

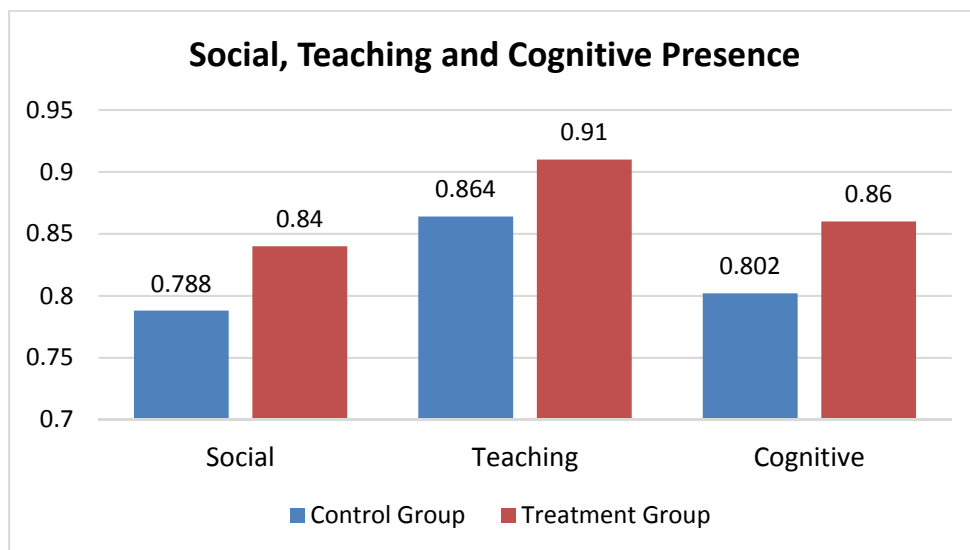
Presence on Purpose: How the First in The World Project’s Intervention Enhanced Engagement and Improved Outcomes for Online Students of Color

Summary

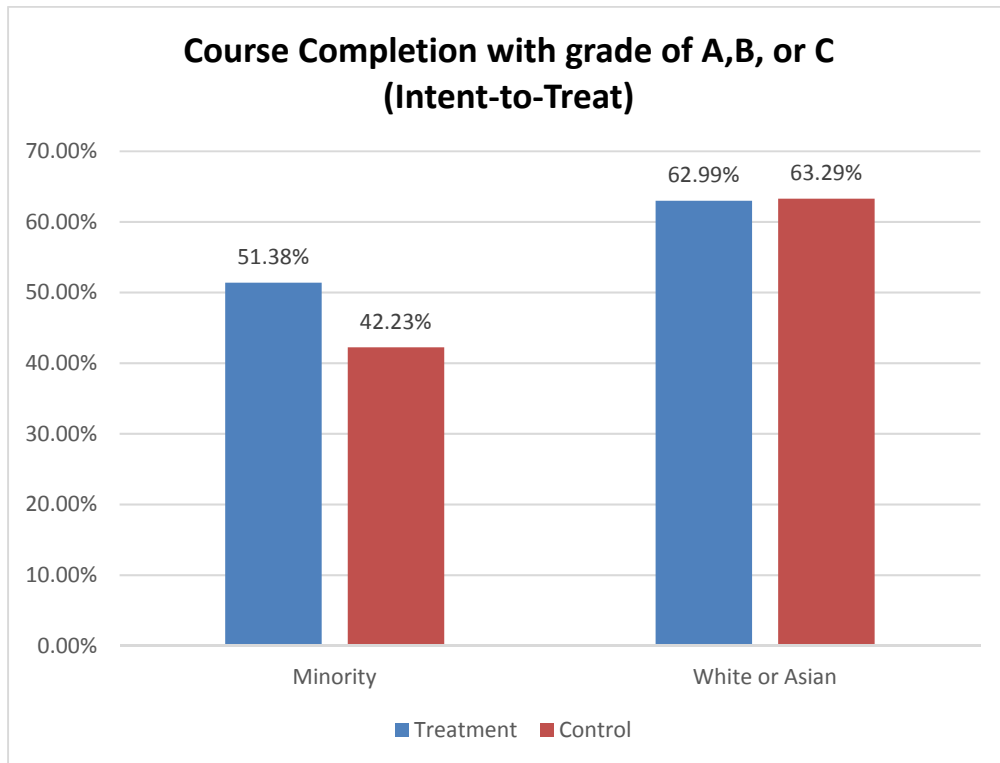
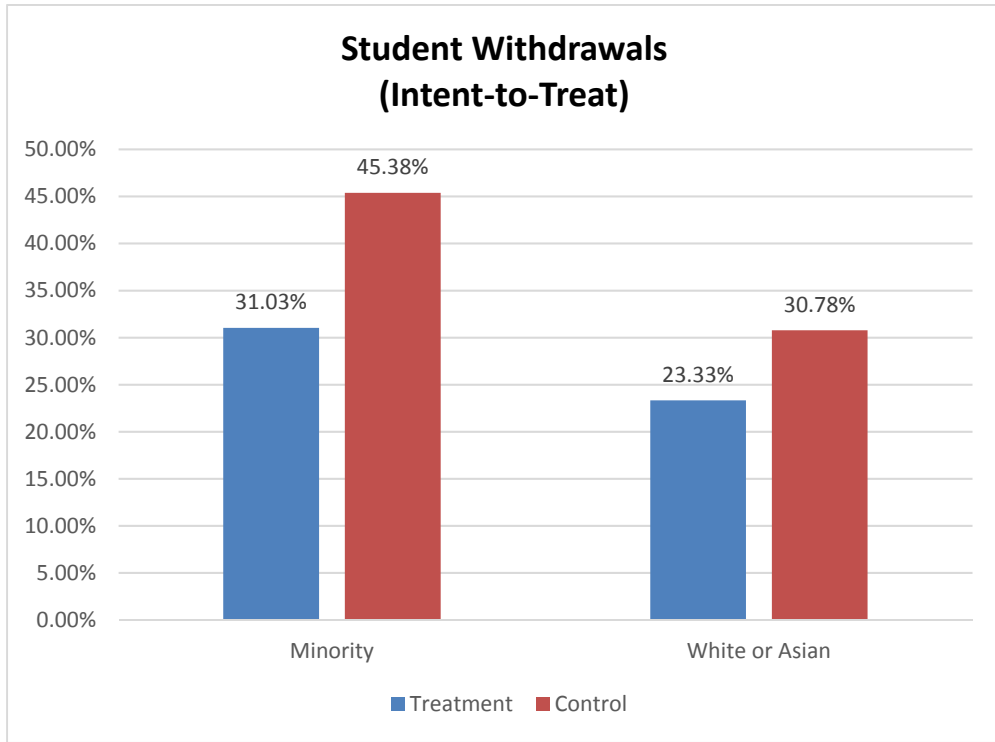
Wake Tech’s First in the World grant, Project COMPASS, was designed to improve retention and success rates of students in online courses. COMPASS, an acronym for “Constructing an Online Model to Promote At-Risk Student Success,” is particularly interested in improving outcomes for students of color. As a part of Wake Tech’s innovative intervention, Project COMPASS instructors have employed “high-tech” tools and “high-touch” course redesign strategies that enhance the student experience and increase teaching, social and cognitive presence in the online environment. Teaching presence involves the instructor’s design, facilitation and climate setting of the course that lead to meaningful learning outcomes; social presence relates to a supportive learning community for students; and cognitive presence relates to collaborative activities that allow students to construct meaning of course content.

