of the two largest in the country. Approximately 7,000 students are enrolled at PVCC.

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build confidence,” Shaw said. “The way the topics are explained in a step-by-step approach and the interactivity as lessons are being taught are just outstanding. The management system is also very good. I’m thrilled with it.”

Flexibility and Teamwork Lead to Success

Instructors acknowledge that the approach isn’t for every student, but for many students “it’s wonderful” and leads to student success.

“Part of our success with the program has been that our students have the opportunity to catch up on missed work. At our college, students are not residential, so when they miss a lecture class, it’s almost impossible for them to make it up,” Shaw said. “Now they can make up lessons at home or in the lab, anytime, anywhere, which greatly contributes to their success.”

Paradise Valley also credits its team approach for its success with the program.

The department started out using team teaching to help new instructors acclimate to the program, and now the department pays instructors experienced with Interactive Mathematics to mentor new instructors.

“We’ve experienced a great deal of success in large part because of the cooperation and support of the department and the dean of instruction,” Shaw said. “Our teamwork has made the implementation and growth of the program continuously successful.”

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