

## MyLab Business Communications educator study explores MyLab homework and simulation scores at Delgado Community College

<p><b>School Name</b> Delgado Community College, New Orleans, LA</p> <p><b>Course name</b> Business Communications</p> <p><b>Course format</b> Flipped and hybrid</p> <p><b>Course materials</b> MyLab Business Communications with <i>Excellence in Business Communication</i> by Thill and Bovee</p>	<p><b>Timeframe</b> Fall 2016</p> <p><b>Submitted by</b> Mark McLean, Assistant Professor</p> <p><b>Results reported by</b> Candace Cooney, Pearson Customer Outcomes Analytics Manager</p>
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### Key Findings

- Students who completed all MyLab homework assignments earned substantially higher average quiz and exam scores.
- Data indicate a strong correlation between MyLab homework assignments and quiz scores.
- 100 percent of students responding to an end-of-semester survey agreed that the simulations in MyLab helped them practice decision-making skills and apply the chapter content to a real-world business challenge.

### Setting

- Locale: large, urban, two-year public community college with campuses throughout the New Orleans area. One of nine community colleges in the Louisiana Community and Technical College system.
- Enrollment: more than 18,000 students
- Full-time students: 42 percent
- First-time, full-time students: 45 percent
- Full-time retention rate: 57 percent
- Graduation rate: ten percent
- Student-faculty ratio: 21:1
- Age 24 and under: 49 percent
- Gender: 67 percent female

- Minority: 67 percent

## About the Course

Mark McLean has a 20-year corporate background in professional services at Deloitte, started teaching at Delgado Community College as a part-time adjunct in 2009, and is currently teaching full-time. He teaches a variety of business courses including Business Communications which has an annual enrollment of approximately 450 students. This one-semester, three-credit course is required of all business students. Approximately 50 percent of the students are in a two-year terminal program while the other 50 percent of students intend to pursue a four-year degree. Business Communications covers advanced techniques of written and oral communication, word usage, organization, and style, including business letters and reports, emphasizing development of effective voice qualities and presentation of oral reports and speeches. Upon satisfactory completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of communication;
- Write effective business letters and memos;
- Identify and explain the preferred forms of research papers; and
- Exhibit presentation skills.

## Challenges and Goals

McLean wanted to offer his students a robust learning experience, but lacked the time and tools necessary to create the kind of digital content that would allow students to connect theory with application and engage with their own learning. Offering Business Communications online created another challenge, as students with varied learning styles would be taking the course without the benefit of face-to-face interaction and instruction. Additionally, flipping the class in face-to-face sections would require students to read and prepare prior to lecture so that discussion and more experiential learning could take place during class.

McLean found that the variety of assignments in MyLab™ Business Communication offered visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners multiple options for learning the course content, and the assortment of exercises challenged students to fully understand the concepts so they would be responsible for their own learning and success. McLean adopted MyLab approximately five years ago to offer his students more than just the physical classroom experience. Believing that today's students are proficient at using digital content, he hoped to offer students a wide-ranging, all-encompassing course experience.

## Implementation

MyLab Business Communication is required; the program is used primarily by students working at home on a personal computer, or in a school lab, library, etc. Students use MyLab for understanding content, homework assignments, and additional practice. McLean's goals for assigning work in MyLab are to introduce new concepts, provide homework and practice opportunities, and to help students assess their own understanding of the course material. McLean anticipates that students will spend approximately 2–3 hours per week working in MyLab, which may include reading the eText, watching videos, and completing assignments. Based on results of a voluntary, end-of-semester survey (61 percent response rate), 29 percent of students said they spent 2–3 hours using MyLab, 43 percent of students indicated they spent 3–4 hours using MyLab, and 21 percent of

students indicated they spent more than four hours per week working in the program. Only seven percent of students responded that they spent less than two hours a week working in MyLab. In McLean's flipped class, students complete pre-lecture MyLab assignments so they attend their once-a-week, face-to-face class session familiar with the background content of the chapter being covered. McLean's role is to link the concepts they learned to the business world through applications and experiential exercises, which are reinforced further when the students complete the MyLab simulations after lecture. Students work in small groups in class to complete end-of-chapter discussion questions and case studies to support and emphasize the learning taking place outside of class.

