Supporting students with the transition from high school to college

The Groves Post-Secondary (GPS) Program started as an extension of the support offered to Groves Academy day school students.

Through study techniques that incorporate assistive technology, the GPS Program assists students with learning disabilities with the highly demanding transition from high school to college. The Program provides year-round assistance for students at colleges throughout the Twin Cities and beyond.

In spring 2015, Josh Tierney, the founder of the GPS Program, decided to implement the Sonocent Audio Notetaker software to provide his students with further note-taking support in lectures, tutorials, and group discussions.

A 5-point value proposition for Groves Academy

By implementing Audio Notetaker, students on the GPS Program gained in five key areas:

- Better notes
- Increased engagement and independence in the note-taking process
- Overall improvement in confidence in a lecture situation
- Reduced time brainstorming papers
- Reduced anxiety

*"What we've found is that **Sonocent is more than taking notes.** It's about organizing papers, capturing thoughts, brainstorming, composing written work... **it's beyond a tool for lectures."***

The journey

Step 1| The challenge: address the difficulties faced by students when taking notes

Due in part to their learning disabilities and attention disorders, the students on the GPS Program find it difficult to take accurate, comprehensive written notes. This is a significant issue at college where most instruction is delivered in lectures, seminars, and tutorials, and where there is an emphasis on independent learning.

The students struggle with note taking for several reasons:

- Poor working memory
- Difficulties concentrating
- Anxiety
- Poor handwriting and spelling

When taking notes by hand, a process that involves a greater cognitive burden than playing chess, the students had no time to think about what they were hearing or engage in class discussion. The resulting notes also missed out important information, such as deadlines and recommended reading, and were often poorly structured or even illegible.

Step 2| The solution: work with spoken instruction using Sonocent software

The answer lay in the award-winning universal study and productivity solution Sonocent Audio Notetaker.

Audio Notetaker is a tool for working with information as speech, rather than as text. It has already helped almost a hundred thousand students work more effectively with spoken information.

The software makes it easier for all students to learn better and more productively when dealing with spoken information. Instead of trying to write down spoken information right away, they can now split the process into two separate stages:

1. Listening, capturing and annotating
2. Reviewing, outlining and documenting

Rather than struggling to take written notes in class, the students on the GPS Program used Audio Notetaker - and the free companion app Sonocent Recorder - to capture everything, marking up important bits to review and adding images, brief text notes, and slides to the software's multisensory workspace.

After class, the students reviewed their Audio Notetaker projects at their own pace, summarizing the information, inserting reference material, taking transcriptions, and editing their audio. By synthesizing and editing the information in what was a classic active learning process, they found that their understanding of course material and retention of key facts improved by leaps and bounds.

Although the teaching staff on the GPS Program were attracted to Audio Notetaker as a note-taking support solution, they and their students soon discovered that its applications extended far beyond that.

Within weeks of implementing the software, students were also using it with their instructors to brainstorm and organise their ideas and to create outlines for written assignments. Before Audio Notetaker, the students often forgot much of the substance of these discussions. But with the software, they could capture everything, edit the audio, and manipulate their ideas, moving to writing when they were comfortable.

This process gave the students more independence when composing assignments, removed the anxiety brought on by writing, and saved students and instructors valuable time.

Student Success Story: Max

Max is a sophomore student at Normandale Community College. During the semester that he began using Sonocent software his course load was writing intensive, and included Freshman Composition, Introduction to Cinema, and Introduction to Psychology.

Max's struggles with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) interfere with his writing process. But with Sonocent software, he was able to capture and organize his thoughts before moving to pen and paper. In addition to greater independence and reduced anxiety, Max has made significant academic strides since he started using the software. Last semester he made the Dean's list for the first time in his college career.

"I have really bad ADHD so I don't pay attention very well. But with Audio Notetaker I am able to record my classes and label important parts, chunk-by-chunk. I need to go through things three or four times before I get it into my head."

"With Audio Notetaker, you can sit down with a student and talk things through, and they can capture everything; none of that information is lost. Then they can take ownership of the project working independently, which frees up the teacher to help other students and do other things."

Joshua Tierney, Founder of the GPS Program

Student Success Story: Rizwan

"The multisensory part of it really struck me, because I found that I was absorbing information a lot quicker. It's a way to manage lectures and compartmentalize information that is truly multisensory."

Rizwan is a 2nd-year student at Normandale Community College. When he began using Sonocent software, he was taking Introduction to Cinema, Business Statistics, Small-Group Communication, and Physical Geography.

Rizwan has Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Non-Verbal Learning Disorder (NVLD). These conditions make it hard for him to store information in his working memory. But with Sonocent software, he could capture everything in his lectures, marking up information to review and prioritize.

Being able to better manage information using the software led to better marks in his classes. Rizwan got a 4.0 grade point average for the semester, increasing his overall GPA. Not having to retake courses saved significant funding and time. The average cost per-class at Normandale is approximately $700.00. Having a higher GPA allows him to transfer to university sooner, expediting his college career.

"[Sonocent] allows people to collect, manipulate, analyze, and annotate notes from a lecture without dealing with the difficulties of handwriting. It takes the focus off the process of handwriting and puts it on understanding the lecture."

Todd Hanson, Director of Technology, Groves Academy

About Sonocent Audio Notetaker

Students at schools and colleges including UC Davis and the University of Central Florida are using Sonocent software to take better notes, compose better written work, and create better revision resources. In 2014, Audio Notetaker won an Educational Resources Award (ERA) and in 2015 Sonocent picked up a Bett Award in the ICT category.

How to find out more

For more information about Sonocent software, email sales@sonocent.com