Do Short-Term Classes Realize a Student Success Windfall?

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College Council
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Analysis

• All student enrollments from Summer 2015 through Fall 2019
  • 764,753 enrollments
  • 8,706 course sections

• Matched classes based on:
  • Same Course ID
  • Same instructor
  • Schedule type (e.g., face-to-face lecture, online asynchronous)
  • 835 matches; 176 matches for 8-week & 16-week class length

• Compared average course success across matched classes when semester length was different.
Overall Naïve Comparison Across Class Length

Overall average success rate by Class Length Among Matched Classes

- 6 week: 82%
- 8 week: 69%
- 12 week: 62%
- 16 week: 63%
Exact Comparison: Within-Subjects t-test

8 week: 68.7%
16 week: 61.8%

$t(175) = 3.67, p < 0.001$
Representative Set of Courses in Analysis
Discussion

• **There is a statistically significant success windfall** associated with a shorter class length across a variety of course subject areas.

• Simply offering a class in **an eight-week format yielded an average increase in student success of approximately 7%**, after controlling for the influence of different course curricula, schedule type, and instructors.

• Students in 8-week & 16-week classes have similar cumulative GPAs (2.47 vs. 2.48, respectively).

• It is likely that shifting more classes to an 8-week format versus a 16-week format will increase overall course success college-wide.

• There are theoretical reasons to expect improved success rates based on student engagement scholarship and memory research.