

First Generation Success: Mixed-Methods Information Literacy Skills Assessment for First Year Writing Students

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Abstract and Description

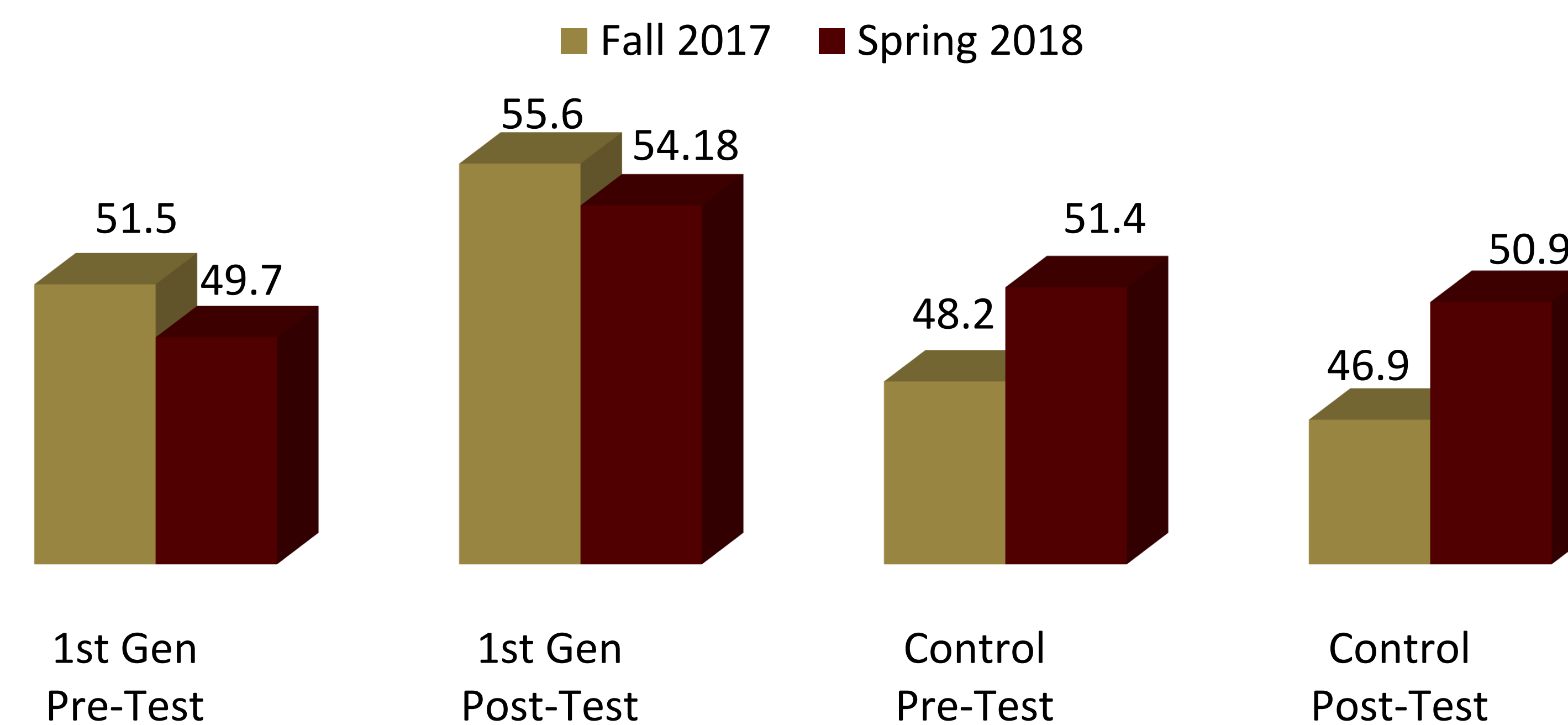
As universities seek to improve retention and graduation rates, more attention is being paid to populations that are statistically less likely to persist, such as first-generation students. Engaging with a campus-wide initiative targeting first-generation college students, librarians at a research university were awarded a grant to study the information literacy skills of this special population and to develop intervention strategies to help retain students.

Partnering with the English department and a campus provisional admission program, librarians developed and taught special sections of the first year composition course, ENGL 104. These sections were designed to seamlessly embed information literacy concepts into the traditional ENGL 104 curriculum and to thoroughly assess the impact of this approach. This study was designed using a mixed-methods approach to better understand the information literacy knowledge and skills of first-generation students and to evaluate the impact of embedding information literacy into a course required for their degree plans.

Rubrics: Assessing Student Learning Artifacts

1. Collected signed consent forms and student work over Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 semesters from 6 instructors
2. Received 187 research papers
3. Brainstormed categories of questions about composition and information literacy skills
4. Drafted 5-leveled rubric
5. Normed rubric over 4 rounds and 30+ sample papers
6. Divided rubric into sections: Information literacy (maroon) & Composition (gold)
7. Working towards interrater reliability; 80% agreement using Krippendorff's alpha
8. Next steps: Score all assignments post-norming, compare scores between 1st gen and control group

Project SAILS Test Results



Standardized Information Literacy Testing

- Information literacy test (Project SAILS) was administered as a pre/post test to the 1st gen class and several control classes each semester, over two semesters
- Students in the 1st gen class test higher than the control group in both the pre- and post-test
- 1st gen class participants show an average of 4 points in growth from the beginning to the end of the semester
- Control group participants do not demonstrate growth in information literacy skills, despite a one-shot workshop

Assessing Across Disciplines

An exciting aspect of our project was that it brought together the English department and the libraries. Our team was composed of one English faculty member and three librarians. One of the librarians had extensive experience teaching composition. However, assessing work across our disciplines proved to be challenging in a variety of ways. Some of the challenges we ran into included:

SAILS: Challenges

- Coordinating testing information and student recruitment with multiple composition instructors. (We had to contact each instructor and request class time to make presentations about the study to students.)
- Motivating students to complete two sets of SAILS tests, pre- and post-. (We tried to motivate students with a pizza party and a prize drawing, but ended up coordinating with instructors to offer extra credit as a better incentive.)

