

Syracuse University Project Advance- Evaluation of Student's College Readiness

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Submitted to:

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Glossary of Terms

| | |
|------|---|
| SU | Syracuse University |
| SUPA | Syracuse University Project Advance |
| STEM | Science, Technology, Engineering and Math |
| NSC | National Student Clearinghouse |

Executive Summary

Syracuse University Project Advance is an enhanced concurrent enrollment program linking Syracuse University (SU) with secondary schools. One component of its stated mission is to provide college readiness tools, programs and services. This program evaluation focuses on this part of Syracuse University Project Advance's (SUPA) mission.

The primary purpose of this project is to evaluate how Syracuse University Project Advance is working to meet its mission of increasing student's college readiness. Our primary audience is Rob Seth Pusch, Senior Associate Director, Syracuse University Project Advance, and the rest of the team, while the secondary audiences include high school students, high school administrators, high school teachers who teach SUPA courses, students' classmates, Syracuse University, and other colleges and universities.

In order to evaluate the college readiness, the evaluation team decided to evaluate from two different aspects – how fast students finish college and the students' college readiness skills.

The key questions that we chose to investigate are:

- Do students who take SUPA courses complete degrees faster?
- Do SUPA courses provide the necessary skills to be college ready?

The methods that were used to obtain answers to these questions are:

- Extant data analysis using records from National Student Clearinghouse of SUPA students
- Online survey with former SUPA students that are freshmen or sophomores in Syracuse University
- Focus group discussion with SUPA teachers

The data analysis revealed that SUPA students on average obtain their bachelor's degree a year faster than the national average. The average time for completion of a bachelor's degree for SUPA students overall was found to be 4.02 years, while for those studying in Syracuse University itself was just 4.01 years. The national average for enrolled students to earn a bachelor's degree is 5.1 years according to National Student Clearinghouse.

Further, the data analysis showed that students perceive that SUPA courses increase college readiness. It also showed that students perceive SUPA courses to be slightly easier than college courses. The focus group discussion exposed that SUPA courses were demanding in terms of critical thinking, course workload, advanced content and engagement with the professors which helped prepare students for college.

We suggest that study group skills are prioritized in SUPA courses and college admission skills development are incorporated in order to enhance college readiness further. We also suggest that SUPA conduct deeper studies in the areas touched upon by the survey, along with analysis

based on background information of the students. Finally, we recommend creating a database in SUPA to keep track of students, especially those that go on to study in Syracuse University.

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Introduction and Background

Syracuse University Project Advance is an enhanced concurrent enrollment program linking Syracuse University (SU) with secondary schools. One of its stated mission is to provide college readiness tools, programs and services. This program evaluation aims to evaluate this mission of Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA).

This program evaluation is undertaken by Kang Zhang, Prabesh Devkota and Qi Wu who are Master of Science Students in Instructional Design, Development and Evaluation. This is done as a part of the course IDE 641- Techniques in Educational Evaluation by professor Dr. Moon Heum Cho. Our primary client is Rob Seth Pusch, Ph.D.- Senior Associate Director, Project Advance.

Context

Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA) began in 1972 as an attempt to address “senioritis,” the tendency for seniors who have completed their graduation requirements to relax rather than prepare for the transition from high school to college¹.

SUPA’s cure for senioritis was to develop a concurrent enrollment (sometimes called “dual enrollment” or “dual credit”) college readiness program. Dual enrollment not only better prepares students to transition from high school to college, it gives them course credit that 90% of SUPA graduates receive recognition for at destination colleges (these destination colleges are higher educational institutions all over the United States).

Since its official launch in 1974, SUPA’s professional development programs for high school teachers have helped more than 750 educators become SU adjuncts. And the first six pilot schools have become part of a community of more than 200 schools across six states and abroad, enrolling approximately 12,000 students every year.

Today, Project Advance offers over 50 SU courses² from 22 academic disciplines (which encompasses humanities, languages, STEM, Business and Technology), with new courses added annually. These university courses for high school seniors are identical in all important aspects to courses offered to matriculated SU students—they use the same syllabi (where appropriate), materials, textbooks, assignments, and assessments.

¹ Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA). (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://supa.syr.edu/about-sup/>

² For the full list of the courses, please see: <https://supa.syr.edu/courses/>

Purpose of the Program

Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA) is an enhanced concurrent enrollment program linking Syracuse University (SU) with secondary school. Through this partnership, high schools can offer qualified seniors the opportunity to enroll in SU courses for university credit. Teachers who have qualified through SUPA as SU adjunct instructors teach enhanced concurrent enrollment university courses in high schools during the school day.

Program Clients

The primary clients of SUPA are high school students and Syracuse University. Students who attend the SUPA courses are often seniors in high school with good academic standing. They are mainly from high schools nearby Syracuse, and some of the students come from other states and even abroad. Syracuse University provides financial and human resources to Projects Advanced.

Secondary clients are student's family members, classmates, and students' teacher. Since students' family pay the tuitions for SUPA courses, parents are an indirect client. Students who are taking SUPA courses may influence their classmates who do not take SUPA courses.

Basic Operation of the Program

Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA) offers Syracuse University courses to qualified high school students' can help to create a "college-going culture" in high schools, where students are challenged by college coursework and learn they have the ability to succeed.

SUPA's structure involved students enrolling in the Syracuse courses as non matriculated students (Edmonds & Signorelli, 2010). They pay a reduced tuition fee and receive Syracuse University credit for the courses they successfully complete. Students can request Syracuse transcripts that verify the courses that they took as well as the grades they received in the class. This can be used to initiate transfer of those credits to the post secondary institutions students attend after high school. SUPA basically undertakes the program, but is not involved directly with teaching the students. Certified teachers in high schools themselves carry out teaching.

