ARC to Success: Linking the “Commons” Model to Academic Success at Central Washington University

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Research Question

In Fall 2012, Central Washington University opened the Academic and Research Commons (ARC); a “one stop shop” for student success with tutoring services, reference librarians, and career services peer advisors. Our question: Does student engagement with the services and space known as the Academic and Research Commons contribute to student success?

Process & Methods

3 sections of English 101 acted as our test group and 2 sections acted as our control group.

The test group received a library instruction session, a tutor-led group review session, and a one-on-one session with a tutor or librarian.

Instructors reported final course grades and grades received on final synthesis paper. Administered the pre-self assessment test at the beginning of Fall Quarter across all 5 sections.

Administered the post-self assessment at the end of Fall Quarter.

All students were tracked to see if they returned to the ARC and met with a tutor in Winter 2014 quarter.

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Overall, we found that students that received additional time in the ARC, had dedicated time in class with librarians and tutors, and were required to meet outside of class with either a tutor or librarian, performed better in English 101 than their counterparts. 65.8% of our test group achieved a final grade of B or better in English 101 versus 36.7% in our control group (Figure B). Students in our test group were also more likely to leave English 101 feeling “very” or “extremely” confident in their ability to perform academic research and proficiency in academic writing (Figure C & D).

Next Steps

• We will be repeating the study again in Fall 2014 with larger, and even, sets of control and test classes.
• Students will receive instruction on what to expect from a tutoring session before those sessions take place.
• The library session will utilize “flipped classroom” methodology so that students come into the session with a basic understanding of library resources.
• Students will be surveyed again at the end of the 2014-2015 academic year to determine student usage of the ARC.

This project is part of the program “Assessment in Action: Academic Libraries and Student Success” which is undertaken by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in partnership with the Association for Institutional Research and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. The program, a component of ACRL’s Value of Academic Libraries initiative, is made possible by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.