MyWritingLab

School Name	California State University, Bakersfield, CA
Course Names	Developmental through upper-division English courses, ESL, courses across the curriculum
Course Format	Hybrid; lab-based; online

Key Results Since first implementing MyWritingLab in 2006, pass rates in developmental English courses have improved 6.4 percentage points, and subsequent success rates in Composition courses are 12.6 percentage points higher. From 2006 to 2014, MyWritingLab use saved CSUB $92,000 and 16,991 classroom hours.

Submitted by
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Course materials
MyWritingLab with various texts (instructor's choice)

Setting

At California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB), the typical student is non-traditional: The average age is 23, most students reside off-campus, and many students are balancing work and family responsibilities with their studies. In an enrollment of nearly 8,700 students, 47.4 percent are Hispanic American and of those 4,133 students, 86.5 percent are ESL, low-income, first-generation college students. Forty percent of all admitted freshmen require English remediation.

Challenges and Goals

Students often do not have adequate writing and grammar skills to sustain them in their college courses, and they come to college with varying skill levels and needs. More than a decade ago, it became clear that a viable, cost-effective support system was needed to help improve student learner outcomes. Limited space and instructional resources, however, presented challenges to finding a solution. MyWritingLab was selected because we felt it would provide an efficient, comprehensive resource for a multiplicity of purposes. As a web-based program, students can access it individually and collectively in a variety of circumstances and for a multiplicity of purposes. In addition, the myriad topics of study available, from basic grammar to how to avoid plagiarism, offer instructors the opportunity to tailor its use to their courses.

In conjunction with adopting MyWritingLab, key courses were redesigned to achieve the following goals:

- Help students improve their grammar and writing skills.

- Deliver a consistent and high-quality learning experience for all students.

- Track and measure student learner outcomes through the mastery of topics and gains from pre- to post-assessment.

- Address students' individual learning needs, despite large class sizes.

Implementation

Since its initial implementation, use of MyWritingLab at CSUB has exploded with fifty-seven percent of the student body now using it in a course or on their own to improve writing skills.

With MyWritingLab now integrated into much of CSUB's curriculum, we have continued to look for ways to build on its success and grow its use. In 2011, the MyLabsPlus "enterprise" version of MyWritingLab was adopted university-wide which allows us to manage, enroll, and report on student progress across all courses in a central location. Students pay a MyWritingLab fee with their tuition to access the program.

