

## MyLab Marketing educator study explores the use of Writing Space and simulations at Sacred Heart University

<p><b>School Name</b> Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, CT</p> <p><b>Course name</b> Principles of Marketing</p> <p><b>Course format</b> Face to face</p> <p><b>Course materials</b> MyLab Marketing and Writing Space with <i>Marketing: An Introduction</i> by Armstrong and Kotler</p>	<p><b>Timeframe</b> Fall 2016</p> <p><b>Submitted by</b> Enda McGovern, Associate Professor</p> <p><b>Results reported by</b> Candace Cooney, Pearson Customer Outcomes Analytics Manager</p>
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### Key Findings

- Students who earned above average MyLab scores also earned higher average final exam and final course scores than students who earned MyLab scores below average.
- Data show that students earning above average decision-making MyLab simulation scores also scored higher on critical-analysis writing assignments.
- 73 percent of students responding to an end-of-semester survey agreed that the writing assignments in MyLab™ Marketing helped them improve their business communication skills.

### Setting

- Locale: four-year, suburban, public institution located on the Gold Coast of Connecticut in southwestern part of the state
- Enrollment: more than 5,000 students
- Freshman retention rate: 82 percent
- Graduation rate (4-year): 67 percent
- Student-faculty ratio: 15:1
- Classes with fewer than 20 students: 40 percent
- Gender: 64 percent female
- Ethnicity/race: 32 percent identify as minority

## About the Course

Enda McGovern has been teaching Marketing for 18 years, including the last nine years at Sacred Heart. Principles of Marketing is a one-semester, three-credit course enrolling approximately 500 students per year. It is required of all business administration majors and comprised of predominantly sophomore students. The course builds upon the concepts and theory of marketing and integrates the theory in classroom discussion with everyday examples of marketing at work. The premise of the course is based on an understanding of the four P's: product, place, price, and promotion. The final part of the course looks at managing the marketing process as it relates to interactive marketing technologies and the strategic marketing process. Learning objectives include:

- To become familiar with the range of tools and tactics used in marketing;
- To develop research skills in analyzing consumer and market data;
- To engage ethical behavior as a fundamental core in marketing activities;
- To understand how environmental factors, both local and global, affect marketing activities; and
- To appreciate and understand the dynamics of differing points of view in making both marketing and business decisions.

## Challenges and Goals

In Fall 2014, McGovern adopted MyLab Marketing to enhance his course by offering his students digital options for practice and learning both inside and outside of the classroom. Because MyLab assignments and assessments are aligned with the text, McGovern was able to incorporate the MyLab experiential case studies and simulations in lecture as a different and engaging option for applying and assessing marketing theories.

In Fall 2015, McGovern added Writing Space assignments to his Principles of Marketing course. While he had been assigning written cases currently in the course, he found it challenging to give compelling and appropriate feedback in a timely manner. Yet he believed writing assignments play a key role in helping his students develop critical-thinking and analytical skills needed for success. The idea behind auto-graded Writing Space assignments—use of artificial intelligence to assess both the content and quality of student writing—was highly appealing and would help him provide immediate, constructive feedback.

## Implementation

MyLab Marketing is required; students are required to complete in-class assignments with MyLab and use it at home for writing assignments as well. As the course instructor, McGovern's role is to assign content and writing assignments in MyLab, introduce new content in lecture, and provide support and remote monitoring to students using the MyLab at home. He anticipates that students will spend approximately 1–2 hours per week working in MyLab, which may include reading the eText and completing in-class assignments. Based on results of a voluntary, end-of-semester survey (79 percent response rate), 64 percent of students said they spent 1–2 hours per week using MyLab, while an additional 27 percent of students indicated they spent 2–3 hours in the program each week.

McGovern integrates the MyLab course with Blackboard, the Learning Management system used at Sacred Heart, to make things easier for both him and his students (learn more about [Blackboard integration](#)).

- Grade transfer: grades are easily transferable from MyLab to Blackboard 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 Blackboard.

