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Abstract

St. Petersburg College's (SPC) developmental education course redesign project, known as "My Bridge to Success," provides individually tailored, intensive, media-rich instruction to a target population of developmental reading, writing, and mathematics students to promote their academic success. This course redesign is based on the premise that educational data shows students placed into developmental courses are generally found to be proficient in some academic course content areas. By assessing and acknowledging the academic proficiencies that these students already possess, SPC has been able to reduce the need to remediate all the competencies within a specific course. Open entry/open exit modules, focusing only on the areas of deficiency, offer students the opportunity to progress through developmental coursework in a shorter time frame and help to build their academic confidence.

Promising Strategy

St. Petersburg College's (SPC) developmental course redesign project, "My Bridge to Success," targets SPC students who test into developmental reading, writing, and/or math courses and offers academic assistance in reduced time and cost. The goal is to avoid remediation in areas where students already have shown proficiency and concentrate on the areas where they need instruction. My Bridge to Success offers individually tailored, intensive, media-rich instruction. Unlike a traditional course structure of 16 week, 4-credit hours offered online, face-to-face, or blended, the redesigned courses are framed on a 8 week, 2-credit hours structure with a blended course format and an opportunity for early exit and enrollment in a college transfer course in the same semester.

The key components of My Bridge to Success are:

- diagnostic assessment for placement into specific self-paced instructional modules;
- use of individualized, "point in time" pedagogy grounded in "best practices" including pre-tests, media-rich content delivery, and mastery post-tests;
- supplemental instructional intervention strategies;
- an opportunity to exit developmental courses and enroll in college-level courses in the same semester; and
- a statistical design for evaluating and reporting the project's results.

History of Need

While SPC has achieved incremental success in developmental education, lower completion rates still left challenges to be addressed. SPC could not afford to ignore the urgency for mathematical and language literacy remediation. Coupled with this identified need was the realization that though the K-12 system strived to ensure high school students are prepared for college, the overall number of individuals required to take developmental education courses continued to grow. Recent studies have shown that the fastest growing group in need of developmental education courses are those over 'traditional college age' or who are returning to college after several years out of school. For this population, as well as minorities and at-risk students, this program provides the necessary pathway to completing upper level developmental reading, writing and math courses while reducing the time and cost of remediation.

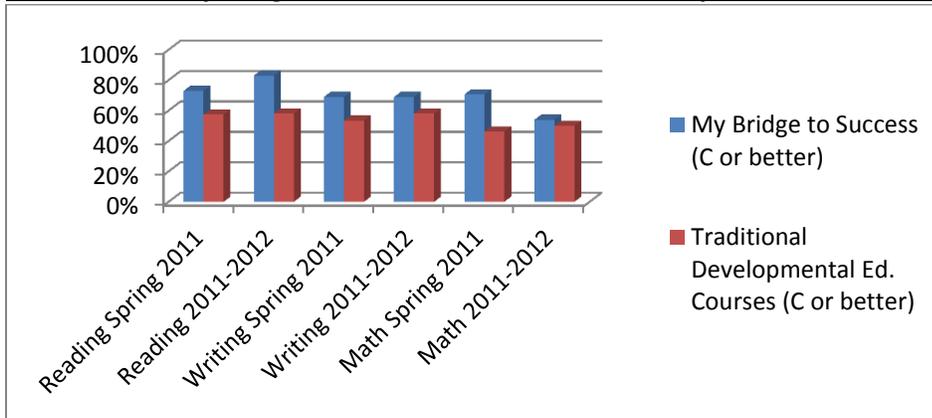
Through the Florida Developmental Initiative Grant, awarded in Spring 2010, SPC was able to develop this sustainable, college-wide course redesign dedicated to increasing completion rates and moving students across the “Bridge to Success”.

