

Assessment of Beach Learning Community Interventions

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Scanning the QR code on your mobile device will allow you to access electronic version of this Data Fellow's project.

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Research Questions

Our over-arching question is: How can we better serve underprepared students and help them succeed academically at CSULB?

- How academically successful has the Beach Learning Community (BLC) population been over time?
- What interventions have worked in helping BLC students succeed?
- What interventions might we use with this student group moving forward, given EO 1110 changes?

Introduction

Who are the Beach Learning Community students?

- Mostly opportunity gap students – approximately 75% of BLC students are in each opportunity gap population (URM, Pell, 1st Gen)
- All students were required to take one semester of pre-baccalaureate Composition I and one or two semesters of pre-baccalaureate math (MAPB 1,7, 11)
- **Challenge:** The population definition changed over time with regard to amount of pre-baccalaureate work required
- Students *mandated* to be in the Community – compliance with CO Executive Orders
- Students had to complete all pre-baccalaureate coursework within one year or leave the University.

Numerous short-lived interventions were tried on the BLC community in pursuit of the primary, CO-directed goal of retention. Our study covers the 2014-2015 to 2016-2017 cohorts. Due to staff changes less known about prior interventions.

Methods

We used IR&A resources to conduct several data explorations of the BLC populations with a focus on:

- Population characteristics (demographics, etc.)
- Retention rates
- Other academic success markers, such as GPA and Units Earned

We gathered data on the various interventions – staff contacts, support resource usage, etc. – insofar as possible

- **Challenge:** some data lost due to changes in e-systems used for tracking, some students belonged to other campus support units, as well.

We gathered anecdotal evidence – student and staff *stories* about their experiences of this population.

The Journey and Data so far....

Our project is still in-progress. We just completed the IRB process. Here is a brief overview of the journey so far.

A picture of the population

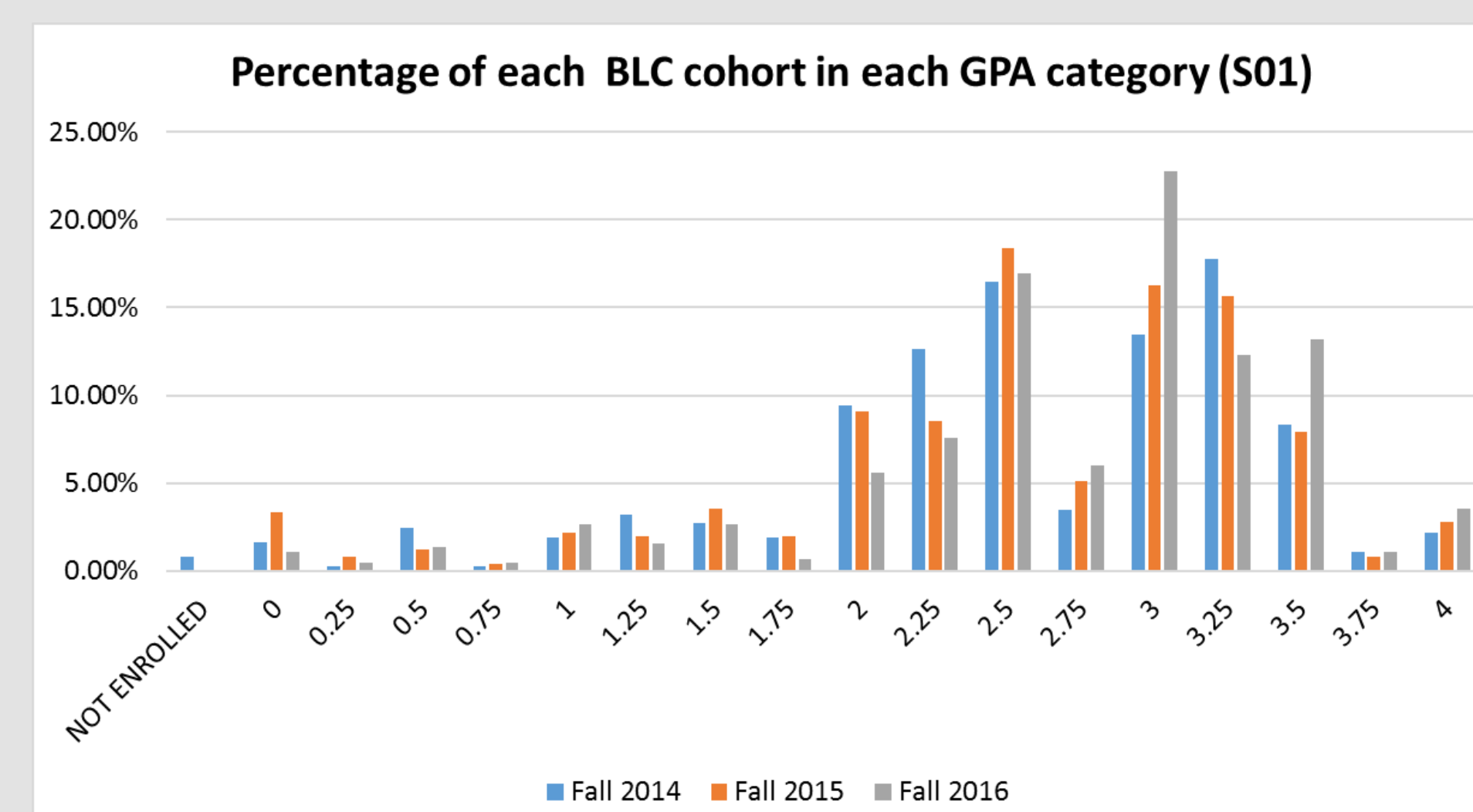
- What do the numbers in the existing data say about this population? And what do we know through our interactions with them?
- *We explored IR&A data and spoke with staff who worked with that population. In addition to retention, we looked at other metrics, such as GPA and 1st-year momentum*

