

MyLab Accounting educator study examines student performance at College of Western Idaho

Key Findings

- The majority of students (93%) scoring above average on MyLab assignments earned an A, B, or C as their final course grade, demonstrating mastery of course content.
- Students who completed most MyLab assignments earned higher average exam grades than students who skipped two or more MyLab assignments.
- 87% of students responding to a national, voluntary Spring 2017 survey agreed that MyLab Accounting helped them achieve a higher grade on quizzes and exams.

Study Specifics

School: College of Western Idaho, Nampa, ID
Course name: Introduction to Financial Accounting
Course format: Face to face
Course materials: MyLab Accounting for *Horngren's Financial & Managerial Accounting* by Nobles, Mattison, and Matsumura

Timeframe: Spring 2018
Educator: Joe Welker, Assistant Professor
Results reported by: Candace Cooney, Results Manager

Setting

- Locale: rural, public, community college located in Southwest Idaho with its main campus locations in Boise and Nampa
- Enrollment: more than 17,000 credit students and 11,500 non-credit students
- Four-year retention rate: 50%
- Four-year graduation rate: 10%
- Ethnicity: 66% White, 18% Hispanic, 2% African American, 2% Asian, 12% Other

About the Course

Joe Welker has been teaching at College of Western Idaho (CWI) since 2010. Introduction to Financial Accounting is a one-semester, four-credit course that is the first semester of a two-semester sequence. This course is required of all business majors, as well as some bookkeeping and office administration students. It enrolls approximately 350 students per year. The course stresses the use of financial information in making investment and business decisions and covers the primary elements of financial statements, accrual accounting, internal controls and cash safeguards, inventories, fixed assets, the statement of cash flow, and long-term liabilities.

Challenges and Goals

In 2011, CWI began offering accounting courses online. The challenge for instructors was providing engaging, interactive tools that promote personal responsibility for learning, while motivating students to participate in the course. Additionally, creating an online course from scratch can be time consuming and expensive, but the ready-to-go format of MyLab takes the pressure off instructors to create the problems sets, assessments, and real-world applications that are important for course success. Knowing that publishers have filled this gap by using their vast resources and textbook content, Welker adopted MyLab™ Accounting.

Implementation

MyLab assignments

Students use MyLab for understanding content, completing homework assignments, and quizzing. Welker views the MyLab homework assignments as formative — an opportunity for students to experiment and learn. Because the goal in assigning homework is practice, students have unlimited attempts at completion with firm due dates. Assignments are sorted by learning objective. Learning aids that act as just-in-time tutorials and student support are turned on during homework assignments. On a voluntary, national survey of students using MyLab Accounting ($n=4,238$), 83% of respondents found the MyLab learning aids to be helpful when completing homework and studying for exams, and 84% said they most often used Help Me Solve This. Said one student, “I often hesitate to ask my professor questions when it is just a simple, short question. Help Me Solve This really made a difference for me.”

“I often hesitate to ask my professor questions when it is just a simple, short question. Help Me Solve This really made a difference for me.”
—Student, National MyLab Accounting Survey

Welker encourages students to view the Demo Docs — problems that are narrated and worked through step-by-step. Additionally, he assigns as many [Excel Simulation](#) exercises as appropriate for each chapter. As a practitioner of accounting, he recognizes that graduating students need practice solving problems in the application they expect to use in the real world. Students must score at least 80% on these exercises and homework problems in order to open the weekly MyLab quiz.

MyLab quizzes are comprised of multiple-choice questions, multi-part problems, and Excel exercises, and students have just one attempt and 30 minutes for completion. The format and difficulty of the MyLab quizzes closely align with exams, bridging the gap for students from untimed homework with more than one attempt to timed, summative exams that are more challenging. Quizzes are due at 11:59 p.m., seven days after the lecture on that specific chapter content.

Other assessments

Welker assigns five paper-and-pencil exams throughout the semester, covering approximately two chapters each. Exams are comprised of modified, multiple-choice test bank questions, as well as several multi-part problems. Students have 85 minutes for completion. Exams are closed book, but students are encouraged to make use of the exam review posted on Blackboard prior to each test.

Assessments

- 80% Exams (6)
- 10% MyLab assignments and quizzes
- 10% Writing assignment

Results and Data

Students were placed into two groups based on their average MyLab score (74%), identifying the following (figure 1):

- 93% of students scoring above average on MyLab assignments earned an A, B, or C as their final course grade, showing mastery of course content.
- No students (0%) scoring above average on MyLab assignments failed the course, while 29% of students scoring below average earned an F as their final course grade.

For students, the formative MyLab assignments are intended to help them identify where they are in terms of successfully completing the summative course exams. Data suggest that if students are not successfully completing MyLab assignments, they may not be aware of potential gaps in their content knowledge until they complete the course exams.

