

### San Diego City College San Diego, California

**INSTRUCTORS** Professor Gavin Brown and Professor Christopher Baron

**COURSE** English 12 Basic English Review

**TEXT** English Simplified, 12/e by Blanche Ellsworth and John A. Higgins with MySkillsLab

**TERMS COVERED** Spring 2009-Spring 2010

**CONTRIBUTION OF MYSKILLSLAB TO FINAL GRADE** 100%

**TYPES OF DATA REPORTED** Improvement in final course grades  
Improvement in standardized test scores  
Improvement in drop/fail/withdraw (retention) rates over previous semesters

**COURSE STRUCTURE** Hybrid: lecture/lab

EQUIPPED WITH A 30-STATION COMPUTER LAB within the San Diego Community College English Center and aware of area high school students' need for basic skills strengthening, professors Gavin Brown and Chris Baron incorporated the Early College High School program and launched it in early 2009. The program was initiated by the Gates Foundation in the form of a grant to San Diego City College, San Diego High School, and San Diego Early Middle College. The grant focuses on college course taking and college readiness for high school students. English 12 is one of the core offerings of the program and admits area high school students to SDCC for a multiple-term refresher course in reading, writing, and critical thinking skills designed to raise students' proficiency, college readiness skills, and to help them achieve higher scores in the required California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) and other standardized tests like the SAT. Baron and Brown had both used Pearson English MyLabs with positive results and chose to develop the new course using MySkillsLab as the primary curriculum.

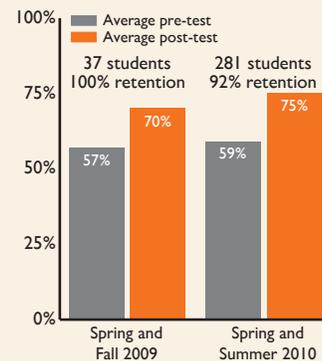
"We chose MySkillsLab because it offered a versatile platform that we could cater to individual and class needs," says Professor Gavin Brown. "Our primary goal was to give high school students the benefits of a college course while also providing a platform that would assist in their preparations for mandatory state examinations. While our initial focus was on helping high school students, we have extended the course to college students as well."

MySkillsLab forms the core curriculum for a self-paced course. Students take the pre-test diagnostic and then pursue the individualized study plan created for them by MySkillsLab. After completing the designated activities, students take the post-test diagnostic to assess their retention and mastery. As students progress, they move beyond sentence-level work to focus on paragraph and essay writing.

#### Teaching with MySkillsLab

"One of the clearest benefits of MySkillsLab," insists Baron, "is the initial diagnostic that gives us an immediate and clear understanding of students' individual knowledge and needs. MySkillsLab enables us to target our teaching from day one of the term, delivering exactly the help that each student requires. We use MySkillsLab as a core part of our curriculum in English 12 for every level of student in courses all across the curriculum."

#### Student performance improvement with MySkillsLab



#### ANALYSIS

Students using MySkillsLab are demonstrating significant skills gains and retention, improved final course scores, and improved passing rates with superb retention rates.

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—Professor Christopher Baron

Brown adds, “Because we do not use MySkillsLab in a traditional lecture setting, it allows me greater flexibility to meet with students on an individual basis and deliver precisely the instructional assistance they need. Our goal with MySkillsLab is to focus on acceleration in basic skills courses, minimize the time our students spend in lower-level basic skills courses, and help students move swiftly to transfer-level courses.”

### Learning with MySkillsLab

Brown and Baron report that students find MySkillsLab very user-friendly. Even students with negligible technology experience are quickly acclimated and motivated to explore the program independently.

MySkillsLab supports a range of learning styles. “Students often mention how the self-paced programming and the video tutorials have helped them better understand the material both in the program and in their other classes,” asserts Brown.

Both Baron and Brown insist that MySkillsLab fosters collaboration among students and that this collaboration helps develop essential interpersonal skills. Brown says, “I have noticed, especially in the high school students I work with, that MySkillsLab allows for a greater opportunity for students to work together and help each other.”

### RESULTS

Professor Brown says, “MySkillsLab counts for 100% of a student’s final grade. Currently, in evaluating the successful completion of the course, we are looking at the correlation between the pre-test diagnostic, the successful completion of the course work assigned in the study plan, and the skills retention rates shown in the post-test diagnostic. We are definitely seeing an improvement in test scores with MySkillsLab.” Professor Baron adds, “MySkillsLab has helped some Basic Skills students to re-enter a regular course of study. And, we are seeing high school students who were at risk of failure able to pass the CAHSEE thanks to MySkillsLab.”

### FUTURE

The success of the MySkillsLab program at SDCC is fueling plans for wider use. While the initial goal was to assist high school students, the MySkillsLab-based refresher course continues to evolve and support expanding populations of students at SDCC. Now serving both high school and college students, Professor Brown is offering more sections of English 12, customizing the MySkillsLab curriculum to address students’ needs for basic, advanced, or critical thinking skills support. Additionally, Baron and Brown are in talks with several SDCC academic departments about potentially offering more contextualized learning using MySkillsLab-based refresher courses specifically designed to support students in curriculum areas like nursing and other career tech programs.

Professor Brown says, “We continue to evolve the program to best meet the needs of our high school and college students. We feel there is great potential with MySkillsLab, and we are already seeing success among our students. MySkillsLab has been a positive experience, and we are excited to expand our use of the program and record greater student performance improvements.”

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