A picture of the interventions

- How do we get clear picture of many, often short-lived, interventions? How do these interventions fit with the academic data on this community?
- *We developed a historical timeline of interventions and gathered internal data on the. We matched that timeline to the IR&A data.*

What else do we need to know?

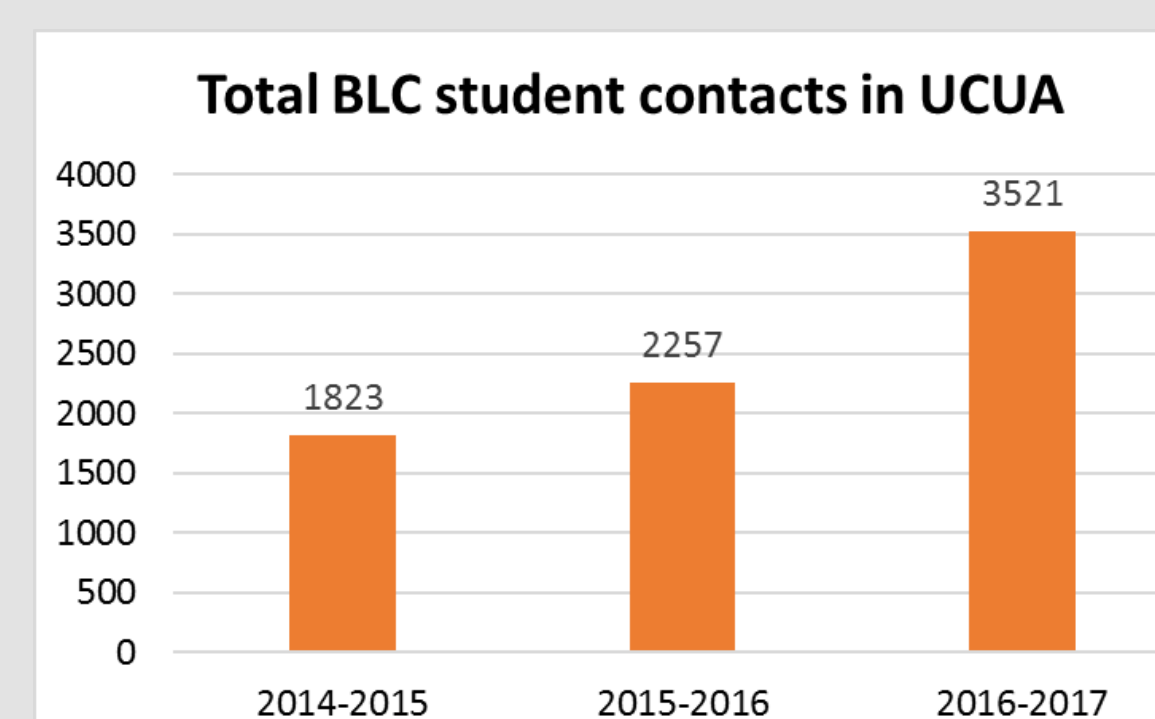
- How may advising practices and CSULB policies have affected this student group? What interventions do we want to know about? What were the students' experiences?
- *We developed a historical timeline of practices and policies and identified the potential key interventions.*



