

West Los Angeles College

Quest for Online Success Summary Report

Spring 2015

Introduction

In spring 2015, students who were enrolled in three specific online courses at West Los Angeles College participated in a pilot program called “Quest for Online Success.” The program consisted of an online readiness assessment called Smarter Measure, and four short learning modules, which were designed to be highly interactive and attention grabbing, in order to keep students interested and engaged. The purpose of the program was to enhance student performance and success in their online classes.

Students were directed to brief surveys after completing Smarter Measure and each of the learning modules, in order to gather immediate feedback on their experiences with the Quest for Online Success program, and to evaluate its effectiveness. In the final weeks of the semester, students were invited to participate in a post-survey to evaluate the usefulness of the Quest for Online Success program in relation to their online course performance and success. This report begins by presenting the results from the initial survey followed by the results from the post-survey, and concludes with a summary of key findings.

Initial Surveys

Between January 27 and March 4, 2015, 50 to 67 students completed the surveys for Smarter Measure and the four learning modules. The Quest for Online Success program consists of five modules that students could take in any order. The program is completely voluntary, meaning that students were not required to participate. The names of the modules are:

- SmarterMeasure, an assessment test that quantifies and identifies a student’s levels of readiness to take an online or technology rich course
- Introduction to Online Learning (Level 2)
- Getting Tech Ready (Level 3)
- Becoming an Effective Online Learner (Level 4)
- Getting Started/Next Steps (Level 5)

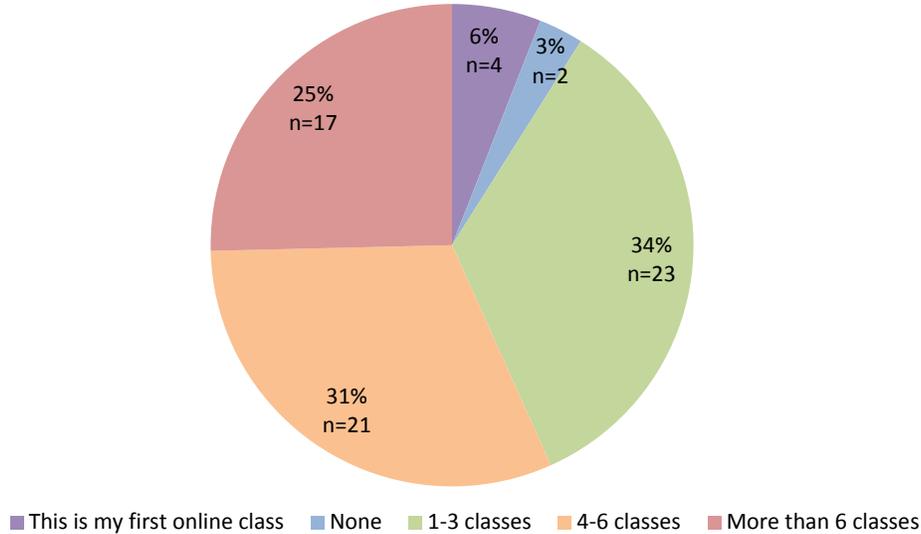
The majority of students who completed the surveys were enrolled in Economics 1. Please refer to Table 1 below for the count of survey respondents for each level of the Quest for Online Success program within each online course.

Table 1. Respondent Count by Course and Quest for Online Success Level

Course	Smarter Measure	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
ECON 1 - Principles of Microeconomics	33	33	32	27	28
ECON 2 - Principles of Macroeconomics	23	15	16	12	12
GEOL 1 - Physical Geology	16	16	16	16	13
Total Unduplicated Count of Respondents	67	60	58	52	50

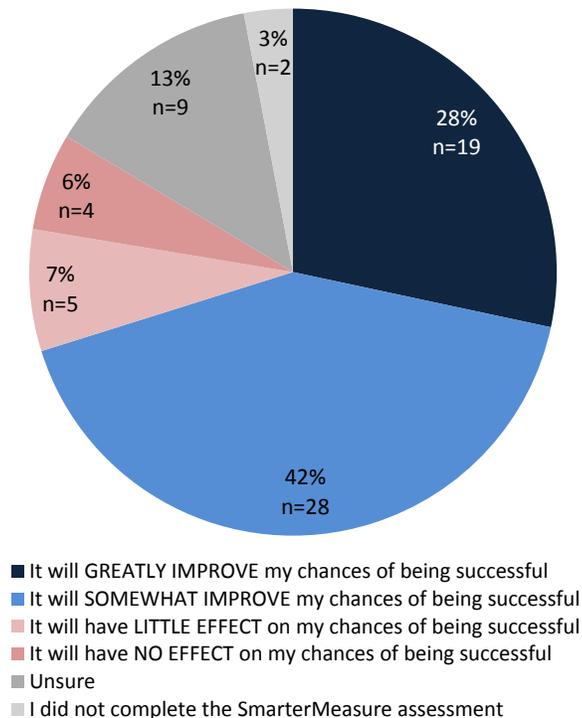
In order to gauge how much prior experience students have had with online courses, respondents were asked how many online courses they have successfully completed. Fewer than 10% of respondents indicated that they had not successfully completed any online courses (3%) or that this was their first online class (6%), while 34% indicated that they had completed between one and three online classes, and the rest (56%) had completed four or more online classes (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. How many online courses have you successfully completed?



Respondents were then asked to gauge the effect of the Smarter Measure assessment on their chances of being successful in their online classes. Nearly three-quarters of respondents indicated that the Smarter Measure assessment would greatly (28%) or somewhat (42%) improve their chances of being successful (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. What effect do you think completing the SmarterMeasure diagnostic assessment will have on your success in your online class(es)?