SUPA was created with the idea of being self-sufficient and capable of implementation and expansion without creating a financial burden on SU or participating faculty. The main idea behind the project was from a public relations aspect rather than for money making.

The SUPA courses, carefully designed and controlled, are taught within the high schools. These courses are designed to be taught by high school teachers as part of their regular teaching load. Further the courses have been made not to conflict with the regular schedule of the student.

Teachers are selected by the high schools themselves to teach the SU courses and then they make an application to SUPA. SUPA then evaluates the application, based on their background and experience on the subject, and makes the decision allowing him/her to attend the summer

institute. The summer institute is held annually at Syracuse University and is led by a respective content area faculty member. After successfully completing this, the teachers are then certified as adjunct instructors of SU. SUPA teachers are required to attend a one-day seminar in the fall and spring every year in order to retain their qualification to teach the course, increase their content expertise and to share their successful strategies and ideas with peers.

Purpose and Audience

Purpose of the Evaluation

Project Advance (SUPA) ongoing mission³ has been stated as:

1. to offer innovative and challenging Syracuse University courses to qualified high school students at their local high schools, during their regularly scheduled high school day
2. to increase students' college readiness by providing college readiness tools, programs, and services
3. to provide continuous professional development for teachers and ongoing dialogue between the University faculty and the high school teachers
4. to conduct extensive ongoing research and evaluation in support of systemically improving instruction and smoothing the transition from high school to postsecondary education

This study seeks to evaluate the second mission, which is to increase the student's college readiness. We would like to determine if we have actually led to an increase in college readiness.

We have defined our purpose:

- To evaluate how Syracuse University Project Advance is working to meet its mission of increasing student's college readiness.

In order to the effectiveness of increasing student's college readiness, we are going to evaluate the readiness from several different aspects:

1. To evaluate the impact of SUPA courses on student's performance as they move on to postsecondary institutions
2. To evaluate how long SUPA course taking students to take to graduate with a college degree
3. To evaluate how well SUPA courses helps to provide skills to students that are required for college

Focus of the Evaluation

The focus of this evaluation is to evaluate how the Syracuse University Project Advance is working to meet its mission of increasing student's college readiness. One of its stated mission is to provide college readiness tools, programs and services.

College readiness involves prediction. Placement tests and other standardized measures are often used to predict students' readiness for college (Kathleen & Ginger). Armstrong (1999) and King et al.(1994) concluded that the predictive value of standardized placement tests is questionable. Standardized placement tests cannot provide a comprehensive understanding of

³ Syracuse University Project Advance. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://supa.syr.edu/>

college readiness, since college readiness are composed of different strategies and skills, such as cognitive strategies, academic skills, behaviors. In order to have an overreaching picture of the college readiness, our evaluation will not be limited to those tests, the evaluation will be conducted from different perspectives.

The audience for the Evaluation Report

The immediate audience of this evaluation report include:

Primary Audience

- **Syracuse University Project Advance.** Dr. Rob Seth Pusch would be our primary audience and main contact person for SUPA. Christina Parish, PhD., Director, SUPA would also be our Primary Audience. It further includes administrators and staff of SUPA.

Secondary Audience

- **The teachers.** Those teachers are high school teachers and they teach SUPA courses.
- **Students.** They are high school students who qualify to take SUPA courses
- **Students' classmates.** They are indirectly engaged in the program.
- **Syracuse University and other universities and colleges.**

Components of the Program to be Evaluated

The program would be evaluated for readiness skills from the students, teachers and SUPA's perspective. The time to degree graduation would be calculated using existing data from National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) for students who graduated high school in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. The major components of college readiness are:

- Cognitive Strategies that indicates intelligent behavior change and forms of cognition
- Academic Skills. Those skills are necessary for college students, such as writing, reading, and the ability to utilize information resources.
- Academic behaviors changes. It includes time management skills, using information management skills

Decisions and Questions

We first introduce the process of how we come up with questions related to the evaluation plan. Second, for the two questions, we are going to share the methods that we are going to use for the two questions.

Divergent and Convergent Phase

After the reviewing of SUPA's mission and goal, the evaluation questions will be assessed from three different perspectives – SUPA teachers, students, and administrators of SUPA. From teacher perspective, our team have come up with several questions: 1. Experience of SUPA 2. Suggestions for improving SUPA. 3. Difference between high school courses and SUPA course 4. How the rate the curriculum difficulty of SUPA courses. 5. Students' performance after and before taking SUPA course.

From students' perspective, our team mainly focus the different learning skills and academic performance in SUPA courses. From the administrators perspective, the core of evaluation will be what do they do for college readiness and if the program is designed to increase college readiness. In the convergent Phase, our team merge those questions and find the common of the three perspective. And our team selected the most important questions to be addressed in the evaluation.

Final Question List

Do students who take SUPA courses complete degrees faster?

Criteria: The time question will help this evaluation plan to collect information about the time to finish college degrees. The data from Syracuse University will be collected. Those data will be classified into two categories. The students who has taken SUPA courses and students who do not take SUPA courses. Then we will calculate the average graduation time for different group of students. This is quantitative information that can give a clear-cut explanation of the value of SUPA courses.

Relevant sub-purpose: By comparing the time of graduation, the difference between students who has taken SUPA courses and students not. We assume that the time of finishing the degrees will be one perspective to show readiness.

Do SUPA courses provide the necessary skills to be college ready?

Criteria: Based on Davide' s Redefining College Readiness article, he describes necessary skills as key cognitive strategies, overreaching academic skills and academic behaviors. All of the sample participants will have 70 percent skills that Davide described in this article.

