

Divisional Strategic Planning Brief – Communications

Campus Outcome

Support the research and design of a comprehensive College E-Learning/ Online-Distance Education Program

Department Outcome

Develop a plan to increase student success in online/hybrid courses in which the average success rates are below 70%

BACKGROUND

In response to initial faculty concerns about student retention and success rates in online courses, the significant student success gaps by modality revealed in the June 2013 Distance Learning Report and the introduction of the High Risk data report, East Campus Communications faculty who teach online/hybrid courses began to examine ways to improve student success rates in their courses starting with our 2012-2013 departmental plan. This plan has shifted and expanded throughout the last 5 years; although no one intervention has shown significant or consistent success, the awareness of and conversations about student success in online/hybrid courses have been engaging and insightful.

2012 – 2013

Due to faculty concerns raised in our first department planning meeting, our initial goal was to improve Online Retention and Success Rates in SPC1608, Fundamentals of Speech. After reviewing IR data, faculty designed and implemented an Action Research Plan which sought to align course policies, have students complete a customized online readiness test and vary course scheduling by part of term during the spring term. Although the success and retention (see below) rates increased, faculty also discerned that student self-reporting on their preparedness for online learning did not align with performance, so faculty planned to revise the customized online readiness tool and re-implement the intervention in the subsequent year.

Measure	201220	201320
Student Success	60.3%	66.1%
Student Retention	70.4%	79.9%

2013 – 2014

Speech faculty revised the online readiness test and re-implemented the ARP with the following results:

Measure	201310	201410	201320	201420
Student Success	66.9%	67.0%	66.1%	62.9%
Student Retention	80.7%	84.3%	79.9%	81.8%

Although both the increases and decreases were minimal, further examination revealed significant differences in student success by part of term during the fall and spring terms; as a result, we developed a more strategic enrollment plan based on this success data shown below.

Part of Term	Student Success
Full-term	68.8%
TWK	53.4%
TR1	81.3%
TR2	63.3%
TR3	51.9%

We discontinued offering the 5 week courses because, in addition to the low student success rates in TR2 and TR3, an examination of student enrollment patterns indicated that offering these options allowed too many students to schedule classes across so many parts of term that they were undermining their own success. In addition, we began intentionally scheduling faculty who had demonstrated success teaching online during the TWK term.

2014 – 2015

At this point, all fulltime faculty who teach hybrid and/or online courses, including Speech, met to discuss the student success data by modality and part of term for all East Campus Communications courses from 201110 through 201430. As a result, each division agreed to develop and implement an intervention during the spring 2015 (201520) semester and meet again during the summer to review and assess the results. Each division chose an intervention faculty felt would be most effective for students in their classes:

- Developmental faculty implemented a first day of class orientation activity.
- EAP faculty created a short video explaining the value-added benefit of hybrid/online classes.
- English faculty implemented two surveys: 1 given two weeks after class began exploring why students enrolled in hybrid/online courses and previous experience taking hybrid/online courses; 2 given one week before the withdrawal deadline to explore students' thoughts about the course, their success in the course and their plans to ensure they passed the course.
- Speech faculty placed a *Frequently Asked Questions* document in the course menu of each hybrid/online course; however, the way the document was added to the course did not allow student access to be tracked, so a student survey was sent during final exam week to assess the helpfulness of the document.

The student success data for courses per modality and by part of term is too cumbersome to share in this document, but all fulltime faculty, and a few part-time faculty, teaching online/hybrid courses met in June to discuss feedback on the intervention and increases/decreases in success data. The slight shifts in the data generated lots of conversation but few tangible results, we agreed to re-implement the intervention and review results again next summer.

2015 – 2016

For a variety of reasons, including the development of and our heavy participation in the college-wide *Online Learning Plan*, revision and reimplementation of the intervention was inconsistent during the fall term, and those who did implement the intervention did not feel it made a significant difference; therefore, we met in March to determine a universal intervention all fulltime faculty teaching online/hybrid courses would implement during the fall 2016 term: teacher-student conferences after the first major assignment.

2016-2017

As a result of the extensive conversations about online student learning, we continued to work on our first learning outcome and developed a second learning outcome:

- **OUTCOME 1:** Develop a plan to increase student success in online/hybrid courses in which the average success rates are below 70%.
- **OUTCOME 2:** Implement college-wide plan to improve student success in online/hybrid SPC1017 and SPC1608 courses.

In addition to the faculty-student conferences all fulltime faculty agreed to implement during the fall 2016 semester (**Outcome 1**), we worked with deans and faculty college-wide to develop a plan focusing specifically on improving student success in our online/hybrid Speech courses (**Outcome 2**).

INTERVENTION

OUTCOME 1: During fall 2016, all fulltime faculty attempted to conduct one conference with each student after the first major assignment. Although the specific purpose of the conference was to provide feedback on the student's assignment, faculty also sought to discuss how the student could be successful in the course, answer any questions and form a human connection with the student.

- Faculty completed the interventions during the fall 2016 term.
- Faculty completed logs to record the date and method of contact for each student intervention.
- In spring 2017, faculty completed a Qualtrics survey on the effectiveness of the intervention before meeting to discuss results

OUTCOME 2: In addition, we held a college-wide meeting on November 4th with all fulltime faculty teaching online/hybrid SPC1017, Interpersonal Communication, and SPC1608, Fundamentals of Speech courses to examine student success data.

