



# Course Length and Success - Literature Review

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# Research Question

How does course length  
impact student success?

Examined 11 scholarly  
articles written between  
2001-2019

- ▶ In almost every instance where time-compressed courses were compared to traditional length courses, the success rates for the time-compressed courses were the same or higher.

**Table 1: Spurling's Study on Course Success by Term and Subject**

Term	Term Length	English	Math	ESL
Fall	17.5 Weeks	60%	51%	66%
Spring	17.5 Weeks	64%	54%	69%
Summer	6 Weeks	74%	57%	76%

Source: Almquist (2015)

Setting	Author	Year	N	Term Lengths Studied (weeks)					Reported Format(s) with Higher Success Rates(s)
				3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	14-18	
University	Coleman, Bolte, & Franklin	1983	Not provided				X	X	Mixed results
	Martin	1997	Not provided	X	X	X		X	Time-compressed (all but one discipline)
	Mensch	2013	Not provided	X	X			X	Time-compressed
Community College	Spurling	2001	71,907		X			X	Time-compressed
	Geltner & Logan	2001	401,872		X	X		X	Time-compressed
	Green & Almquist	2012	464,958	X	X	X	X	X	Time-compressed
	Green & Almquist	2015	397,746			X		X	Time-compressed

According to Almquist's (2015) review of the literature



**Table 5. Success rates by course length and a set of social and academic background characteristics**

Characteristic and success	5–6 week course	8–9 week course	15–18 week course
Gender	$x^2 = 1.348^*$		
Male	69.13	69.19	51.92
Female	71.98	74.12	57.34
Ethnicity	$x^2 = 214.667^{**}$		
Asian/Pacific Islander	77.78	87.75	62.20
African American	53.78	58.91	42.78
Latino	71.28	70.52	55.79
White	62.79	78.18	61.12
Other	72.22	69.96	55.70
Age	$x^2 = 10.785^{***}$		
Below 25	66.29	71.57	52.78
25 and Over	78.82	74.29	62.80
GPA	$x^2 = 77.554^{**}$		
Below 2.0	54.45	122.51	38.09
2.0 and over	76.91	77.42	63.28

*Note.* The total number of students is 21,165 for gender, ethnicity, age, and GPA.

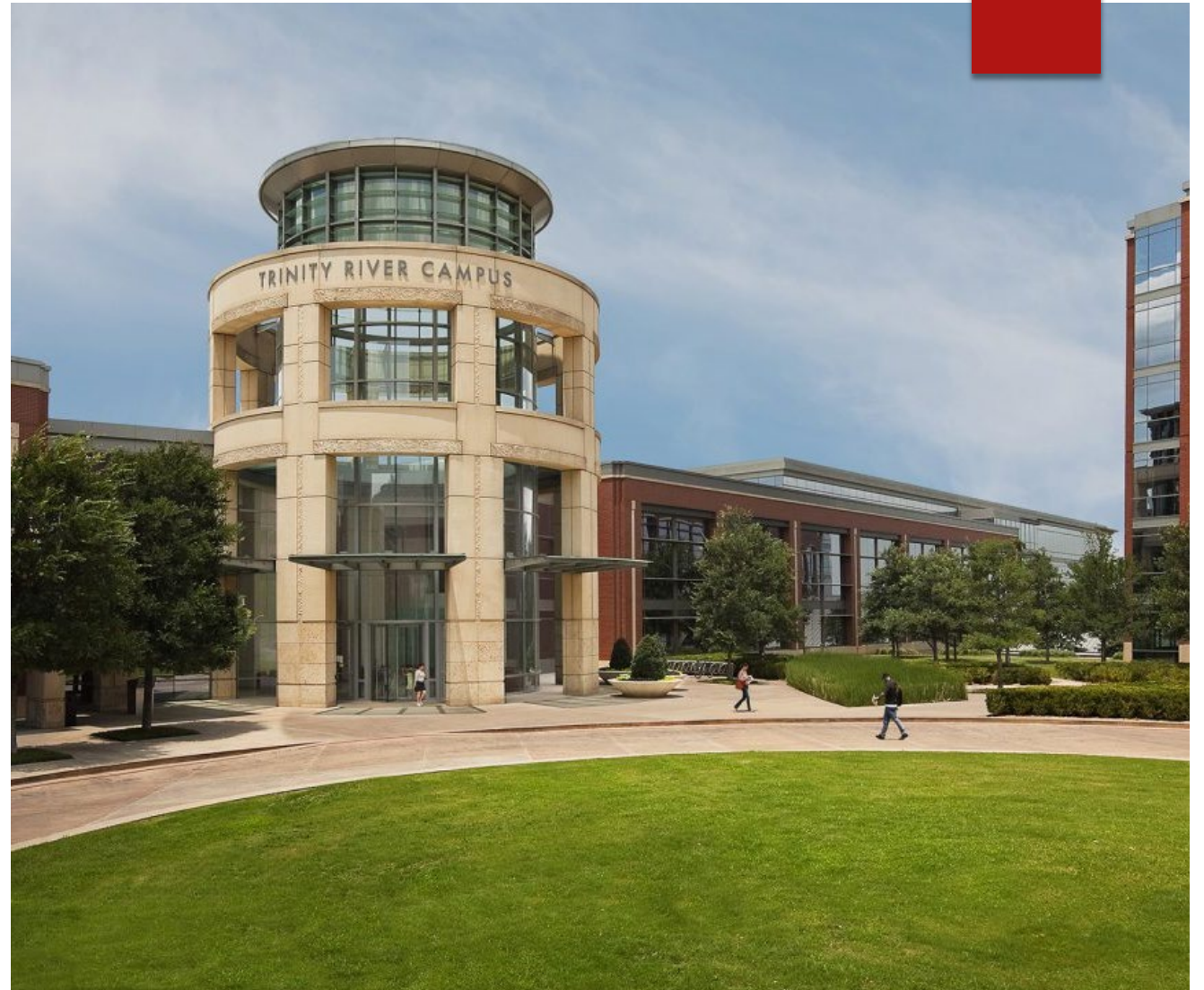
\* $\alpha = .510$ .

