

# Success Story



**BELLEVUE  
COLLEGE**

## **BELLEVUE COLLEGE**

**Location:** Bellevue, Washington

**Program Enrollment:**  
80 students per quarter

### **Success Metrics:**

- Allows students to work at their own pace
- Helps students prepare to earn MOS certification
- Provides a competency assessment



## Bellevue College Implements Competency Based Education with Microsoft Office Specialist Certification and GMetrix Practice Tests

GMetrix Helps Students Go at Own Pace to Earn Industry Certification

### **Challenge**

Bellevue College is a community college that serves 37,000 students in Bellevue, Washington. The Business Technology Systems (BTS) Department gives students an opportunity to become computer literate, and gain competency working with the most current business software applications as applied in a business environment.

Western Governors University (WGU) has been successfully doing Competency Based Education (CBE) for 15 years.

They received a grant from the Gates Foundation to train 10 community colleges across the U.S. how to implement CBE. The requirements for the grant were that projects be online, technology-related, a certificate or degree, and delivered in a CBE format.

Jean Floten, Chancellor of WGU Washington explains, "Competency-based education is an outcomes-based approach to education where the emphasis is on what graduates know and can

“Achieving the Microsoft Office Specialist certification enhanced my job and career opportunities.”

**Jin-Mei Wang**  
Student  
Bellevue College

do rather than what goes into the curriculum. Students advance when they have demonstrated a mastery of a competency.”

Bellevue College was invited to participate in the grant with WGU and selected the BTS Business Software Specialist certificate for the CBE pilot. Suzanne Marks, BTS Program Chair, explains, “We wanted an existing certificate that was in high-demand and would appeal to a broad audience and included industry certification.”

## Solution

The BTS Business Software Specialist certificate met the criteria. The program was made up of 8 courses including one orientation class, five Microsoft Office classes and two Web classes. The next step was to identify the certificate outcomes.

“What we learned was if you don’t assess it, you can’t count it as an outcome,” said Marks. “We selected three outcomes, and one of them

was to gain Microsoft Office Specialist certification.”

Bellevue College became a Certiport Authorized Testing Center in order to offer the Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) certification in all five of the Microsoft Office courses – Outlook, PowerPoint, Word, Excel, and Access. Bellevue also purchased GMetrix practice tests to prepare students to take MOS certification.

At the beginning of the program students completed a pre-test to identify strengths and weaknesses, then practiced the areas they needed to work on. They took a post-test with GMetrix to see if they could achieve 80 percent competency or better. If not they went back and practiced. When they were ready they took the MOS certification.

## Results

Although BTS only expected 20 students in the new Business Software Specialist program, within a few days the new program was full with 80 students and 20 on the waitlist. After the first quarter, 77 percent of the students passed MOS certification.

“Adding GMetrix and MOS certification to the program was a smashing success,” says Marks. “These tools fit extremely well with the CBE learning. Why should a student have to sit in an Excel class for an entire quarter

if they already know most of the content?”

GMetrix allows students to drill and practice the portions they do not already know and prepare for MOS certification at their own pace.

“We have been stunned at the positive response and made some adjustments for the second quarter,” explains Marks. “We found some students had high stakes test anxiety and although they could perform well on GMetrix they could not pass the MOS exam. We added an option that students could earn a B in the course by earning 80 percent on GMetrix without passing MOS certification.”

Bellevue College paid for MOS and GMetrix out of the gate, but Bellevue plans to continue to fund the program with a combo certification fee that will cover all costs that apply to a CBO course.

One student who earned Outlook, Excel and Word MOS certification in the pilot program, Jin-Mei Wang, says, “The flexible class pacing and lack of scheduled homework helped me to be self disciplined with good time management. Most of all, I could focus on studying how to utilize Microsoft Office in my personal life and field of work. Achieving the Microsoft Office Specialist certification enhanced my job and career opportunities.”



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