We subsequently rolled out the MyWritingLabPlus Headquarters in 2012 to enhance instructor training and student support. The Headquarters has 21 student computers, a sign-in computer, and a projector for demonstrations and presentations. The Headquarters team (two faculty coordinators and seven student assistants) creates classes in MyWritingLab, trains faculty and tutors, provides support for faculty and students, sends progress updates, and analyzes data quarterly. As of May 2014, almost 30 percent of on-campus faculty had been trained to use MyWritingLab. Because all students have access to MyWritingLab, the Headquarters uses advertising, public relations, and social media to increase awareness and expand usage. The Headquarters even sponsors an annual essay contest where students can win prizes for answering the question, "How has the MyWritingLabPlus program helped you in your academic career?"
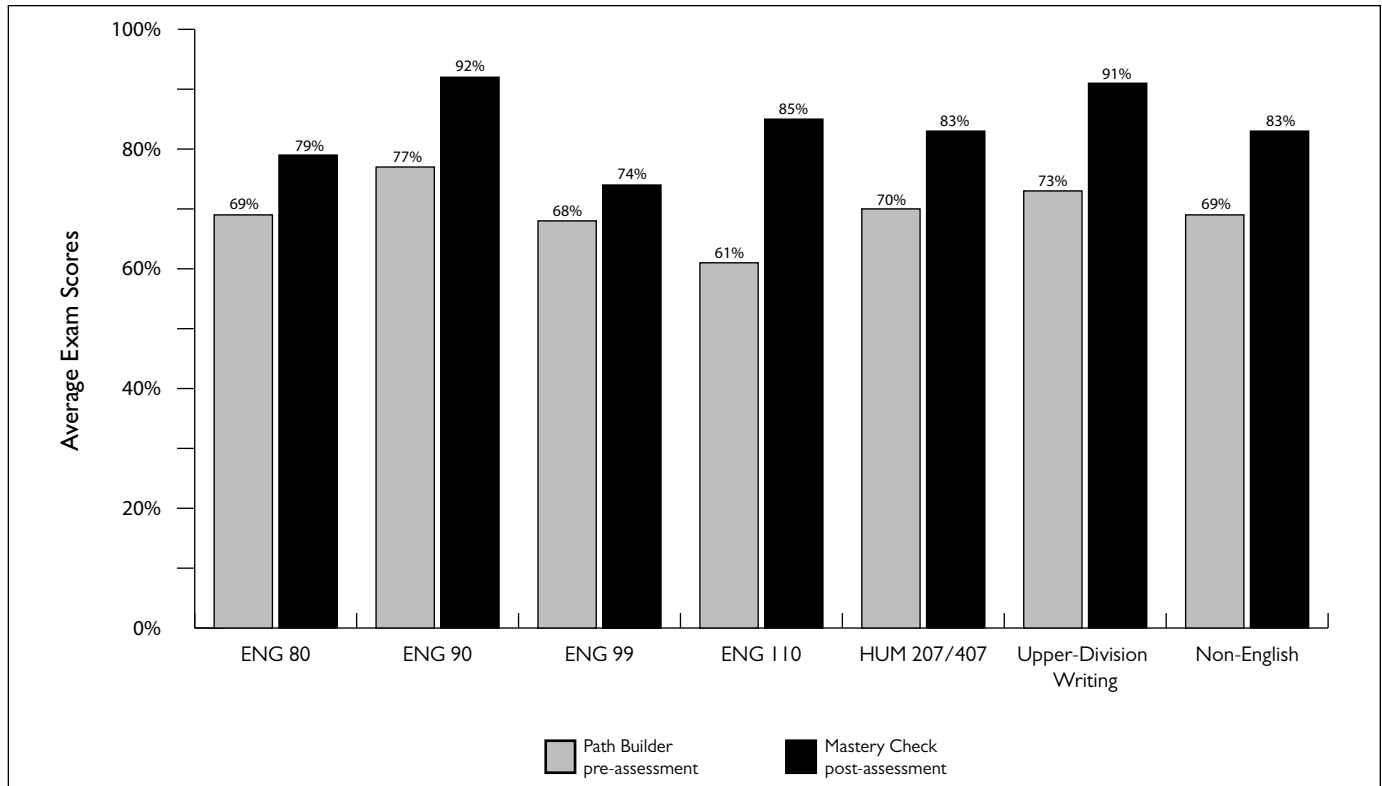
Figure 1. Path Builder (Pre-Assessment) and Mastery Check (Post-Assessment) Averages, 2006–2014: ENG 80 ($N=3,264$); ENG 90 ($N=18$); ENG 99 ($N=6,008$); ENG 110 ($N=937$); HUM 207/407 ($N=2,771$); Upper-Division Writing ($N=698$); Non-English disciplines ($N=1,163$)

Most importantly, MyWritingLab has served as an essential tool in the redesign of several courses and is now an essential component in the following courses:

Reading and Writing (ENG 80) is a developmental course focused on writing development from paragraph to essay. MyWritingLab is used to teach and provide practice in basic and sentence-level grammar. Students take the Path Builder diagnostic test, complete 10 required topics, and take the Mastery Check post-assessment. Students work on their own, outside of class, and their work in MyWritingLab counts as 10 percent of their final course grade. We recommend that students master approximately one topic a week in order to stay on track with the course.

English as a Second Language (ENG 90) prepares non-native English speaking undergraduate students for university level coursework and concentrates on the development of English literacy skills. Students combine sentences, summarize and critique academic texts, write several short papers, and write a short academic research paper. The course is a requirement for international students whose English Placement Test score is T141 or below. Students work on MyWritingLab outside of class time. They must complete the Path Builder diagnostic, 10

required topics, and the Mastery Check post-assessment which counts for 10 percent of their final course grade.

Critical Thinking and Writing (ENG 99) is a developmental course covering essay writing using rhetorical modes. Students are required to complete the Path Builder, master 15 topics, and take the Mastery Check for 10 percent of their final course grade. To master a topic, students must earn a score of 80 percent or higher on the Recall 1, Recall 2, and Apply sections. We recommend that students complete approximately one and a half topics per week to stay on track. Students complete MyWritingLab work outside of class.

Writing and Research (ENG 110) focuses on student practice in expository writing and the completion of a research paper. MyWritingLab use varies by the instructor, but students generally complete 5–10 topics outside of class for no more than 10 percent of their grade. The instructor chooses which topics best supplement the course.

