



CASE study

“I don’t think I’ve had a single student who didn’t get it since we started using GoVenture CEO”



Brenau University, Georgia USA

An interview with Dawn Keig, Assistant Professor
College of Business & Mass Communication
School of Business

Assistant Professor Dawn Keig watches as a new batch of senior undergrad students file into her classroom for the first day of their capstone business strategy course.

“The capstone course tries to bring all the business disciplines together,” says Keig, who teaches business strategy to undergrad and MBA students at Brenau University, a liberal arts university with 3,000 students, headquartered in Gainesville, GA.

“We have a diverse student population,” says Keig. “This was once a small women’s-only college, but now it has five satellite campuses, including one on a naval base. We also have an online campus. We offer both semester-long as well as half-semester ‘accelerated’ programs.”

The students are quieter than usual as they take their seats in Keig’s class. Keig knows why.

“Undergrad students are usually scared to death when they come into this course,” says Keig. “There is a lot of grading anxiety, especially for the successful students. They know exactly how to succeed with textbooks, but they don’t know if they can succeed using a simulation.”

For years Brenau had been using a simulation to teach the capstone course. But the old simulation wasn’t working out. “It was too complex,” says Keig. “And every year, some students, even the good ones, would fail to get it.”

The growth of the accelerated programs at Brenau brought the issue to a head for Keig. “We needed the whole semester to play a single instance of the old simulation.”

So Keig went looking for a replacement. Whatever she chose needed three key features:

1. A well-designed interface that would be easy for students to learn.
2. Short simulation times. “We wanted to be able to advance the simulation several times during a single class, even in the accelerated courses,” says Keig.
3. And it had to be affordable.



"I remember when I first looked at GoVenture CEO," says Keig. "I'm kind of old-fashioned. I was looking at the interface with its bright colors and its smartphone graphic and asking myself, 'Is this too cute? Too gimmicky?'"

But she took it into her classroom to try it out – and she really liked the results. "We have now adopted GoVenture CEO 100% for all of our undergraduate capstone classes in business strategy," says Keig.

There are four stages to Brenau's capstone course. Each stage uses GoVenture CEO. Keig has tweaked the grading scheme to help her students get past their 'grading anxiety.'

In the first stage, the students work individually and play against the computer using GoVenture's Movie Theatre QuickStart. "Nothing counts for grades in this first round," says Keig. "This is just an opportunity for the students to get familiar with the interface."

In the second stage, Keig assigns the students to small teams, usually two or three students working together to manage a Game Software company. Each team goes head-to-head in competition with all the other teams. The team members consult with each other on strategy and tactics. This gives them a chance to test strategies and concepts by selling their ideas to a small group, and then seeing the results instantly. Some minor marks are assigned for this work.

In the third stage, the students are back to working on their own. But now they are competing head-to-head with each other, managing Smartphone Manufacturing businesses.

"This is the intense part of the course," says Keig. "The students need to define a market, find a niche, and pursue their own agenda while managing the competitive dynamics of the marketplace. We do a lot of debriefing after each round."

Keig and her students use examples from the simulation to discuss different strategies for maintaining a competitive advantage, and the role played by business ethics. "I can't imagine another learning experience that would be as good," says Keig.

And while the students are quickly gaining real experience and confidence in their business acumen, Keig is likewise gaining confidence in her ability to deliver the program because of the high level of support she gets from the GoVenture team.

"I love the responsiveness of the people at GoVenture," says Keig. "I used to get nervous any time I encountered a glitch or wanted to change the way things work. But they always get right back to me whenever I have a question or a suggestion."

Back in the classroom, Keig's students are getting ready to use GoVenture one last time - for their final exam. For the exam, students return to Stage 1, where they play individually against the computer. "But now it's a different experience for them," says Keig,

Armed with simulation experience and their new understanding of business strategy, Keig's students march into the exam confident they can beat the computer at its own game. "In retrospect," says Keig with some pride, "I don't think I've had a single student who didn't get it since we started using GoVenture CEO."



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