Rubrics: Challenges

- Reconciling disciplinary differences about which aspects of researched-writing are important. (How important are minor formatting errors in a citation? To what extent do we need to assess how a source is used in relation to what kind of source it is, and whose definitions matter most here?)
- Coming to a common agreement about the definitions of different types of errors. (What counts as a dropped quote?)
- Accurately assessing categories outside of one's discipline in an efficient and timely manner. (Can we all see the same levels of detail in assessing student synthesis?)
- Ultimately, we decided to team up based on disciplinary training and divided the rubric to play to our disciplinary strengths. This aided norming.

ENGL 104 Research Paper Rubric

ENGL 104 Instructor: Reviewer:	1 pt.	2 pt.	3 pt.	4 pt.	5 pt.	POINTS
Works Cited	Works cited does not exist.	Works cited elements are present. Citations are not in a single recognizable format. Many citations may not contain all required elements or too many.	Works cited elements are present. Citations are in a single recognizable format. Some citations may not contain all required elements or too many or they may not be in the correct order.	Works cited elements are present. Citations are in a single recognizable format. Most citations contain all required elements in the correct order and no extraneous information, though one or two may have errors. Errors may be orthographic in nature.	All works cited elements are present. All citations are in a single recognizable format. All citations contain all required elements in the correct order.	
In-text Quotation and Paraphrase Attribution	In-text quotation and paraphrase attributions are missing.	Quotations and paraphrases are rarely attributed. For those in-text citations that exist, they are not in any recognizable format or just wrong.	Some quotations and paraphrases are attributed.	The majority of quotations and paraphrases are attributed.	All quotes and paraphrases are attributed.	
In-text Citation Format	In-text quotation and paraphrase attributions are missing.	Some of the sources from the works cited appear in the paper, and some of the in-text citations appear in the reference list. Clearly, some sources are missing from the works cited or from the in-text citations.	Many of the sources from the works cited appear in the paper, and many of the in-text citations appear in the reference list. Incorrect formatting makes it unclear if all of the sources are present and all of the citations appear in the reference list.	Almost all of the sources from the works cited appear in the paper, and almost all of the in-text citations appear in the reference list. There is no unclear formatting.	All of the sources in the works cited clearly appear in the paper. There are no sources in the paper that are missing from the works cited.	
Source Usage	None of the sources in the works cited appears in the paper.	Few of the sources used are peer-reviewed and most are scholarly in nature.	Some of the sources used are peer-reviewed and most are scholarly in nature.	Most of the sources are peer-reviewed and most are scholarly in nature.	Almost all of the sources used are peer-reviewed and are scholarly in nature.	
Peer Review	Does not apply (all sources were scholarly, or there were no sources used)	All popular sources are treated as evidence in the same manner as scholarly sources.	Some popular sources may be used for rhetorical effect, but others are used for evidence.	Popular sources are used mostly for rhetorical effect.	Popular sources are used only for rhetorical effect.	
Quotation Integration	No or almost no quotation integration.	Quotations are rarely or poorly integrated.	Quotations are sometimes integrated well. Could be consistently clunky.	Most quotations are integrated well. No more than one dropped quote.	All quotations are properly integrated.	
Source Synthesis	No source synthesis.	Few sources are synthesized and synthesis tends to be shallow.	Some of the sources tie together but the synthesis is not explicit. Organizational synthesis may be present.	There is synthesis among many sources, though depth of synthesis is uneven.	Sources are well-synthesized, making reference to and building off of one another in a way that makes new meaning.	
Source Engagement	The paper does not use any of the sources in the text.	Engagement tends to be shallow, when it is present.	The paper relies heavily on only a couple of sources for engagement OR the paper engages with most of the sources in a shallow manner.	Many sources may be well engaged with. A few sources may be engaged with shallowly.	Most sources are engaged in depth.	
Source Applicability for Argument	Most of the sources do not match the topic.	Most of the sources match the topic. Few of the sources move the argument forward.	Most of the sources match the topic. Few of the sources move the argument forward.	Almost all of the sources match the topic. Most of the sources move the argument forward.	All of the sources match the topic. All of the sources move the argument forward.	
Source Credibility and Reliability	None of the sources used are credible in context of the paper.	Few of the sources used are credible in context of the paper. Many of the sources appear to be chosen for convenience rather than applicability for the thesis.	Some of the sources used are credible in context of the paper. Some of the sources appear to be chosen for convenience rather than applicability for the thesis.	Most of sources are credible in context of the paper. Few of the sources appear to be chosen for convenience rather than applicability for the thesis.	All of the sources used are credible in context of the paper. None of the sources appear to be chosen for convenience rather than applicability for the thesis.	
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