This project implemented “high-tech” technologies such as easy use studios for video creation, web-conferencing software for synchronous interaction, texting tools for course reminders, and video threaded discussions to increase social and cognitive presence. “High-touch” engagement elements were also included such as intentional, proactive communication, proactive interventions to identify student issues before they arise, and intentional inclusion of people of color throughout course materials.

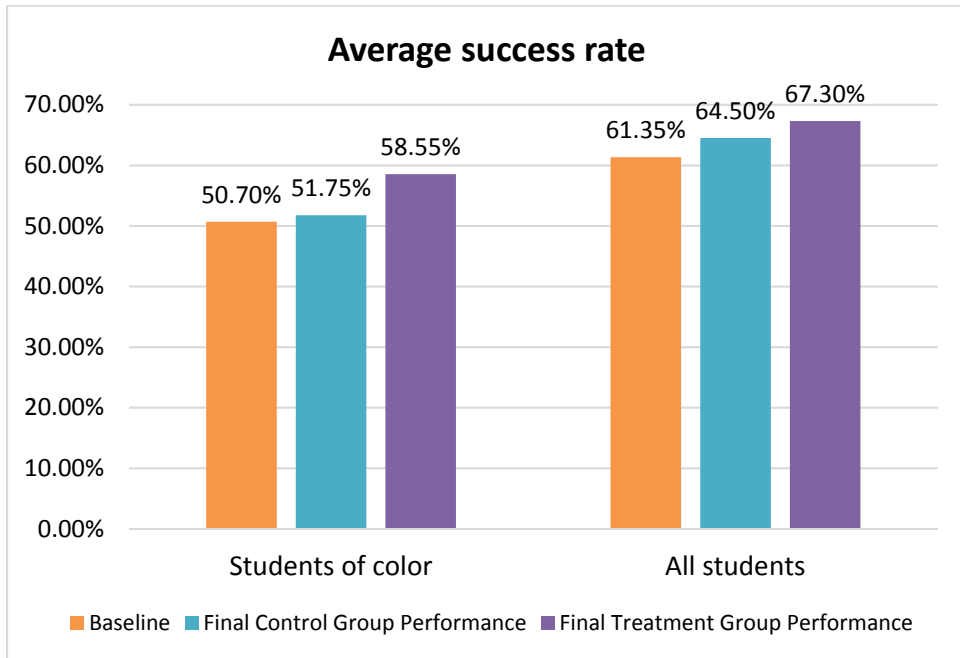
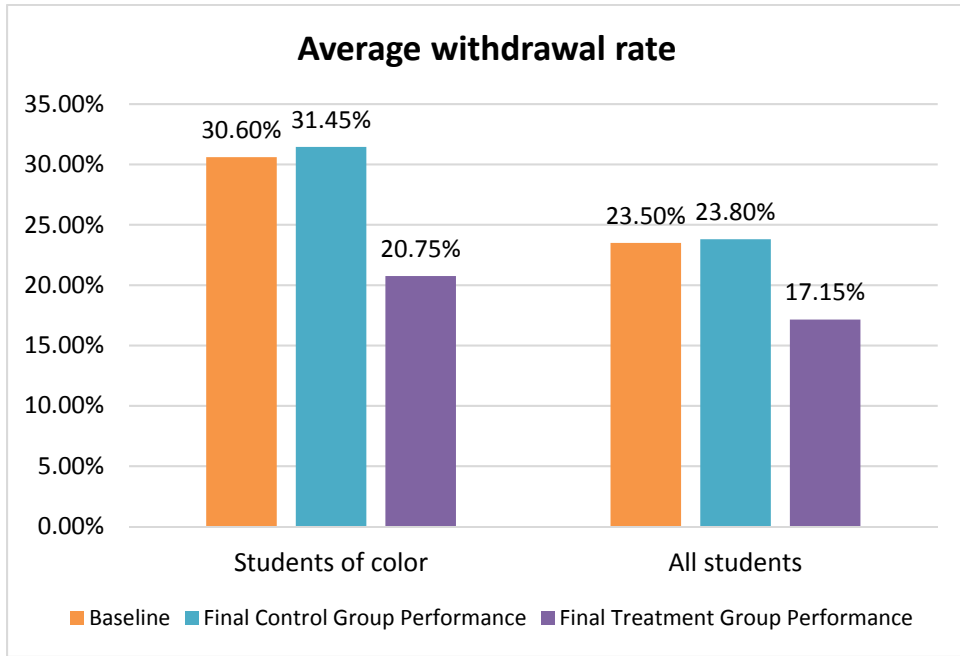
Results of this randomized controlled, 4-year study are based on the two high-enrollment, low-success gateway courses in the project’s first research phase (research for the third and final course is underway). Results indicate improvement in withdrawal rates and an increase in student success rates for all students, with greater improvements for students of color.



Intent-to-Treat Data



Descriptive Data



Additional Outcomes/Impacts of Project

Video Technology

- Two video production studios were developed and opened
 - Free to use for instructors and students
 - Easy to use for those with little to no experience with video creation

Model for Instructional Support Collaboration

- Partnerships between the team's faculty, instructional designer and instructional technologist have rendered a support model for faculty-instructional support
- College intends to scale this model to other departments and initiatives

Successful Randomization Process

- Successful and confidential randomization process each semester
- Students randomly assigned in all three courses into treatment and control groups
- Multi-department, multi-campus and multi-institution collaboration from project staff, independent evaluators, registration staff, deans, department heads, and Information Technology Services

Future college and community research partnerships

- Implementation and dissemination of the project helped to increase interest in research at our community college
- College has formed the Wake Tech Research Colloquium (WTRC) to support this interest
 - WTRC assists in identifying research resources and opportunities across the college and opportunities for collaboration in the educational community