\*\* $\alpha \leq .000$ .

\*\*\* $\alpha \leq .005$ .

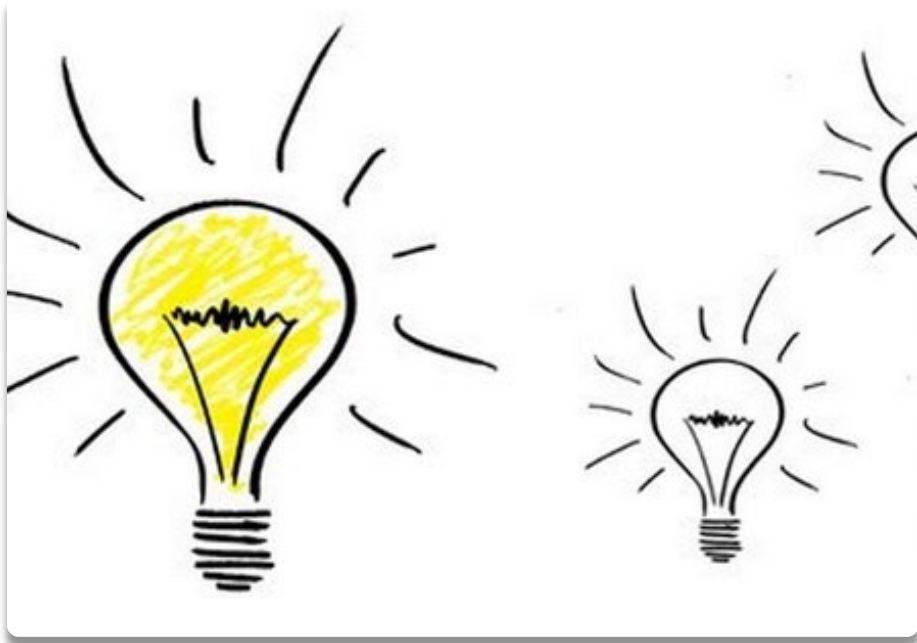
This holds up  
across different  
characteristics

- ▶ More recently, Pearce (2019) did a study of Tarrant County College in Fort Worth Texas and found higher success for 8-week courses compared to 16-week courses.
- ▶ Success rates were highest for 8-week courses offered online or using a hybrid modality.





# Implications



- ▶ An implication of these findings is that we should offer more variations in course length to accommodate for students with various needs and time constraints.