



RESEARCH BRIEF

OIR

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Mandatory Student Development Course – Student Survey Results: Fall 2014

This Research Brief presents an overview of the results of the student survey on mandatory enrollment in student development (SDV) courses. In Fall 2014, NOVA implemented a policy stating that all first-time in college (FTIC) students must enroll in an SDV course during their first 16 credits at NOVA.¹ These one-credit courses are designed to help FTIC students start strong in their first semester of college. SDV 100 and SDV 101 help students develop skills in time management, note-taking and test preparation, academic planning, career decision-making, financial literacy, and critical thinking.

NOVA emailed the survey to 1,078 FTIC students and 132 responded, resulting in a 12 percent response rate. However, the number of respondents varies by question as not all participants answered every question in the survey. For several items, respondents were given the opportunity to provide multiple responses. The total number of responses is divided by the number of respondents to calculate the percentage of respondents. Therefore, percentages do not always add up to 100 percent.

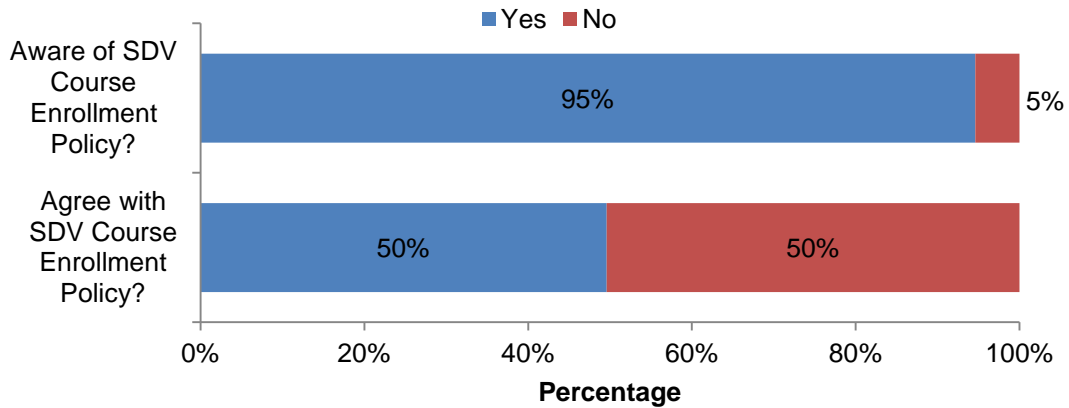
Table 1 and Figure 1 (next page) present results from the questions, “Are you aware that FTIC students (those who have never attended a college/university previously) are required to enroll in a student development (SDV) course within their first year?” and “Do you agree that FTIC students should be required to enroll in an SDV course within their first year?” Almost all of the students (123 respondents, 95 percent) said that they were aware of the policy change. Five percent (7 respondents) said they were not aware of the policy change. Regarding whether they agreed with the SDV policy, the results were evenly divided, with 50 percent (59 respondents) indicating “Yes” and 50 percent (60 respondents) indicating “No”.

Table 1. Awareness of and Agreement with SDV Course Enrollment Policy

Responses	Aware of SDV Course Enrollment Policy?		Agree with SDV Course Enrollment Policy?	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	123	94.6	59	49.6
No	7	5.4	60	50.4
Total Respondents	130	100.0	119	100.0

¹ All first-time to college students, namely recent high school graduates or GED recipients, between the ages of 17 and 24 who have never previously attended college (not counting dual enrollment during high school).

Figure 1. Awareness of and Agreement with Developmental Education Requirement

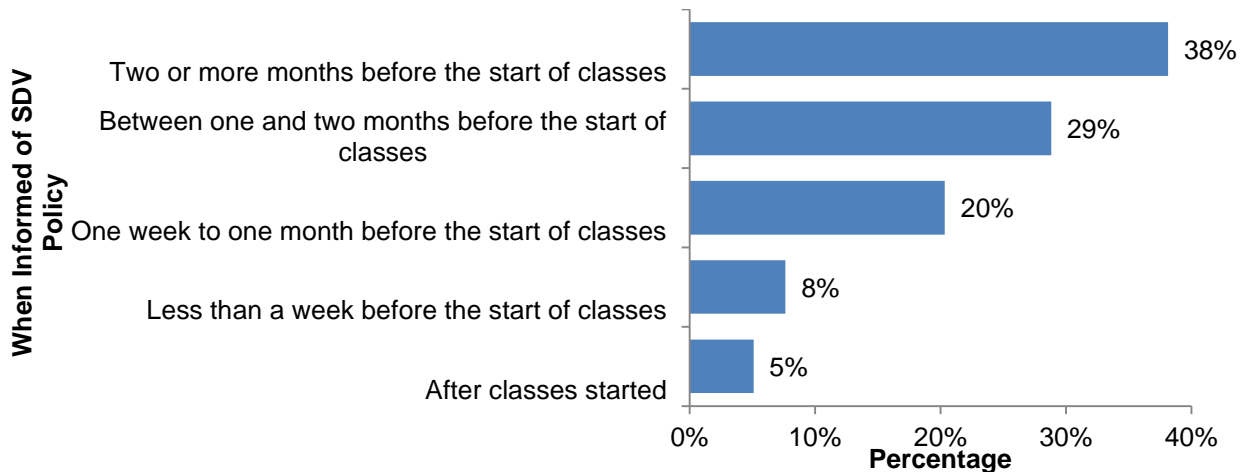


If students had been aware of the policy change, they were asked to indicate when they had been informed of the policy change regarding SDV (Table 2 and Figure 2). The largest percentage of respondents said they were informed of the policy change two or more months before the start of classes (45 respondents, 38 percent). Twenty-nine percent of respondents (34 respondents) were informed of the policy between one and two months before the start of classes, while 20 percent (24 respondents) were informed one week to one month before the start of classes. Thirteen percent (15 respondents) were informed of the policy change either less than a week before the start of classes or after classes started.