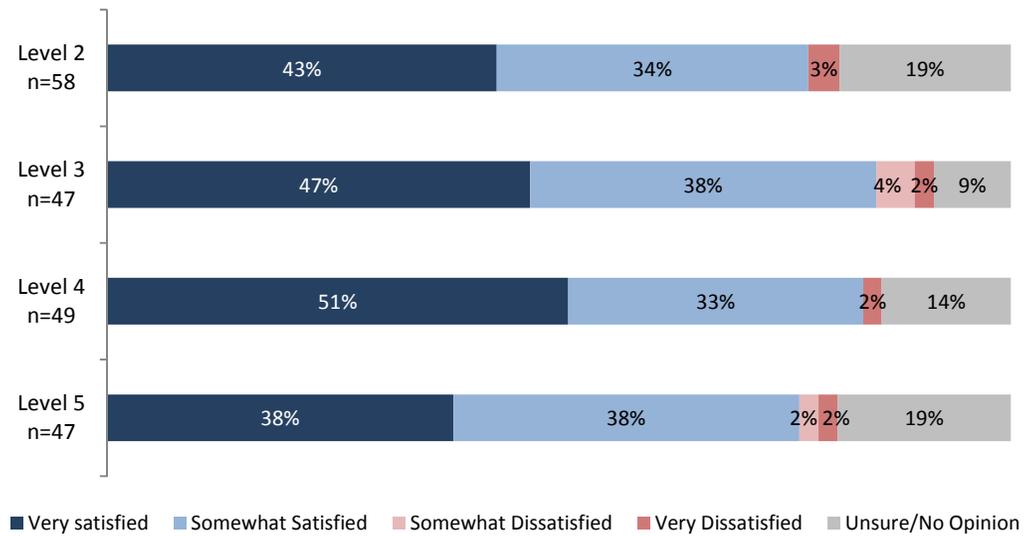


As described earlier, the five modules in Quest for Student Success are:

- SmarterMeasure
- Introduction to Online Learning (Level 2)
- Getting Tech Ready (Level 3)
- Becoming an Effective Online Learner (Level 4)
- Getting Started/Next Steps (Level 5)

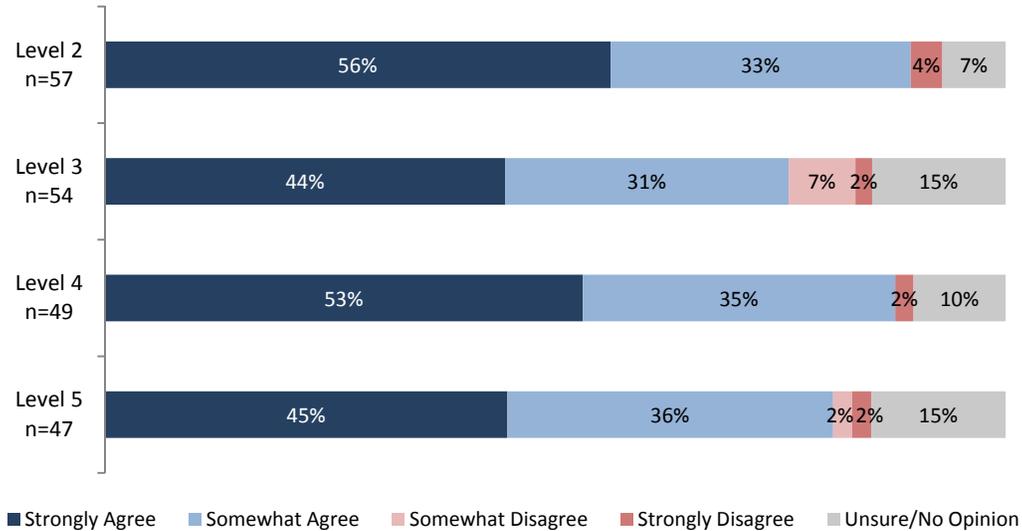
When combining the respondents who were very or somewhat satisfied, students were most satisfied overall with levels 3 (Getting Tech Ready) and 4 (Becoming an Effective Online Learner) with 85% and 84%, respectively (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Overall satisfaction by level of learning module



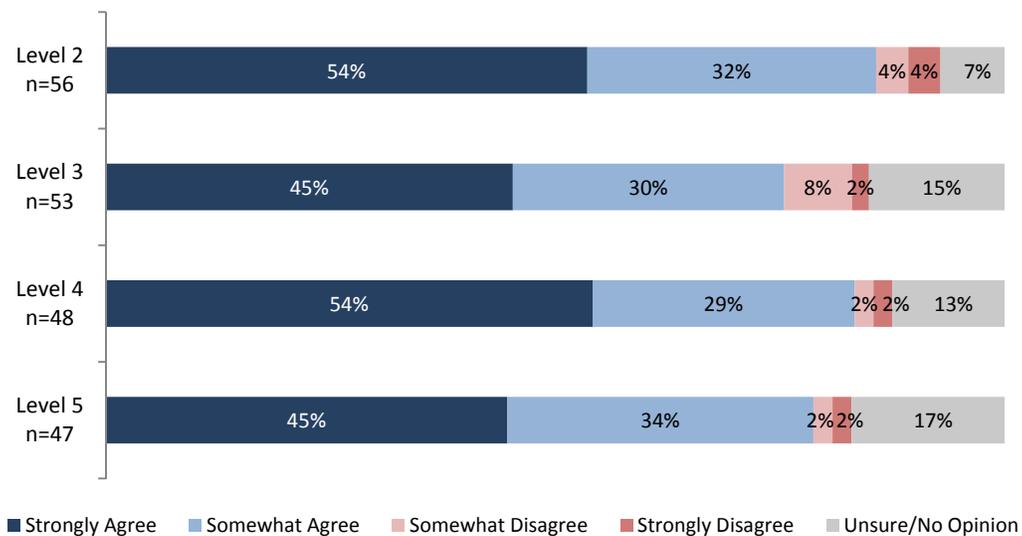
While a majority of respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that each of the learning modules provided them with useful strategies and tools to help them succeed in their online classes, levels 2 (Introduction to Online Learning) and 4 (Becoming an Effective Online Learner) garnered the most positive responses, 89% and 88%, respectively (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. This level has provided me with useful strategies and tools that will help me succeed in my online class



