

lowing matrix and then to summarize the information in just one grammatically correct sentence. This technique can be used to collect student views of an entire course, a time period, an assignment or a unit. Depending on the focus given in the first box, instructors can identify problems in an assignment, assess differences in group dynamics, etc.

In last weeks group case study assignments...

Who?

Did what?

To what or whom?

When?

Where?

How?

Why?

In sentence form:

Technology Fair

The Technology Fair is a series of twenty self-instructional modules which provide experiences with a variety of technology applications such as audio CD, the Internet, and multimedia. Each module requires that

students follow written instructions on correct technology use. In addition, reflective and evaluative questions contained in each module encourage the students to take the technology beyond the basics. Facilitating and delegating teaching styles are both important for managing such hands-on activities.

Conclusion

Many factors influence the classroom environment a professor creates. While each teaching style plays a role in the process of learning, it is up to the professor to utilize the expert, formal authority, personal model, facilitator, and delegator styles to benefit students.

Ely, D.P. (1996). *Trends in Educational Technology 1995* (Syracuse, NY: Clearinghouse on Information Resources), p. 29.

Grasha, A.F. (1994). *A matter of style: The teacher as expert, formal authority, personal model, facilitator, and delegator*. *College Teaching* . 42, 142-149.

A Study on the Success of *Strategies for College Success* at North Georgia College and State University

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STRATEGIES FOR COLLEGE SUCCESS is a first-year course implemented Fall 1996 at North Georgia College and State University to aid retention. The course's purpose is "to assist new North Georgia students in making a successful transition to college life by teaching them both academic and personal success skills, by introducing them to various resources at this college, and by providing mentoring opportunities with faculty and upper-class students." The course has three main components: academic skills, student success skills, and special topics. Academic skills and student success skills comprise 60% of the class content and special topics comprise 40%. Rather than teaching each of the components

discretely, each instructor may integrate the three. Methods of instruction include lecture and discussion. Class assignments involve "reading and discussion; analytical thinking; independent learning through research and writing assignments; and student oral presentations, either individual or team." Each section accomplishes these goals by focusing on specific course content that is determined by the instructor. This content provides both the theme of the course and the means of teaching the college success strategies without duplicating already extant campus programs. Course topics have included geriatrics, careers, and international business.

To date, seven sections have been taught to about twenty students each. The first offering of the course in Fall 1996 was limited to four sections. Fall sign up, which occurred at different summer orientation sessions, was very limited and many more students wanted to

sign up than there was space. By Spring 1998, approximately 320, or about one-tenth of North Georgia students will have taken the two credit hour course, which is not required. Even though enrollment figures suggest strong interest in the course, we are more interested in its success. Does it improve college success and increase retention rates? Because the course is so new, our conclusions are still tentative. We will know more as time passes. However, based on our preliminary qualitative and quantitative analysis of sections offered Fall 1996, the course is a success.

One Section's Experience

One section focused on "Ways of Seeing." In addition to the text used by the other sections, John Gardener and Jerome Jewler's *Your College Experience: Strategies for Success*, texts included the North Georgia College Undergraduate Bulletin and three essays focusing on how museums and other public institutions manipulate the public view. John Berger's "Ways of Seeing," Walker Percy's "The Loss of the Creature," and Lawrence Weschler's "Inhaling the Spore: Field Trip to a Museum of Natural Un(History)" challenged the students' critical reading skills. They also provided a basis for assignments that pushed students into the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives—application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

The academic skills component of the course also demanded higher-order skills. The second exam required each student to use the Undergraduate Bulletin to plan out a course of study for the first two years and then to evaluate the plan in writing. The exercise was crucial to college success, especially with conversion from the quarter to the semester system looming—these students should complete their core classes before that time. Cognitively, the exam demanded comprehending the requirements for the degree program, applying those requirements by mapping out a quarter by quarter plan, analyzing the program for its strengths and weaknesses, synthesizing the schedule with any other personal considerations, and evaluating the plan for its workability, flexibility, and value.