Reduced Costs to Students

- Members of the project team collaborated to develop an open educational resources (OER) textbook and complementary course materials
- Eliminated textbook/materials costs to students
- Addressed the concern of selecting the incorrect textbook or not being able to access it at the beginning of the semester due to purchasing delays
- The creation of these materials saved students approximately \$360,000.

Training Modules in Development

- Project staff are currently developing training modules for faculty interested in deploying the enhanced engagement teaching module in their online sections. Please see project staff for more information.

Below is the protocol checklist used by treatment instructors to enhance engagement in online courses.

Semester Checklist At-a-Glance

PRE-SEMESTER	
	◆ Confirm ADA accessibility for all course materials.
	◆ Incorporate minority figures and field leaders in images, topics and examples of course content.
	◆ Include at least one major assignment with a multicultural component.
WEEK ONE	
	◆ Utilize web conferencing to provide a one-time synchronous orientation.
	◆ Create and upload a custom welcome/getting started video in the course introduction materials.
	◆ Identify and contact potentially at-risk students enrolled in the course.
WEEK 2 THROUGH End OF SEMESTER	
	◆ Hold 3 hours of synchronous events, such as webinars or virtual office hours.
	◆ Aim for a weekly personalized video (minimum of 8 during the semester).
	◆ Utilize weekly discussion board forums to support student collaboration, inquiry and problem-solving.
	◆ Respond to student contacts within 6 hours on active days.
	◆ Send weekly announcements with affirmation messages
	◆ Send reminders to students of upcoming due dates.
	◆ Contact (email/text/phone) students who missed weekly assignments or have not logged into Blackboard for 7 days.
ONE TIME EVENT	
	◆ Host and/or promote at least one online event with a minority speaker from Campus during the semester.
	◆ Support high participation in the COI survey (mid-semester).
	◆ Finalize your data collection at the end of the semester.

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