Alignment of this SUPA mission with college readiness objectives met from different perspectives

Relevant sub-purpose: To collect information for improving the curriculum context. Based on students' feedbacks, the SUPA can find the way to improving the curriculum context so that the college' readiness goals can be achieved.

Methods

The collection of data for this evaluation is designed to provide answers to the key questions listed earlier. Evaluation methods to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of this training program.

Data Collection Matrix

| Methods | Question 1 Do students who take SUPA courses complete degrees faster? | Question 2 Do SUPA courses provide the necessary skills to be college ready? |
|--|---|--|
| Questionnaire | | x |
| Focus group | | x |
| Collection of School Records (Extant Data) | x | |

Methods-Question 1

Do students who take SUPA courses complete degrees faster?

To answer this question, we will mainly use the record of students who took SUPA courses provided by National Student Clearinghouse. The student records will be compared with national average data to see if the students who have taken SUPA courses complete degrees faster than the average.

Collection of student records: One of the program evaluators is currently working as a graduate assistant in SUPA so he has permission to access the program data and offer the data of the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. Initially, 5 year data was looked up (including 2014, however, due to the fact that many students starting college in 2014 won't be done with their bachelors, we decided to remove it.)

The collection of student records provides some general students information including when students took SUPA courses, when they entered university and when they graduate. The data

will be analyzed and then compared with the national average. The comparison between SUPA student records and national average data can show if the SUPA courses increase student's readiness.

Methods-Question 2

Do SUPA courses provide the necessary skills to be college ready?

To answer this question, we will mainly use two different online questionnaires for students and SUPA teachers and interview. The questionnaire will help us to know what kinds of skills students have learned from the SUPA courses and if those skills increase student's college readiness. The interview of students, teachers and SUPA staff will help us get a deeper understanding of the necessary skills.

1) Online questionnaires. We will offer two different questionnaires to students and SUPA teachers. The reason why we offer questionnaires for students and the SUPA teachers is that we want to have a comprehensive understanding of whether SUPA courses provide necessary skills to be college ready (which would include key cognitive skill, over-reaching academic skills, academic behaviors and contextual skills and awareness). The main focus of the questionnaires is about the kind of necessary skills. From students' questionnaires, we will know whether students gain the necessary skills from SUPA courses. From teachers' questionnaires, we will know what kinds of skills that SUPA courses provided to increase students' readiness.

2) Focus Group discussion. The focus group discussion would be a group interaction process with questions that lead to a deeper understanding of whether SUPA courses provide the necessary skills to be college ready.

Question Summary

| Evaluation Questions | Sub-questions | Audience | Why important | Collection Procedure | Analysis Procedure | Procedure for Making Judgement | Evaluation Criteria |
|----------------------|---------------|----------|---------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| <p>1. Do students who take SUPA courses complete degrees faster?</p> | <p>1.1 What is the average time for completion for SUPA students that take SUPA courses?</p> <p>1.2 Do they graduate earlier (vs average)? Do they transfer SUPA courses going into college?</p> | <p>SUPA teachers High school students</p> | <p>This is quantitative information that can give a clear-cut explanation of the value of SUPA courses</p> | <p>National Student Clearinghouse data analysis;</p> | <p>Data analysis using software's like Stata and excel to calculate time to graduation</p> | <p>Compilation and summary of data with reference to national averages</p> | <p>Results of analysis versus national average</p> |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|---|--|---|--|
| <p>2. Do SUPA courses provide the necessary skills to be college ready?</p> | <p>2.1 How is learning in SUPA courses different (vs regular high school courses)?</p> <p>2.2. How do SUPA courses provide the knowledge required for transitioning to postsecondary institutions?</p> <p>2.3 Do SUPA course help high school students develop key cognitive strategies?</p> <p>2.4 Do SUPA courses help you to get overreaching academic skills? Are there any academic behaviors change? Is any intelligent behaviors change after taking the SUPA course, such as think with openness?</p> <p>2.5 Can you demonstrate what you have learned in a higher form of cognition?</p> | <p>High school students, SUPA, SUPA Teachers</p> | <p>This will show if the program is working to deliver on one of its core missions. Qualitative data would seek to answer this question</p> | <p>Online SUPA student survey SUPA teacher interview SUPA teachers focus group discussion</p> | <p>Do an analysis of survey data Focus group discussion answers (fixed question)</p> | <p>Alignment of this SUPA mission with college readiness objectives met from different perspectives</p> | <p>Information summarized from surveys Qualitative analysis of focus group</p> |
|---|---|--|---|---|--|---|--|

Instrumentation

The College Readiness Survey

Based on Byrd K, Macdonald G (2005) *Defining College Readiness from the Inside Out: First-Generation College Student Perspectives*, we have created the college readiness survey to collect students information from various perspective including reading skills, communication skills, problem solving skills, time management skills, computer skills, difficulty level of SUPA courses, feedbacks, and suggestion. The survey has 13 question in total, the first 11 questions are Likert scale inquiring students' agreeability to those questions. The 12th question collect information from students about the difficulty level of SUPA courses compared to the college courses. The 13th question is an open-ended question to collect feedbacks and suggestions from students.

The survey questions will be transferred to Qualtrics (an online survey software). The survey will be distributed with the help of the online survey platform and SU-email. The survey will be mainly sent to the freshmen in Syracuse University, since SUPA can provide us with those students' email addresses. The survey is going to be delivered on April first with expectation response rate of above 20 percentage.

The Focus Group Interview

Interviews are considered to be one of the most important sources of data collection with in the case study method. Interviews are conversations with a purpose, which is to obtain specific information. Determining students' college readiness required more than just quantitative data from the college readiness survey. In order to determine the perceived effectiveness of SUPA learning, for supporting college readiness, the group interview helps obtain more information than what can be purely observed from quantitative performance indicators.