McGovern's students now have just one access code and a single sign-in process in lieu of separate log-in and passwords for both Blackboard 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 Blackboard and appreciated not needing a second, separate login for MyLab.
- 95 percent of respondents agreed that the sign-in and registration process for MyLab was simple and fast through Blackboard.

McGovern's lecture is a combination of PowerPoints for delivery of chapter content, discussion of current events, MyLab simulations and quizzes, and small group case study presentations. McGovern spends the first 15 minutes of each lecture using [Flipboard](#), an app for smart phones and tablets that offers his students access to current business and marketing articles, stories, and blogs in a magazine format. This engages his students and enlivens lecture by bringing current events into the classroom and helping students apply the theory they are learning about to the real world. After taking time to lecture on new content and respond to student questions, the final 20–30 minutes of class is spent on group work or MyLab simulations.

Students complete four MyLab Marketing [decision-making simulations](#) at the end of a class period throughout the semester. These 30-minute simulations are an individual assignment that puts McGovern's students in the role of a manager as they make a series of decisions based on a realistic business challenge. The simulations change and branch based on the decisions made, creating various scenarios paths. Upon completion, McGovern's students receive a grade and a detailed report of the choices they made and the associated consequences of those decisions. On the end-of-semester survey, 68 percent of students agreed that these simulations helped them apply the chapter material to real-world business scenarios. The simulations helped the students to put marketing concepts together and assess their understanding of how they might be used in business. As one student on the survey reported, "The simulations were interesting and interactive, a new way of taking an exam."

Outside of class, students complete four MyLab case study writing assignments. [Writing Space](#) provides McGovern with auto-graded assignments that assess student writing and provide immediate feedback. Writing Space checks spelling and grammar, but more importantly, evaluates content and quality using a five-point grading rubric specific to the question assigned. It goes beyond just recognizing key words and phrases but understands language and the nuances of meaning. Students must submit a two-page response to the case study issue, relating marketing concepts and theories studied to the topic, using examples taken from the business world. Once Writing Space auto-grades a student's work, McGovern reviews the submission and reassesses the grading based on the scope of knowledge displayed and the depth of understanding expressed,

prior to returning the assignment to his student. This enables him to gauge how his students are applying the concepts, and generally, he finds the computer-grading is appropriate and fair. Topics include: SWOT Analysis, Positioning Strategies, New Product Development, and Market Research. Prior to giving Writing Space as a graded assignment, McGovern has students complete a practice assignment to test the system out, allowing them to get comfortable with computerized writing, employing the rubric, and submitting their writing online.

Students on the end-of-semester survey reported the following:

- 82 percent of respondents agreed that the feedback from McGovern on the Writing Space assignments was supportive and valuable.
- 73 percent of respondents agreed that the computer grading of their Writing Space assignments was fair and reasonable, given the effort and quality of their work.
- 73 percent of respondents agreed that Writing Space assignments helped them improve their business communication skills.

Students also shared these comments about Writing Space on the survey:

- *"What I like about the writing assignments is the instant feedback. It makes sure that the writing is on track for that writing prompt."*
- *"I liked how the topics related back to current chapters so I felt I was able to get a better understanding of the class material."*
- *"I thought the writing assignments were helpful and I saw improvement with each assignment I did."*

Students also complete two in-class quizzes through MyLab Marketing. Each quiz is comprised of 25 multiple-choice questions and students have 60 minutes for completion. The final exam is an in-class, written, blue-book test that consists of five articles with associated questions. Students provide a response to three of the five articles, using marketing concepts to support their argument and discussion. Students are not allowed to access the textbook or notes and have 90 minutes for completion.

As part of the class participation grade, McGovern has students select a company or market sector to follow during the semester. Open discussion begins each class period and students report on recent, important company activities or other significant news relevant to the market sector. Additionally, students are placed into small groups and tasked with developing a marketing report on a blue chip company for a significant portion of their final grade.