Humanities 207/407 is an online, 1-credit course completed exclusively in MyWritingLab that focuses on writing and grammar mechanics. Students start the course by taking the Path Builder diagnostic that generates an individualized lesson plan. Students

are then responsible for mastering 20 MyWritingLab topics of their choosing. To master a topic, students must view the Overview, watch the Animation, and complete the Recall 1, Recall 2, and Apply with a score of 80 percent or higher. Students receive 100 percent credit for mastering the 20 topics.

Free-Range is not a course but rather an opportunity for students to have self-directed access to MyWritingLab. Work completed in Free Range does not count toward a credit-bearing course using MyWritingLab.

The **English Early Start Program** provides students with the skills they need to have a successful start to their academic career. The program is taught over the summer by CSUB and high school faculty to help students become accustomed to the college environment prior to beginning their freshman year. Students who score below 147 on the English Placement Test are required to enroll. Students must master three topics in MyWritingLab, which count for 10 percent of the program grade. Students take a Qualifying Exam at the end of the session; a good score can help them accelerate through one or two levels of developmental English.

Non-English Courses. MyWritingLab is now regularly used in over 22 disciplines, including business, public policy, chemistry, and management. In most courses that incorporate MyWritingLab, students take the Path Builder diagnostic, master a required number of topics, and finish by taking the Mastery Check post-assessment. Students submit their writing to Pearson Tutor Services for feedback and work on MyWritingLab outside of class. MyWritingLab work generally counts for 10 percent of the students' final grade. Other non-English courses may require MyWritingLab on a section-by-section basis.

Results and Data

- From 2006–2014, students have improved an average of 18 percent from the Path Builder pre-test to the Mastery Check post-test in MyWritingLab. See a breakdown of average learning gains from pre-test to post-test by course in Figure 1.

- In developmental English, pass rates average 6.4 percentage points higher in years with MyWritingLab (2006–2014) compared to the five years prior to implementing MyWritingLab (2001–2005). See Figure 2. Subsequent pass rates in Freshman Composition (ENG 110) are 12.6 percentage points higher for students who were in a redesigned developmental course using MyWritingLab from 2006–2014 compared to students who were in a traditional developmental course from 2001–2005 without MyWritingLab. See Figure 3.

- The cohorts of students from 2001–2014 are comparable, though, unfortunately, in the last few years, we've observed freshmen entering with lower skill levels. Although we can't say MyWritingLab has caused the increase in pass rates and success rates, we believe it has played an important role in helping students be better prepared to succeed in both developmental English and composition.

- Between 2006 and 2014, CSUB saved $92,000 for teaching hours and 16,991 classroom hours by using MyWritingLab—an annual savings of $11,500 and 2,124 hours.

- Over the past five academic years (2009-10 to 2013-14), the number of sections with students enrolled in MyWritingLab has grown from 48 to 202.
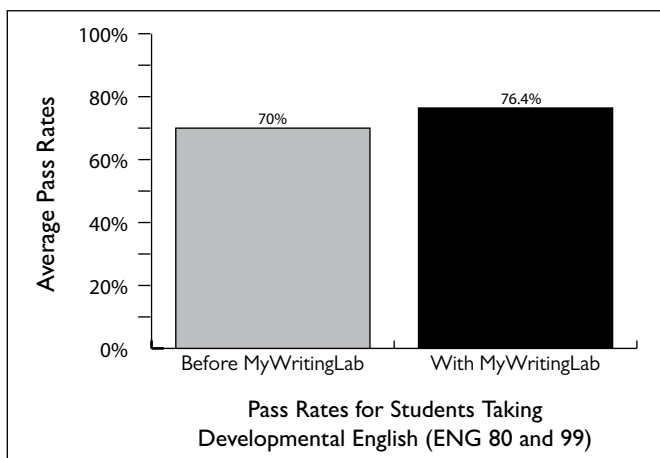

Figure 2. Average Pass Rates for Students Taking Developmental English (ENG 80 and 99) before MyWritingLab, 2001–2005 (*N*=1,746) and with MyWritingLab, 2006–2014 (*N*=8615)
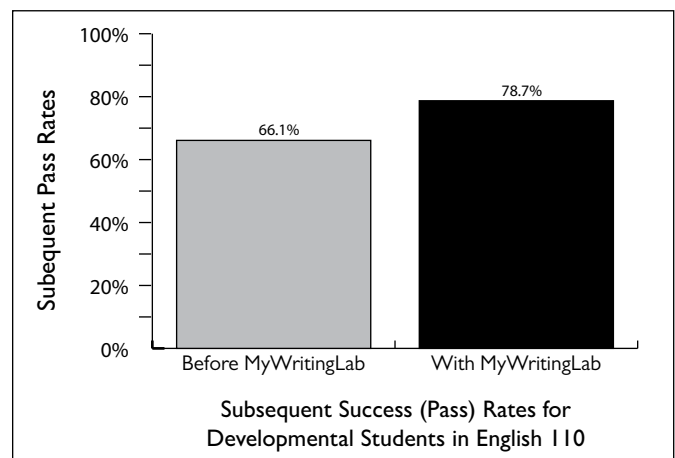