On April 8th, SUPA has a seminar scheduled local SUPA high school accounting teachers. After the meeting, we are going to have a focus group interview for our project. The focus group interview questions classify into three parts – SUPA courses attributes, student's learning performance and teaching styles and teaching methods. For example, under SUPA courses attributes will focus on the difference between college courses from the high school teachers' perspectives. The focus interviews will no be last for half hour.

Results

Question 1. Do students who take SUPA course complete degrees faster?

Extant Data Analysis

Extant data analysis was used to calculate the time taken for students to obtain a bachelor's degree. This time period would be calculated based on the first course enrollment beginning date post high school graduation and the date of receiving a (the first) bachelor's degree for students. National Student Clearinghouse (<https://studentclearinghouse.org>) database was used to extract SUPA student records for the required time period.

The data analysis was carried out in the following steps:

- The data was sorted in the order of SUID (unique identifier). Then this data was imported to stata and further sorted within SUID by the year and month of first enrollment in courses post high school graduation.
- The sorted data was then imported back to stata and the degrees for the graduated rows was sorted. Only bachelor degree was identified and copied to a new sheet.
- Using the sorted list, the first course enrollment after high school graduation was identified using a simple excel formula. The first courses were then copied to a new sheet.
- The sheet containing the bachelor degree graduated rows and the first college enrollment post high school were combined and sorted again using SUID.
- Finally, the difference between the bachelor degree received date and first course enrollment in college post high school were calculated in consecutive rows within these records (in terms of months and years). A sort for Syracuse University (SU) was also done to obtain the same information for SU students.
- The difference that was calculated was used to get the overall number of students graduating, the total amount of time for all students, and the average time per student.

The average time for completion for SUPA students from their first courses post high school graduation to the date they received their bachelor degree was found to be 4.02 years. This was seen to be slightly faster for students who completed bachelors from Syracuse University itself at 4.01 years.

Everywhere

| | Number of records | Number of records found | Percentage completing bachelors | Number Graduated | Sum | Average |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------|
| 2010 | 7436 | 7128 | 73% | 5232 | 21173.833 | 4.047 |
| 2011 | 8176 | 7904 | 71% | 5607 | 23455.917 | 4 |
| 2012 | 8588 | 8254 | 76% | 6253 | 24257.23 | 3.879 |
| 2013 | 9003 | 8617 | 67% | 5784 | 23181.833 | 4.008 |
| Totals | 33203 | 31903 | 72% | 22876 | 92068.813 | 4.02 |

| Syracuse University | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| | Number of records | Number of records found | Percentage completing bachelors | Number of Graduated | Sum | Average |
| 2010 | 278 | 278 | 68% | 188 | 723.583 | 3.849 |
| 2011 | 220 | 220 | 96% | 212 | 885.833 | 4.178 |
| 2012 | 318 | 318 | 67% | 213 | 833.57 | 3.913 |
| 2013 | 302 | 302 | 65% | 196 | 799.583 | 4.08 |
| Totals | 1118 | 1118 | 72% | 809 | 3242.569 | 4.01 |

The national average time for enrolled students to earn a bachelor's degree is 5.1 years according to a report by National Student Clearinghouse (National Student Clearinghouse, 2016). This report examined time to graduation for students who earned their bachelor degree as their first four year degree between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015.

We can infer that students taking SUPA courses graduate on average a year faster than the students who do not participate in SUPA. We make this inference based on the fact that the average time for graduation for the SUPA students is 4.02 years while for those students who do not take courses through SUPA it is 5.1 years (A difference of 1.08 years).

However, the data also shows that out of the total number of records (or students) found, only 72% go on to complete a bachelor's degree. This could be for various reasons: they might have attended institutions that are not recorded in National Student Clearinghouse data (perhaps international); they could drop out prior to receiving a degree; or possibly they perhaps many of went on to pursue an associate degree. With the data here, we simply cannot say. Thus, we must look at these numbers with a certain degree of caution.

National Student Clearinghouse serves more than 3600 colleges and universities covering 98% of postsecondary students (<https://studentclearinghouse.info/onestop/wp-content/uploads/Clearinghouse-brochure.pdf>). Hence, the records from student clearinghouse do show, at least at some initial point, almost all post high school students. On the other hand, not all records are found and seen going on to get a bachelor's degree.