Table 2. When Were You Informed of This Policy?

When Informed of SDV Policy	Responses	
	#	%
Two or more months before the start of classes	45	38.1
Between one and two months before the start of classes	34	28.8
One week to one month before the start of classes	24	20.3
Less than a week before the start of classes	9	7.6
After classes started	6	5.1
Total Respondents	118	100.0

Figure 2. When Were You Informed of This Policy?



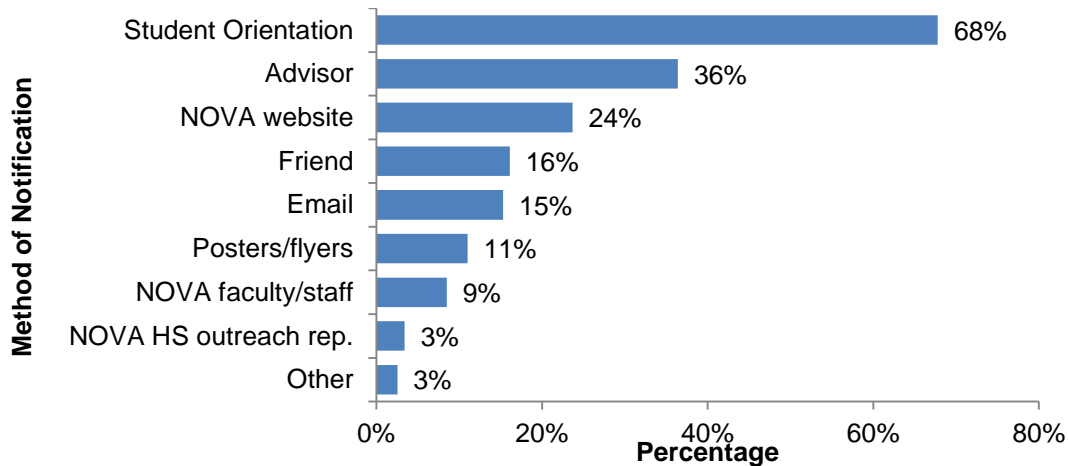
Those respondents who were aware of the policy were also asked about how they learned about the policy (Table 3 and Figure 3). The majority of students learned about the policy at student orientation (80 respondents, 68 percent). The next most common method was from an advisor (43 respondents, 36 percent). Other commonly cited methods included the NOVA website (28 respondents, 24 percent), from a friend (19 respondents, 16 percent), and via email (18 respondents, 15 percent).

Table 3. How Did You Learn About This Policy? Select All That Apply.

Method of Notification	Responses	
	#	%
Student Orientation	80	67.8
Advisor	43	36.4
NOVA website	28	23.7
Friend	19	16.1
Email	18	15.3
Posters/flyers	13	11.0
NOVA faculty/staff	10	8.5
NOVA HS outreach rep.	4	3.4
Other	3	2.5
Total Respondents	118	

Note: As respondents could choose more than one option, totals will not equal 100 percent.

Figure 3. How Did You Learn About This Policy? Select All That Apply.



If students had already enrolled in an SDV course, they were asked if they believed that the course will provide them with skills, resources, and information that they can use in other courses at NOVA (Table 4). More than half of the students answered affirmatively (57 respondents, 55 percent).

Table 4. Do You Feel That Your SDV Course Will Provide You with Skills, Resources, and Information That You Can Use in Other Courses at NOVA?

Found SDV to Be Useful	Responses	
	#	%
Yes	57	55.3
No	46	44.7
Total Respondents	103	100.0

If students said that they did feel that the SDV course would provide them with skills, resources, and information they can use in other courses, they were asked to indicate how. As shown in Table 5, time management skills were mentioned most often, cited by 36 percent (18 respondents) of the 50 respondents who provided examples. Respondents also specifically mentioned study skills (12 respondents, 24 percent) and organization skills (5 respondents, 10 percent).

Conversely, if students answered that they felt SDV would not provide them with skills, resources, and information they can use in other courses, they were asked to provide a reason for why not. The majority (25 respondents, 66 percent) said that the material covered in SDV was basic “common sense” that they had ready learned before attending NOVA (sometimes citing they learned the skills, etc. in high school). Table 5 presents responses for this item.

Table 5. Reasons Students Did or Did Not Find SDV Course Useful

Reasons Found SDV Course Useful	Responses		Reasons Did Not Find SDV Course Useful	Responses	
	#	%		#	%
Builds time management skills	18	36	Provides common sense information	25	65.8
Improves study skills	12	24	Other*	8	21.1
Other*	10	20	Not all students need it	2	5.3
Improves organization skills	5	10	Waste of time and money	2	5.3
Includes generally helpful coursework	3	6	Not helpful	2	5.3
Provides info on NOVA and NOVA resources	3	6		-	-
Promotes success in college	3	6		-	-
Provides transfer information	2	4		-	-
Reinforces what students already know and addresses weaknesses	2	4		-	-
Total Respondents	50		Total Respondents	38	

Note: As respondents could list more than one option, totals may not equal 100 percent.

**Other” includes all items indicated by only one respondent.