

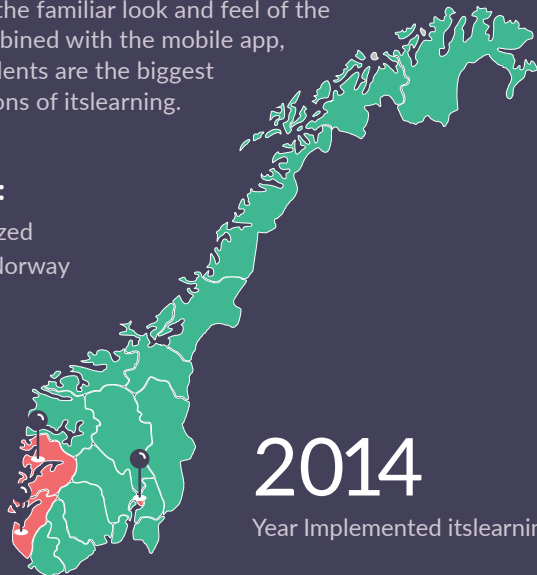
VID Specialized University, Norway

Overview:

- VID's commitment to e-learning entails that all courses must be created within itslearning.
- Teachers and staff report that students now have a greater sense of ownership over their education, which has contributed to the decrease in dropouts.
- The largest faculty of the university, the Faculty of Health, has the greatest usership of itslearning.
- Due to the familiar look and feel of the UX combined with the mobile app, the students are the biggest champions of itslearning.

Customer:

VID Specialized University, Norway



2014

Year Implemented itslearning

University Profile:



3,500

Students



4

Campuses across Norway



350

Employees



100%

Courses using itslearning



1843

Diaconal and missional pioneer work began at the Stavanger campus in 1843, making VID the oldest private institution of higher education in Norway.

VID's Commitment to E-Learning Creates Closer Connection to Students and a Decreasing Dropout Rate

At VID Specialized University, students are expected to participate beyond the "normal" amount to earn their degree. "Many are initially surprised at the amount of mandatory, hands-on participation. But after the first 6 months, they love it," says Vidar Tobiassen, E-Learning Coordinator at VID.

VID's commitment to e-learning is just one example of their student-centered mindset. For example, all courses must be created within itslearning, the learning management system of choice for VID. "Not all teachers are enthused about the idea of adopting new technology, of course. But when you present it in a way that proves the pedagogic benefits, they jump on board," says Tobiassen. "They need to know what's in it for them."

Since beginning the implementation of itslearning 3 years ago, dropout rates have continuously gone down. VID leadership attributes this in part to the technology allowing for a closer connection to students as well as an increase in

the students' sense of ownership over their education. "Our contact with students is much better since implementing itslearning. For teachers, it doesn't feel like just a big mass of students anymore, they actually know their students' names. And students are no longer afraid to ask for help — their self-confidence has improved," says Tobiassen.

Convincing Teachers to Use New Technology

One practical example Tobiassen gives to reluctant teachers is by presenting a new way of grading available within itslearning. When students hand in a 10-page paper, for example, rather than grading each by hand, itslearning offers a faster, digital approach. After the student submits the assignment using the Assignment Tool, teachers can start a recording of their screen with the assignment visible while audibly discussing their feedback. There is no margin

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limiting the amount of feedback they can give, and it can be more easily digested by the student. They have found that students love this approach. “If it will save time, teachers will listen. If students will get better grades, they will listen. Presenting the benefits to them in this way is one example of how we’ve been so successful in implementing itslearning.”

Flipping the Classroom on Day One

VID has four campuses spread across Norway in Bergen, Oslo, Stavanger and Sandnes. In 2016, four diaconal universities merged to create VID – establishing a larger, more effective institution within the private, non-profit segment of the university- and university college sector in Norway. “We do things differently here at VID,” continues Tobiassen. “We constantly ask ourselves, ‘How can we use class time more productively?’ We are not afraid to change things or try out new methods to figure out what works best for our students.”

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One of these methods has been flipping the classroom, starting day one for new students. Teachers record a brief introduction to the course along with any preliminary activities and put them on itslearning so that students can watch and complete these beforehand. This ensures that on the first day of class, students can already begin delving into the course content through peer discussions and further activities. “Some students prefer to sit in the back of the room and receive information from the teacher. We don’t allow this to happen,” says Tobiassen. “The teacher’s

job is to create the assignments to be done at home so that their class time can be spent facilitating these in-class activities. Students quickly learn they can’t be a passive receiver of information.”

Keeping Students Engaged and Connected

The university has found that it is much easier for students to speak up or contribute through the platform, rather than during class. For example, before a course begins, teachers open a discussion – maybe asking students why they signed up for the course. This allows for interaction before anyone actually meets so that on day one, students already feel they know each other. “These get-to-know-you discussions beforehand are vital. Students present themselves, photos of them or their dogs – then they get to class and their shoulders are down,” says Tobiassen. Discussions are also continually used throughout the year: “When teachers give out assignments, students can comment with their questions, notifying the class and allowing for collaboration and follow up.”

These discussion boards are also an important way for distance learners and part-time students to stay involved. “Because they’re not on-campus all the time, they don’t always have a place to meet and chat. The discussion boards have been a great way for them to communicate, even for small things like selling books from last year and other things you can’t categorise.”

Due in part to these features, the students are, in general, the biggest champions of the LMS. “Because the UX has a familiar look and feel, the students pick it up so quickly. They love the mobile app and all of the different tools within the platform, for example, using the assignments sections as a backup where they can store and review all their projects.” When teachers choose to use the LMS in a more specific way, students are quick to adapt. “If we want them to do something special in a course, there’s never a problem – they figure it out easily,” says Tobiassen. ♦

Popular Uses of itslearning at VID:

- “Christmas Calendar” Onboarding: Two weeks before the start of winter semester, VID highlights something different every day in itslearning, encouraging students to get to know the platform.
- The Assignment tool is used year-round – teachers love the built-in plagiarism tool, which immediately checks assignments upon hand-in.
- Teachers rely on the Test and Survey tools to regularly check their students’ progress.
- Students love the integration with Google Suite, specifically Google Docs – a tool they already use and thus, a powerful tool in the LMS.