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2. **Title:** Filling the Gaps in Undergraduate Education: The Implementation of AVID in Two Texas Universities

3. **Abstract:** This study utilizes first and second year implementation data gathered from the newly formed AVID university courses, from instructors, site teams, students and tutors at both Texas Tech University and The University of Texas Pan American. Working in collaboration with the Texas Higher Education Board and the AVID National Office the implementation of AVID in universities is designed to improve the overall college retention and success of first year, first generation, and underrepresented students.

4. **Narrative:** (limit 1,000 words) *Introduction to the topic,*

   The AVID Postsecondary System (APS) may be described as a holistic, integrated college-success system designed for students with the determination to succeed and for campuses committed to promoting student success (AVID Postsecondary, 2012). APS is predicated on the proposition that college students who have the will to succeed will succeed - if they are challenged and given the academic and psychosocial support needed to meet that challenge (AVID Postsecondary, 2012).

   Over the last two years, AVID has extended its historic mission of promoting college readiness to include college success. The AVID Postsecondary System builds on the success of the AVID precollege system that has effectively promoted college access and preparedness for secondary and high school students for over 30 years. Courageous conversations with AVID high schools and partnering colleges and universities expanded the scope to span both sides of the secondary-postsecondary bridge.

   The AVID postsecondary system is comprised of the following six features: 1) Holistic: AVID engages the whole student and campus; 2) Systematic: AVID creates a comprehensive, cross-divisional infrastructure; 3) Sustained: AVID provides a systematic plan for campus involvement that is ongoing and incorporated follow-up support and assessment; 4) Transformative: AVID drives the development of a student-centered, learning-focused campus culture; 5) Empirical: AVID is built on research based evidence that track student progress; and, 6) Customized: AVID is tailored for campuses that are committed and determined to implement its features (Cuseo, 2010). These features support AVID’s five postsecondary essentials which include: Administrative Leadership and Support, AVID Campus Planning Team, Professional Development, AVID Freshman Experience and Beyond, and Data Collection and Research (http://www.avid.org/sta_avidpostsecondary.html).
Review of related literature

It is the hope of AVID to bring transparency and support to the hard truths regarding the college completion crisis across the state and the nation. The United States has one of the highest college-going rates in the world, yet its college-completion rate (both 2-year and 4-year) rank near the bottom half of all industrialized nations (College Board, 2008a; National Governors Association, 2008). Only 35% of America's college students graduate with a bachelor's degree in four years and just over half (52%) graduate within six years (College Board, 2009). For students who attend college part-time, the completion rate is even lower: Less than 25% graduate within eight years (Complete College America, 2011).

The percentage of high school graduates enrolling in college is increasing for all racial and income groups (NASH & Education Trust, 2009); however, these gains in college access rates are not being matched by gains in college success rates (Hunt & Carruthers, 2004). Viewing America's current college-completion rates from an international perspective, the United States has dropped from number two in the world to number 12, and is in the process of dropping further (Complete College America, 2010). If this trend continues, the current generation of college-age Americans will be the first in U.S. history to be less educated than its parents (CCSSE, 2010).

The transformative process in undergraduate education needed compete globally is highlighted in research indicating that individual programs created to promote college student success are implemented in isolation from a larger focus on organizational reform; they do not impact student outcomes on a significant scale (Jenkins, 2011). AVID’s 30 year history and capacity for reforming and transforming campus culture derives from intentional involvement of all key campus members and programs in the change process. Being subjected to data analysis, consistently replicated and disseminated, research and reviews of practices characterize high-performance organizations, both within and beyond the educational sector recommend “colleges should convene cross-functional teams for assisting students at each stage, [from] entry into a program of study, program completion, and career placement” (Jenkins, 2011, p. 36).

Methodology:

A quasi-experimental design approach was used in which two cohorts of freshmen enrolled in a paired set of courses serve as the experimental group (A), two randomly selected cohorts serve as the control group (B). Group A consists of a cohort of students enrolled in a paired freshman seminar and a developmental math class. Instructors of group A have been trained in AVID methodologies, and group A had access to AVID trained tutors. Group B is a cohort of students enrolled in non-paired classes whose instructors have not been trained in AVID methodologies. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to address the first two research questions.

To answer the third research question, focus groups of AVID-trained tutors, mentors and student assistants, instructors, and student support center staff were conducted in the spring of 2011, and again in the spring of 2012. Data gathered from focus group interviews allowed for a deeper investigation into the AVID implementation process and how the instructors, tutors, student support center directors, and students perceive the effectiveness of the initiative.

Research Questions:
1) Is there a significant difference in the retention rates of first semester freshmen enrolled in the paired Freshman seminar class/math class and a control group of freshmen?
2) Is there a significant difference in the grade point averages of first semester freshmen enrolled in the paired Freshman seminar class/math class and a control group of freshmen?
3) What do instructors, student support center directors and tutors report to be the benefits of AVID Postsecondary?

Preliminary Results/discussion

Data from one semester of AVID implementation at UTPA have been analyzed and results are highlighted below. Students in the experimental group A were significantly more likely to return to college the following semester than students in the control group B. The effect size (phi coefficient) was .08, fairly small. Group A had a retention rate of 96.6% and Group B had a retention rate of 80.6%.

To demonstrate the effect of the intervention, odds ratios are presented (Valentine & Cooper, 2003). Students enrolled in the paired freshman seminar were 6.76 times more likely to return the following semester than those not enrolled in the paired seminar (control) group. Caution is needed when interpreting these findings since the intervention and control group sizes were very different.

As shown above, measuring performance of first-year AVID and non-AVID students revealed no statistically significant differences (more results will be shown in the full paper). When interpreting these results, one must be mindful of the level of AVID implementation; the AVID class itself was still “under construction” in 2011-2012. Themes emerging from the tutor focus group interviews included support/expectations, struggles/challenges, AVID training & professional development, responsibilities, and program success/strengths. Those emerging from the instructor/director focus group included common backgrounds, changes/barriers, perspectives on AVID strategies, and recommendations for improvement. In the interest of space, quotes are not presented, but will be presented in the full paper.

5. References, survey/interview protocols, etc.
CCSSE (Community College Survey of Student Engagement) (2010). The heart of student success: Teaching, learning, and college completion. Austin, Texas, The University of Texas at Austin. Community College Leadership Program.