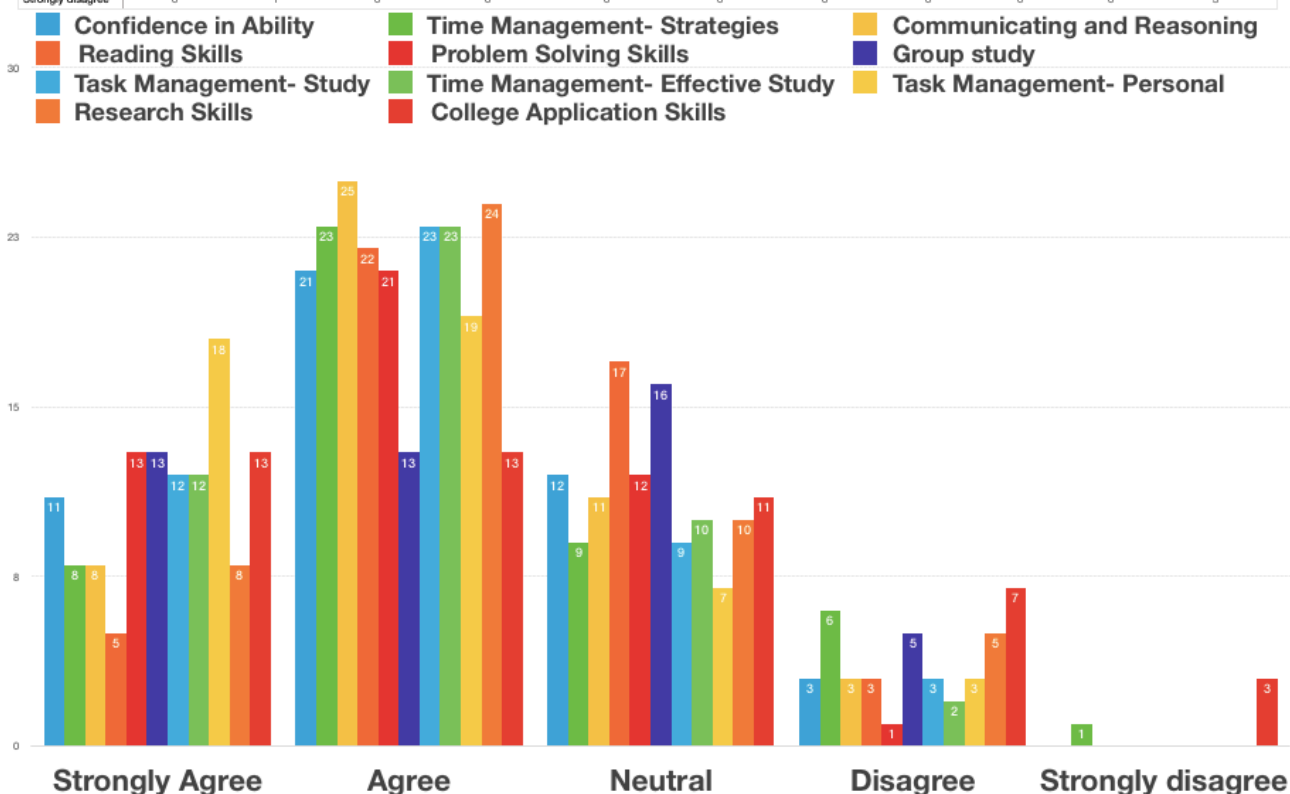
Question 2. Do SUPA courses provide the necessary skills to be college ready?

The Survey Analysis

The college readiness survey was sent via email on April 1st and a reminder email was sent on April 4th (2019). 176 freshmen who had taken courses through SUPA received the email, 47 freshmen responded the survey. The response rate was 27 percent. Since the survey question can classified into three categories, the survey analysis will be divided into three parts – skills, the difficulty level of the SUPA course, and suggestions.

The Skills Analysis

| | CONFIDENCE IN ABILITY | TIME MANAGEMENT - STRATEGIES | COMMUNICATING AND REASONING | READING SKILLS | PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS | GROUP STUDY | TASK MANAGEMENT- STUDY | TIME MANAGEMENT- EFFECTIVE STUDY | TASK MANAGEMENT- PERSONAL | RESEARCH SKILLS | COLLEGE APPLICATION SKILLS |
|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|------------------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Strongly Agree | 11 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 13 | 13 | 12 | 12 | 18 | 8 | 13 |
| Agree | 21 | 23 | 25 | 22 | 21 | 13 | 23 | 23 | 19 | 24 | 13 |
| Neutral | 12 | 9 | 11 | 17 | 12 | 16 | 9 | 10 | 7 | 10 | 11 |
| Disagree | 3 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 7 |
| Strongly disagree | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |



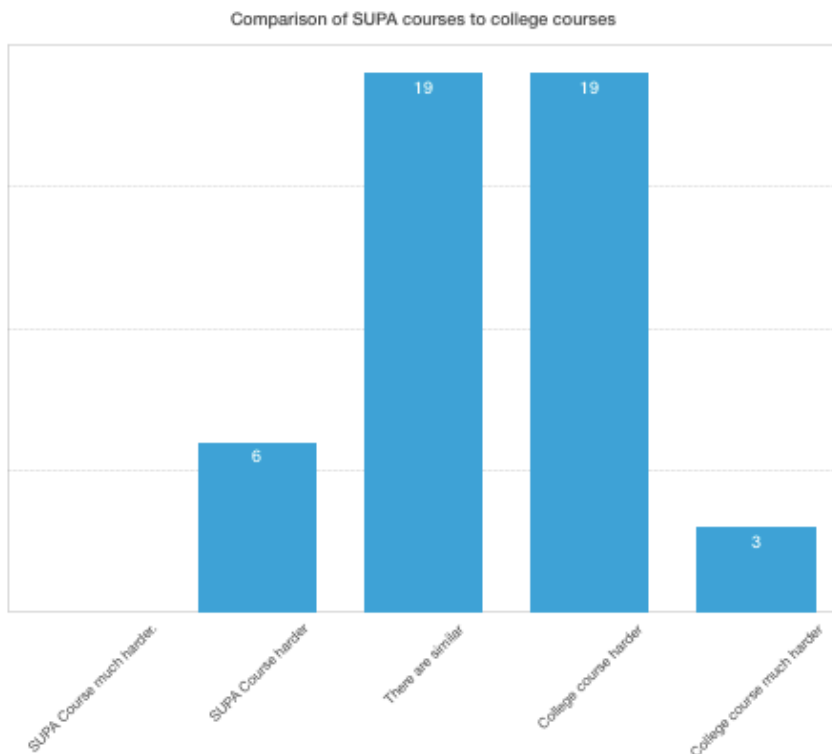
As we can see from the table and graph, 67 percent of freshmen strongly agreed or agreed that the SUPA courses increased their college readiness. 38 percent of freshmen strongly agreed that the SUPA courses increased their ability to create and maintain a personal schedule that includes a to-do list with prioritized tasks and appointments, which were highest in the strongly agree section. At least two thirds of freshmen agreed or strongly agreed that their confidence in ability to do college level academic work, time management skills, task management skills, communication & reasoning skills, problem solving skills and research skills were improved as a result of taking SUPA courses. However, only 56 percent of freshmen either agreed or strongly agreed that SUPA courses increased their group study skills and college applications abilities- which can be seen as relatively weaker responses rates and areas for potential improvement. **The overall results from this section showed that students perceive taking SUPA courses increase their college readiness.**