Outcomes and Evaluation

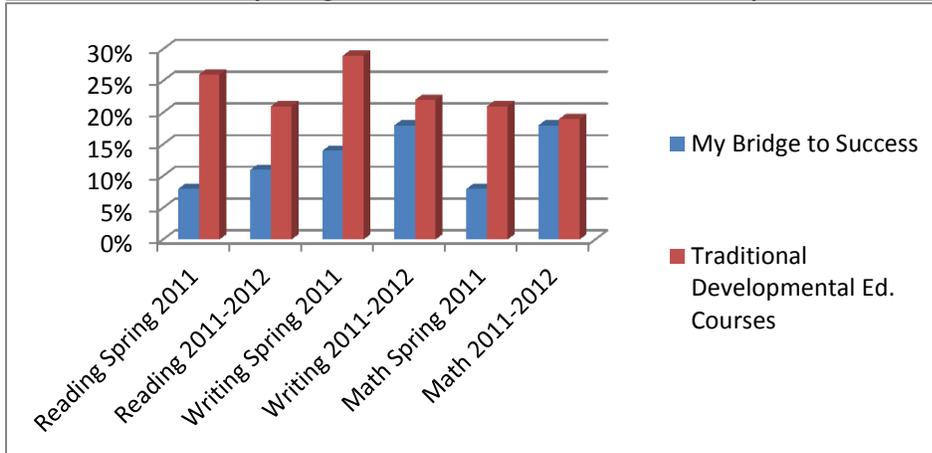
To assess the impact of the My Bridge program, SPC utilized the college’s acclaimed Business Intelligence (BI) tool, which was developed out of a need for timely information to maximize decisions affecting student success and a desire for these conversations to occur with commonly defined metrics. The intent of the BI tool is to provide timely, relevant and valid information in an easy-to-interpret format, giving support to sound decision-making and driving performance improvement.

Since implementation during the 2011 Spring Semester, over 500 students have participated in the My Bridge to Success *Reading*, over 500 in My Bridge to Success *Writing* and over 800 in My Bridge to Success *Math*. **Through continued assessment and evaluation, outcomes have shown increased success rates for those participating in My Bridge courses, as well as decreased withdrawal rates.**

Success Rate: My Bridge to Success vs. Traditional Developmental Ed. Courses



Withdrawal Rate: My Bridge to Success vs. Traditional Developmental Ed. Courses





Measuring long-term success for this program has been a challenge because there is currently no statewide persistence model. In an effort to gain a snapshot assessment of continued college success, SPC analyzed the transcripts of 100 students who participated in the Spring 2011 My Bridge to Success English course. Outcomes showed that 72% passed on the first or second attempt, 63% finished Composition I with a “D” or better in the Spring of 2012 and 54% were still enrolled in college one year later. The need for a model to assess persistence will continue to be a goal of SPC.

In 2012, SPC’s developmental course redesign received the Florida Department of Education’s (FLDOE) Chancellor’s Best Practice Award. According to the Chancellor of the FLDOE, “the Best Practice Awards give much-deserved recognition to exceptional programs that allow our institutions to learn from proven strategies that raises the level of performance for the entire Florida College System.” Beginning in the 2012-13 academic year, the state of Florida adopted 1 credit and 2 credit developmental reading, writing, and math courses for colleges who elected to redesign developmental coursework.

Obstacles

SPC faculty and staff have identified several areas of concern over the initial implementation period that will guide program development moving forward. The following questions have been posed as factors for further assessment:

- How does SPC advise students who do not complete within the session?
- How does SPC continue to improve registration/advisement/testing processes?
- How does SPC design a statistical model to “tell the story” (both qualitative and quantitative)?
- How does SPC support professional development of faculty members so they can communicate with other course redesign faculty statewide and nationally?

Next Steps

Ongoing analysis and evaluation have been woven throughout the My Bridge program to ensure the continued success in meeting students’ developmental needs. Several key factors for continued enhancement have been identified:

- The refinement of the diagnostic and placement tools to aid in timely assessment of students’ areas of deficiency
- Working toward an open exit as students complete remediation and move into transfer courses in the same semester
- Continue to explore other options for 16-week, 4-credit developmental classes.

Replication

Institutional replication of the program has been supported by the Florida Department of Education through the statewide adoption of this model. For institutions outside Florida, replication begins with a willingness and commitment to progressive instruction and alternative course delivery. Institutions looking to offer similar programming will need to be open to both reducing course length of time from the traditional 16 weeks to 8 weeks while also reducing the number of credits offered. Additionally, the use of blended learning is critical for replication. SPC utilizes modular software which allows for students to learn and master skills in a self-paced, early exit format. To support start-up expenses, SPC received a \$10,000 grant from the Florida Department of Education. Once the courses were developed, SPC did not encounter any additional or recurring costs.



Keywords

Accelerated Learning; Basic Skills; Developmental/Remedial Education; Efficiency; Improving Achievement; Learning Assessment; Modular Curriculum; Personalized Instruction

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