

Closing the Assessment Loop: Case Study in Improving Outcomes for Online College Students during Pandemic

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Abstract : To counter the adverse effect of Covid-19 on college student success, two faculty members at a US community college have used web-based assessment data to improve curricula and, thus, student outcomes. This case study exemplifies how “closing the loop” by analyzing outcome assessments in real time can improve student learning for academically underprepared students struggling during the pandemic. The purpose of the study was to develop ways to mitigate the negative impact of Covid-19 on student success of underprepared college students. Using the Assessment, Evaluation, Feedback and Intervention System (AEFIS) and other assessment tools provided by the college’s Office of Institutional Research, an English professor and a Music professor collected data in skill areas related to their curricula over four semesters, gaining insight into specific course sections and learners’ performance across different Covid-driven course formats—face-to-face, hybrid, synchronous, and asynchronous. Real-time data collection allowed faculty to shorten and close the assessment loop, and prompted faculty to enhance their curricula with engaging material, student-centered activities, and a variety of tech tools. Frequent communication, individualized study, constructive criticism, and encouragement were among other measures taken to enhance teaching and learning. As a result, even while student success rates were declining college-wide, student outcomes in these faculty members’ asynchronous and synchronous online classes improved or remained comparable to student outcomes in hybrid and face-to-face sections. These practices have demonstrated that even high-risk students who enter college with remedial level language and mathematics skills, interrupted education, work and family responsibilities, and language and cultural diversity can maintain positive outcomes in college across semesters, even during the pandemic.

Keywords : AEFIS, assessment, distance education, institutional research center

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