We included a few questions to see the consistency of survey responses. Time management was one major one (the questions were worded differently and kept separate), and we can see that responses for the two time-management questions tended to have responses that were relatively aligned. Another question that shows consistency is the task management ones

(although they are placed close to each other- and ask different but related things), they also move more or less in the same direction. **From these questions we can infer that the responses are reliable.**

The difficulty level of the SUPA course

| | NUMBER |
|----------------------------|--------|
| SUPA Course much harder. | 0 |
| SUPA Course harder | 6 |
| There are similar | 19 |
| College course harder | 19 |
| College course much harder | 3 |



40 percent freshmen thought the SUPA courses and the college courses were the same, and 40 percent freshmen contended that the college courses were harder than SUPA course. Only six freshmen agreed that SUPA courses were much harder. **Overall, we can say that students perceive SUPA courses to be easier than college level courses, but not a whole lot different.**

Feedback and Advice

21 out of 47 freshmen gave the detailed feedbacks and advices. The majority of freshmen indicated that SUPA courses increased their **confidence about starting college level work**, since the SUPA courses helped them know college level course in advance and enabled them to be better prepared for college courses. Some courses even provided a field trip to Syracuse University helping students experience college lectures in a campus setting.

Moreover, they also said SUPA courses helped them **head start on credits for college, which allowed them to have more flexibility with their schedule.**

Students have mentioned that **SUPA teachers are doing an exceptional job at engaging with their high school students**. Some freshmen said their teachers in high school guided students and gave them a lot of help whereas teachers in college don't do this as often.

The freshmen also provided advice, summarized below:

- **SUPA courses should be standardized with regards to course load**. Some students suggested that they have too many assignments and they don't have enough time to finish them, while some advised that they don't have enough practice.
- Second, the **majority of freshmen suggested that more courses should be offered**, since the current SUPA course offerings in their high schools were only in a few subjects as compared to the selection of subjects available on a college campus.
- Last, if possible, **SUPA should provide more field trips to Syracuse University**. It allows students to experience a lecture in the actual college setting as well as gain some comfort in negotiating their way around a campus, which could increase students' interest in choosing to attend Syracuse University.

The focus group discussion

The focus group discussion was carried out during a seminar at the Syracuse University Project Advance office. The discussion was held for about half an hour prior to lunch on the 8th of April, 2019. The group of SUPA teachers numbered 4 and were all accounting teachers. They provided valuable insights into our evaluation questions and also helped strengthen our survey conclusions.

Time management/ Task Management: The teachers reported that SUPA students come into the courses knowing that the course load is much heavier than for regular high school courses. They elaborated saying students joined knowing the amount of work that would be required of them. Moreover, the online platform (for courses using programs like those provided by Wiley) have a different approach to doing class tasks. Finally, the teachers informed us that they encourage the effective use of syllabus. These skills provided by SUPA courses will help students once they get into college in terms of managing time and tasks better.

Writing/ Reading/Problem Solving Skills: The teachers reported that SUPA courses differ in that they offer more advanced topics/content relative to other high school courses. They also reported that the SUPA courses required more critical thinking. We can deduce that the advanced topics/content and critical thinking required would enhance their reading/ writing/ problem solving skills going into college.

College admissions process: The SUPA teachers reported that the prospect of reducing tuition was attractive for students and their parents, as SUPA courses could likely be transferred into the higher education institution that students decide to join. Further, they mentioned that

SUPA courses often have juniors and seniors in high schools taking the same course which gives the junior cohort of students exposure to college admissions process via peer interaction as the seniors experience it (an indirect effect of taking SUPA courses). This awareness and planning could be seen as an indicator of the role SUPA courses are playing in enhancing college admission process among students.

Comparison of SUPA courses to college courses: The teachers reported that the students that take SUPA courses are generally stronger students academically. Hence, we can assume these students are likely to be more successful going into college. Also, the teachers reported that the exposure to more rigorous content in SUPA courses could be expected to provide a valuable experience of the course loads to students going into college.

Other areas in which the SUPA teachers provided insight were:

- The SUPA teachers had set up hours outside of class for students. This was a great opportunity to reinforce learning the content, and to learn about initiating this process of connecting directly with instructors beyond the classroom, which would be helpful going into college.
- SUPA provides a lot of support to the faculty with their summer training, workshops, community of support, etc. They thought this all helped the whole process of teaching and learning.

Recommendations

1. Create an internal database for SUPA students who go on to study at Syracuse University to track their academic progress. This database should attempt to keep information of students who may transfer out of Syracuse University and obtain degree elsewhere.
2. SUPA could emphasize incorporating group study practices more into its courses as a relatively higher portion of students have perceived they lack adequate skills in this area.
3. Though not directly related to the course subject matter, SUPA could help assist students to understand the process of college admission, tuition and financial aid, timelines and placement requirements by creating mentoring groups, forums and exposure to resources in this particular area. Some students have indicated they lacked such skills coming into college.
4. Undertake follow up studies in areas such as the reasons for students' perception of the difficulty of SUPA courses relative to college courses. Determining the exact reasons could help improve the design of the program.
5. Evaluation studies like this could be enhanced further if the backgrounds of the respondents could be obtained and analyzed. For instance, which school districts do the SUPA students originate from, their demographic profile, their socio-economic backgrounds, etc. This might entail taking on a study with a broader scope in the future.
6. Further studies and analysis could be made on the expectations concerning dual enrollment from the students as well as the teachers' perspective, in line with SUPA plans and constraints.
7. Manage more guided field trips to Syracuse University campus for high school students enrolled in SUPA in school districts within a reasonable distance.

