

MyLab Economics educator study examines the use of Dynamic Study Modules and the Inclusive Access distribution model at Athens State University

Key Findings

- Data indicate that students with above average Dynamic Study Module scores earned average MyLab quiz scores 15 percentage points higher than those with below average DSM scores.
- 100% of respondents on the survey agreed that the test-review-retest pattern of the Dynamic Study Modules helped them learn and remember chapter content.
- 94% of respondents on an end-of-semester survey agreed that having access to MyLab assignments and the eText [through the Pearson Inclusive Access model] on the first day of class increased their chances of getting a good grade in this course.

Study Specifics

School name: Athens State University, Athens, AL
Course name: Modern Economics
Course format: Online
Course materials: MyLab Economics for *Essentials of Economics* by Hubbard and O'Brien

Timeframe: Spring 2019
Educator: Jeff Johnson, Assistant Professor
Results reported by: Candace Cooney, Pearson Results Manager

Setting

- Locale: small, public, two-year, upper level (juniors and seniors) university in northern Alabama
- Enrollment: nearly 3,000 undergraduate students
- Faculty to student ratio: 15:1
- Gender: 67% female, 33% male

About the Course

Modern Economics is a three-credit, junior/senior level course enrolling approximately 150 students per year. The course is a macro examination of the operation of modern economic systems including price determination, aggregate demand and supply theory, public policy options, and the philosophical foundations of free market and command systems.

Challenges and Goals

Because problem solving is essential for success in economics classes, Johnson began using MyLab™ Economics in Fall 2018 as an opportunity to offer his students a greater variety and depth of exercises. Additionally, the ready-to-go format of MyLab takes the pressure off instructors to create the problems sets, assessments, and real-world applications, offering important flexibility in creating assignments reflective of the nature and difficulty of the course content.

In Fall 2018, the university also implemented Access Athens, their branding of the Inclusive Access distribution model where students are provided with all course content in digital format by the first day of class, and payment is made through a course fee at the time of registration. The core goals of the Access Athens model is to offer first-day access to required course materials at a student-conscious price.

Implementation

Participation in Access Athens is at the discretion of the individual instructor. Johnson chose to participate in Fall 2018 because many of his students are nontraditional and the cost of course materials may impede their ability to purchase them when classes begin. In his course, he has seen the cost of his required materials drop from approximately \$150 to approximately \$60 now, offering his students a significant savings. Students also have the choice of participation in the program, and 8% of survey respondents opted out of Access Athens. On the end-of-semester survey of Johnson's students, based on responses from students who opted in to the Access Athens program:

- 97% of respondents agreed that they appreciated having their required course materials included as part of a course fee, so they did not need to purchase them on their own.
- 100% of respondents agreed that the cost of course materials through Access Athens was a good value compared to a print text or packages they purchased in the past.
- 94% of respondents agreed that having access to MyLab assignments and the eText on the first day of class increased their chances of getting a good grade in the course.
- 76% of respondents chose not to purchase a print version of the textbook and used only digital course materials.
- 66% of respondents were initially concerned about using only an eText for their reading assignments, however, 94% of respondents became comfortable using the eText as the semester progressed.

To ensure a successful MyLab implementation and launch of his course, Johnson partnered with a Pearson Customer Success Agent to help assist with course creation and additional training. To communicate to his students that this course is part of the Athens Access program, Johnson provided students with an orientation video to help them understand the process and to create expectations for use of the digital course materials.

Because students often procrastinate with homework assignments, Johnson has MyLab homework due weekly on Tuesday night to avoid any potential issues arising on the weekend. For every chapter covered, students begin their assignment with the Dynamic Study Modules, complete the homework and Digital Interactives, and finish up with the chapter quiz.

[Dynamic Study Modules \(DSM\)](#): These questions continuously assess student performance and activity using data and analytics to provide personalized feedback in real time, reinforcing concepts that target a student's strengths and weaknesses. These questions provide a balance of questioning, application, and feedback, giving students a strong understanding of the chapter concepts. On the survey, students shared the following:

- 100% of respondents on the survey agreed that the test-review-retest pattern of the Dynamic Study Modules helped them learn and remember chapter content.
- 89% of respondents agreed that the use of confidence levels when answering questions in the Dynamic Study Modules ('I am sure', 'I am partially sure', 'I don't know yet') helped them identify chapter content they still needed to focus on.
- *"I love that the DSM allowed you to answer over again after explaining the reason for the particular answer."* —Student
- *"Stepping through the Dynamic Study Modules and the chart deck reference materials helped with chapter content and assignments and tests quite a bit."* —Student

End-of-chapter homework: Johnson assigned the prebuilt end-of-chapter exercises. Students have no time limit and unlimited attempts at completion.

Digital Interactives (DI): These simulations help students understand fundamental concepts like opportunity cost, comparative advantage, unemployment, and monetary policy in an active learning format and use real-time graph displays of current economic data from the Federal Reserve Bank. Students uniformly found the DI to be a helpful learning tool as indicated on the end-of-semester survey:

- 95% of respondents agreed that the active-learning aspect of the DI helped them understand the chapter content more completely.
- 89% of respondents agreed that the DI offered a more engaging out-of-class experience than traditional homework assignments.