There was a sharp increase in students in the 3.0+ GPA range in the 2016 cohort – 53% in 2016 vs. 43% for the 2014 and 2016 cohorts.

Percentage of student population completing 30 or more units first year			
TUEs (30+)	2014	2015	2016
BLC (overall)	4.0%	6.3%	3.8%
BLC NURM	3.1%	6.5%	2.7%
BLC URM	4.3%	4.5%	4.3%
UNIV (overall)	16.0%	18.9%	26.0%
UNIV NURM	19.0%	21.5%	31.0%
UNIV URM	12.0%	16.0%	22.0%

First-Year Momentum – BLC below University numbers, but no NURM-URM gap. Could advising practices (units attempted) help change this? Should it be changed for this population? What do the students think?



2016 GPA increase coincided with two primary interventions: Balanced course loading and advising groups. The advising groups greatly increased the number of staff-student contacts. In person contacts up sharply (56% in 2016 from previous year). BUT correlation is not causation...

Student Voices:

“Because of the BLC [we are] still in college and [are] going to graduate.”

-from student interviews for a UCUA external program review

In addition to quantitative data, we want the students' experiences through their voices.

How will we find out what else we need to know?

- What questions will be valuable to ask students? How can our survey build and contribute to other university data collection? What discussions do we need to have with advisors and other staff/faculty?
- *We had discussions with advisors who had worked with the BLC population to help devise survey questions. We collaborated with other colleges on additional survey questions.*

Thoughts so far

Our work with the BLC cohorts had an overall positive effect on their retention, including the BLC opportunity gap population – which comprise the bulk of the community.

Some intervention seem to match up with improvement in other academic success markers, such as GPA.

The BLC population was still behind the general university population with regard to other measures, such as first-year momentum (completion of 30 or more units in their first year) – exacerbated because some of their completed units were pre-baccalaureate. This may have been in part due to ongoing questions about the number of units that should be taken by this population.

These students are not going away just because remediation did – but now all their courses are college-level. How does EO 1110 change the equation for these students moving forward? And how must interventions that seem to have worked with BLC be adapted?

Recent experiences with the 2018-2019 students who would have been in the BLC previously seem to indicate that the structure of that prior program was beneficial for students.

Next Steps / Future Directions

We now need to look beyond the quantitative data and discover more about the student experiences in the BLC and their stories to gain a clearer picture about what interventions may have had positive effects and why. Conversely, we also want to understand why some well-intentioned interventions and advising practices may not have worked as well and why.

We are currently at the end of the IRB process for carrying out an extensive survey of the BLC cohorts covered by this project. The survey will be followed up with focus groups to get more in-depth understandings of BLC student experiences and uncover aspects of their experience with the BLC that we may not have considered.

Opportunity: Connecting our work with others': Our survey uses some of the same question about students' general experiences at the university and larger life contexts (commute times, off-campus responsibilities, etc.) that will allow us to better add to a common, shared, data pool.

We will match survey results with IR & A data and, in conjunction with focus group results, develop a more comprehensive picture of these students' experiences and academic paths to inform how we move forward with working with these students in the future under the 'Beach Academy' designation.