

Writing Center Usage and ENGL 101 Outcomes

Overview

This study compared the retention and course success rates for students who utilized THINK TANK Writing Center services to those of students who did not. Civitas' Illume Courses tool has shown that students' grade in English 101 is correlated to their future graduation rates. While the course has shown consistently low overall DEW rates, Illume Courses has identified the "tipping point" as a grade of B. This means that students who earn an A or B are significantly more likely to graduate in six years than students who earn a C or below. Using propensity score analysis, we analyzed the impact of Writing Center usage on course success and one-year retention. The results show that:

- Freshmen in ENGL101 who visited the Writing Center during their first semester were retained to fall 2016 at a rate 6.9 percentage points higher than non-participants.
- Freshmen in ENGL101 who visited the Writing Center also were more likely to receive an A or B in the course – 86.2% compared to 74.2% of non-users.

Data and Methodology

In fall 2015, 54% of the full-time, first-time freshman cohort enrolled in English 101 (n=3,754). Of the freshmen in English 101, 449 visited the Writing Center at THINK TANK, comprising 12% of the course. The average number of visits per student was 2.1.

For analyzing outcomes, a number of demographic and academic variables were used to create the comparison group: students' Academic Index (AI), ethnicity, first-generation status, Pell grant eligibility, residency status, and gender.

Results

Among the matched data set, freshmen in the Writing Center User group had a one-year retention rate of 84.4%, 6.9 percentage points higher than the comparison group. Additionally, freshmen in ENGL101 who used the Writing Center were more likely to earn a grade of A or B in the course, influencing their future likelihood of graduation.

