

Horstman, W. A. (2004). A quantitative comparison of two different college success course formats on freshmen at a four-year college.

ABSTRACT

For first time students, arriving at college can be an overwhelming experience. Compared to high school, college is a different world and new students are strangers in a strange land. Higher education is a symbiotic relationship, one in which colleges need students and students need colleges. Keeping the two together is becoming a challenge. Schools have implemented college success courses; often called Freshman Seminars, as a way to acclimate students to college, and in doing so, retain students at their initial college.

In order to add to the data about the relationship between such courses and academic success; six hypotheses were investigated. Two questions considered the impact of a college success course on specific groups of students. Two questions dealt with gender and ethnic differences for students who took the college success courses. One question examined the relationship of final college success course grades to academic success. The final question delved into academic indicators that show which group “needed” a college success course the most.

Data from traditionally aged first year, first time students was analyzed in order to find possible relationships between college success courses and academic success. Data relating to retention to the sophomore year, cumulative GPA, and accumulated credit hours was considered in terms of college success course length, taking or not taking a colleges success course, gender, ethnicity, course grade, and Colorado Commission of Higher Education Index Scores.

Several research projects have found statistically significant relationships between similar courses and academic success. Results from the majority of questions within this project reflect previous findings, but lack the statistical significance of those investigations. However, two findings are worth noting. First, it does not appear that freshman with similar academic preparedness fared better academically due to completion of either a one-week or a sixteen-week college success course. Second, final course grades in the college success course were found to be statistically significant in terms of predicting academic success. There are indications in the data that suggest that completion of a college success course may help retain students who start college with low standardized test score and/or low GPAs.