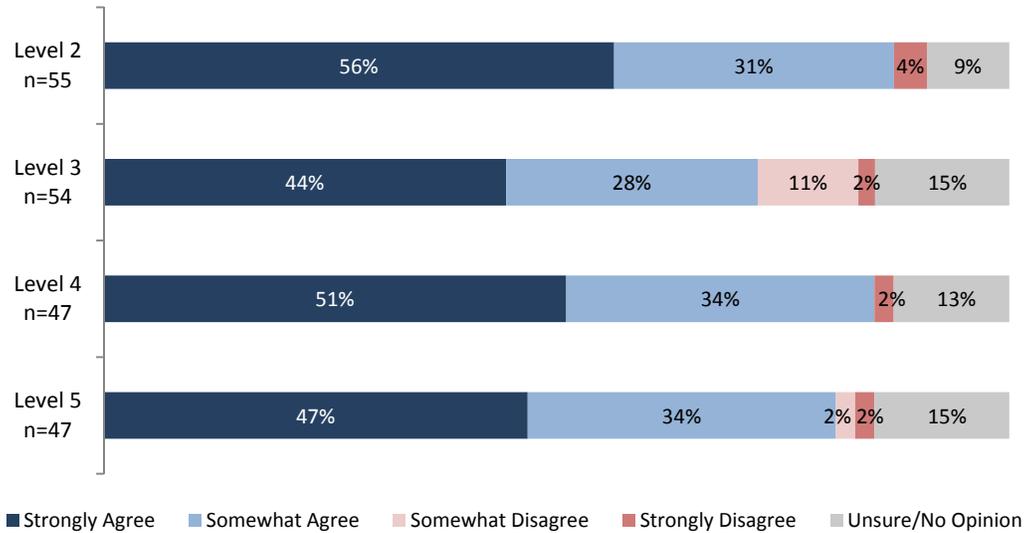
Level 2 (Introduction to Online Learning) came out on top again as having positively contributed to students' online learning experiences, followed by level 4 (Becoming an Effective Online Learner), 86% and 83%, respectively (see Figure 6). However, it is important to note that there was some disagreement for each level, and several students in each level were unsure or had no opinion.

Figure 6. This level has positively contributed to my online learning experience



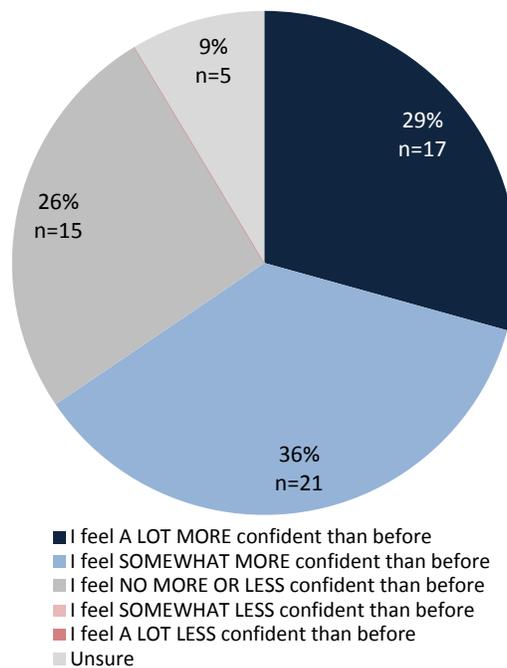
While a majority of respondents agreed that all four levels helped them feel more prepared to be successful in their online classes, levels 2 (Introduction to Online Learning) and 4 (Becoming an Effective Online Learner) were identified as being the most helpful, with 87% and 85%, respectively (see Figure 7). Level 3 (Getting Tech Ready) had the largest proportion of respondents who disagreed, in addition to those who were unsure (28%).

Figure 7. This level has helped me feel more prepared to be successful in my online class(es)



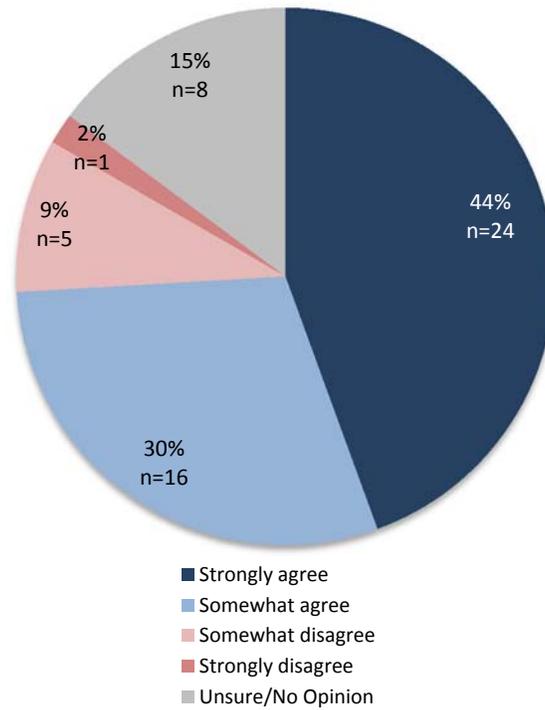
Two-thirds of respondents indicated that they felt a lot (29%) or somewhat (36%) more confident about successfully completing their online class than they did before learning about the seven myths of online classes (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Now that you understand the 7 myths about online classes, what effect does this knowledge have on how confident you feel about successfully completing your current online course?



