MyStudentSuccessLab CASE STUDY

School Name Salt Lake Community College, Salt Lake City, UT

Course Name Essentials of College Study

Program Format On-ground, Online

Key Results Module post-tests indicated learning gains across 15 of 16 course learning objectives. Average scores improved from 67 percent on the Pre-Course Diagnostic to 77 percent on the Post-Course Assessment.

Program Coordinator
Ray Emett

Course materials
Cornerstones for Community College Success by Sherfield and Moody with MyStudentSuccessLab

Setting

Utah's largest college, Salt Lake Community College offers open access to more than 120 areas of study and serves more than 60,000 students at 10 physical and one virtual campus. Overall, students' average age is 24 with an even percentage of male and female students. A majority of students have experienced work life before returning to school; among students taking the Essentials of College Study, the percentage of older/returning students is higher. Most students register for Essentials of College Study based on the recommendation of an adviser or a fellow student.

The Essentials of College Study course, which typically enrolls 35-40 sections per term, seeks to orient students and to prepare them for the rigors of college. The 3-credit course is designed both to foster development of specific academic skills (like time planning, study skills, and accessing college resources) and to develop students' identities as critical thinkers, life-long learners, and workplace contributors.

Challenges and goals

In an effort to move toward data-informed continuous improvement in the Essentials of College Study course, Professor Ray Emett reviewed institutional data from 70,000 students over the previous 10 years at Salt Lake Community College. Comparing results for students who took the Essentials of College Study course versus those who did not, Emett found that:

- Among students whose scores were in the lowest quartile of Accuplacer results, those who took Essentials of College Study persisted better than students who did not take the course. Specifically, students who took the course did not necessarily raise their GPA but their likelihood of persisting and graduating significantly increased.
- Among students whose scores were in the highest quartile of Accuplacer results, those students who took Essentials of College Study measurably improved their GPA versus students who didn't take the course.

Emett concluded that the Essentials of College Study course was benefitting students. But how could the course be redesigned such that all students made learning gains that resulted in higher GPAs and improved persistence/completion rates? Emett chose to adopt MyStudentSuccessLab to enable all faculty teaching Essentials of College Study to measure and track students' learning gains.

Implementation

Beginning in fall 2013, SLCC instituted a new common syllabus for Essentials of College Study. The standard syllabus allows experienced instructors some discretion but provides a pre-built course structure for adjuncts or instructors new to the course.

Professor Emett states, "We first implemented MyStudentSuccessLab after changing our textbook and course structure. We customized the pre- and post-course assessment to match our learning objectives. Module tests are a combination of Cornerstones test questions and MyStudentSuccessLab content, currently given through Canvas, our LMS (Learning Management System). The peer reviewed assignments are practical applications of skills taught such as note-taking, time management, ePortfolio development, Information technology, etc."

"We can't rely on subjective measures to determine if students are achieving the outcomes we deem important. We want this to be a data-driven course and to make decisions about any changes to the course based on students' actual results."

—Professor Ray Emett

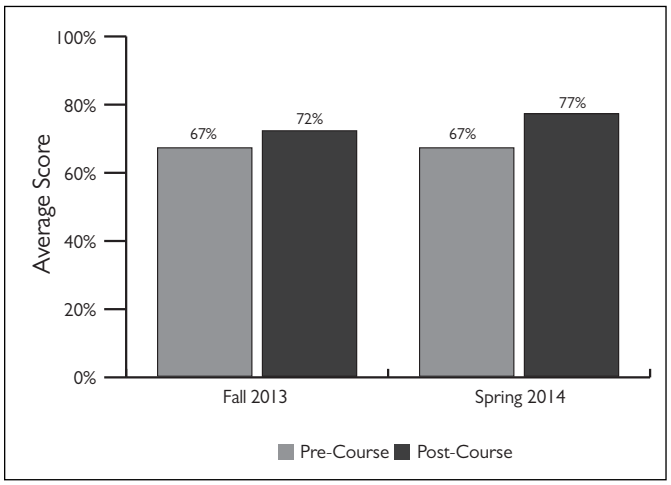

Figure 1. MyStudentSuccessLab Pre-Course Diagnostic and Post-Course Diagnostic (final exam) scores fall 2013 (*n*=396) and spring 2014 (*n*=589.)

Plan: Careers/Interviewing	+22
Read: Reading Strategies	+22
Communicate: Basics	+21
Communicate: Teams	+18
Think: Critical Thinking	+15
Plan: Careers/Resume	+13
Think: Problem-Solving	+13
Study: Test-taking Skills	+12
Prioritize: Stress	+10
Prioritize: Time	+10
Change: Setting Goals	+9
Prosper: Managing Money	+9
Connect: Information Literacy	+4
Record: Listen/Note-taking	+3
Study: Memory/Studying	+2
Learn: Learning Styles	+0

Table 1. Average points increase ranked from greatest improvement to least improvement Pre-test to Post-test spring 2014 (*n*=589)

All students are required to take the MyStudentSuccessLab Pre-Course Diagnostic to provide a baseline measurement of skills strengths and weaknesses. Class meetings are a mix of lectures and group activities. Students are expected to complete work in the assigned MyStudentSuccessLab modules independently; instructors monitor students' progress through the MyStudentSuccessLab Gradebook. The final exam is the MyStudentSuccessLab Post-Course Assessment; Emett and his team of instructors compare the Post-Course Diagnostic scores to the Pre-Course Diagnostic scores to assess learning gains.

Professor Emett notes, "We can't rely on subjective measures to determine if students are achieving the outcomes we deem important. We want this to be a data-driven course and to make decisions about any changes to the course based on students' actual results."

Results and data

Emett says, "We look at MyStudentSuccessLab Item Analysis data to see gains student are making on specific course outcomes and to understand where students improve the most and the least from the beginning to the end of the semester. After reviewing the fall 2013 results, we dedicated more time and emphasis on areas like critical thinking, test-preparation, and goal-setting where students had not shown pre- to post-test improvement. In spring 2014, students showed improvement in every skill area except Learning Styles. There were no skill areas that showed a decline. These results are much stronger than the fall 2013 results. The data tells us where to strengthen instruction in order to improve student performance."

Conclusion

Emett sums up, "I am happy with the data that we pulled from MyStudentSuccessLab's pre- and post-course assessment. We use the outcomes results in our annual measurement of outcomes at SLCC, and the data will also be extremely helpful in addressing our accreditation requirements.

Implementation and results case studies share actual implementation practices and evaluate possible relationships between program implementation and student performance. The findings are not meant to imply causality or generalizability within or beyond these instances. Rather, they can begin to provide informed considerations for implementation and adaptation decisions in other user contexts. For this case study, mixed-methods designs were applied, and the data collected included qualitative data from interviews, quantitative program usage analytics, and performance data. Open-ended interviews were used to guide data collection.