## Assessments

- 30% Group assignment
- 20% In-class exercises in MyLab
- 20% MyLab writing/case assignments
- 20% Final exam
- 10% Class participation, leadership, attendance

## Results and Data

In figure 1, students were divided into two groups based on their average MyLab assignment score (simulations and quizzes). Students who scored above average on MyLab assignments earned higher final exam and final course grades than students who scored below the MyLab assignment average.

- Students who earned above average MyLab scores earned final exam scores six percentage points higher than students who scored below the MyLab average.
- Students who earned above average MyLab scores earned final course grades 10 percentage points higher than students who scored below the MyLab average.

For students, the formative MyLab assignments are intended to help them identify where they are in terms of successfully completing the summative course assessments. McGovern acknowledges that this connection is hard for him to confirm because his assessments are paper-and-pencil, a different format from MyLab assignments. However, he asserts that “MyLab is still a very powerful addition to my course; too many students don’t want to read but they will watch and engage with online content.”

### Relationship between MyLab Assignment scores and final exam and final course scores

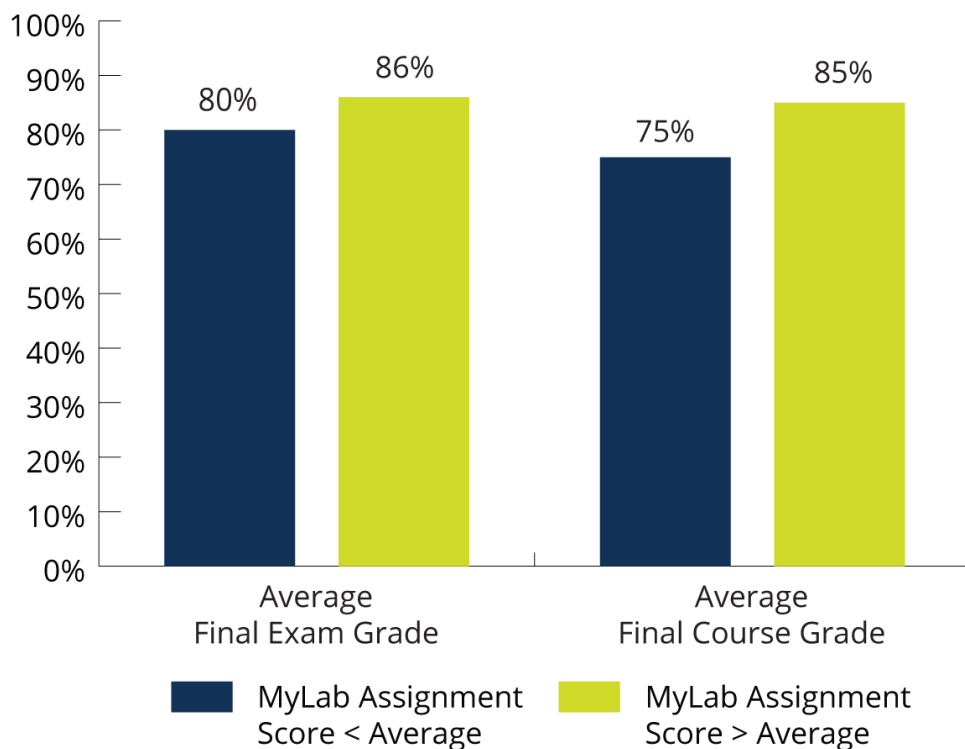


Figure 1. Relationship between MyLab Assignment Scores and Final Exam and Final Course Scores, Fall 2016 ( $n=28$ )

Students were also grouped according to their MyLab simulation scores to assess how these critical thinking activities where students apply chapter content might impact student writing assignments where they are tasked with analyzing case studies and applying marketing theories to a real-world

example (figure 2). Students who scored above average on simulations earned writing assignment scores that were eight percentage points higher than students who scored below the simulation score average. Empirically, 68 percent of students responding to the end-of-semester survey agreed that the simulation exercises helped them experience course concepts in a real business scenario.