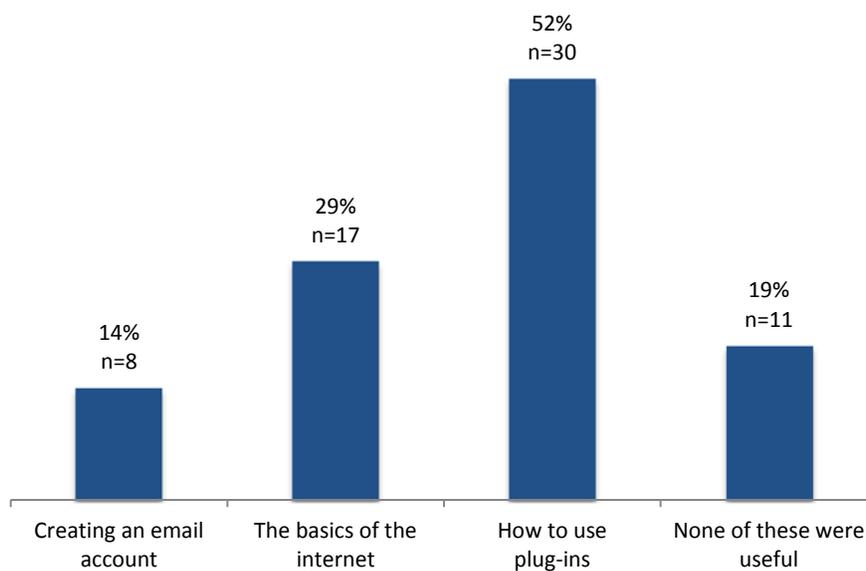
Almost three-quarters of respondents strongly (44%) or somewhat (30%) agreed that the Getting Tech Ready module would help them improve their computer and online skills (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. The Getting Tech Ready (Level 3) module will help improve my computer/online skills.



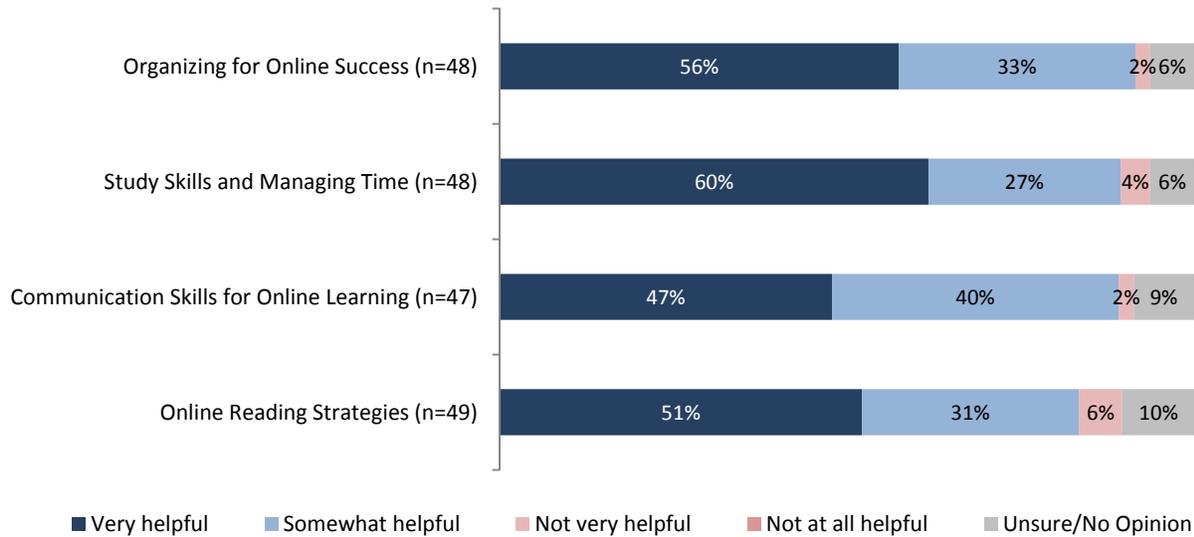
Over half of respondents (52%) indicated that the information on how to use plug-ins would help them the most with their current online classes, and almost one-third (29%) indicated that the information on the basics of the internet would help them most (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. Of all of the resources provided in the Getting Tech Ready (Level 3) module, which ones do you believe will help you the most with your current online class(es)?



The majority of respondents indicated that all four multimedia modules would be very or somewhat helpful (82%-89%) in helping them achieve success as online students (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Please indicate how helpful you believe each of the multimedia modules will be in helping you achieve success as an online student:



Almost half of respondents (48%) indicated that they found on-campus resources through the Getting Started module to help them successfully complete their current online course (see Figure 12). The most frequently identified resource was tutoring (see Table 13).

Figure 12. After completing the Getting Started (Level 5) module did you find any on-campus resources you will use to help you successfully complete your current online course?

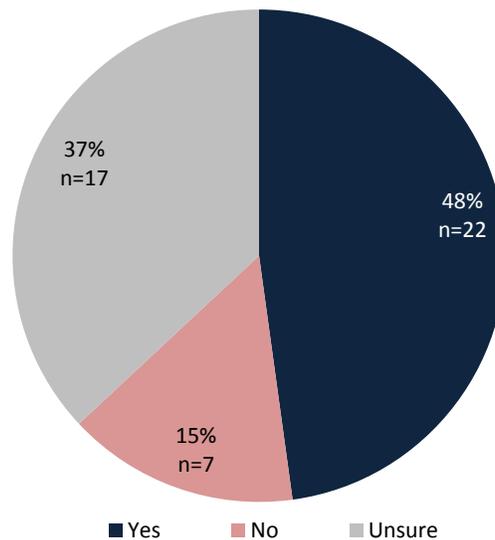


Table 13. If yes, please share which resources

Category of Written Response	Count	Percent
Tutoring	7	32%
Helpdesk	2	9%
Learning Center	2	9%
Library	1	5%
Admissions	1	5%
Transfer Center	1	5%
Online writing lab	1	5%
Academic support	1	5%

Respondents most frequently identified the following as the most valuable: the list of resources provided in level 5 (Getting Started/Next Steps); identifying their strengths and weaknesses from the Smarter Measure assessment; and learning about the myths of online classes in level 2 (Introduction to Online Learning). The time management information provided in level 4 (Becoming an Effective Online Learner) and learning how to use plug-ins in level 3 (Getting Tech Ready) were also identified as being very valuable (see Table 14).

Table 14. What did you find MOST valuable about each level?

