

School Name [Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA](#)

Course Name [Introduction to Psychology](#)

Course Format [Traditional](#)

Key Results After increasing MyPsychLab from 10 to 20 percent of students' overall course grade, success rates increased by 8 percent while D/F/W rates decreased. In addition, students continue to develop important writing and critical thinking skills with Writing Space's auto-feedback assignments.

Submitted by

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Course Materials

Psychology by Ciccarelli and White with MyPsychLab

The Introduction to Psychology course serves as a social science requirement for Louisiana State University's general education curriculum. Approximately 1,300 students from a wide range of majors take the course each semester. As part of this general education requirement, students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of factors associated with global interdependence including economic, political, psychological, cultural, and linguistic forces. In addition, students gain an understanding of psychological theory and research while learning to think critically and apply this material in their daily lives. One of the best ways for students to develop both a deep understanding of course content and critical thinking skills is through writing. Our challenge was finding a way to assign and grade 1,300 student essays in a way that was consistent across sections and provided personalized feedback to each student in a timely manner.

Implementation

MyPsychLab was initially implemented as a way to give students more opportunities to practice writing. Conceptual and applied writing assignments—corresponding to videos from the MyPsychLab Video Series—are due before each exam. These assignments are automatically graded for both content and the more mechanical aspects of writing. Students receive instant feedback within the program to help them identify weaknesses along with tools that can improve their writing skills. Psychology majors, like all students, benefit greatly from this writing practice which helps develop critical thinking skills necessary for success in more advanced courses.

After two semesters we began assigning weekly quizzes to help students master basic course concepts and prepare for lectures. In addition to their auto-feedback writing assignments, students also complete quizzes in MyPsychLab before each chapter is covered in class, and they have the option of referencing their textbook for help. (Many students like to use the MyPsychLab eText when taking these weekly quizzes.) Along with this change, we increased MyPsychLab from 10 percent to 20 percent of students' overall course grade.

Benefits

By providing reliable auto-feedback on student essays, Writing Space allows us to assign writing for all of our Introduction to Psychology students each semester. These assignments give students the opportunity to practice writing while mastering important psychology concepts. The process of writing, combined with Writing Space's immediate feedback, leads to more long-term retention of course content and the development of important writing and critical thinking skills. MyPsychLab also helps to ensure students are reading the textbook, which includes material covered on exams but not always covered in class.

Assessments

45 percent	Exams (three)
20 percent	Final exam
20 percent	MyPsychLab (Writing Space assignments; quizzes)
10 percent	Class participation (clicker questions)
5 percent	Research learning requirement

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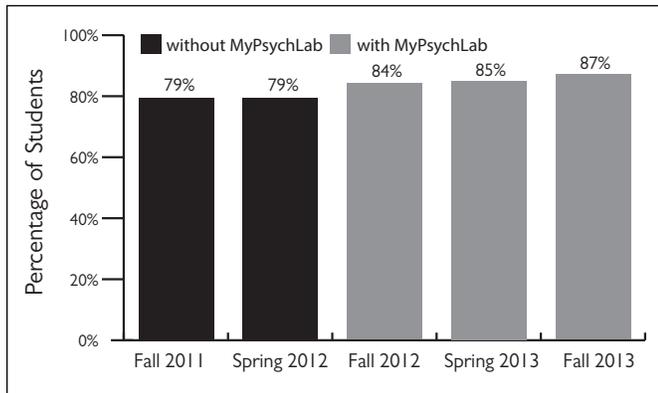


Figure 1. Success Rates without MyPsychLab (Fall 2011, $n=1,379$; Spring 2012, $n=1,135$) vs. with MyPsychLab (Fall 2012, $n=1,320$; Spring 2013, $n=1,258$; Fall 2013, $n=1,595$). Success rate = the percentage of students receiving a grade of A, B, or C in the course.

Results and data

To determine MyPsychLab’s impact on student learning over time, we compared grade distributions and withdrawal rates from five consecutive semesters: two without MyPsychLab and three with MyPsychLab. The results indicate that MyPsychLab has had a positive measurable impact on our students’ learning. Success rates have increased with more students now receiving overall course grades of A, B, or C compared to previous semesters without MyPsychLab (figure 1). In addition, fewer students are receiving overall course grades of D or F, and fewer students are withdrawing from the course (figure 2).

The initial increase in success rates in fall 2012 may also have been the result of more students reading their required textbook carefully in order to complete the quizzes. Although we do not have data measuring time spent using the textbook in current or previous semesters, we did see an increase in the number of textbooks (with MyPsychLab) purchased, so more students had access to all course materials. In fall 2013, results improved further when MyPsychLab was increased from 10 percent to 20 percent of students’ overall course grade (figures 1 and 2). Requiring additional weekly assessments led to students spending more time actively engaged with course material within MyPsychLab. As a result, overall performance improved.

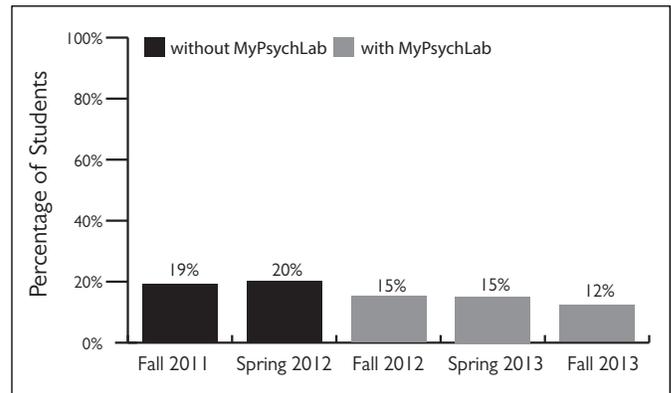


Figure 2. D/F/W Rates without MyPsychLab (Fall 2011, $n=1,379$; Spring 2012, $n=1,135$) vs. with MyPsychLab (Fall 2012, $n=1,320$; Spring 2013, $n=1,258$; Fall 2013, $n=1,595$). D/F/W rate = the number of students who receive an overall course grade of D or F, plus the number of students who withdraw from the course.

The student experience

Because this course is often students’ first experience with computer-graded essays, they can be skeptical when they initially learn about these assignments. However, as the semester progresses we are able to work through these concerns. We have found it helpful to walk through a sample writing assignment together on the first day of class so students see the kind of feedback they will receive and how their essays will be scored.

Conclusion

The data indicate that our initial increases in student learning with MyPsychLab have been sustained over multiple semesters. Next semester we plan to move to the updated version of Writing Space’s auto-feedback assignments so we can take advantage of the built-in Turnitin feature to help prevent plagiarism.

Going forward we plan to redesign the entire course with the goal of measuring and improving student learning outcomes while providing a more active learning experience in the classroom. We ran one pilot section during the spring 2014 semester where each week students spent three hours working with MyPsychLab resources in a computer lab and one hour in a traditional classroom. We learned a great deal from this experience, and we are now in the process of evaluating the pilot section data and planning the next steps in our course redesign.