Figure 3. Subsequent Success Rates in Writing and Research (ENG 110) before MyWritingLab, 2001–2005 (*N*=1,598) and with MyWritingLab, 2006–2014 (*N*=10,216)
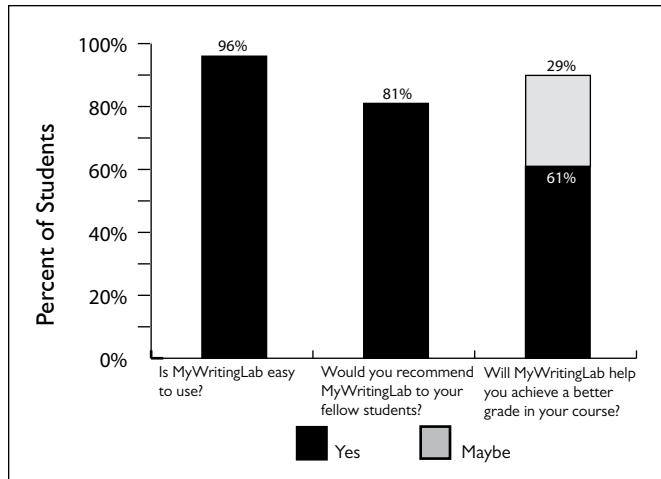
Figure 4. Results from Student Survey, Fall 2014 (*N* = 74)

- In the past two academic years, (2011-12 to 2013-14) student visits to the MyWritingLabPlus Headquarters have exploded from 1,705 to 8,960 visits, an impressive 425 percent increase.

The Student Experience

Students using MyWritingLab in a variety of English and non-English classes were surveyed in the fall of 2014 (Figure 4); 74 students responded. Keeping in mind that students in these courses all have different skill levels and needs, overall the results were positive. The following quotes highlight student responses to the question, "How is MyWritingLab helping you succeed in your course?"

- "I initially started using MyWritingLab to aid in the organization of my essays, but after taking the assessment, I realized there were many areas of my writing that needed improvement. Now, I can confidently write my essays and know why I'm writing them the way I am, all thanks to MyWritingLab."

- "[MyWritingLab] allows me to practice a lot of grammar that I never really fully understood."

- "MyWritingLab will help me succeed by ensuring my grammar and writing skills are at the college level."

- "MyWritingLab is helping me succeed in English 110 because of all the topics I could master. I have the option to be able to complete many activities to help me out with grammar. It also helps me make little or no mistakes when it comes to writing papers."

- "MyWritingLab is very helpful to me because I can always refer back to the topics or modules if I ever need any assistance."

Benefits

Not only do the students enjoy the program, but instructors find it to be successful in teaching grammar and writing skills. The following quotes highlight satisfied faculty members from a variety of disciplines who have found MyWritingLab to be a benefit to their students:

- "All of my students now understand comma splices, and I didn't have to spend 35 minutes of class time."
  —*English Instructor*

- "This is just what my students needed in this course. The combination of MyWritingLab and Pearson Tutor Services is invaluable." —*History Instructor*

- "Ever since my students enrolled in Humanities with MyWritingLab, their writing has improved, and it takes me less time to mark up their papers."
  —*Geology Instructor*

- "It's been a long time since my students have had an English course. MyWritingLab is a good way for them to get that information quickly and painlessly."
  —*Public Policy & Administration Instructor*

- My students frequently would tell me how easy MyWritingLab was to use and how much they learned from it. I could definitely see an improvement in the first three weeks of them working in MyWritingLab."
  —*Business Instructor*

Conclusion

Due to the popularity of the program with faculty and students, our enrollment has increased steadily. Since the university elected to make MyWritingLab available to all students, we're thrilled to see that in 2015, almost 5,000 students—57 percent of the student body—are using MyWritingLab in either a course or on their own to become better writers. Our goal is to have at least 75 percent of the student body working in the program by 2016.