Category of Written Response	Smarter Measure	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Count of respondents	51	36	31	30	23
Nothing/ No response/ It is all valuable	8%	14%	35%	23%	35%
List of/Links to resources	2%				48%
I already knew some/most of the information	2%	8%	13%	7%	4%
Time management	4%	11%		40%	
The information/helpful tips		3%	6%		
Communication skills				7%	4%
Identified my strengths/weaknesses	37%				
Identified my learning style	14%				
The results that I was provided	8%				
Typing test	6%				
Learning about myself	4%				
Organizing	2%				
Knowing what is needed to succeed in an online course	2%				
Study skills	2%				
The reading section	2%				
The help for planning	2%				
Testing my technology knowledge	2%				
Good refresher	2%				
I don't understand why I need to do this? I've never had to do this	2%				
If it is a valuable resource, I have appreciation for it	2%				
The dedication I have for school	2%				
The site was unavailable	2%				

Table 14. What did you find MOST valuable about each level? (continued)

Category of Written Response	Smarter Measure	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Count of respondents	51	36	31	30	23
The myths section		42%			
The online vs classroom section		11%			
Explanation of how online classes work		6%			
Short and to the point		6%			
Time consuming; waste of time		3%			
That online professors do check participation		3%			
The way things are explained		3%			
Troubleshooting technical difficulties			23%		
Learning about plug-ins			16%		
Basics of the internet			6%		
Breakdown of jargon			3%		
Creating accounts			3%		
Study skills				30%	
Organization skills				20%	
Reading strategies				3%	
Mind tools website				3%	
How to be an effective learner				3%	
Having people that understand				3%	
Online tutoring					4%
Helped me be more organized with my place of study					4%

When asked to identify what was the least valuable about each level, respondents most frequently indicated that everything was valuable, especially in levels 5 (Getting Started/Next Steps), and 4 (Becoming an Effective Online Learner). Several respondents indicated that they already knew some or most of the information in level 2 (Introduction to Online Learning), that the Smarter Measure assessment took too long and/or that the questions were redundant, and that the email setup in level 3 (Getting Tech Ready) was not necessary (see Table 15).

Table 15. What did you find LEAST valuable about each level?

Category of Written Response	Smarter Measure	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Count of respondents	46	30	32	26	21
Nothing/ No response/ Everything was valuable	52%	53%	59%	62%	90%
I already knew some/most of the information	2%	13%	13%	4%	5%
Takes too long; used up my time; redundant	9%	3%		4%	
Life factors	4%				
The results	4%				
The technical section	4%				
I don't really understand the point of this assessment	4%				
It labeled and characterized who I was as a student based on questions that I answered; we all learn from our mistakes, and just because we made them before does not mean we should be labeled as one thing	2%				
It's a good tool to know about studies and college but you have to wait for the reply	2%				
The second page of questions	2%				
Answers to questions are subjective or did not cover everything	2%				
The self diagnostic of my views towards school	2%				
The site was unavailable	2%				
Some things seemed pretty obvious and tedious	2%				
The typing speed	2%				
This is the first time I have been introduced to the assessment	2%				
Timing and specific topics	2%				
Analyzing motivation	2%				
I didn't find all of the different information it gave me useful	2%				
Bad acting		7%			
The "how it works" section		7%			
That online classes are more cost efficient		3%			
A few myths were pretty self explanatory		3%			
I wish I knew this before		3%			
The information		3%			
Sources		3%			
Email setup was not necessary			13%		
Most of it			6%		
Level of technical info			3%		
Plug-ins			3%		
Sources			3%		
What I will need section			3%		
The information			3%		
Online reading strategies				12%	
Online communication; Netiquette				8%	
Organizing for online success				4%	
The examples				4%	
The procrastination check list didn't move on				4%	
The list of resources was too long					5%

When asked how they would improve each level to benefit online learners the most, well over half of the respondents in every level indicated that they would not change anything. A few respondents suggested making levels 2 (Introduction to Online Learning) and 3 (Getting Tech Ready) optional, or only for new online students. Additionally, a few respondents would like to see fewer questions, especially fewer repeated questions, in the Smarter Measure assessment (seeing Table 16).

Table 16. How would you improve each level to benefit online learners the most?

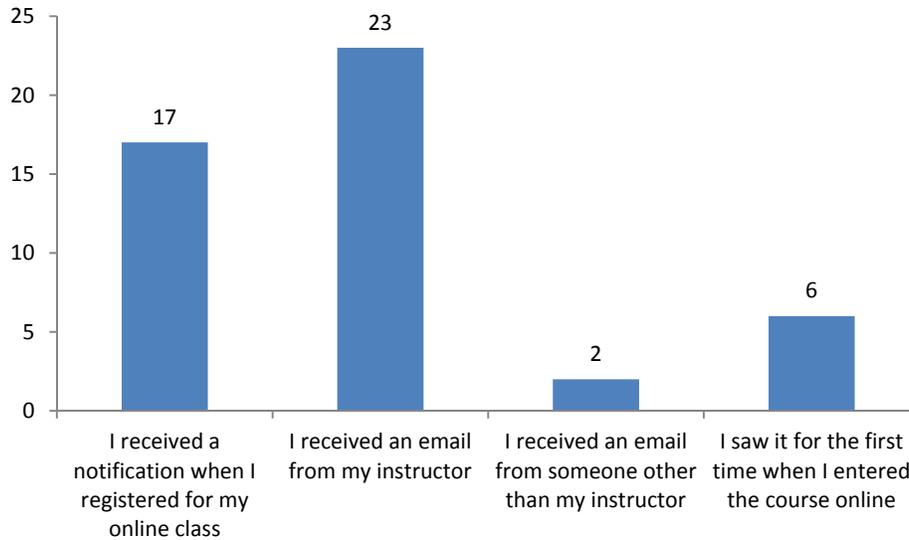
Category of Written Response	Smarter Measure	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Count of respondents	37	28	28	21	19
No response/ No improvement needed	81%	68%	71%	76%	89%
Make it optional or only for new online students		4%	14%		
Give more information and examples			4%	5%	
Stop repeating questions; fewer questions	8%				
I'm happy the college now conducts surveys to improve student learning	3%				
Add short math section and more questions regarding what type of learner you are	3%				
I'm not sure how to answer the question on tech devices used. For example, the smart phone encompasses a cell phone, mp3 player and GPS device	3%				
The site was unavailable	3%				
The selection of answers in a few sections (i.e., the Individual Attributes) hardly made sense	3%				
Make it shorter		4%			
It will help the student become confident and confidence brings success		4%			
change the cheesy 'wrong' noise, or tone it down a bit		4%			
More sources		4%			
more about online discussion threads		4%			
Do not like being forced to take a survey before I can start my online class		4%			
I am more mentally prepared for the class than I was before		4%			
I understand your on a budget so better actors aren't necessary		4%			
dont talk about unnecessary power on/off stuff			4%		
I don't like to be forced to take a survey!			4%		
it help me get a better grasp on my computer			4%		
Less enactments; get better actors				5%	
Give more examples and make the slide more interactive				5%	
I would improve it by showing specific images				5%	
Do not like to be forced to take a survey!				5%	
Have an image of students getting help					5%
By doing the instructions myself					5%

