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Article:

Do Student Success Courses Actually Help Community College Students Succeed?

Zeidenberg, M., Jenkins, D., & Calcagno, J. C. (2007, June). *Community College Research Center Brief*, pp. 1-6.

Summary:

Researchers at the Community College Research Center, at Teachers College, Columbia University attempted to address the need for research on the outcomes of the student success courses that are becoming a prevalent at community colleges. Zeidenberg et al. studied institutional data from a cohort of students at community colleges in Florida to assess whether enrolling in a student success course was related to positive outcomes. Logistic regressions were used to control for student characteristics hypothesized to be related to the decision to enroll in a student success course, including the following: gender, race/ethnicity, age, citizenship status, limited English proficiency, regular high school completion (as opposed to GED) and placement scores.

The sample consisted of all students who entered a Florida community college for the first time in fall 1999. Students were tracked for 17 terms (five and two-thirds calendar years). After excluding incomplete data 37,000 students were included in the study. 36% of the sample enrolled in a student success course. Of these, 79% passed the course with a D or better. 63% of students in the sample took at least one remedial credit, and students taking at least one remedial credit were more likely to take a student success course. Overall 28% of the sample took both a student success course and remedial coursework.

Results:

The results of the regression model indicated that students who enrolled in a student success course were 8% more likely than their peers to earn a credential. Although students who enrolled in remedial courses were less likely to earn a credential than their peers who took only college-level courses, remedial students who enrolled in a student success course were only 2% less likely to earn a credential than those student who enrolled in neither a student success course nor remedial coursework. Thus, "taking an [student success course] combined with enrollment in remediation is associated with a higher probability of completion than enrollment in remedial courses alone"(p. 4). Transfer and persistence data showed similar significant findings.

Among students who never participated in remedial coursework, student success course enrollment is associated with a 9% increase in the probability of success (i.e., earning a credential, persistence or transfer). For those students enrolled in at least one credit of remediation, student success course enrollment is associated with a 5% increase in success. Although socio-economic status and student motivation could not be statistically controlled in the study, it is not likely these factors accounted for the results.

The authors conclude that given the positive outcomes of the study, “community college educators may want to consider expanding requirements that students take student success courses” (p. 5). Next steps include studying which elements of student success courses are most strongly associated with the improved rates of student success.