

Florida Institute of Technology

Making Testing More Convenient and Secure for Everyone

Founded in 1958 to provide advanced education for professionals at the Kennedy Space Center, Florida Institute of Technology has since grown to become one of the nation's top technology schools, listed among America's best colleges by *U.S. News & World Report* and ranked in the top 15% of U.S. Colleges in 2010 by *Forbes*.



In addition to its five colleges, Florida Tech operates the Office of Strategic Initiatives, which offers a variety of professional development and enrichment programs in areas such as Behavioral Science and Technology. Dedicated to delivering affordable, interactive, high quality learning opportunities in the field of Applied Behavioral Analysis, the Behavioral Science and Technology department "utilizes cutting-edge technology and learning principles to assist the time-strapped lifelong learner," according to its website. Florida Tech's online Applied Behavioral Analysis courses meet the instructional requirements for certification as a Board Certified Behavior Analyst® from the Behavior Analyst Certification Board, Inc.® and the Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst® examinations. The reach of this world-renowned program is broad, serving hundreds of online students from 47 states and 27 countries.

GROWING NEED FOR A REMOTE SOLUTION

Since its establishment three years ago, the Behavioral Science and Technology department's Applied Behavioral Analysis certification program has become increasingly popular for business professionals who want to develop their skills and further their careers in their spare time. However, while the online courses are convenient, the mechanics of test-taking were not. Remote students would need to find and schedule trusted proctors to supervise their tests during a two-week testing window. Florida Tech's Behavioral Science and Technology staff would then have to provide those proctors with instructions, which would sometimes get caught in email spam filters or delayed in postal mail. As enrollment swelled to 900 students per session from all over the world, the process became more cumbersome and time-consuming.

"We needed a user-friendly way to make testing more convenient for students while ensuring test integrity."

Cynthia Schmitt
Director, Behavioral Science &
Technology Program
Florida Institute of Technology

At the same time, Cynthia Schmitt, the Director of the Behavioral Science and Technology program, had additional concerns. "Computers show what students do when they're taking an exam," she explained, "and students don't realize that computers tell everything." On more than one occasion Schmitt and her colleagues discovered that students were cheating during online exams, despite the presence of proctors. "We wanted to make sure the proctors were really proctoring," she said. "Because what happens in a proctor location is, the proctor will get someone started and then walk away. We wanted to see what they were doing the entire time without worrying about the proctor getting distracted."

Schmitt and her colleagues considered doing their own virtual proctoring, but quickly realized it was not feasible. "We just didn't have the manpower to do that for 900 students," she said. When a co-instructor

told her about Securexam® Remote Proctor, Schmitt was intrigued. "We were very interested, because we're always interested in using cutting-edge technology in our program," she said. Schmitt contacted Software Secure and obtained a Securexam Remote Proctor device to explore its capabilities.

A FLEXIBLE AND COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

With Securexam Remote Proctor, each student installs patented Securexam software on the PC before testing and connects the Securexam Remote Proctor device to the PC via a USB port. At testing time, the USB device authenticates the test taker's identity and captures each student's testing experience through both audio and video recording. Meanwhile, Securexam Browser locks down the testing tools within the institution's Learning Management System (e.g., Blackboard, Angel, Moodle, WebCT). Securexam Student locks down a standalone word processor and spreadsheet test engine. As a result, students can take tests whenever it is convenient for them, and institutions can confirm that the right people are taking the tests and doing so fairly. Educators concerned about cheating can review the test videos to look for any suspicious behavior.

Florida Tech was impressed with the Securexam Remote Proctor solution. "We were especially attracted by the lock-down browser and the 360-degree view of the room," said Schmitt. She and her colleagues decided to make Securexam Remote Proctor available on a voluntary basis to a limited number of students as a pilot at the conclusion of its October 2009 – January 2010 Applied Behavioral Analysis session.

"Our biggest concerns were ensuring compatibility with students' computers and dealing with firewalls," said Schmitt. "Also, a lot of our students are not computer-literate at all, and we often have to teach them how to use their computers to take our courses online. So our concern was how user-friendly it was. We didn't want a device that would create a lot of tech support requirements." When the pilot proved successful, the Behavioral Science and Technology team formally made Securexam Remote Proctor available to all students taking their courses.

CONVENIENCE AND CONFIDENCE

Since Florida Tech began giving students the option of using Securexam Remote Proctor, approximately 275 students have employed it to take the two final exams required for each of the five Applied Behavioral Analysis courses. "It has gone well for the majority of the students," said Schmitt. The reaction from students has been enthusiastic. "Most of the students absolutely love it," she said. "They really like the flexibility."

Florida Tech is also taking advantage of Software Secure's video reviewing service to screen the test performances. "Software Secure reviews the videos for us, tags any suspicious activity, and then we look at that video to determine if the student was actually cheating," said Schmitt. For Liana Kangas, Learning Management Systems Coordinator for the Behavioral Science and Technology program, working with Software Secure has been a positive experience. "Of every provider we deal with, Software Secure has truly excellent customer service," said Ms. Kangas.

"I'm in regular contact with Software Secure, and they always get back to me. We ask for a lot and they're always willing to find a solution that works for us."

Liana Kangas
Learning Management Systems
Coordinator
Florida Institute of Technology

Schmitt sees several key benefits from the use of Secureexam Remote Proctor. "It's changed things for the better for the students, because they can schedule at a time that's convenient for them," she said.

“When it comes to checking for cheating, Remote Proctor has made my job much easier. We’re satisfied that cheating is not an issue with our students using Remote Proctor.”

Cynthia Schmitt
Director, Behavioral Science &
Technology Program
Florida Institute of Technology

Schmitt draws a strong link between testing integrity and her institution's academic integrity, which benefits Florida Tech in several ways. "We're preparing people that are going to be sitting for a certification exam in behavior analysis," she said. "It's really important to our credibility that our students know what they're talking about."

Maintaining integrity is also vital to continued accreditation from the Behavioral Analysis Certification Board. "The Board tracks the exam pass rates and will put a school on 'academic probation,' so to speak, if they have a poor pass rate," explained Schmitt. Using Secureexam Remote Proctor gives added validity to Florida Tech's pass rate by proving that students using the product did their own work under rigorously proctored conditions.

At present, the use of Remote Proctor is voluntary in Florida Tech's Behavioral Science and Technology program; however, Schmitt intends to make its use mandatory after Software Secure launches the Macintosh version of the product (GA Date Summer 2010), making it available to more students.

“I go to a lot of conferences with educators looking at technology in education. I would recommend Remote Proctor to anyone who wants to maintain the academic integrity of their school’s online programs.”

ABOUT SOFTWARE SECURE

Software Secure is a pioneer and market leader in secure, computer-based testing solutions. With an unrivaled commitment to supporting its customers, Software Secure provides proven, patented solutions for traditional and distance learning environments, as well as professional certification organizations. Academic institutions, as well as organizations overseeing mid and high-stakes testing environments, rely on Software Secure’s expertise for testing solutions that exceed regional and national accreditation standards as well as federal regulation requirements, and facilitate the responsible use of technology in education.



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