ANTELOPE VALLEY COLLEGE

Notes from the Researchers - Volume 2 – May 2010

Recent Projects from the Office of Institutional Research and Planning

Research for: SMARTHINKING
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SMARTHINKING is an online resource made available to AVC students to help them become stronger writers. Through the use of SMARTHINKING's online writing lab, students receive a detailed, personalized critique of written assignments, such as essays, reports, or creative stories. The philosophy of SMARTHINKING is that students will improve as writers when they write frequently and receive helpful, timely feedback and assessment.

The following analysis was conducted in order to understand the demographic makeup of AVC students who have used the services provided by SMARTHINKING during the 2009-2010 academic year and also to determine if SMARTHINKING is having a positive effect on its users. You will notice that the totals for Spring 2010 are somewhat low in comparison to Fall 2009. This is because the data for this analysis was collected only half-way through the spring term.

Summary Data: AVC SMARTHINKING User Count and Percentages

This data represents the numbers associated with all AVC SMARTHINKING users. One of the many reasons Antelope Valley College chose SMARTHINKING was to provide access for students who may not be able to seek services in person, those normally provided in the Learning Center. As you can see from the table below, there is a growing trend of online students utilizing SMARTHINKING for their writing tutorial needs. Also, students taking courses at the Palmdale Center represent a decent proportion of SMARTHINKING users. Another reason AVC chose to employ the services of SMARTHINKING was to provide yet another option for students enrolled in basic skills courses to improve their likelihood of success. A large proportion of AVC's SMARTHINKING users are enrolled in at least one basic skills course.

	Unduplicated Number of Users	Users Enrolled in a Basic Skills Course	Users Taking an Online Course	Users Taking a Class at Palmdale
Summer 2009	56	35	9	12
Fall 2009	436	189	86	53
Spring 2010	228	93	79	48
Total	720	317	174	113

	Unduplicated Number of Users	Users Enrolled in a Basic Skills Course	Users Taking an Online Course	Users Taking a Class at Palmdale
Summer 2009	100.0%	62.5%	16.1%	21.4%
Fall 2009	100.0%	43.3%	19.7%	12.2%
Spring 2010	100.0%	40.8%	34.6%	21.1%
Total	100.0%	44.0%	24.2%	15.7%

SMARTHINKING Usage Minutes: Percentages by Demographic Category

For each SMARTHINKING session one of our students participates in, the total minutes of each session is recorded. The following table represents the percentage of total usage minutes by demographic category.

Age Group	Summer 2009	Fall 2009	Spring 2010	Total
Less than 20	27.0%	34.1%	30.1%	32.3%
20-24	23.4%	30.6%	33.2%	30.7%
25-29	15.0%	7.3%	11.8%	9.3%
30-34	17.3%	5.3%	5.6%	6.5%
35-39	2.0%	4.0%	1.6%	3.1%
40-49	13.4%	12.9%	9.0%	11.8%
50 or Older	2.0%	5.8%	8.6%	6.2%
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Ethnicity	Summer 2009	Fall 2009	Spring 2010	Total
Am. Indian or Alaskan Native	5.2%	0.7%	0.0%	0.9%
Asian or Pacific Islander	6.5%	5.0%	4.6%	5.0%
Black Non-Hispanic	27.3%	15.2%	10.0%	14.8%
Hispanic	29.4%	27.8%	43.2%	32.4%
Other	16.9%	35.9%	29.3%	32.3%
White Non-Hispanic	14.7%	15.5%	12.8%	14.7%
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Gender	Summer 2009	Fall 2009	Spring 2010	Total
Female	85.3%	66.6%	68.0%	68.7%
Male	14.7%	32.1%	31.7%	30.4%
Unreported	0.0%	1.2%	0.2%	0.8%
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Students 24 years old or younger use SMARTHINKING services much more than any other age group. From this particular data, it is difficult to tell what is causing this shift. One possible reason is that the majority of AVC students fall within this age group, so these numbers should reflect population proportions. Another possibility is that with age comes experience, so naturally those with less experience would need more help. Female students use SMARTHINKING services more than twice the amount of male students. The shift in this data could be attributed to females possibly being more proactive about their studies, or this could simply be a reflection of AVC student population proportions.

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Success of AVC SMARTHINKING Users

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of SMARTHINKING's services, we decided to compare AVC students who utilized these services with those who did not. We constructed two cohort groups to compare. The first group consisted of students who were enrolled in ENGL 095, ENGL 097, ENGL 099, or ENGL 101 and utilized the services provided by SMARTHINKING. The second group consisted of students enrolled in ENGL 095, ENGL 097, ENGL 099, or ENGL 101 who did not utilize the services provided by SMARTHINKING. English courses with no students who used SMARTHINKING were excluded from this analysis. From the table below, it appears that SMARTHINKING users are proportionately more successful in their English courses than those who did not use SMARTHINKING.

Term	Non Smarthinking Users	Smarthinking Users
Summer 2009	43.7%	86.1%
Fall 2009	48.0%	75.3%

Conclusion

SMARTHINKING has proven to be a valuable resource for AVC students who utilize the services it provides. With over 95% of in-coming students being placed into a basic skills course, it is necessary for AVC to address the academic support needs of these students. The total number of students utilizing this service is not large; however, with the proper advertising of this service and its effect, AVC could increase the number of users per term.