McLean integrates the MyLab course with Canvas, the Learning Management system used at Delgado, to make things easier for both he and his students.

- Grade transfer: grades are easily transferable from MyLab to Canvas and there is one single gradebook for the course;
- Single sign-in process: students are ready to work in MyLab on the first day of class; and
- Content linking: ability to link to MyLab directly from Canvas.

McLean's students now have just one access code and a single sign-in process in lieu of separate log-in and passwords for both Canvas and MyLab. In the end-of-semester survey, students shared the following:

- 100 percent of respondents agreed that they were able to access MyLab through Canvas and appreciated not needing a second, separate login for MyLab (93 percent strongly agreed).
- 100 percent of respondents agreed that the sign-in and registration process for MyLab was simple and fast through Canvas (86 percent strongly agreed).

Following a Pearson best practice, McLean requires students to complete the chapter 0 Getting Started with MyLab assignment by the end of the first week of class. This assignment shows students the types of questions they will be answering and how to respond to them in MyLab. Students generally have fewer questions about MyLab functionality after completing this exercise and have more confidence completing future assignments. Additionally, students complete a syllabus quiz in class during the first week. McLean's syllabus is set up in weekly increments in a columnar format to clearly show students how and what they will learn:

- Column 1 identifies the chapter and topics being covered along with the associated learning outcomes.
- Column 2 describes the learning activities and assignments that are required each week, showing students how they will learn. This includes reading the text, reviewing PowerPoint slides and learning objectives, completing pre-class assignments, and engaging in class discussions.
- Column 3 outlines the learning assessments, tests, and exams where students will demonstrate their knowledge.

Because McLean only meets with his hybrid sections once a week for a 1-hour, 15-minute lecture, he creates the MyLab course using a variety of assignments to foster learning outside the classroom.

- Video assignments: ‘Watch It’ and ‘Think Like a Manager’ videos explore a variety of business topics related to the theory students are learning and assess students’ comprehension of the concepts covered in each video. Videos are less than ten minutes in length and students have one attempt at completing a five-question, multiple-choice quiz that follows. Video exercises must be completed before the once-a-week lecture meeting.
- [Decision Making Mini-Simulations](#): Mini-simulations put McLean’s students in the role of manager as they make a series of decisions based on a realistic business challenge. The simulations change and branch based on their decisions, creating various scenario paths and strengthening critical thinking skills. Each simulation takes about 15–20 minutes to complete and students have one attempt.
- Grammar review exercises: these practice exercises provide a grammar refresher, assessing student understanding of basic grammar concepts, and include short media lessons followed by practice QuickChecks and objective-based homework questions.
- Document makeovers: McLean gives his students the opportunity to understand the why and how of polished communication in these exercises. Students review a sample document, analyze and revise an interactive document and receive feedback, and finally prove their comprehension on a brief document makeover quiz.

On the end-of-semester survey, students reported the following about MyLab assignments:

- 100 percent of respondents agreed that the video exercises in MyLab helped them visualize the chapter contents in action.
- 100 percent of respondents agreed that the simulations in MyLab helped them practice decision-making and apply the chapter content to a real-world business challenge.
- 100 percent of respondents agreed that the detailed report of their choices at the end of the simulation exercises allowed them to see the consequences of the business decisions they made.
- 100 percent of respondents agreed that Document Makeover exercises helped them learn how to communicate in a professional setting and refine their business writing skills.

All sections of Business Communications complete weekly quizzes in Canvas and standardized mid-term and final exams are also completed in Canvas, administered in a computerized classroom, regardless of instructor. Quizzes are comprised of 15–20 multiple-choice questions from the Pearson test bank; students have one attempt at completion and there is no time limit. The midterm and final exams consist of 50 multiple-choice, true-false, and a few short-answer questions, and are timed to one class period.

### Assessments

- 60% MyLab and Canvas assignments
- 20% Exams (2)
- 10% Report and presentation
- 10% In-class participation

## Results and Data

Figures 1 and 2 are correlation graphs; correlations do not imply causation but instead measure the strength of a relationship between two variables, where  $r$  is the correlation coefficient. The closer the positive  $r$  value is to 1.0, the stronger the correlation. The corresponding  $p$ -value measures the statistical significance/strength of this evidence (the correlation), where a  $p$ -value  $<.05$  shows the existence of a positive correlation between these two variables.