Students recognized the value and practicality of the assignment. One student wrote in a portfolio evaluation, "I thought I had planned out my course of study prior to fall quarter—I was wrong. I had not actually taken the time to research through my course catalog and map out which classes I will be taking each quarter. Test #2 actually made me accomplish this crucial task." Another student commented that she had learned how to use the handbook "more efficiently": "It is sort of frightening to think about how much crucial information is housed in this little book. Therefore, it is a must that each student, including myself, be very familiar with the handbook and the proper way in which to locate its information...I truly felt that I gained a better grasp of

the handbook and the appropriate way in which to use it as a result of this exam."

Is the course effective? Faculty remain dedicated to the course because it can enculturate students into the academic community, a community that demands application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Because these cognitive skills are more difficult than the knowledge and comprehension skills students have long practiced, they often resist assignments using these higher level skills. *Strategies for College Success*, then, offers opportunities for faculty to counter student resistance to difficult conceptual tasks before they fully engage in their core course work.

Students themselves recognized how their thinking and writing expanded. One student wrote in his portfolio evaluation: "The overall importance of writing is not so much the narrative story of chronological events, but rather the analysis of how the events came about and how they apply to me. Writing should express the thoughts of the writer, not the preconceived ideas of a professor or any other individual." Another also recognized his wider perceptions: "The more I focused in the class, the more I realized that this class had more to offer and I could end up learning a lot more than just how to write better. For instance, my ways of seeing on particular things has changed. I no longer base my opinion about things on preconceived notions."

These students have developed new "ways of seeing," an openness to new ideas. They are ripe for college success. Thus, our qualitative analysis suggests that the course is a success but a quantitative analysis is also warranted. This formal quantitative assessment requires the use of statistical techniques. Using these techniques, we compare the success of freshmen who have taken the course with the success of freshmen who have not taken the course. Over time, we will track these students as they proceed through their higher educational experiences.

Data

Our data set includes all NGC&SU students with cumulative hours less than 25 hours and who were enrolled in the Fall 1996. Of the 696 freshmen who fell into this category, 78 took the class and 618 did not. A division by gender reveals that approximately the same percentage of students who took the class were female as is reflected in the 696 freshmen (69% and 63%, respectively). For each student we have hours attempted, hours completed, quality points, high school average, SAT scores, and demographic information such as race, gender, and marital status.

Methodology

Freshman GPAs are computed based upon a standard model with some modification (Board of Regents of the USG, 1996a and 1996b; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991;

and Stage, et. al., 1996). By modeling student GPA based upon their individual characteristics, we can then predict the effect of these same characteristics on the general freshman population. Naturally, one of the characteristics for the students is whether or not they have taken the *Strategies for College Success* course (SCS100).

More specifically, freshman GPA is modeled as a function of high school average, SAT verbal, SAT math, gender, race, marital status and enrollment in SCS100. The last four variables are handled using dummy variables. The dummy variables are assigned a value of "0" for the more common characteristic and a "1" for the less common characteristic. At NGC&SU, our student population is predominantly female, single, and White; thus these dummy values are "0". The alternate categories, male, not single, and non-White, are each assigned a value of "1". Due to the very small numbers of non-White students, it was not statistically feasible to include a dummy variable for each separate race.

The most general regression equation is shown as model 5 below.

$$GPA = \alpha + \beta (SCS) + \gamma (HSAVG) + \delta (SATV) + \lambda (SATM) + \zeta (MALE) + \eta (NON-WHITE) + \theta (MAR) + \epsilon$$

where α is the constant to be estimated and the coefficients to be estimated are represented by β , γ , δ , λ , ζ , η , and θ . The residuals are reflected by ϵ . The variables SCS, HSAVG, SATV, SATM, MALE, NON-WHITE, and MAR respectively reflect, enrollment in *Strategies for College Success*, high school average, verbal SAT, math SAT, gender dummy, race dummy, and marital status dummy.

We have modeled four additional versions of the general model 5. This is to isolate the effects of additional variables and to check the robustness of our results to different model specifications. Regression models 1 through 4 are shown below.

