



San Joaquin Delta College

The Impact of Guidance 11 Summer Courses on Student Performance Indicators

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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

A large body of research has demonstrated that orientation programs help engage students thereby facilitating student success. Orientation courses have been offered at San Joaquin Delta College (SJDC) for over a decade and are typically offered as half or one unit courses that new and re-entering students can voluntarily enroll in. Unlike many other colleges and universities that have adopted a mandatory orientation program for new students, the orientation programs at SJDC are all still voluntary. Therefore, the purpose of present study is to present data on the impact of SJDC's core orientation program: Guidance 11 on specific student performance indicators of interest. The data can help justify the need for a mandatory policy that would require all new incoming students and re-entering students to enroll in orientation programs at the beginning of their college careers.

VARIABLES OF INTEREST

Two specific cohorts of students were targeted to investigate the effects of Guidance 11 on several student performance indicators. These cohorts were based on students who first enrolled in the academic years 2006-07 and 2007-08. The first cohort consisted of first-time enrolled students who took a summer Guidance 11 course and then subsequently enrolled in the fall term. The second cohort consisted of students who first enrolled at SJDC in the fall term of the same years but did not enroll in Guidance 11. The purpose of dividing these two specific cohorts apart is to enable us to make statistical comparisons between the groups in order to determine the impact of taking Guidance 11 on the following performance indicators of interest: grade point average, units attempted, units earned, completion of a student education plan (SEP), financial aid status, academic and progress probation status, and counseling service usage.

DATA PREPARATION AND ANALYSIS

Data were retrieved from the System 2000 database and were screened prior to analyses. All outcome variables were based on the student status at the end of each fall term. Data from 2006 and 2007 were collapsed to create the two cohorts used for statistical comparisons.

RESULTS

After screening the data, 6,959 students were identified as first-time enrolled students in the fall of 2006 and 2007 and 2,318 students were identified as first-time enrolled students in the summer of 2006 and 2007 that subsequently enrolled in the fall term. Two sets of analyses were conducted to compare the two cohorts: t-test analyses for outcome variables measured on a continuous scale (e.g. GPA, units attempted, and units earned) and chi-square analyses for outcome variables measured on a categorical scale (e.g. Financial aid status, academic probation status, progress probation status, SEP status, counseling service usage).

Academic-Related Outcomes. Results from the t-test analyses revealed significant mean differences in GPA, units attempted and units earned between the cohorts. Students who enrolled in a summer Guidance 11 course attempted and earned more units and had a higher end of term GPA than students who first enrolled at SJDC in the same fall term (see Table 1).

Table 1. Average Grade Point Average, Units Attempted, and Units Earned Comparisons

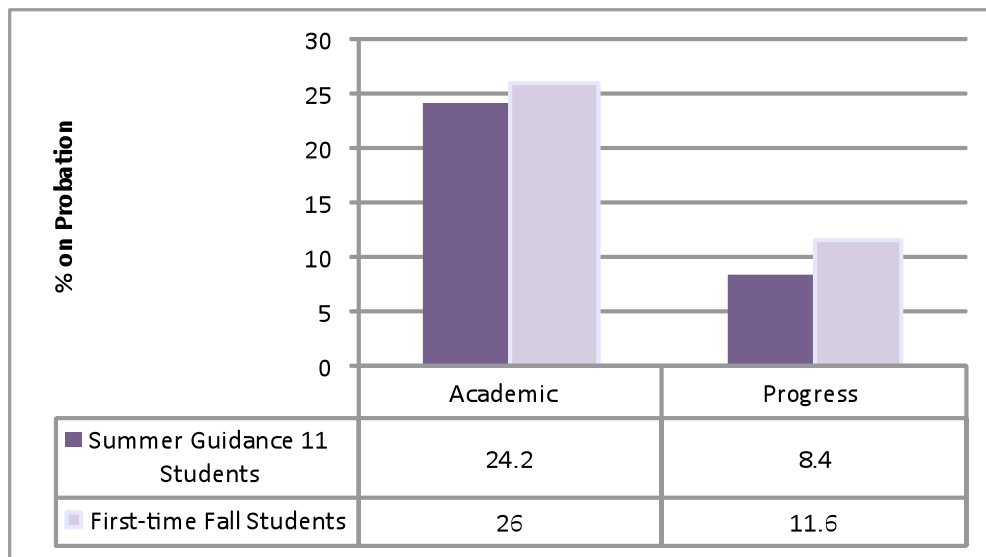
Cohort	GPA	Units Attempted	Units Earned
Summer Guidance 11 Students (N=2,318)	2.17	12	8
First-Time Fall Students	1.83	9	6

