

Course Assessment Report for PSYC 1300 Effective Learning

Executive Summary

For the 2005-06 academic year we ran an assessment study replicating one done two years earlier. The intent was to examine key outcomes for “at risk” students who took the Effective Learning course during the Fall 2005 semester. The Effective Learning course is a 3 credit hour transferable elective course designed to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that can enhance their success in school and in life.

Early Alert, Probation, and Suspension students who took the Effective Learning course (N=40) were tracked and compared to similar students who did not take the course in Fall 2005 (N=2,585). 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for that semester, mean number of hours attempted, mean number of hours earned, mean number of courses and hours withdrawn from during the semester, and percentage of re-enrollment into the subsequent semester. For comparison purposes, we chose to *not* include the grade earned in the Effective Learning course in the calculations below, so the overall results reflect only the outcomes in other courses taken.

The results for this study correlate with the earlier study with only small differences. In this report we will focus on the outcomes for GPA, Course Withdrawals, and Retention into the subsequent semester.

Grade Point Average

“At risk” students successfully completing the course with a “C” or better grade (N=20) entered the course with a mean GPA of 1.71 and at the end of the semester earned a mean grade point average (*excluding the grade in the PSYC 1300 course itself*) of 2.54, an increase of .83 grade points. Similar “at risk” students who did not take the course (N=2,585) entered with a mean GPA of 1.64 and earned a mean GPA of 1.93 at the end of the semester, an increase of .29 grade points. Students who earned a grade of “D”, “F”, or “W” (N=20) entered the course with a mean GPA of 1.33 and earned a mean GPA of 0.40, a decrease of .93 grade points. Those who successfully completed the course, showed a mean overall GPA of .61 grade points compared to those who did not take the course.

Course Withdrawals

“At risk” students successfully completing the course with a “C” or better grade withdrew from a mean of .40 courses (or 1.25 hours) during the semester. Similar students who did not take the course withdrew from a mean of .91 courses (or 2.81 hours). At risk students who earned a grade of “D”, “F”, or “W” in the course withdrew from a mean of 1.35 courses (or 3.70 hours). This outcome represents a difference in course withdrawals during the semester of .51 fewer courses (or 1.56 hours) for those who successfully completed the course compared to those who did not take the course.

Retention Into Following Semester

“At risk” students who were successful in the course re-enrolled the subsequent semester at a mean rate of 90%. Similar students who did not take the course returned the next semester at a rate of 51%. Students who were unsuccessful in the course returned at a rate of 45%. This represents a positive difference in retention for those who successfully completed the course of approximately 39% when compared to those who did not take the course.

We also generated results for students who took the course but were not in the Early Alert, probation, or suspension status at the time. The differences in the outcomes were not as pronounced as with “at risk” students, but the outcomes were generally in the directions we were looking for. Data from both the most recent assessment and the initial one are attached for comparison purposes.

In summary, while these cohorts are small and the frequency data are subject to the effects of many uncontrolled factors, these preliminary outcomes are not inconsistent with the hypothesis that this course may provide generally positive outcomes for those “at risk” students who successfully complete this course when compared to similar students who did not take the course. The fact that the outcomes were so similar to the ones from two years before, lend some support for the likelihood that this course has a positive impact on student learning and outcomes. A more rigorous scientific design would be required, however, to provide real evidence of the benefits of this course for those who complete it successfully.

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