

MyLab Business Communication Inclusive Access study tracks student gains in learning and retention at Elgin Community College

Key Findings

- Student success rates have increased approximately three percentage points (or 15 students) since adopting MyLab Business Communications and transitioning to Pearson Inclusive Access.
- Student drop/withdrawal rates have decreased over 2.5 percentage points (or 14 students) since adopting MyLab Business Communications and transitioning to Inclusive Access.
- Since implementing Inclusive Access, the number of students dropping the course within 16 days of the course start has decreased by 37.5%, from 40 to 25 students.

School name

Elgin Community College, Elgin, IL

Course name

BUS 101, Business Communications, and BUS 142, Report Writing

Course format

Face to face and online

Course materials

Business Communications Today, MyLab Business Communication

Timeframe

Fall 2011–Fall 2015

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Results reported by

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Setting

Elgin Community College is located between Chicago and Rockford, Illinois, and is one of the 39 community colleges in the Illinois Community College System. In addition to its main campus in Elgin, the community college has three satellite locations in the district. It enrolls approximately 16,000 students, with over two thirds of its student body enrolled part-time, and nearly half of its students above age 23. Forty-two (42) percent of students are White, 42% are Hispanic, 7% are Asian, and 5% are Black. Thirty percent (30%) of high school graduating seniors in the district choose to attend Elgin Community College following graduation. Elgin

Community College boasts small classes of below 20 students on average, and has been subject of a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation study to identify the factors contributing to the improved education outcomes of students at the community college over the past decade.

Challenges and Goals

Elgin's business department uses common curricular materials across sections of each course to ensure that students are receiving an equitable learning experience regardless of the course section in which they enroll. However, until Inclusive Access was implemented, at least 25% of students did not buy the textbook. In addi-

tion, many students who bought the required textbook reported that they did not use the book to prepare for class or for exams. When the department decided to make the change from a traditional textbook to an online assignment platform that included eText access so that students would be accountable for their learning outside of class.

Instructors hoped that the start of the semester would be more seamless after Inclusive Access was implemented, and thought that student success would improve if all students had access to the eText and were required to use it to complete the MyLab™ assignments. Since students have the option to refer to the textbook during exams, students without access to the text are immediately at a disadvantage. In addition, students would be more familiar with the textbook content due to the required MyLab assignments. Decision makers believed that the digital course content combined with inclusive and immediate student access to course materials would impact the course delivery and student grades.

Implementation

The business instructors at Elgin chose *Business Communication Today*, by Bovee and Thill, as their new text and began using it along with MyLab Business Communication in Fall 2015. Students purchased access codes to the eText and MyLab at the bookstore, which did not ensure that all students would purchase the text. Students also had the option of purchasing the hard copy in addition to the eText. In Spring 2016, the following semester, the department arranged for the bookstore to pay for the access codes and then require students to visit the bookstore to make their payment. Beginning in Fall 2016, the department began to use the Inclusive Access model to provide access to students. With the Inclusive Access model, the cost of the access codes was included in the student fee and students were granted access to the course materials at the start of the semester.

In the traditional full-length face-to-face and online sections, instructors teach the content of nine chapters of the textbook, and students complete assignments and a quiz for one chapter every two weeks. There are also “late-start” sections of the course, which are shorter in length and more challenging for students, as they are required to complete each chapter’s assignments and quiz within one week.

Instructors have made student use of the eText and MyLab a priority in their courses. Professor Conniff has found it helpful to provide information to students via

email before the start of the semester, informing them that they will have first-day access to the eText and to MyLab Business Communication. Instructors also make sure to set guidelines and timelines for students so that expectations are not ambiguous. Additionally, Professor Timm explained that providing students with class time to use MyLab helps them understand the importance of and how to navigate the online assignments.

Results and Data

Student success rates (scoring A, B, or C) in the course have increased overall since MyLab has been implemented, and remained higher than the pre-MyLab implementation after Inclusive Access was implemented in Fall 2016. The difference in percentage between FY 2015 and FY 2017 is nearly three percentage points, which translates to approximately 15 more students succeeding the courses. Students who earned a Z (dropped the course during the extended add-drop window) were excluded from the calculation.

Course success rates

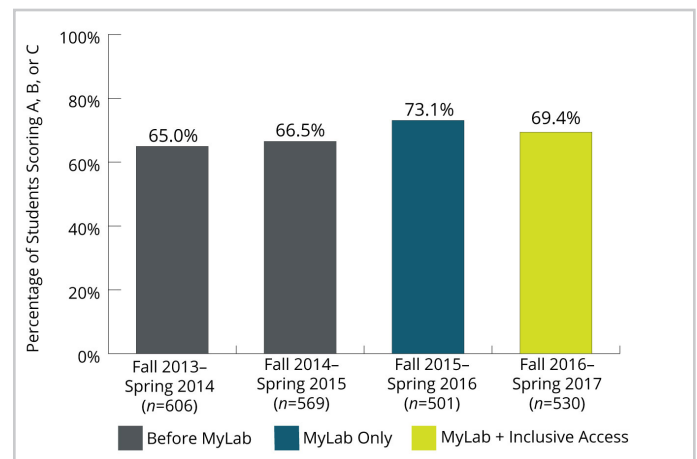


Figure 1. Student course success rates during the Fall and Spring semesters before and after Inclusive Access implementation.

