



Honorlock™ Customer Success Story

Ryan P. Mears, PhD, Lecturer, Department of Psychology, University of Florida

Understanding the Anomalous Curve in Online Learning

Ryan P. Mears, PhD, has been teaching at the University of Florida (UF) since the Fall of 2015. When he began to teach full time last semester as a Lecturer he was presented with a new opportunity: to teach his first online course—a general elective course, PSB 3002 - Physiological Psychology. Trained as a brain scientist and researcher, he was intrigued with this new learning modality and quickly came to understand the pros and cons of the online teaching environment.

The pros: for students the convenience of instant access to information and setting their schedule. For him having a script when recording the course kept him focused on the most important points of his lecture and improved his

teaching. The cons: because the course is online, there's less feedback from students—like being on the wrong side of a two-way mirror.

Mears Lacked a Means to Understand How Students Approached Learning Online

Mears wanted feedback about how students were doing in his class. He was interested in how students approached learning online. Being a scientist, he began to statistically diagnose his students' exam scores. "After the second quiz in the third week of class, I had a ceiling effect that looked like a ski jump, with 80% of my students getting 100% on tests. I knew there was something seriously wrong. I began looking closely at who had missed which questions over the two quizzes. That's when I realized I needed a proctoring solution of some kind. When I initially attempted to address the issue, I really didn't even know enough to ask the right questions to get help."

“Honorlock was more than a tool to guard or block students from using inappropriate information. It was also a means to detect and determine many different ways that students approach the exams. Because of access to the wealth of data/information through Honorlock, I became better able to utilize it.”

– Ryan P. Mears, PhD, University of Florida



When he reached out to the Distance & Continuing Education folks at UF, they recommended Honorlock. “There wasn’t a technology fee for my students because I didn’t have a proctoring solution and a lot of students told me they didn’t like having to schedule their tests. With Honorlock, I didn’t have to pay the technology fee ahead of time and students didn’t have to schedule their exam.” Win-win.

Honorlock Provides the Tool and Analytics Needed to Uphold Academic Integrity

Using Honorlock, Mears was able to identify test questions that needed more complexity to prevent the ability to look up the answer through text search. Reformatting those questions and Honorlock’s proprietary features proved to have advantages: first, it changed the anomalous curve—no more ski jumps! Secondly, it helped identify students who were still sharing answers to questions and it provided the irrefutable proof necessary to report the students. Finally, it was also a means to detect and determine many different ways that students approach the exams. Because of access to the wealth of data/information through Honorlock he became better able to utilize it.

“I felt that I couldn’t trust my test scores at all before Honorlock. The analytics that come with the flags and real time recording helped me to understand how students were approaching the course and what strategies they were using to pass the test. Honorlock helped me make sense of what was going on in my online course and it gave me the confidence that academic integrity was upheld.”

In the future, Mears will use Honorlock for assessments in his live classes as well.

About the University of Florida

The University of Florida was founded over 160 years ago in Gainesville, FL, and is a comprehensive, land-grant, research university. UF supports 16 academic colleges and more than 170 research centers and institutes. It offers nearly 300 graduate degree programs—including business administration, engineering, law, dentistry, medicine, pharmacy, and veterinary medicine to their over 54,000 student population. UF is consistently ranked among the nation’s top universities: No. 7 in U.S. News & World Report’s “Top Public Schools” (2020) <https://www.ufl.edu/>

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