End-of-Term Survey

Thirty-four students from West Los Angeles College completed the Quest for Success end-of-term survey.

When asked how they learned about the program, 23 respondents indicated that they received an email from their instructor, 17 said that they received a notification upon registering for their class, six saw it for the first time when they entered their course online, and two received an email from someone other than their instructor (see Figure 17). Please note this question employed a “check all that apply” format, hence the total number of responses is greater than 34.

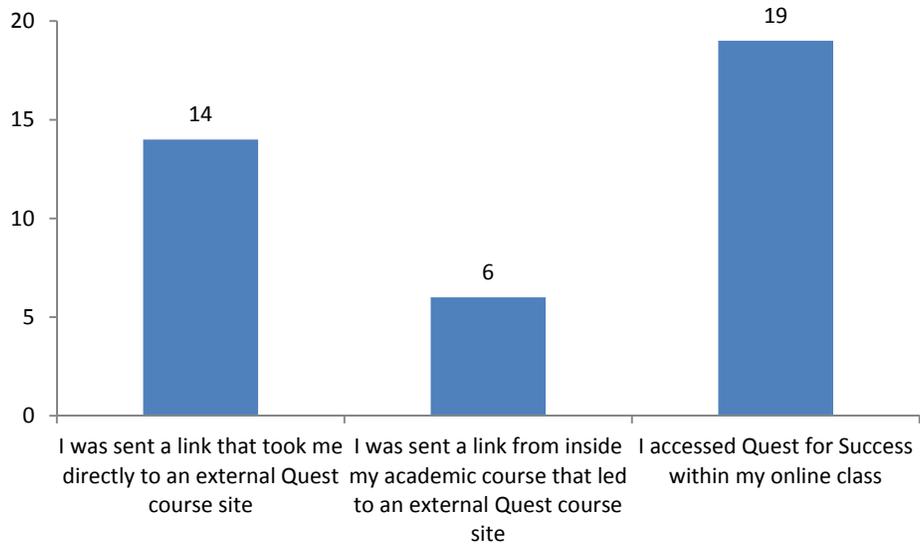
Figure 17. How did you learn about the Quest for Success?



Fifteen respondents indicated that they received access to Quest for Success one or more days prior to the start of the course, nine said that they received access on the first day of class, nine said they received access right after registering for the class, and the last respondent indicated that he/she did not remember. For respondents who received access to Quest for Success one or more days prior to the start of the course, the average number of days is four.

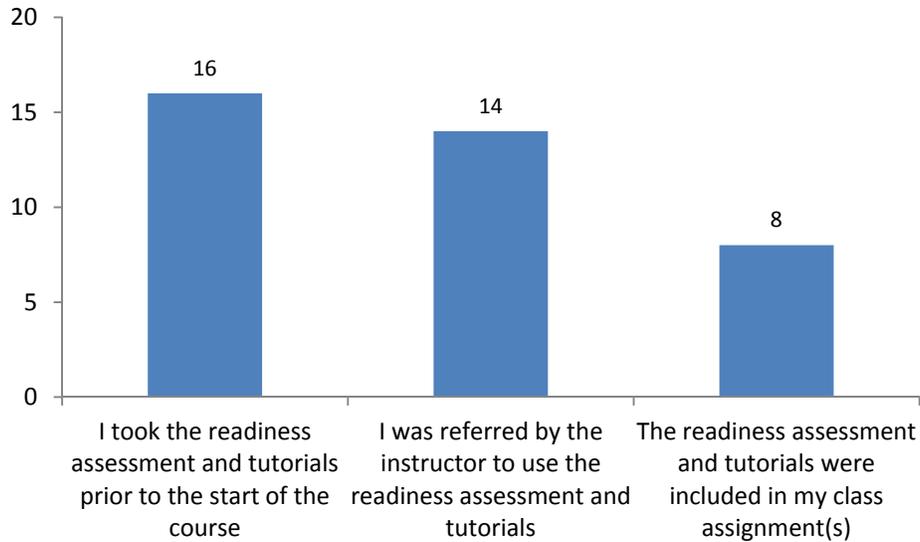
When asked how they accessed the Quest for Success program, 19 respondents indicated that they accessed Quest from within their online course, 14 said that they received a link to an external Quest course site, and six received a link from within their course that sent them to an external Quest course site (see Figure 18). Please note this question employed a “check all that apply” format, hence the total number of responses is greater than 34.

Figure 18. How did you access the Quest for Success program?



Sixteen of the respondents took the readiness assessment and tutorials prior to the start of the course, 14 respondents were referred by their instructor to use the readiness assessment and tutorials, and eight respondents indicated that the Quest for Success materials were included in their class assignments (see Figure 19). Please note this question employed a “check all that apply” format, hence the total number of responses is greater than 34.

