

Helping Students Complete the Journey

at Louisiana State University

Continuing Education Case Study

At Louisiana State University (LSU) Online & Continuing Education, the goal is to meet learners where they are. The continuing education department, led by Lisa Verma, Senior Director of Professional Development, and Kristy Anthony, Director of Professional Development, considers its mission to provide high-quality learning experiences, with world-class customer service and a sustainable economic model.

A Stackable System from Certificates to Degrees

The department, quickly diving into the world of hybrid and online learning options, works closely with companies, many focused on business and industry, to see what kind of training their employees need.

"We've stayed very close to what [learners] need and the areas of focus they need," Verma says. "We don't just focus on tech. We don't just focus on management. We don't just focus on counting our business skills. We have a wide variety."

Because of its location, LSU Online & Continuing Education tends to be a training hub for the oil and gas industry. They often want to send their employees to in-person classes, while those in the energy industry, another frequent consumer group, prefer online and in-person education.

"We make sure to have breadth and depth where people need it," Verma says.

LSU's unique stackable structure enables students to use prior credit and non-credit certificates and courses towards an online undergraduate or graduate degree.

"The idea is that you can go from one course to a fully-online undergraduate or masters degree, and stack your way into that, because we have a prior learning assessment policy at the university," Verma says.

"The idea is that we have something for everybody, at every level."



Engaging and Targeted Student Support

For individual learners that question where to begin, LSU Online & Continuing Education offers a bank of coordinators to serve as a concierge service. They ask the right questions about educational goals, lay out the learner's options, and determine what learning option makes the most sense for that individual learner: synchronous in-person, or online asynchronous courses.

"We have a lot of people who work full time," Anthony says. "Can [they] dedicate time to go to the classroom? Or would it be better to have something that is asynchronous that [they] can do at night after [they] put the kids to bed?"

For those interested in online education, but unsure if it is the right fit, LSU offers *Geaux for Free* – a single module of a program that a learner can take for no cost. It serves as an introduction to online learning and LSU's learning management system, Moodle.

"We did that with about 15 of our most popular intro courses, and we've seen a nice return of folks who did that and say, 'Okay, I get that, and I'm ready to sign up for the first course,'" Anthony says.

A Pandemic-Related Educational Shift

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought sudden changes to how learners access education. With new remote options came a surprising new benefit.

LSU Online & Continuing Education has a long-standing paralegal program that, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, was fully in-person. Now that the program is live online, enrollment grew tremendously. Learners from across Louisiana, and in states like Texas and Utah, suddenly have access to a program they wouldn't have been otherwise able to attend.

Verma and Anthony anticipate the program, and many others, will be permanently hybrid going forward.

"I think there are going to be a lot of people that are going to be trained remotely," Anthony says. "We're looking to find the best pathway to meet both [in-person and online] needs in the classroom."

At a time when remote learning is at the forefront of education, MindEdge has been an asset for the department in meeting learners where they are.

"We weren't going to be able to build fully online courses ourselves at the time that we engaged with MindEdge," Verma says. "We always felt like [MindEdge] was cutting edge."

Never failing to meet their mission of world-class customer service, LSU Online & Continuing Education offers a career change scholarship, a discount off of MindEdge bundles, to make it easier for learners to access new courses.

"MindEdge has always been an easy button for us," Anthony says. "Our rep with MindEdge has always been open and eager to help us."

