Conducting the Skills Builder Analysis Homework Assignment

Kathy Booth, WestEd
Peter Bahr, University of Michigan
Jennifer May-Trifiletti, University of Michigan

Skills builders are community college students who…

- Enroll in community college for a short time (often 1 to 2 semesters)
- Take comparatively few credits, usually attending part-time
- Take classes mostly in career and technical fields
- Are highly successful in their coursework

What have we learned about skills builders?

- They account for about 1-in-7 to 1-in-9 new community college entrants
- They are older, on average, than the overall student population
- They are disproportionately (but not exclusively) white men
- A sizeable minority have prior college experience
- They usually leave college without a credential and without transferring to a four-year institution
- On average, they reap meaningful earnings gains from their short time in college

Skills Builder Homework Assignment

We will pause to answer questions after each step is described

Step 1: Establish Cohort

Identify a cohort of students who enrolled in 2016-17. All students in the cohort should meet all of the following criteria:

- **Prior attendance of a community college:** The student has not previously attended your institution or (to the extent that it can be determined) any other community college, as indicated by prior enrollment or award records, self-reports of prior enrollments, or self-reports of previously awarded community college credentials.
- **Prior attendance of a four-year institution:** The student may have attended a four-year institution previously, and even may have been awarded a degree by a four-year institution, but the student was not enrolled in a four-year institution in the year prior to enrolling in your institution.
- **Dual enrollment:** The student was not a dual-enrolled high school student when first enrolling in community college.

Step 2: Identify Skills Builders

Focusing on the longitudinal records of the student cohort, skills builder students meet **all** of the following criteria:

- Enrolled in community college for ≤ 6 academic semester terms
- Attempted ≤ 35 semester-equivalent credits
- Proportion of total credits that were in CTE fields of study ≥ 0.65
- Overall credit success rate ≥ 0.79, where courses completed with a grade of “D” or better are considered successfully completed

Step 3: Document Skills Builder Characteristics

Among students who meet all of the skills builder criteria, disaggregate results by the following criteria:

- Academic discipline (such as by department or metamajor)
- Prior academic experience (first time, some college, prior award)
- Educational goal
- Median age as of October 1, 2016
- Race/ethnicity
- Gender

Step 4: Identify Common Skills Builder Courses

For academic disciplines in which there are 10 or more skills builder students, identify:

- Common courses taken by skills builders

Step 5: Determine Relationship of Skills Builder Courses to Awards

Identify relationships between skills builder courses and awards:

- Share the information from the analysis with faculty and deans in the departments/metamajors that have more than 10 skills builders.
- Ask them to identify how common skills builder course sequences relate to certificates and degrees at your college.
  - What certificates or degrees include common skills builders courses?
  - How many additional courses would a skills builder need to complete each award?
- Document your findings in the same Excel file as your skills builder analysis.

What Happens Next

In advance of the February institute, you will receive a customized report that identifies:

- Possible underserved populations that could be recruited into your skills builder pathways.
- How your skills builder courses relate to your completion patterns as identified by CCRC.
- How your college's skills builder courses relate to high-demand skills and jobs in your region.
- Considerations for ensuring your skills builder courses provide an onramp for economic mobility.