- A strong positive correlation exists between average MyLab homework scores and average quiz scores where  $r=.72$  and  $p<.05$ .
- A very strong positive correlation exists between average MyLab Document Makeover scores and average MyLab Grammar Improvement exercise scores where  $r=.82$  and  $p<.05$ .

For students, the formative MyLab homework is intended to help them identify where they are in terms of successfully completing the summative assessments; it appears that performance on these assignments could be a leading indicator of course success (additional research is needed to develop and test this concept further). McLean asserts that the MyLab assignments add to the student learning experience and ultimately increase their level of understanding.

### Correlation between quiz and homework scores

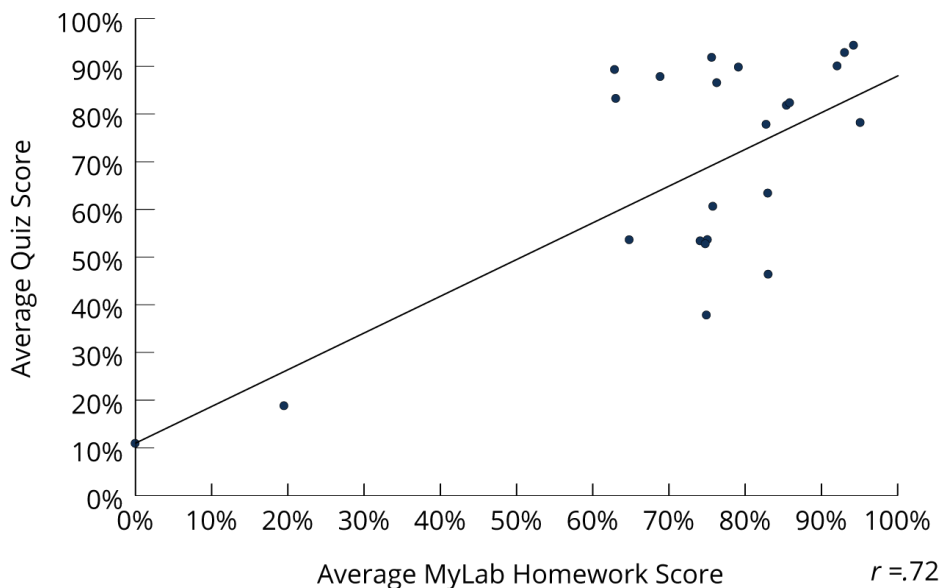


Figure 1. Correlation between Average Quiz Scores and Average MyLab Homework Scores, Fall 2016 ( $n=23$ )

### Correlation between document makeover and grammar exercise scores

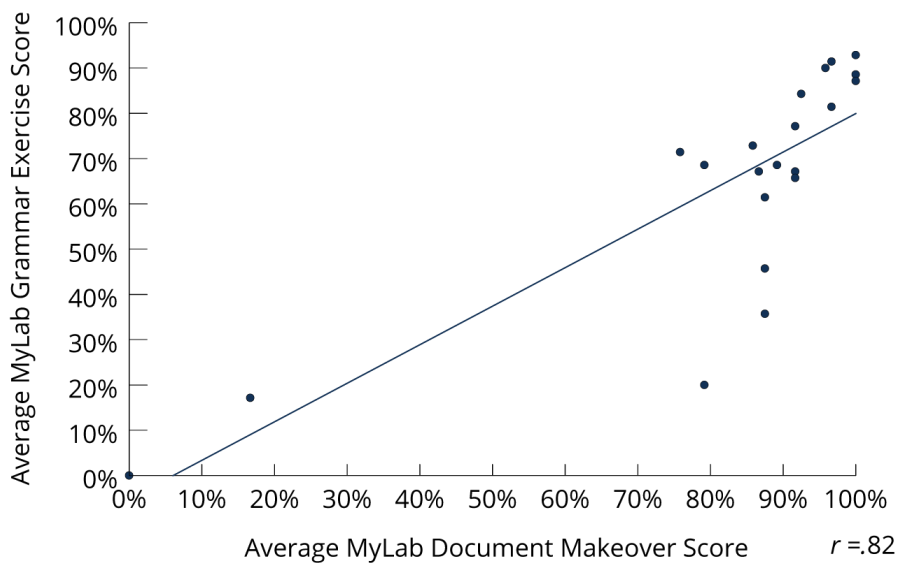


Figure 2. Correlation between Average MyLab Document Makeover Scores and Average MyLab Grammar Exercise Scores, Fall 2016 ( $n=23$ )

Students were divided into two groups based on the number of MyLab assignments they completed; a total of 48 exercises were assigned throughout the semester. McLean stresses assignment completion as a necessary part of course success. Students who completed all MyLab assignments earned higher quiz and exam scores than students who skipped at least one MyLab assignment (figure 3).

