

**UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS REPORT
2015**

Sauk Valley Community College

District 506

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Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVE PRACTICES | 3 |
| Topic 1: Closing the Achievement Gap and Increasing College Credentials for Underrepresented Groups: Using a Self-Paced, Computer Assisted Instructional Technique to Supplement Instruction for Developmental Math Students | 3 |
| Topic 2 Intuitional Effective Practice That Increases Educational Attainment: Mandatory Orientation and First Year Experience Class for All New Degree Seeking Students..... | 5 |

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Topic 1: Closing the Achievement Gap and Increasing College Credentials for Underrepresented Groups: Using a Self-Paced, Computer Assisted Instructional Technique to Supplement Instruction for Developmental Math Students

A. Purpose, Goal, or Objective

Being academically underprepared is an important reason why students drop out of college and never complete a degree. In order to remediate academically underprepared students at Sauk Valley Community College (SVCC), students are required to complete developmental coursework. In some cases, students may need to take a single developmental class two or three times in order to pass it, losing momentum to completion of a college degree. Only after completing the developmental class (or classes) can a student proceed into the next college-level class.

Many students who attend SVCC are academically underprepared; internal SVCC data suggests that as many as 50% of new students need academic remediation. Unfortunately, only 37% of developmental students successfully complete their developmental math class the first time. The goal of this project was to increase first-time pass rates of developmental math classes.

B. Date of Implementation

The Math Lab project was started in the spring semester, 2013. Academic data was analyzed from both the fall semester 2013 and spring semester 2014.

C. Description of Program Elements or Strategies that Make the Program Successful

In order to give students an alternative developmental pathway in math that students may be more successful in, Sauk developed a “math lab” instructional technique. This developmental math lab allowed students to follow a math curriculum using computer based modules. Students would advance to the next module after successful completion of the previous module. Therefore, students advance at their own pace, getting assistance from the Math Lab coordinator as needed. This model also allows students to possibly complete more than one developmental class in a single semester.

D. Evidence of Success

Preliminary evidence suggests that the Math Lab is effective at increasing pass rates of students in developmental math classes. In general, students passed developmental math classes at nearly twice the rate of traditional lecture classes (Table 1). Additionally, students from three racial classifications (white, black, and Hispanic) were much more likely to pass the development math class in the Math Lab setting than the traditional setting. However, female students were somewhat less successful than their male counterparts, but still much more successful than the traditional teaching method.

Table 1. The success rate of developmental math students in a traditional lecture and Math Lab setting.

| | Total number of students | Total number of students who passed | Percentage Passed |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| All students: Math Lab | 114 | 81 | 71.1% |
| All students: Traditional | 66 | 25 | 37.9% |
| | | | |
| Male students: Math Lab | 48 | 36 | 75.0% |
| Male students: Traditional | 33 | 15 | 45.5% |
| | | | |
| Female students: Math Lab | 66 | 45 | 68.2% |

50601 Sauk Valley Community College
FY 2014 Underrepresented Groups Report

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|--------------------------------|----|----|-------|
| Female students: Traditional | 33 | 10 | 30.3% |
| | | | |
| White students: Math Lab | 86 | 60 | 69.8% |
| White students: Traditional | 70 | 18 | 25.7% |
| | | | |
| Hispanic students: Math Lab | 17 | 12 | 70.6% |
| Hispanic students: Traditional | 12 | 5 | 41.7% |
| | | | |
| Black students: Math Lab | 7 | 6 | 85.7% |
| Black students: Traditional | 5 | 2 | 40.0% |

SVCC is excited that the Math Lab concept has dramatically increased success rates in developmental math classes. More students are now entering college-level coursework from developmental courses than ever before. It is hoped that the College will experience increased graduation rates in the spring 2015 semester.

Topic 2 Intuitional Effective Practice That Increases Educational Attainment: Mandatory Orientation and First Year Experience Class for All New Degree Seeking Students

A. Purpose, Goal, or Objective

In order to increase the retention and persistence (number of students who pass their classes) of all degree seeking students, Sauk Valley Community College instituted a mandatory orientation and First Year Experience class for all new degree-seeking students beginning in August 2013. The educational literature on this subject suggests that as retention rates increase so will graduation rates. Of course, these programs are also designed to aid minority, disabled, and female students succeed in college and graduate at higher rates as well. With 60% of Sauk's current students being female, 12% being Hispanic or African American, and 3.1% of our students reporting disabilities, these programs will dramatically affect those underrepresented groups.