MyLab chapter quizzes: These prebuilt quizzes are untimed, comprised of 10 multiple-choice questions per chapter, and students have two attempts at completion. The higher of the two scores is recorded as the final quiz score in the gradebook.

MyLab exams: Additionally, students complete three exams in MyLab, equally weighted and mutually exclusive in terms of content. Exams are comprised of 35 multiple-choice, randomized, and pooled questions taken from the test bank, including 3–8 questions per topic. Exams are available for one week, but once opened, students must complete the exam in 70 minutes.

Assessments

- 390 points MyLab assignments
- 300 points Exams (3)

Results and Data

Students were placed into two groups based on the average DSM score. Figure 1 identifies that students with DSM scores above average earned MyLab quiz scores 15 percentage points higher than students who earned below average DSM scores.

MyLab quiz score and DSM score

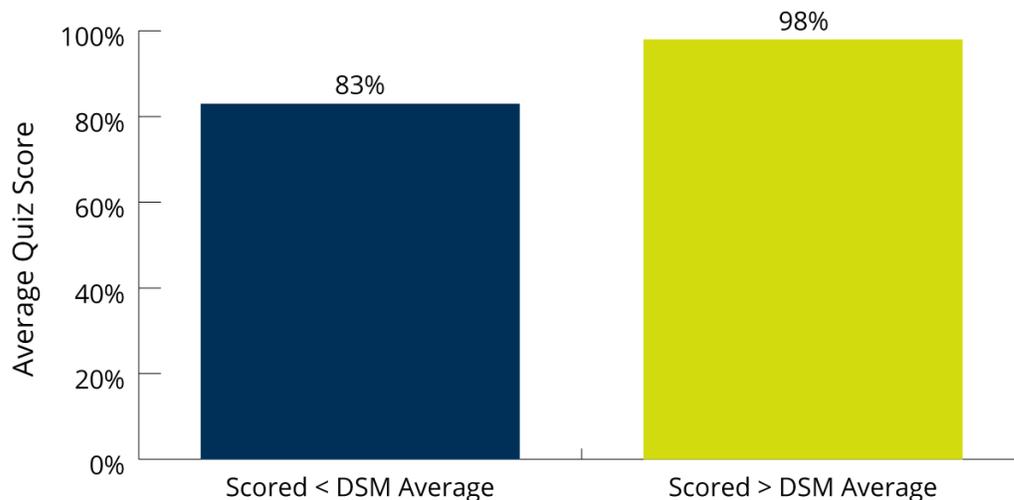


Figure 1. Average MyLab Quiz Scores Based on Average DSM Score, Spring 2019 (n=55)

While not depicted in this study graphically, additional data analysis showed that:

- 77% of students scoring above average on the DSM earned an A as their average quiz letter grade, while just 21% of students scoring below average on the DSM earned an A as their average quiz grade.
- No students (0%) scoring above average on the DSM earned a D or F as their average quiz letter grade, while 14% of students scoring below the DSM average earned a D or F.

For students, the formative DSM assignments are intended to help them identify where they are in terms of successfully understanding chapter topics. Data suggest that if students are not successfully completing the DSM, they may not be aware of potential gaps in their content knowledge until they complete the chapter quizzes.

The Student Experience

Responses from the end-of-semester survey of Johnson's students indicate that the majority of responding students recognize the value of MyLab Economics:

- 100% of respondents agreed that MyLab provided additional study resources that helped them learn more than they would have from traditional pencil-and-paper homework.
- 100% of respondents agreed that their understanding of the course material increased as a result of using MyLab.
- 100% of respondents agreed that MyLab homework assignments positively impacted their quiz and exam scores.

Student responses to the question, "What were the benefits of MyLab?" include:

- *"It helped me so much with the examples provided which resulted in me being successful in this course."*
- *"It is very simple to understand what you need to get done and when. Quite frankly this is my favorite class this semester for this reason."*
- *"I especially valued the homework section of MyLab where, if I missed a question, I had the opportunity to try again with different numbers."*
- *"The ability to review questions and have rationale for the ones you missed. Some of the terms can become confusing with their meanings, so having that rational helped a lot."*
- *"I actually use a Pearson product for out of class assignments in the course I teach, and being able to be on the student side allowed me to see just how beneficial it really is."*
- *"One of the benefits of MyLab was almost like being live in the classroom!"*

Conclusion

In Johnson's Modern Economics course, homework is formative, and students have the opportunity to try, review, and try again, learning from their mistakes and practicing concepts until they are confident. The immediate feedback in MyLab offers his students something that paper-and-pencil homework cannot, helping them quickly identify areas of strength and weakness, leading to more focused practice opportunities. In addition, the Dynamic Study Modules help students with challenging vocabulary and definitions, and data suggest that DSM mastery may also lead to higher quiz scores. In fact, students overwhelmingly agreed that use of MyLab positively impacted both quiz and exam scores.