

2006 Course Assessment Update for HUDE 0111 Transition to College Success

Executive Summary

For the 2005-06 academic year we replicated an assessment of the HUDE 0111 Transition to College Success course that was originally done in the previous year. The intent was to examine key outcomes for first time in college (FTIC) students who took the Transition course during the Fall 2005 semester.

As part of the policy implementing the Texas Success Initiative (TSI), entering students who fail two or more of their assessment tests are mandated by ACC to take the HUDE 0111 Transition to College Success course. (Any student with a TSI placement score of below 5 in Mathematics, Reading, or Writing is considered deficient in that area.) The course is a one credit-hour developmental level course designed for entering freshmen with priority needs. It provides an overview of key aspects, knowledge, and skills needed in the transition to college life. Students identify their educational goals, personal strengths, and areas for development; become familiar with college resources and services; and briefly explore strategies for academic success such as time management and study skills. The course is taught in 8 week sessions with two sessions scheduled back to back during the long semesters and one session in each of the standard 5.5 week sessions in the summer semester.

This assessment was designed to track FTIC HUDE 0111 students who successfully completed the course in the Fall 2005 semester with a grade of A, B, or C and compare them with similarly mandated students who did not take the course during that semester. For the purposes of this assessment, successful Transition students were placed in three cohorts, those who had two or more deficiencies, those with only 1 deficiency, and those students who took the course but had no deficiencies. The key criteria for comparison were the mean grade point average for that semester, mean number of hours attempted, mean number of hours earned, mean number of hours withdrawn from during the semester, and percentage of re-enrollment into the subsequent semester. For comparison purposes, we chose *not* to include the grade earned in the Transition course in the calculations below, therefore actual GPA's would be slightly different than those indicated below.

An overview of the results follows for the three areas of GPA, Course Withdrawals, and Retention into the following semester. Since there were only small numbers of students in the single and no deficiency cohorts, we are not focusing on those results in this summary section. The accompanying chart lists the outcomes for all three of the cohorts.

Grade Point Average

FTIC students who had two or more deficiencies and successfully completed the course with a "C" or better grade (N = 250) earned a mean grade point average of 2.51. Similar students who did not take the course (N = 448) earned a mean GPA of 2.29. These outcomes are fairly close and do not indicate a major impact on the overall GPA. This is not surprising given that the course is only 8 weeks long and for many of the students the course is taken in the second half of the semester rather than from the beginning. Considering the fact that during the initial assessment in 2004-05, the results were slightly reversed, 2.81 for successful completers and 2.92 for those not taking the course, we should avoid coming to any conclusions about the effect on GPA at this point.

Course Withdrawals

FTIC students with two or more deficiencies successfully completing the course with a “C” or better grade withdrew from a mean of .69 hours during the semester. Similar students who did not take the course withdrew from a mean of 1.69 hours. This outcome represents a positive difference in retention during the semester of 1.0 hours for those who successfully completed the course compared to those who did not take the course. In the previous study, the results were withdrawal from .62 hours for successful completers and 1.60 hours for those not taking the course. The remarkable consistency of the results in these two years of study is suggestive, but continued study is needed to confirm whether this is a stable outcome.

Retention Into the Following Semester

FTIC students with two or more deficiencies who were successful in the course re-enrolled in the subsequent semester at a mean rate of 83%. Similar students who did not take the course re-enrolled the next semester at a rate of 59%. This represents a positive difference in retention for those who successfully completed the course of 24% when compared to those who did not take the course. In the previous study the rates were similar, 82% of successful completers re-enrolled and 62% of those who did not take the course re-enrolled. Again, the outcomes are remarkably similar and in the directions we would hope to see.

It should be kept in mind, however, that these outcomes are purely descriptive, *not* evidence of cause and effect, and there are many uncontrolled factors that have not been taken into account. At best, it can be said that these preliminary outcomes are not inconsistent with the hypothesis that this course may provide generally positive outcomes in retention for those “at risk” students who successfully complete this course when compared to similar students who did not take the course.

A few implications from this study can be proposed, however. First, about 43% of the mandated students with two or more deficiencies ended up taking the course in their first semester—341 of 789—suggesting better referral procedures and course opportunities could be helpful in raising the number of students enrolled in the course. At the end of the Spring 2006 semester, a hold was established for students mandated into this course and that may provide incentive for more students to complete the class in their first or second semesters. Secondly, the number of students who started the course and earned a D, F, W, or I (91 out of 341 or 27%) suggests an area for further attention. Comparisons with outcomes for FTIC students in other developmental level courses might prove useful here as benchmarks to see if this is a fairly typical outcome for these students. Finally, the general consistency of some of these outcomes from one year to the next suggest this 8 week student support course *may* have some positive effects on the retention both during a semester and the retention to the subsequent semester, but many factors could be at play here and more rigorous study involving random, matched samples would be helpful in establishing stronger grounds for any effects this course may have on those who take it.

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