

# NYU SCHOOL OF CONTINUING AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES, NEW YORK

## Transforming online teaching and learning



### Profile

New York University's School of Continuing and Professional Studies (NYU-SCPS) is part of one of the largest private research universities in the U.S. NYU-SCPS offers 14 master's degrees and 12 graduate certificates, a range of undergraduate degrees, and noncredit continuing education programs for working adults in key sectors where New York leads globally.

These include real estate, hospitality, sports management, global affairs, philanthropy, communications media, publishing, design, digital arts, business, marketing, finance, foreign languages, and the liberal arts. In 2008, the School had 31,253 continuing education students, 1,866 undergraduates, and 2,787 graduate students.

### Looking for a new course management system

According to the Academic Director of the NYU-SCPS Office of Distance Learning, Kristen Sosulski, NYU-SCPS set out in 2006 to re-envision its approach to online education. Given technological advances and the affordances of those technologies on learning and community building, NYU-SCPS could offer its online student population a better way to learn. "We wanted to leverage tools for community building and networking as well as course management," said Kristen.

"At that time we were using an innovative, in-house customized course management system that allowed instructors to create their courses and share materials. However, we wanted something more—informed by educational research—that showed that students do better when they connect with one another and share examples of their work."

According to Kristen, "Our focus at NYU-SCPS is and has always been on providing the highest-quality teaching and learning in our courses, whether in-person or online. We knew we could rely on Epsilon for hosting and technical support, and thus free ourselves to focus on helping instructors build effective online courses."

CREATE  
COLLABORATE  
ACHIEVE

NYU-SCPS uses Epsilon Environment in a wide range of courses across its credit and noncredit programs, including Information Design and Navigation (undergraduate), Strategic Marketing (graduate), and many continuing education classes such as Introduction to Real Estate Finance.

*"We knew we could rely on Epsilon for hosting and technical support."*

Kristen Sosulski, Academic Director,  
NYU-SCPS Office of Distance Learning

### Addressing unique needs

Kristen and her team found Epsilon was very responsive to their needs. "For example, Epsilon helped with enrollment, so that the Epsilon system was completely integrated with our student information system," said Kristen.

Epsilon was a capable partner in helping NYU-SCPS realize its important educational ambition of connecting faculty and students online at the same time, or "real time online." After NYU-SCPS located an appropriate vendor, Epsilon handled the integration.

**EPSILEN**

AHEAD OF THE eLEARNING CURVE.

“Epsilon was very accommodating,” said Kristen, “and we felt that all our feedback—both positive and negative—was welcome. The team at Epsilon made changes and adjustments very quickly to meet our needs.”

### **Connecting and communicating**

Since some NYU-SCPS students take only one class, another goal of Kristen’s team and the NYU-SCPS faculty was to reach out to those students and involve them in other activities and events. According to Kristen, “With systems like Blackboard, Sakai, and Moodle, when students log in, all they see are their courses. With Epsilon they can start immediately connecting and communicating with one another.”

After starting a course, NYU-SCPS faculty and students create an ePortfolio. “Our faculty are professionals in their fields,” said Kristen. “We encourage them to highlight their experience in their ePortfolios so that students can see what it means to be a leader in that field and be encouraged to develop their own skills further.”

According to Kristen, NYU-SCPS faculty are using Epsilon Environment for collaborative projects and blogs for individual projects within the course environment. “Many faculty members have taken to the blogs—they work really well, especially in workshops,” said Kristen. “For example, the undergraduate students in their Writing Workshop courses use blogs to reflect on their writing practice.”

Using the group tools, NYU-SCPS is building community at the course level and the program level, and faculty are encouraging students to interact and connect with each other.

### **Training faculty and students**

Although many NYU-SCPS faculty members are new to social media, they are familiar with basic course management systems. Kristen and her team use this base knowledge to help instructors learn to build strong, effective online courses.

*“Epsilon is a robust system with tools that support diverse methods and approaches to teaching and learning.”*

**Kristen Sosulski**, Academic Director,  
NYU-SCPS Office of Distance Learning

The NYU-SCPS Office of Distance Learning offers eight hours of professional development for faculty new to teaching online. The workshops cover topics such as assessment, pedagogy, classroom management, and communication tools, with a focus on the theory, rationale and goals of each topic and examples of how Epsilon provides support in each area.

“Epsilon is a robust system with tools that support diverse methods and approaches to teaching and learning,” said Kristen. “Our job is to ensure the tools are used appropriately and purposefully.” Kristen’s team also offers an online student orientation course that covers topics such as study skills and time management, as well as an introduction to the Epsilon system.

### **Looking to the future**

According to Kristen, a next step for NYU-SCPS will be to expand the scope of its use of Epsilon. “We currently use Epsilon very effectively with our online continuing education students,” said Kristen, “and I see us expanding to use the course, group, and ePortfolio tools to support, enhance, and expand classroom-based teaching and learning as well.”