Limitations

In this evaluation plan, there are some limitations that are not able to be controlled by the evaluation groups. Several such validity threats were present in this plan, thereby limiting the ability of the evaluation group (1) to conclude with confidence that the data information collected from the online survey and focus group discussion were actually due to the SUPA and not to other extraneous factors and (2) to generalize the findings of this plan.

In addition, due to the limitation of time, it is impossible for the evaluation group to analyze a large quantity of data; therefore, the evaluation is only going to select a small number of students as its sample. Due to the small numbers of the sample size, the results may not be representative. However, this small sample size will provide a blueprint for the future large-scale evaluation.

Further, the extant data analysis has limitations in that the data is reported from National Student Clearinghouse, which does not include all colleges and schools records. Not all of them report to this institution. To go along with this, the percentage of students receiving a degree is less than the total number of records. Hence the reason behind this discrepancy should be analyzed to draw a better conclusion to the question of time to degree completion.

Another limitation of this evaluation is the diverse interpretations of the term college readiness. For this evaluation, it regards college readiness as relating it to the students' performance and academic self-efficacy, and the length of time students using to complete their college degree. There will be obstacles in designing and planning this evaluation. The obstacles can change and influence the results, which could ultimately make the findings invalid. Therefore, care should be taken in minimize and, if possible, eliminate the threats to assure the results are a true reflection of the evaluation itself.

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Appendix A

Online Survey Questions

As a result of taking Syracuse University courses in High School through Project Advance:

1. I came to college more confident about my ability to do college level academic work. (Likert scale: Agreeability)
2. I am able to develop strategies and tools to manage time better. (Likert scale: Agreeability)
3. I am able to plan a writing strategy, communicate ideas clearly and concisely, construct reasonable arguments, use sources and organize ideas effectively. (Likert scale: Agreeability)
4. I am able to utilize appropriate reading strategies for my courses. (Likert scale: Agreeability)
5. I am able to recognize a problem, create solution options, implement a solution and evaluate its impact. (Likert scale: Agreeability)
6. I am able take part in study groups with my peers in an effective manner. (Likert scale: Agreeability)
7. I am able to schedule realistic amounts of time for assignments so I can allocate study times and break times for optimum productivity. (Likert scale: Agreeability)
8. I am aware of time periods when I do my most effective studying. (Likert scale: Agreeability)
9. I am able to create and maintain a personal schedule that includes a to-do list with prioritized tasks and appointments. (Likert scale: Agreeability)
10. I am able to utilize appropriate computer software to conduct research, analyze data sets, write papers, prepare presentations and record data. (Likert scale: Agreeability)
11. I understood of the process of college admission, tuition and financial aid, timelines and placement requirements prior to high school graduation. (Likert scale: Agreeability)
12. When comparing Project Advance courses to the ones I took here on campus. (Likert scale: Difficulty level)
13. Is there anything else that you would like to share (open ended question)

Appendix B

Focus Group Discussion Questions

How would you see SUPA courses differing from other high school courses that you teach?
What do you do different?

Do you feel that students take a different approach to study and assignment in SUPA courses?
How is that?

How is the performance of SUPA students generally in terms of grades? How would you
compare their performance to high school students in general?

Do you feel taking SUPA courses encourage students to think about college admission, tuition
and financial aid, timelines and placement requirements better? What makes you think so?

Do you provide tools and strategies to manage tasks better while teaching SUPA courses? If so,
what?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix C

Focus Group Interview Responses Summary

Focus Group Interview Information

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Focus Group Interviewees | 4 SUPA accounting teachers |
| Date of Interview | 08, April, 2019 |

Interview Question

| Themes | Main Points | Questions |
|--------|-------------|-----------|
|--------|-------------|-----------|

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>SUPA Courses Attributes/specialties</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher Level • Course Load • Grading System | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you see SUPA courses differing from other high school courses that you teach? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SUPA course is more about advanced topic, and the information requires more critical thinking. 2. SUPA Course is not part of the traditional high school course, so it can give students better experience for the college. • How do you think the SUPA course workload for high school students? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SUPA course is hard course for high school students to take. However, most of the students who are taking the SUPA course have been in honors classes, AP classes, they knew the course workload before they take the course. • Is there anything else that is different from the other courses? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is a different grading system. College's grading policy is only give 30% A and A-. In other high school courses, if the students get an A, then the teacher gives an A. |
|--|---|---|

