



# Student Success at Pine Manor College

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## Abstract

This study looked at what PMC students believe contributed to their academic success. There were 14 participants. Few significant differences were found. Juniors/seniors generally responded more positively to questions. Suggestions for dealing with the academic challenges were presented.

## Introduction

According to Finn and Rock (1997) student success means graduating from the institution on time with good grades. However, studies in recent years have indicated that success means more than grades. According to Hunter (2006), success has been defined in several ways, including whole student development, and having many dimensions beyond cognitive and academic factors. According to Pritchard and Wilson (2003), emotional and social factors are crucial in relation to student success, and there is a strong impact of psychological variables on students' academic achievement through students' adjustment to college.

This study looked at what PMC students believe contribute to their academic success. Specifically, we expect that students who use learning resource tutors in particular, and those who have a greater number of support persons, will have a higher sense of academic success, persistence, and a stronger sense of commitment and belonging.

## Method

### Participants

Fourteen students participated in the survey: four first-year students, three sophomores, two juniors and five seniors. Fifty-seven percent of participants stated English was not their second language, and 43% indicated English was a second language.

### Materials

Participants answered a SurveyMonkey survey asking them about their feelings and behaviors related to student success. The survey included 25 close-ended questions and two open-ended questions.

### Procedure

An online survey and consent form was sent out to faculty who were asked to distribute the survey link within their classes. Participants were given several weeks to complete the survey.

## Results

### Combined Class Years

Because of the small sample size, we combined the FYS and sophomores into one group, and the juniors and seniors into a second group, and looked at the mean differences by these two combined groups (there were seven participants in each combined group). Two questions were significantly different by combined class year. Juniors/seniors were more likely to know where to get academic help ( $M = 4.71$ ) than FYS/sophomores ( $M = 3.71$ ),  $t(12) = -2.48, p = .029$ . Juniors/seniors felt like they were able to accomplish their semester goals ( $M = 3.71$ ) more than the FYS/sophomores ( $M = 2.57$ ),  $t(12) = -2.22, p = .047$ . No other differences were found (see Table 1 for means).

**Table 1**

**Means for the questions based on class years**

Question	FYS/SOPH	JR/SR
Confidence in completing degree	3.00	3.57
It is easy for me to ask for help	3.00	4.00
I know how to get help*	3.71	4.71
Family responsibilities might interfere	3.71	3.57
Physical/mental health issues might interfere	3.86	3.29
Money issues might interfere	3.43	3.00
Online classes have negatively impacted my academic success	3.57	3.00
I have the same amount or resources as before the pandemic	2.57	2.71
I have a good support network	4.29	4.29
Number of people in primary support network	4.00	5.67
It has been difficult reaching out for help during the pandemic.	2.86	2.43
I have been able to accomplish the goals I set for myself*	2.57	3.71

*Note.* \* $p < .05$ . Confidence to complete degree was rated on a 4-point scale (1 = not confident at all, 4 = very confident); all other questions except for the number of people in primary support network was rated on a 1 – 5 scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

### Open-Ended Questions

Participants were asked two open-ended questions about what academic challenges they would face this semester, and how they would deal with them. No significant differences were found (see Tables 2 and 3 for data).

**Table 2**

**Academic challenges during the semester**

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage
Time management issues	5	31%
Technology issues	4	25%
Motivation/concentration	3	19%
Lack of in-person interaction	4	25%

*Note.* People could have answered more than one challenge.  $p = n.s.$

**Table 3**

**Categories for dealing w/academic challenges**

Behavior	Frequency	Percentage
Better organization/time mgt.	3	30%
Try my best/be positive	3	30%
Ask for help	4	40%

*Note.*  $p = n.s.$

## Discussion

This study looked at what PMC students believe contribute to their academic success. Specifically, we expect that students who use the LRC in particular, and those who have a greater number of support persons, will have a higher sense of academic success, persistence, and a stronger sense of commitment and belonging. These differences were not supported by our findings. However, this study was greatly limited because of the small sample size. The pandemic forced the College to move all courses online for the past 2½ semesters. This likely has led to some online fatigue for students at this point in the academic year. Students may also have become less engaged and motivated because they do not have that in-person encouragement from faculty and staff. Students are also experiencing stress from the pandemic as well as the approaching graduation for seniors.

Going forward, we suggest based on our data, the student success program should add undergraduate students (juniors and seniors) as success coaches to follow up and reach out to other students. Having fellow students make the contact with other students can be more motivating and impactful, than if the contact was made by faculty or success coaches. This is especially true for male students, since they were the ones who were less likely to reach out for help. Upperclass students could function like a big brother or big sister and establish a relationship with undergraduate students that could continue for more than one or two semesters. This will lead to better connection with the college community.