Elgin currently allows an extended drop window for students at the start of the semester. Students who drop the course within this window receive a Z grade, and it does not affect their GPA or academic standing in the college. After implementing the Inclusive Access model, the combined student drop (Z) and withdrawal (W) rates decreased. The change in percentage from FY 2015 to FY 2017 is more than 2.5 percentage points, which translates to approximately 14 fewer students dropping or withdrawing from the courses. Given the increased success rates despite the decreased drop/withdrawal rates, it can be suggested that students who would have normally dropped the course are nonetheless as or more successful in the Inclusive Access model course as

their peers who would have remained in the course in the past.

Drop/withdrawal rates

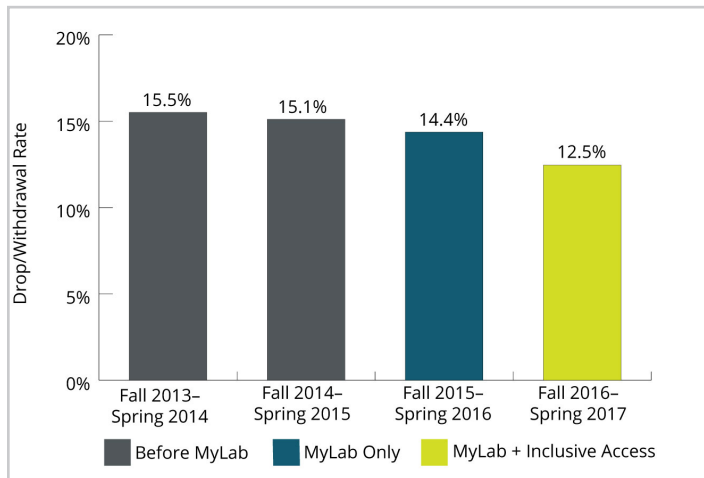


Figure 2. Student drop and withdrawal rates during the fall and spring semesters before and after Inclusive Access implementation.

Perhaps the most powerful indicator of the impact of first day access on student retention can be seen in Figure 3. This figure shows how after Inclusive Access was implemented, the number of students who dropped the course within 16 days of the course start decreased dramatically from 40 to 25 students.

Distribution of drops and withdrawals by number of days after course start

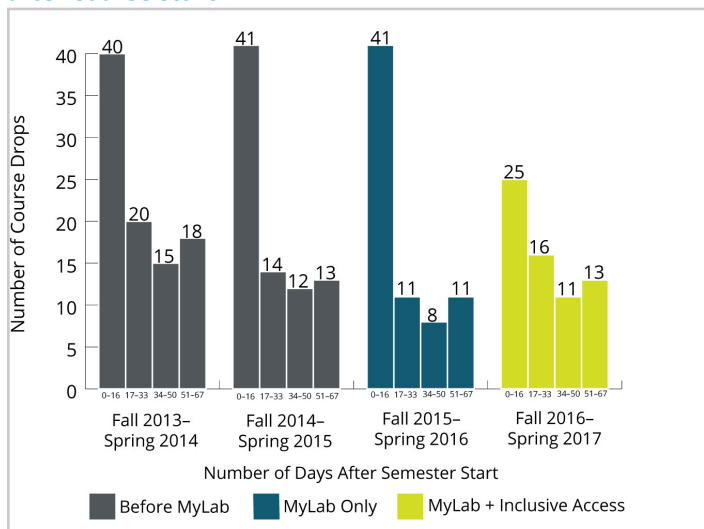


Figure 3. Distribution of student drops and withdrawals from BUS 101 and 142 during the Fall and Spring semesters of each academic year.

The Student Experience

Students completed an end-of-semester survey in two sections of BUS 101. Only 13 students completed the survey, but the results were generally positive regarding MyLab and Inclusive Access.

- 84.6% of students agreed that having first-day access to MyLab increased their chances of getting a

good grade.

- Only 15.4% of students reported that they usually purchase course materials before the first day of class if they are not included in the course fee.
- 61.5% of students agreed that they were more engaged in the course because they used MyLab.
- 53.8% of students agreed that they prefer to have the required course materials included in the course fee than have to purchase it on their own, and 15.4% of students were neutral.
- 53.8% of students agreed that they learned more from MyLab than they normally learn from a hard copy textbook, and 30.8% were neutral.

Students also self-reported that they appreciated having first day access to the eText and MyLab. They highlighted the ease in which they were able to access the course materials, learn how to use the program, and troubleshoot access issues at the start of the semester, and the way Inclusive Access removed the hurdle of purchasing the access codes at the bookstore. Several students also noted that they were able to get an early start to the course assignments and work ahead of time and at their own pace, enabling them to become familiar with key concepts before learning about them in greater depth during class.

The Instructor Experience

Faculty have observed that student complaints about the course materials have ceased since Inclusive Access was implemented. Now that students don't need to go to the bookstore to buy access codes and the cost of the materials are included the course fee, students have not showed resistance to the use of the book or MyLab.

Conclusion

Students and instructors alike have benefited from the transition to inclusive, first-day access to course materials using the Inclusive Access model. In addition to increases in student grades and retention, instructors believe that the quality of class discussions and learning has improved now that all students are able to complete independent preparation for class. Professor Eaton commented, "I can see a big difference in student participation. When they get into group work and apply what they are supposed to have read, there is more meaningful discussion, and there are questions that show that they are more interested in the content."