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <p>Students' Learning Performance</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation • Capability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think that the students take the different approach to study and do the assignments in the SUPA course? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Some students do, and some do not. Students who signed up for the course knowing the amount of the work they will have to do. 2. The students in the course are more motivated to do well. The students know the potential outcome of taking SUPA course is they can transfer credits to their college anywhere. • Do you think that taking SUPA course encourages students to think about college admission and tuition financially timelines and placement requirements? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The tuition reduction helps. Reducing tuition is attractive for both the parents and the students. One student who was applying to Syracuse University, got his application was waived because he had taken SUPA course. 2. Taking SUPA course with different grades of students create an environment for learning incentive and motivation. The class has seniors, juniors and they all apply for school. So, students are getting drawn to that and help guide. |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| <p>Teaching Styles/Methods</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Tools/Strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think you are offering enough help to your students who taking the SUPA course? (Because the processors in university only have the office hours). <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Most of the professors put all the assignments and tests online, and the students also have e-books. 2. Some professors think it is students' own responsibility to completing their work. If students missed something, they need to set up a time with the professors to work on it. 3. Some professor make themselves available on daily bases. • Do you provide tools and strategies to manage tasks better while teaching the course? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Most of the professor prefers using tools like blackboard in their class. It provides clearly deadline of each attempts, and it is convenience to deliver evaluation. 2. Professors want students to use syllabus more effectively. Some professors will provide a timeline, and it is constantly being revised depends on the real course running. Some students who like doing work on paper, the professor would encourage them to get familiar online. If they have a specific problem as long as they have done this they can do that one on paper. 3. SUPA provides a lot of support to the faculty with their summer training, workshops, community of support, etc. |
|--------------------------------|--|---|

Appendix D

Open ended responses Online Survey

Please share some feedbacks about Project Advance and how it can be improved.

1. SUPA classes have helped me so much in College. I came in with 41 credits. This allows me to have more flexibility within my schedule and I am so thankful I had the opportunity.
2. I did not take the supa course as seriously as i should have, it did not occur to me that it would apply towards my college gpa
3. I loved project advance because it helped me get a head start on credits for college. I think it is planned very well and I enjoyed the information a lot.
4. Gave me an unbelievable head start in college and put me on the right track to accomplish what I have to do to succeed
5. The SUPA courses I took in highschool fully prepared me for the class work I would have in college. Most of the classes I have taken in college are less stressful and even less hard. This is due to the fact that my highschool teachers took it personally to make sure we were prepared for college. Also in SUPA classes you attend class every single day, have class work and homework almost everyday and that is just not the same case for my college classes. Each day in my SUPA classes were rigorous and rigid. Personally, I suggest SUPA classes for any student that can handle the work load and content because it over-prepared me for college academics which has allowed me to not stress so much my freshmen year of college. I was also able to complete a lot of core requirements in highschool that allowed me to quickly start working towards my major and start taking classes I actually enjoy, not just ones I needed to fill for my A&S requirements.
6. I think more courses should be offered.
7. The project advance can depend on the teacher. My classes in college are obviously harder as they are completely different subjects from the SUPA class, but on top of that my teacher in high school was very lenient of the course which made it easier to pass. There should most likely be more standard exams in place to test the students across the board.
8. They made it a priority over other classes . it would be better if every one wasnt told that this is the most important class, yes it is important but it is not a highschoolers entire life to revolve around.
9. I loved taking project advance because it made the work load seem less overwhelming when I started college.
10. I would wish for there to be less unnecessary work to do in High School because we actually are taking SUPA classes in high school 5 days a week for around an hr which is even longer than college classes.
11. I think it was fine, I appreciate the credit it gave me. Altogether, it was worthwhile.
12. It's a good program to get ahead on courses. It's an easier route to take because college courses are much harder than SUPA courses in high school.
13. I wasn't informed correctly about the fact that if I went to Syracuse the grade factored into my GPA and that it was irreversible. My teacher didn't really give set deadlines which allowed me to procrastinate a lot and sometimes way too much - to the point I never got it done. It's the class that brought down my GPA the most last semester. It was really annoying to not start college on a fresh start and made me more stressed to get a perfect GPA my first semester to make up for it which is really hard considering you're adjusting and etc. Even though my grade was low, I learned a lot from the class and I

am glad I took it. It did give me a sense of what college classes are like now that I have almost completed my first year. Regardless of the grade in the class, I think students will gain a sense of what college class material is like. And if that's the purpose it should count as a credit.

14. I took a presentational speaking class which helped with my performance of public speaking and how to articulate my thoughts into concise communication.
15. The program is great with an able teacher, only SUPA calc was available to me. Make more SUPA courses available to schools
16. I have never loved a course more than the SUPA course I took my senior year of high school. There was a little bit more hard work needed than high school courses but I think it was worth taking it now being credits ahead.
17. I think the Project Advance classes are very beneficial and challenging for high school students, but I think they should be made harder or more hands off in regards to the teachers because they do not compare to the difficulty of a college class. The teachers in high school guided students and gave them a lot of help where as teachers in college don't do this as often.
18. My SUPA class (PSY 205) took a field trip to SU to sit in one of the lectures of that was of the same class. I know that the other SUPA course offered at my school did not do that, and I think it would be really great to encourage all teachers to send kids to see how a lecture would feel, because it is very different from a high school class. Also, it made me want to come to SU as a student even more.
19. The classes felt very similar to Syracuse University classes so that was good. The only difficult part was that my teacher wasn't there when I needed her. When she was there, she was obviously teaching her own other classes. Unlike Project Advance classes, professors at SU have office hours. While, in high school, I don't think teachers are even payed to stay after school so there's often no incentive. I struggled in my Math classes (Physics and Calc I) because my teachers weren't always available after school. Though, I generally do worse in Math than in other subjects. I'm not sure how this could be fixed though. Other than that, the pacing of SU feels similar to PA. A lot of my classmates would complain about how quickly the classes went. That's a good thing though, because college goes by much quicker than high school. The fact that you have to go to high school everyday contributed to the rigor, because we'd have homework everyday. Whether that rigor was more overwhelming than college, not sure.
20. To get more awareness around project advance classes and how beneficial it is for the transition from high school to college.
21. I really enjoyed having the ability to take SUPA classes in high school because it allowed me to start college with credits already. I would hope that more Project Advance classes would be offered in high schools in the future.