

Summary of the University's Plan to Assess Achievement of its QEP

Overview:

The University's QEP has been termed VITAL (Value in Task Achievement, and Learning). With the specific targeted outcome in the new strategic plan of "decreasing the number of Ds, Fs, and Ws" in mind, Warner University proposes a student-success-related QEP based on the concept of Utility Value Interventions (UVIs), with UVIs being assignments that require students to reflect about the perceived usefulness or relevancy of course tasks in light of their future plans. Anchored in the "start with why" principle, this initiative will incorporate UVIs in targeted first-year courses with high DFW rates, with the goal of improving student success and thereby improving student retention.

Methodology:

Three embedded writing assignments and three embedded writing responses are part of the educational experience in three first-year courses with high DFW rates. These three courses are ENG1010 Composition I, ENG 1020 Composition II, and BST1010 Christian Life: Faith and Practice.

Research question(s):

To what extent do Utility-Value Interventions (UVI) impact student grades and persistence (measures of academic success), and is the intervention impactful among an intersection of populations?

Embedded writing response prompts:

Condition (UVI)

Choose one of the two options below:

- 1. Type a short response (2-3 paragraphs in length) addressing [the course topic/assignment concurrently submitted] and discuss the relevance of the concept or issue to your own life. Be sure to include some concrete information that was covered in this assignment, explaining why this assignment is relevant to your life or is useful to you. Be sure to explain how the true story assignment applies to you personally and give examples. -or-*
- 2. Write a letter to a family member or close friend, [the course topic/assignment concurrently submitted] to this other person. Be sure to include some concrete information that was covered in this assignment, explaining why this assignment is relevant to this person's life or useful for this person. Be sure to explain how the true story applies to this person and give examples.*

Control (no UVI)

Type a short response (2-3 paragraphs in length) summarizing the [the course topic/assignment concurrently submitted]. You should attempt to organize the material in a meaningful way, rather than simply listing the main facts or research findings. Remember to summarize the material in your own words.

Utility-value score and LIWC word counts:

For the three supplemental writing responses, each participant will have a hand-coded utility-value score (0-4) as well as text analysis generated word counts, based on nine Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) dictionaries (Pennebaker et al., 2001). Words representing interdependent values will be highlighted then coded for the level of utility-value in each written assignment:

- first-person singular pronouns (e.g. I, me, my)
- second-person pronouns (e.g. you, your)
- Social process words (e.g. friend, aunt, talk) and
- cognitive process words (e.g. think, cause, know, explain)

Score	Description
0	Indicates no utility
1	Indicates general utility applied to humans generically
2	Indicates utility that is general enough to apply to anyone, but is applied to the individual
3	Indicates utility that is specific to the individual
4	Indicates a strong, specific connection to the individual that includes a deeper appreciation or future application of the material.

Baseline measures:

Three-year pass and persistence rates related to the selected courses.

Course achievement measures:

At the end of the 16-week course, course achievement data will be collected from university records and shall include the following: writing assignment grades (T1, T2, T3), final course grade, cumulative grade point average, and enrollment in the subsequent semester (persistence). Data will further be disaggregated by generation status (First and Continuing Generation) and Race/Ethnicity.

Data analysis will be ongoing at the end-of-each semester.

The University's assessment plan may evolve as it engages with the QEP.