



Microsoft® Office Specialist

Helps University of Denver Students Stand Out

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Case Study



Daniels College
of Business

**University of Denver –
Daniels College of Business**

Location:
Denver, CO

**Number of Undergraduate
Students:**
2,177

**Number of Undergraduate/
Graduate Dual-Degree Students:**
158

Number of Graduate Students:
1,023

Success Metrics:

- Improved student performance
- Enhanced recruiting power
- Improved student placement
- Program expansion



GRADUATES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF DENVER'S DANIELS COLLEGE OF BUSINESS FIND A PROVEN WAY TO STAND OUT AS JOB CANDIDATES WITH MICROSOFT® OFFICE CERTIFICATION.

CHALLENGE

The Daniels College of Business at the University of Denver has been educating students for over 100 years and is consistently ranked among the top business schools in the nation. But as the school's graduates plunged into the competitive job market each year, administrators knew they needed a way to help them get ahead. They wanted to continue to see their students hired at top companies, as well as see them find more unconventional employment by building their résumés while still in school and helping them develop skills that would benefit them in the future.

SOLUTION

The faculty determined the creation of a Microsoft Office certification program within the business school could help provide graduates tangible proof they possess skills that make them ideal hires.

Kathleen Davisson, chair of the undergraduate programs curriculum committee, says certification gives students a leg up in a difficult job market. "When they're competing against other students from other business schools, if all things are equal, this is a differentiator for our students. We know students need to look at every angle possible to stand out and get ahead."

Microsoft® Office Specialist

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– **Kathleen E. Davisson**
Chair of the Undergraduate Programs Curriculum Committee
Daniels College of Business
University of Denver

Davisson first saw Microsoft Office certification highlighted by Certiport at a conference as an effective means of validating student skills. After certifying herself in 2006, she brought Microsoft Excel® and Access® certification to the Daniels accounting program as a pilot; it was later built into the coursework. One class made Excel certification a requirement, and another had students perform accounting applications in Access as the final exam. The pilot program was a success, and certification became a permanent part of the curriculum.

As of fall 2009, all incoming undergraduate business school students must certify in Microsoft Excel, PowerPoint® and Word their freshman year. The certification programs—incorporated into the curriculum—will allow professors to build on the high-level knowledge of the programs in coming years and prepare their students for their post-graduate careers.

RESULTS

Since 2006, over 150 students have certified in Excel and over 200 in Access.

The response from students has been positive. At first the perception of having extra work to do is daunting, but the payoff has been significant, says Davisson. "The students [are] telling us they definitely have an easier time finding jobs. And when into their jobs, they perform head-and-shoulders above their peers. It makes it very obvious. And it makes it easier for them to earn promotions," she said.

The response from employers has been especially encouraging. When Katie Miner, a recent Daniels graduate, was hired for her internship at Isaak Bond Investments, she learned that her certification set her apart. "My boss told me part of the reason he hired me was because I was certified in Excel. In the past, he had to explain to employees how Excel worked, and he knew he wouldn't have to explain it to me."

When students and graduates go on to summer jobs or permanent positions, Davisson said, she hears them discuss the Microsoft Office-intensive projects they are able to complete in much shorter timeframes than what employers initially estimate.

Eric Weinberg, an accounting student interning at Newmont Mining, said, "I'm writing certain things and doing projects that would be a lot more difficult [without the certification]. I'm working on a project they haven't done in-house before. It requires a lot of work with Excel to link things correctly and use more complex formulas."

As Microsoft Office Specialist certification spreads to even more of its students, administrators at the Daniels College of Business are confident the additional training and validation will benefit students at school and in their future careers. They have learned that certification is not only a way for its students to stand out in a very difficult economy, but also a strategy for promoting the business school itself.

"When employers see the performance of our students, they want to come back and hire from our school. It has definitely been worth the investment," Davisson said.

ABOUT CERTIPORT

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