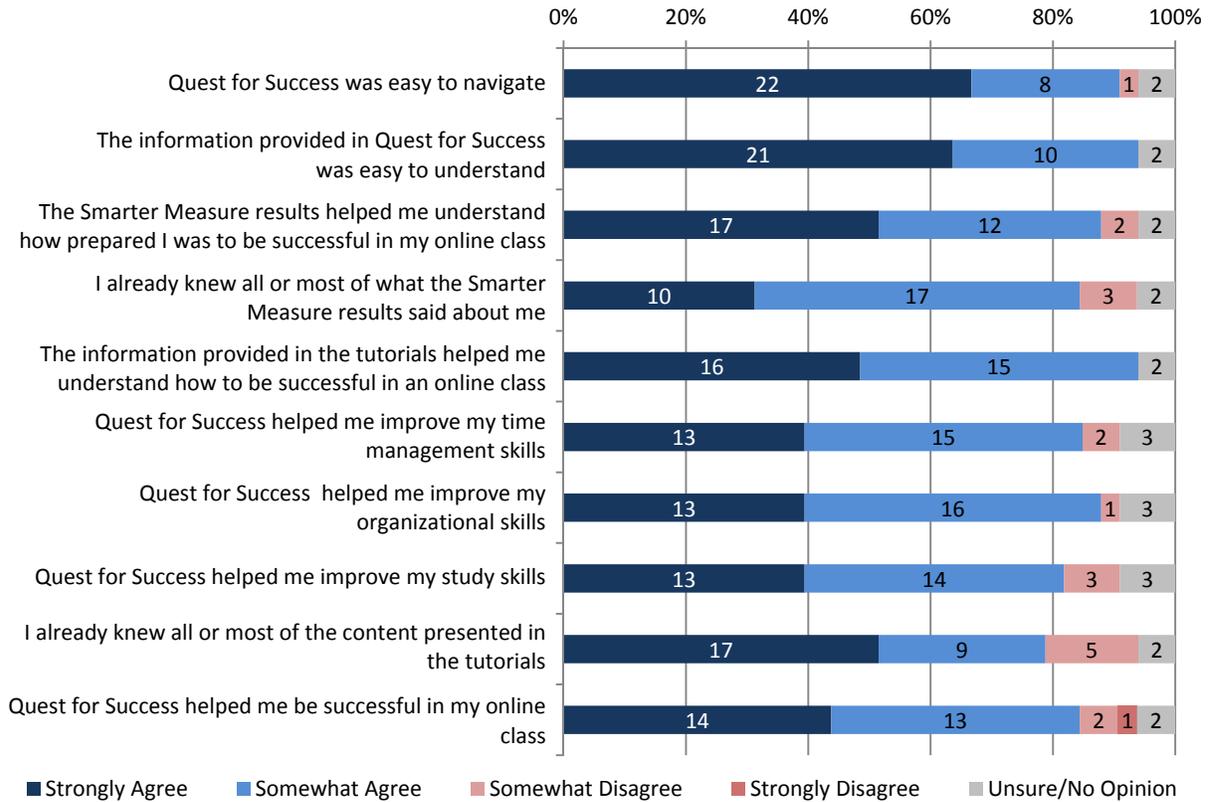
Figure 19. How and when did you use Quest for Success?



Eight respondents indicated that they chose to return to Quest for Success on their own at some time during the class. One respondent said that it helped him/her to study and get motivated to be successful, and another said that he/she needed clarification on how to use the online system. Of the 25 respondents who did not return to Quest for Success on their own, only seven provided explanations as to why not. Three said that they didn't feel the need to, two forgot about it, one was too busy, and the last respondent said it seemed like it was a one-time thing.

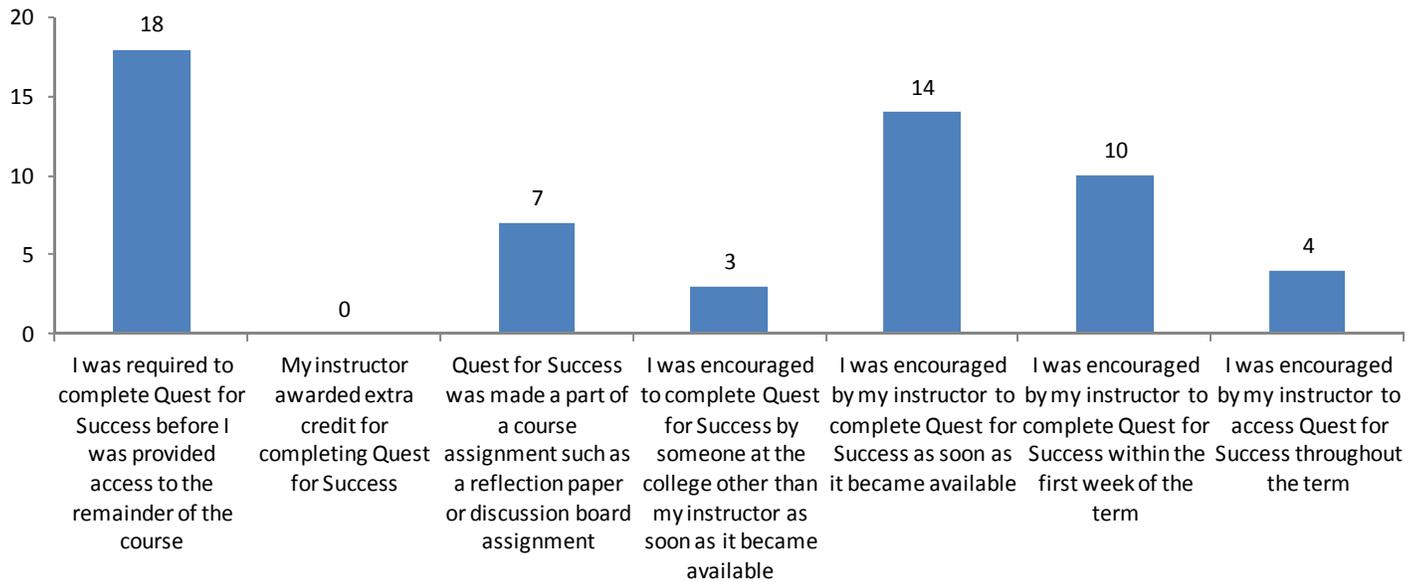
Twenty-seven or more of the 34 total respondents agreed strongly or somewhat with all of the statements regarding the ease of use and effectiveness of Quest for Success, in particular “The information provided in Quest for Success was easy to understand,” and “The information provided in the tutorials helped me understand how to be successful in an online class.” Respondents expressed less agreement, and some disagreement, with the two statements: “I already knew all or most of the content presented in the tutorials,” and “I already knew all or most of what the Smarter Measure results said about me,” which indicates that the Quest for Success program did introduce them to some new information (see Figure 20). Two respondents answered each of these statements with “Unsure/No Opinion.”