MyLab assignment score and final course letter grades

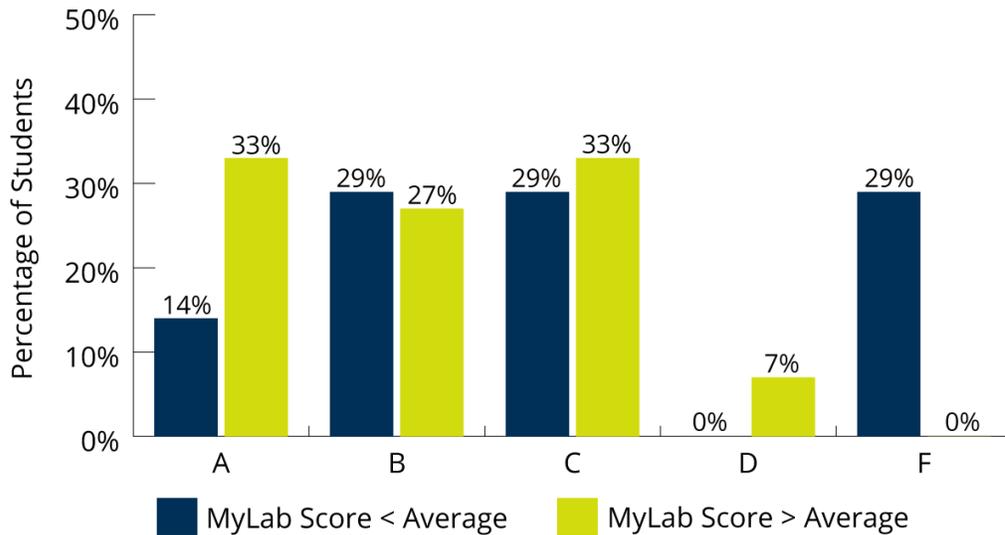


Figure 1. Relationship between MyLab Scores Above and Below Average and Average Final Course Letter Grades, Spring 2018 (n=59)

MyLab homework completion was measured by identifying the number of MyLab assignments a student did not complete out of a total of 12 assignments; a score of 0 was used to indicate an assignment that was skipped and not completed. Data show:

- Students who completed most assignments, skipping one assignment or fewer, earned average exam scores seven percentage points higher than students who skipped two or more assignments (figure 2).

Data indicates that MyLab performance may be an indicator of successful course completion. As a best practice, MyLab scores may help Welker identify students early on who might be at risk of poor overall course performance.

MyLab homework completion and average exam scores

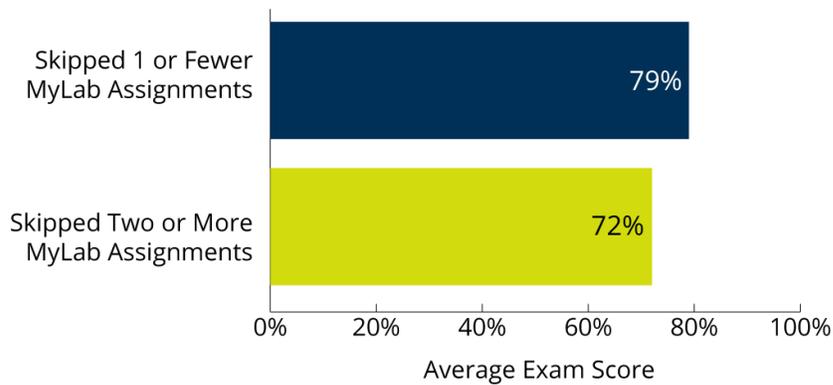


Figure 2. MyLab Homework Completion and Average Exam Score, Spring 2018 ($n=59$)

The Student Experience

Responses from a national, voluntary Spring 2017 survey of 4,608 MyLab Accounting users indicates that the majority of responding students recognize the value of the program.

- 87% of students agreed that MyLab helped them achieve a higher grade on quizzes and exams.
- 90% of students would recommend their instructor use MyLab in a future semester.
- 90% of students agreed that MyLab was easy to navigate.

Student comments when asked, "What are the benefits of MyLab?" include:

- *"I am a hands-on learner, so doing the homework solidified the material much better than reading by itself."*
- *"MyLab allowed me to get a better grade because it reinforced how to do the problems over and over again; even if they were a little difficult, it allowed for me to learn the problems."*
- *"When I could not grasp a concept or had difficulty, Help Me Solve This took me step-by-step through the process. That definitely helped me understand the concept and get a better grade!"*
- *"The study plans were tremendously helpful by allowing for hands-on practice. Without the study plans, I would not have had the chance to apply knowledge and practice what was learned."*

Conclusion

Homework is formative and students have the opportunity to try, review, and try again, learning from mistakes and practicing concepts until they are confident. The immediate feedback in MyLab offers Welker's students something paper-and-pencil homework cannot, helping them quickly identify areas of both strength and weakness, leading to more focused practice opportunities. Data from this course suggest that if students are not successfully completing MyLab assignments, they may not be aware of potential gaps in their content knowledge until they complete the course exams.