Model 1:

$$GPA = \alpha + \beta (SCS) + \epsilon$$

Model 2:

$$GPA = \alpha + \beta (SCS) + \gamma (HSAVG) + \delta (SATV) + \lambda (SATM) + \epsilon$$

Model 3:

$$GPA = \alpha + \beta (SCS) + \gamma (HSAVG) + \delta (SATV) + \lambda (SATM) + \zeta (MALE) + \epsilon$$

Model 4:

$$GPA = \alpha + \beta (SCS) + \gamma (HSAVG) + \delta (SATV) + \lambda (SATM) + \zeta (MALE) + \eta (NON-WHITE) + \epsilon$$

Results

The results so far are *preliminary* and based upon one quarter's grades. Even so, we have found that taking the *Strategies for College Success* class appears to improve a student's GPA. In fact, our results for the students' first quarter predict that a student's GPA will increase by 0.2 GPA points if a student takes the class. This result is significant with a p-value of between 0.05 and 0.06 for models 2, 3, 4, and 5. The results for Model 1 are not significant. This is most likely because Model 1 does not control for any academic ability measures. It is also interesting to note that race does not appear to make any difference in predicting GPA for NGC&SU freshmen but that gender and marital status do. Females tend to do better than males, and married students tend to do better than single students.

It is prudent to point out again that these results are based upon preliminary data—only one quarter of grades have been assessed—because of the "newness" of the class and initial data availability. This study is a longitudinal one, and so we need more time for the data "to come in" to see if the class is helping students over the long run and not just the short run. Additionally, we do not believe self-selection bias to be a problem for several reasons. First, sign up was limited and doled out over the course of the entire preceding summer. Second, poor students signed up to get the extra help and we think this particular potentially biasing effect will be mitigated by the highly motivated students who also signed up for the class. This is an area we will study in future research. Third, we have corrected for differences in student ability by including variables for SAT verbal scores, SAT math scores, and high school averages.

Conclusions and Future Research

Overall results indicate that our *Strategies for College Success* course appears to be effective in improving student success in college. Our results are in line with other college/university experiences. Both students and the university are benefitting. However, further study is warranted. We are concerned with accounting for any possible bias in the test group. The analysis of long-run data will mitigate any effect the individual course, SCS100, had on student GPAs for the quarter the course was taken. Also to mitigate possible bias, we plan to develop a control group of students who did not take the class that is based upon similar educational and demographic characteristics as the students who took the class. We will also continue to compare student GPAs of those who took the class to the general student population but we will do this for longer time periods. Ultimately, we will track all the students through graduation via both quarterly and cumulative GPAs. Lastly, we will compare retention rates for those who took class versus those who did not take the class.

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Peer Mentoring

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THE MANAGEMENT OF LARGE CLASS INSTRUCTION has been and will continue to be a part of the academic setting. We in academia accept that this structure is the most efficient way to meet the needs of the masses but question whether it is the most effective way to meet the needs of individual students. In this day and age of cultural diversity and recognition of individual learning styles, we dare not overlook this component.

In the meantime, because of lack of resources, both financial and human, coupled with ignorance about learning and teaching styles, large classes still envelop the college and university landscape. Until the knowledge and resources become available to reduce these classes, how do we accommodate these students? One possibility is peer mentoring.

In this scenario, large classes (usually core curriculum) in the humanities, sciences, math and social sciences that have a high failure rate are identified. Next, students who were successful (made an "A" or "B") in these classes are identified and challenged to serve as "models" of good student behavior. These "expert stu-

dents" or models are then paired with a professor who teaches a large class as his/her assistant. Now the work begins.

While there is an assumption that these model students knew what it took to be successful in these particular courses, they should be taught or reminded how to be model students. Once the students accept the challenge, they are hired and given charges that include attending classes daily, participating in workshops for study skills, time management and the like. Additionally, they must attend high enrollment classes and serve as role models by taking notes, stimulating discussion, asking questions and holding study sessions for fellow classmates at least twice a week.

With such a program, we are able to accomplish several goals. Three of them include saving on financial resources by hiring assistants instead of reducing class size, giving students opportunities to demonstrate their leadership and teaching skills and improving students' performance in core courses.