Figure 20. Please indicate your agreement with the statements below



Eighteen respondents indicated that they were required to complete Quest for Success before gaining access to the remainder of the course, 14 were encouraged by their instructor to complete Quest for Success as soon as it became available, 10 were encouraged by their instructor to complete Quest for Success within the first week of the term, seven indicated that Quest for Success was made a part of a course assignment, four respondents were encouraged by their instructor to access Quest for Success throughout the term, and three respondents were encouraged by someone at the college other than their instructor to complete Quest for Success as soon as it became available (see Figure 21).

Figure 21. How were you encouraged to use Quest for Success?



When asked what they liked the most or found the most useful about Quest for Success, three respondents said that it provided good information on how to take an online class, two respondents said they liked the videos, two respondents said it shows where they need to improve, and two respondents said it is easy to navigate and use. One respondent appreciated the information on time management and organization, while another liked the information that clarified the myths of online courses.

When asked what they liked the least or found the least useful about Quest for Success, three respondents said that all the information was helpful, whereas one respondent would have liked to have more tips on study skills. One respondent did not like the extra time it took to complete Quest for Success, and another said that it was tedious.

Twenty-eight respondents indicated that they would recommend Quest for Success to other students taking online courses, and six were not sure. When asked to explain why they would recommend Quest for Success to other students, 13 respondents gave reasons, which were all related to how helpful it is for students in order to be successful in online classes, especially for students who are new to online classes or who are less tech savvy than others.

When asked what suggestions they have for improving Quest for Success, 13 respondents said that it is good as-is, two suggested making it shorter, and another said not to give it to seasoned online class takers. One respondent suggested making it more available to students, one said to expand the course range, while another wanted it more integrated into the course. Finally, one respondent thought there should be more promotion about the benefits of the Quest for Success program.

Conclusions

Initial Survey

- Almost three-quarters of respondents indicated that completing the SmarterMeasure diagnostic assessment would greatly (28%) or somewhat (42%) improve their chances of being successful in their online course.
- Students were most satisfied overall with levels 3 (Getting Tech Ready) and 4 (Becoming an Effective Online Learner).
- Respondents agreed most strongly that levels 2 (Introduction to Online Learning) and 4 (Becoming an Effective Online Learner) provided them with useful strategies and tools to help them succeed in their online classes, positively contributed to their online learning experiences, and helped them feel more prepared to be successful in their online classes.
- Almost two-thirds of respondents indicated that they felt a lot (29%) or somewhat (36%) more confident about successfully completing their online class than they did before learning about the seven myths of online classes (Level 2).
- Almost three-quarters of respondents strongly (44%) or somewhat (30%) agreed that the Getting Tech Ready module (Level 3) would help them improve their computer and online skills.
- More than half (52%) of respondents indicated that the information on how to use plug-ins, and 29% felt that the information on the basics of the internet would help them the most with their current online classes.
- All four multimedia modules, Organizing for Online Success, Study Skills and Managing Time, Communication Skills for Online Learning, and Online Reading Strategies, were identified by a majority of respondents as being helpful for their success as online students (Level 4).
- Almost half (48%) of respondents indicated that they found on-campus resources through the Getting Started module (Level 5) to help them successfully complete their current online course; the most frequently identified resource was tutoring.
- Most valuable information, by level:
 - Identifying strengths and weaknesses (Smarter Measure assessment)
 - Learning about the myths of online classes (level 2 - Introduction to Online Learning)
 - Troubleshooting technical difficulties (level 3 – Getting Tech Ready)
 - Time management information (level 4 - Becoming an Effective Online Learner)
 - List of resources provided (level 5 - Getting Started/Next Steps)
- Least valuable information, by level:
 - Takes too long (Smarter Measure assessment)
 - Everything was valuable (level 2 - Introduction to Online Learning)
 - Email setup was not necessary (level 3 – Getting Tech Ready)
 - Online reading strategies were least valuable (level 4 – Becoming an Effective Online Learner)
 - Everything was valuable (level 5 – Getting Started/Next Steps)
- Suggestions for improvement, by level:
 - More than half of the respondents in every level indicated that they would not change anything
 - Stop repeating questions or have fewer questions (Smarter Measure assessment)
 - Make it optional or only for new online students (level 3 – Getting Tech Ready)

End-of-Term Survey

- Twenty-seven or more of the 34 total respondents agreed with the following eight statements (listed in order of strongest agreement):
 - The information provided in Quest for Success was easy to understand
 - The information provided in the tutorials helped me understand how to be successful in an online class
 - Quest for Success was easy to navigate
 - Smarter Measure results helped me understand how prepared I was to be successful in my online class
 - Quest for Success helped me improve my organizational skills
 - Quest for Success helped me improve my time management skills

- Quest for Success helped me be successful in my online class
 - Quest for Success helped me improve my study skills
- Suggestions for improvement:
 - Make levels 2 (Introduction to Online Learning) and 3 (Getting Tech Ready) optional or only for new online students
 - Have fewer questions, and fewer repeated questions in the Smarter Measure assessment