

Title: We Built a First Year Success Program, Now Where are the Students?

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Memorial University of Newfoundland

Memorial University is a 4 year public, open-admissions university in Atlantic Canada. Memorial is the only university in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador and carries a special obligation to be accessible to the people of the province. About 2000 new students start at Memorial each year and the majority of these students are from the region.

First Year Success Program (FYS):

What is it and who is it for?

Students entering the university with admission averages between 70-74.9% were identified as the institutions most academically vulnerable group. FYS was specifically designed with this group of students in mind. It is a full-credit, two semester program that includes three new courses dedicated to basic preparatory skills, small classes in key areas including mathematics; additional tutorials, regular academic and career advising and a learning community.

The Challenge: Recruitment

FYS is a voluntary program. It is also selective based on students' admission averages. We wanted to advise students with 70-74.9% admission average to participate in the program. However, final high school results were not released early enough to allow us to do so before university registration.

Strategy

With support from key areas on campus such as Student Recruitment, Academic Advising, Admissions and Marketing and Communications we developed an alternative strategy to promote, target and advise students.

Promote – We promoted broadly to high school students and their key influencers:

- Developed an online presence
www.mun.ca/success
- Included FYS in university literature
- Sent printed information to high school students, guidance counsellors and principals
- Local newspapers and radio
- Attended high school events
- Social Media

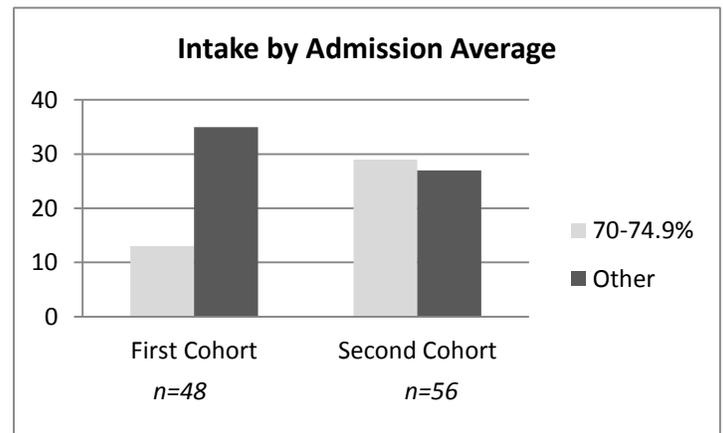
Target – Messaging targeted students who were:

- Worried about the transition to university
- Uncertain about their program of study
- Thought they would begin university an admission average under 75%

Advise – Based on grade 11 grades students were selected to be informed on FYS during interviews and asked to predict their final high school results.

Results

First Year Success began with a group of about 50 students but less than half were in the admissions range that the program was originally intended. We had more success in the second year of the program where slightly more than half the students had admission averages between 70-74.5%.



What We Learned:

Despite recruitment challenges and the limitations this placed on evaluation, assessment demonstrated that FYS students performed better academically in comparison to a matched sample group.

We also learned that a small percentage of students who need support in university are able to recognize they need help and are willing to commit to a program to ensure they receive that help.

What we question:

Will continuing to build on recruitment initiatives work?
Is a mandatory program the only solution?