- After discussing the student success results, faculty suggested we post the following comment in Banner (long and short) for all online/hybrid Speech courses for one year, after which we would meet to discuss potential results and additional steps we might take.

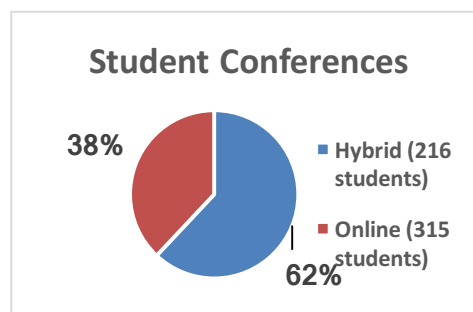
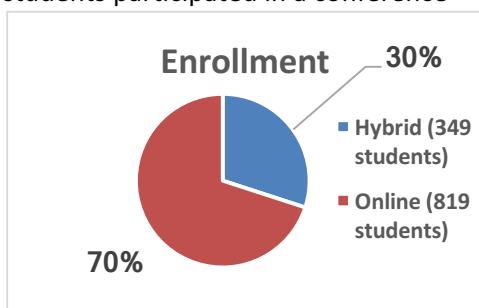
Note: It is the responsibility of students to have a minimum audience of five adults for speech assignments which must be digitally recorded and uploaded.

- We agreed to measure both student success and the percentage of enrollment by modality to gauge the potential impact of the intervention. In addition, during the first week of the fall 2016 semester, some faculty will disseminate a brief survey to determine if students noticed and/or considered these comments when they registered for the courses.

STRATEGIC RESULTS

OUTCOME 1: Overall, 22 fulltime faculty (EAP, English and Speech) implemented the intervention:

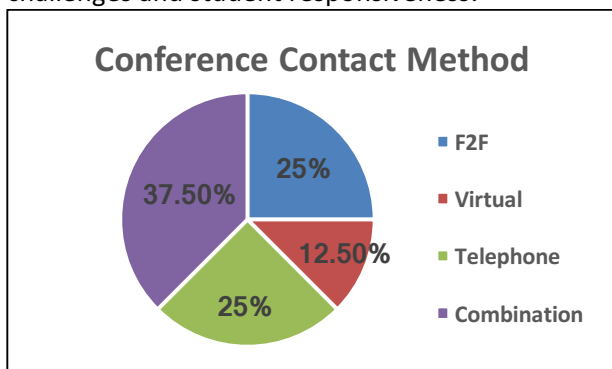
- 1168 students enrolled in fulltime faculty hybrid and online classes; and 531 (45%) of the 1168 students participated in a conference



- As a result of their learning and student feedback, 5 of the 11 faculty who taught online classes in spring 2017 voluntarily continued the interventions in their online classes.

The online survey was completed by 16 of the 22 faculty members who reported the following results:

- Faculty held the several different ways depending on the course, (online or hybrid), technology challenges and student responsiveness:



- Faculty reported the following obstacles:**
 - Both faculty and students encountered a variety of technology challenges.
 - Many students did not respond, and often those who would or could were not the struggling students; many students just didn't have time for the conferences.
 - Coercing students to respond made some of them resistant.
 - The process was very time consuming, especially for faculty teaching 3 or more online classes.
 - Some students just attended the conference for points.
- Faculty reported learning the following:**
 - Discussing the student's work prompted the students to ask many more questions, some about their work and some about the course in general.
 - Many online students do not want or are not available for a face-to-face conference; speaking on the phone was a more effective way to get a student to respond.
 - Some student who were able and willing to participate in the conferences expressed appreciation, saying this was the first time an online teacher had every reached out to them.
 - The time would be better spent reaching out to students who scored a C or lower on their first assignment.
- When asked if they planned to re-implement the intervention, faculty replies were the following:** Yes (5), Modified (6) and No (5)
- Faculty suggest sharing the following recommendations with part-time faculty:**
 - Email students after the have missed two small assignments; offer help and/or clarification.
 - Send a weekly message – virtual or email – to make you more approachable.
 - Consider virtual conferences, at least for struggling students.
 - Provide assessments of student work quickly.
 - Monitor student participation and contact ghost students to offer a conference.

LEARNING OUTCOME 2: The following data depicts the results for first semester, Spring 2017.

Hybrid

SPC1017	% Enrolled	Success	SPC1608	% Enrolled	Success
201620	2.2%	88.0%	201620	6.5%	64.6%
201720	3.3%	72.5%	201720	5.5%	62.5%

In addition to the SPC1017 hybrid headcount being only 25 students in 201620 and 40 students in 201720, the only notable data is the decreased success from 201620 to 201720.

Online

SPC1017	% Enrolled	Success	SPC1608	% Enrolled	Success
201620	32.2%	68.7%	201620	18.9%	68.7%
201720	30.5%	73.7%	201720	21.8%	69.6%

Here, the only notable data is the slight increase in student success in 201720 in both courses; otherwise, the increase or decrease in hybrid could be impacted by too many additional factors.

NEXT STEPS

Faculty recommended the following next steps:

OUTCOME 1:

- Eliminate mandated conferences and focus on struggling students
- Develop and implement small best practices workshops for faculty
- Compile and share a departmental best practices list by discipline
- Consider a more in-depth study by a small group of faculty, perhaps endowed chair

OUTCOME 2:

- Add the comments to both summer 2017 and fall 2017 courses
- Survey students during the first week of classes to find out if they considered the comments when registering
- Meet next spring to determine if the intervention should be continued