(N = 6,959)

Note. All outcomes statistically significant between cohorts

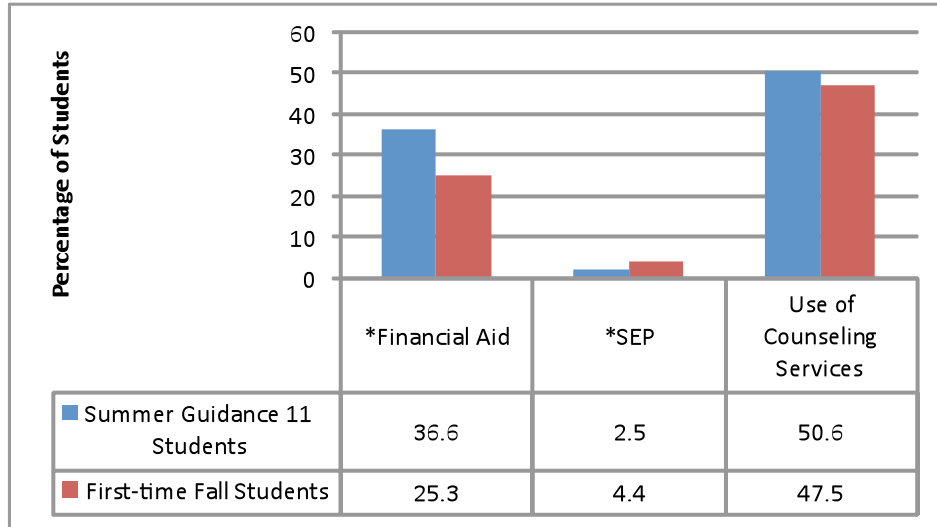
Given that summer Guidance 11 students earned significantly more units and higher GPAs, it should follow that a lower percentage of these students would end up on academic (GPA < 2.0) or progress (Units Completed/Units Attempted < 80%) probation than students who first enrolled in the fall term. However, because probation status is based on students' performance after 12 attempted units, the likelihood of students being placed on probation increases for the summer Guidance 11 students since their average unit load was 12, whereas the average unit load of the first-time fall students was less than 12. Given this, we controlled for the effects of units attempted by only comparing probation status between the cohorts for students who attempted 12 or more units during the term. Controlling for unit load, we found no relationship between taking a Guidance 11 course in the summer and academic probation status but a significant relationship between the cohort and progress probation status. Students who enrolled in a Guidance 11 course in the summer were just as likely to be on academic probation as students who first enrolled in the fall term; but were less likely to be on progress probation than students who first enrolled in the fall term (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Academic and Progress Probation Status Comparisons



Student Service Outcomes. The use of student services such as counseling, applying for financial aid and creating a student educational plan are other outcomes the Guidance 11 courses are expected to affect. Chi-square analyses revealed that a higher proportion of students from the summer Guidance 11 courses had financial aid and were more likely to use counseling services than first-time fall students. In terms of creating a SEP, a greater proportion of first-time fall students developed an SEP than the summer Guidance 11 students, although the differences are very small (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Percentage Comparisons of Students Using Students Services



Note. Use of counseling services almost reach significance, $p = .053$
 *Statistically significant at .01 level

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study suggest that the summer Guidance 11 courses do have a positive impact on new students. On average, students from these courses have higher GPAs, attempt more units and earn more units than new students beginning in the same fall terms. Moreover, a higher proportion of these students received financial aid and used the counseling services on campus. Although a larger proportion of first-time fall students created an SEP, the proportions for both cohorts were both extremely low. Therefore, based on these results it does appear the summer Guidance 11 courses are having a positive impact on student performance and that these results legitimize the need for the college to switch from a voluntary enrollment policy to mandatory orientation enrollment policy for new incoming and re-entering students.