The FY 2013 Underrepresented Groups report focused on the development of the Orientation and the FYE class and specifically on the data that was collected during the summer of 2013 from only the Orientation sessions. This FY 2014 report will show the possible impact of FYE and orientation on persistence and retention efforts rates at the College.

B. Date of Implementation

The first orientation session was held on June 24, 2013. The first FYE classes were taught in August, 2013. The data used is from the fall semester of 2013 and spring semester of 2014.

C. Description of Program Elements or Strategies that Make the Program Successful

Contemporary education literature indicates that college orientation sessions and First Year Experience classes are strongly correlated to retention and graduation rates. For all first-time, degree seeking students taking classes in the fall of 2013, they were mandated to take a SVCC orientation in the summer and a FYE course in the fall semester concurrently with their other college classes.

- Mandatory orientation sessions would, within a four hour timeframe, orient students to the campus and to key College personnel. It would also allow students to verify their electronic student account, login to email and other web resources (including their classroom management system), and be able to ask questions of College personnel. Parents and loved ones were also encouraged to attend and ask questions.
- The First Year Experience course is a one-credit class designed to expose students, in their first semester at SVCC, to a number of important topics that may help them persist at the College. Some of the topics included academic and career planning, study skills, appreciating diversity, time management, financial management, and note taking skills. Essentially this is a college "survival" class.

D. Evidence of Success

The goal of making orientation and the FYE course mandatory was twofold: (1). Increase the retention rates of these students. Previous research has shown that students who are retained from semester to semester are more likely to graduate, especially from the fall to spring semester of their first year. (2). Decrease the number of poor grades or withdrawals from classes. At SVCC, the students who "pass" classes are "persisting" in those classes.

Fall to spring retention rates at SVCC have historically been very good. However, it seems as if the orientation and FYE efforts have been moderately successful at raising both fall to spring retention (Table 2) and fall to fall retention rates (Table 3). Even small increases in retention rates means that more

50601 Sauk Valley Community College
FY 2014 Underrepresented Groups Report

students have remained at SVCC and are actively engaged in completing their degree. It is too early to determine if these programs will result in increased degree completion rates.

Table 2. Fall to spring retention rates for degree seeking students for the last three fiscal years.

| Fiscal Year | FALL TO SPRING RETENTION | Retention Rate |
|--|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| FY 2012 | Fall of 2011 to Spring of 2012 | 77.1% |
| FY 2013 | Fall of 2012 to Spring of 2013 | 81.6% |
| FY 2014 (first year of FYE and Orientation) | Fall of 2013 to Spring of 2014 | 82.6% |

Table 3. Fall to fall retention rates for degree seeking students for the last three fiscal years.

| Fiscal Year | FALL TO FALL RETENTION | Retention Rate |
|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| FY 2012 | Fall of 2011 to Fall of 2012 | 54.6% |
| FY 2013 | Fall of 2012 to Fall of 2013 | 57.7% |
| FY 2014 (first year of FYE and Orientation) | Fall of 2013 to Fall of 2014 | 58.5% |

While retention is the primary focus of Sauk’s efforts, another positive aspect of these two initiatives is to improve the grades of the degree seeking students. Again, there seems to be a moderate positive effect on the grades of students as students are persisting at higher rates (Table 4).

Table 4. Persistence rates for degree seeking students for the last three fiscal years.

| Fiscal Year | % of A, B, & C Grades “persisting” | % of D, F, & W Grades |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| FY 2012 | 78.6% | 21.4% |
| FY 2013 | 82.7% | 17.4% |
| FY 2014 (first year of FYE and Orientation) | 83.3% | 16.5% |

SVCC administration completely understands correlation is not causation, but we feel comfortable saying that our orientation and FYE initiatives are positively affecting our student body as a whole. Moderate increases in retention and persistence rates are always welcome news.