



Quantifying Impact of Academic Support Programs

Monroe Community College is ranked among the top 3 percent of U.S. community colleges for most associate degrees awarded. The college serves 13,000 students across two campuses, two centers and multiple other locations, offering more than 100 degree and certificate programs at a significantly lower cost than most higher education institutions in the country. One third of Monroe students are 25+ years old and 94 percent commute to campus.

Over the last decade, Monroe has seen a decrease of 32 percent in enrollment. The decline is attributed to various changes — from intentional implementation of registration deadlines and proof of ability to pay, to the nationwide decline in the number of high school graduates and the uptick in the economy. As retention has remained flat, operating cost per FTE has increased by 36 percent — meaning that expensive initiatives designed to keep students in school may not have been having the desired impact on outcomes. But, without the ability to analyze those initiatives with precision, it was difficult to know how to refine them in order to make them more effective.

In 2018, Monroe's institutional research (IR) team reorganized and focused on two goals: achieving a 3 percent increase in the persistence rate and 2 percent increase in the completion rate from fall 2018 to fall 2019. Part of this work involves clarifying the impact of student success initiatives across the institution.

Problem:

Monroe's approach to reporting on the efficacy of initiatives involved primarily looking at student participation and use of various services. The team also took some snapshots to see how many of the students who used academic and student support services persisted into the next term. This analysis was done in-house and took a week or more to complete, which means campus teams were not able to take action to shift outcomes during the current term. Additionally, Monroe recognized that many of the students who took advantage of support services were already the most likely to persist. This kind of selection bias is common when it is not possible to execute a randomized control trial or when it is difficult to obtain a sample that is representative of the student population.

Thus, the return on investment for some of Monroe's biggest student success efforts was difficult, if not impossible, to measure without the ability to isolate the impact on persistence of individual initiatives.

In Fall 2018, the IR team was tasked with using analytics to approach student success differently and to move the needle quickly — in just four months.

Efficacy
measurement
case study:

Monroe Community College

Benefits:

5.9%pp
Overall Increase
in Persistence

3.4%
Return
on Investment

Most effective for:

- Zero terms completed
- Readmitted undergrads
- Part-time
- Lowest persistence probability



Solution:

Monroe implemented the Civitas Learning® Impact® application in September 2017, attended two webinars and, within two weeks, started analysis of one of their largest academic support initiatives — the Center for Academic Reading (CAR).

Originally developed as a pilot under a Title III grant, the CAR served 1,856 students between Fall 2013 and Spring 2017, helping them with reading and critical thinking skills. As a pilot, the CAR cost the institution \$138,000 each year including equipment, tutors and coaches to staff the center. With the expansion of the CAR in 2017, Monroe needed to know impact on persistence in order to justify ongoing investment in the program.

Impact applied prediction-based propensity score matching (PPSM) to find the group of students who participated in the initiative, match them to a group of students who did not participate but who shared incredibly similar characteristics, and then, compared the two... providing an apples to apples comparison for analysis. Impact analyzed more than 2,500 student pairs — half of whom visited the CAR at least 10 times over the course of four years, and half of whom did not. The result was a 5.9 percentage point (%pp) overall lift in persistence, which translates into a 3.4 percent return on investment for the college. This was the highest lift in persistence of all initiatives run through Impact at Monroe in the first year. Impact also revealed that the CAR was most effective for new students, readmitted undergraduate students, full-time students, and students with the lowest probability to persist.



5.9%pp
Overall
Increase
in Persistence



7.64%pp
Increase
in Zero Terms
Completed



12.38%pp
Increase
in Undergraduate
Readmit Students



12.81%pp
Increase
in Part-Time
Students



8.32%pp
Increase in
Bottom Quartile
Prediction
Percentile

Action:

Empowered by Impact results, Monroe used the Civitas Learning Illume® application to segment students from the groups that saw the most lift for CAR, and then sent them personalized nudges to encourage them to leverage these resources.

Following the CAR analysis, the Monroe IR team put out a call for initiatives from teams across the college to submit through Impact. The college discussed with their data leadership team, which initiatives were eligible for analysis. This cross-functional team was able to suggest a variety of student success initiatives that had not previously had an ROI analysis and were excited about the possibility to minimize selection bias in their assessment. More than 30 programs were submitted for analysis. The college plans to work with teams to drill into the efficacy of these initiatives in order to identify opportunity to refine efforts and maximize the impact on students.

About Civitas Learning®:

Today, Civitas Learning is a strategic partner to nearly 400 colleges and universities, serving more than 8 million students. Together with our growing community of partners, Civitas Learning is making the most of our world's learning data to graduate a million more students per year by 2025.

Learn more about our efficacy measurement solution at www.civitaslearning.com/solutions/efficacy-measurement.



We could only see who went and who didn't and we were lumping a lot of things into one ROI formula. Impact has given us confidence in our results, and the ability to take specific action with student groups who benefit most.

— **Kimberley Collins**

*Associate Vice President,
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