### Relationship between MyLab simulation scores and writing assignment scores

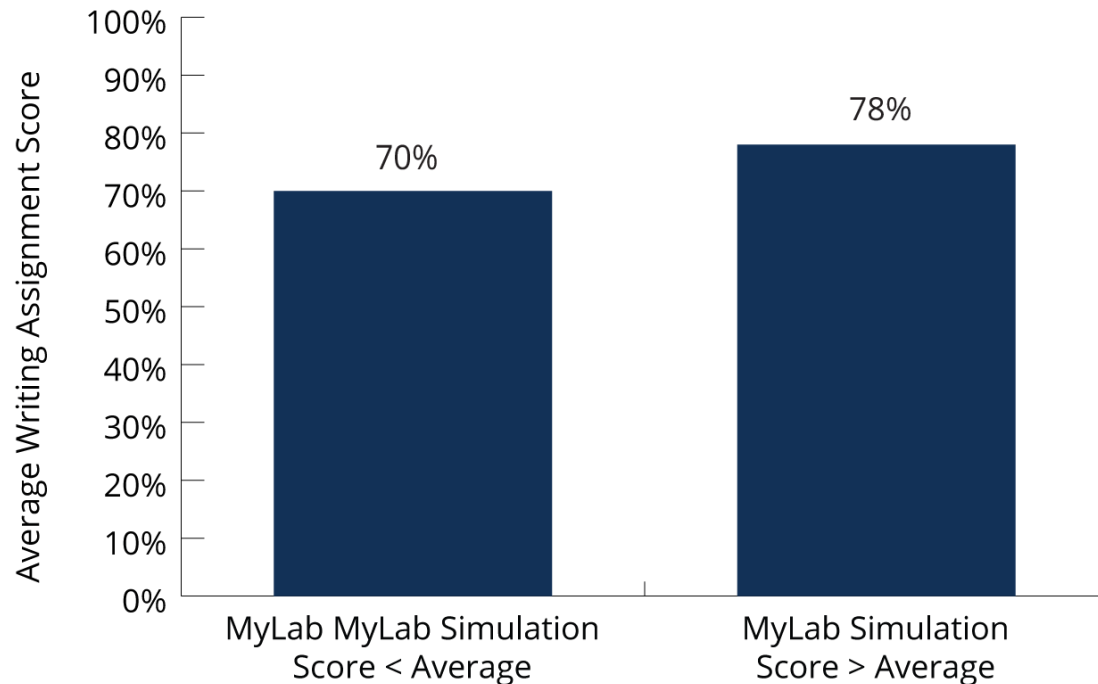


Figure 2. Relationship between MyLab Simulation Scores and MyLab Writing Assignment Scores, Fall 2016 (n=28)

## The Student Experience

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

- 77 percent of respondents strongly agree or agree that their understanding of the course material increased as a result of using MyLab.
- 60 percent of respondents strongly agree or agree that use of MyLab positively impacted their exam scores.
- 64 percent of respondents 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:

- *"I liked that it helped my understanding of the material because it made me do more than just take notes in class and read the book."*
- *"I liked that I had the ability to test what I knew about the chapter and see what else I needed to learn."*

- *"I liked that there were study materials available to help reinforce the ideas in class."*
- *"I liked how you could connect the material to quizzes and activities online. These activities helped me understand the concepts in the book better."*
- *"The exams and questions were not just definitions, but engaging."*

## Conclusion

McGovern believes students need practice to hone their writing and critical-thinking skills. However, providing critical feedback to written assignments in a timely way was challenging and often resulted in a longer than desired lag between submission and return. Writing Space, with its auto-grading capabilities, gave McGovern the capacity to assign four writing prompts during the semester that were quickly scored according to a specific five-point rubric, with valuable feedback and returned to students promptly. Both McGovern and students on his end-of-semester survey concur that the Writing Space assignments were fair, reasonable, and helped improved both critical analysis and business writing skills.