- Students who completed all MyLab assignments earned average quiz scores 15 percentage points higher than students who did not complete all assignments.
- Students who completed all MyLab assignments earned average exam scores 17 percentage points higher than students who did not complete all assignments.
- 43 percent of students completed all MyLab assignments ( $n=10$ )

## Relationship between MyLab assignment completion and quiz and exam scores

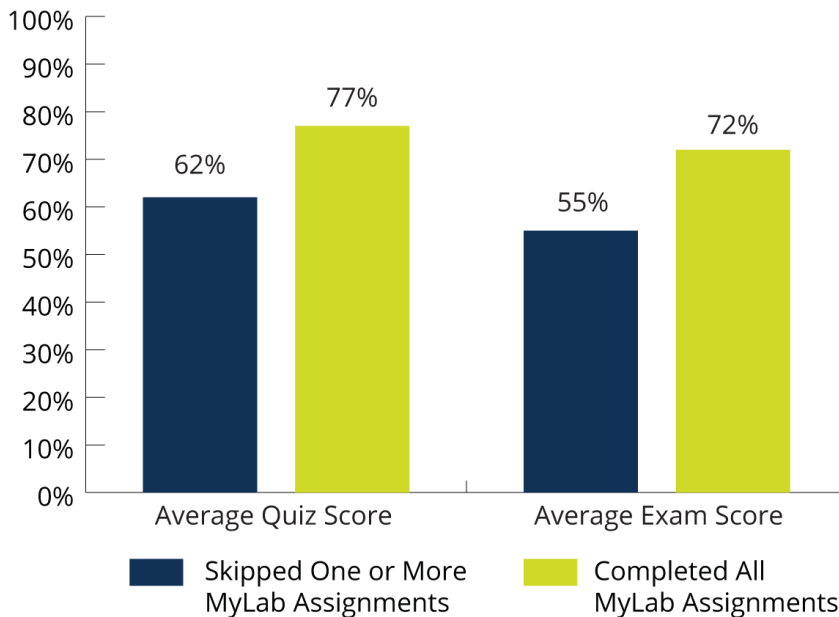


Figure 3. Relationship between MyLab Assignment Completion and Average Quiz and Exam Scores, Fall 2016 ( $n=23$ )

## The Student Experience

Responses from the Fall 2016 end-of-semester, voluntary survey of McLean's students indicate that the majority of responding students recognize the value of MyLab Business Communication.

- 100 percent of students strongly agree or agree that their understanding of the course material increased as a result of using MyLab.
- 100 percent of students strongly agree or agree that the use of MyLab positively impacted their quiz scores.
- 100 percent of students strongly agree or agree that they would recommend MyLab to another student.

Student survey responses to the question, "What did you like most about MyLab?" include:

- *"[MyLab] gives you a chance to see if you have the right answer and gives an explanation when the answer is wrong."*
- *"The eText portion was very easy to read and helped complete my assignments at the same time."*
- *"The grammar exercises sharpen your writing skills."*

## Conclusion

**"MyLab allows my students to experience the course content in various ways." –Professor Mark McLean**

As McLean sought to offer his students a more digitally-enriched course, both hybrid and online, he adopted MyLab Business Communication for the variety of resources and assessments it offered.

His students complete MyLab assignments prior to class so that he can use their one weekly face-to-face session to apply the concepts to real-world business applications, and after class to assess their knowledge and measure their progress. Similarly, his online students have diverse learning options to choose from in MyLab, including videos, simulations, and critical thinking assignments, to meet their wide-ranging learning styles. McLean stated, "MyLab allows my students to experience the course content in various ways," achieving exactly what he had hoped to when he adopted the program.