

RESEARCH BRIEF

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Student Success Outcomes by Compliance with SDV Policy: Fall 2014 through Fall 2016

This Research Brief compares the outcomes of students who completed a Student Development (SDV) courses in the fall semester of their first year at NOVA with those who did not. Student outcomes presented here include GPA, overall success in credit courses, fall-to-spring retention, and average number of credit hours.

Start Strong Policy: Enroll in Student Development (SDV) Course

While NOVA policy requires students to complete SDV within their *first 15 credits*, the majority of students who complied with the SDV policy did so in the fall semester rather than in the spring or summer semester. Therefore, the data in this research brief reflect only students who completed SDV in the fall semester of each cohort.¹

In Fall 2014, NOVA implemented a policy requiring all GPS students to complete SDV (with a grade of D or better) within their first year. At that time, GPS students could receive an exemption from the SDV requirement by passing the Assessment by Local Examination (ABLE).

In Fall 2015, the SDV policy was revised such that all GPS students were required to complete an SDV course within their *first 15 credits* at NOVA (instead of in their first year), and GPS students could no longer use ABLE to be exempt from the course.

What is SDV 100: College Success Skills?

Student Development (SDV) 100/101: College Success Skills is a one-credit course on subjects such as time management, note taking and test preparation, academic planning, career decision making, financial literacy, and critical thinking.²

¹This data does not include, for example, students who took fewer than 15 credits in the fall and completed SDV in the spring, even though those students complied with the SDV policy.

²SDV 101 is College Success Skills tailored for a specific academic program. Students in healthcare, teacher education, information technology, business, and horticulture programs may substitute the SDV 101 that is tailored for their program in place of SDV 100.

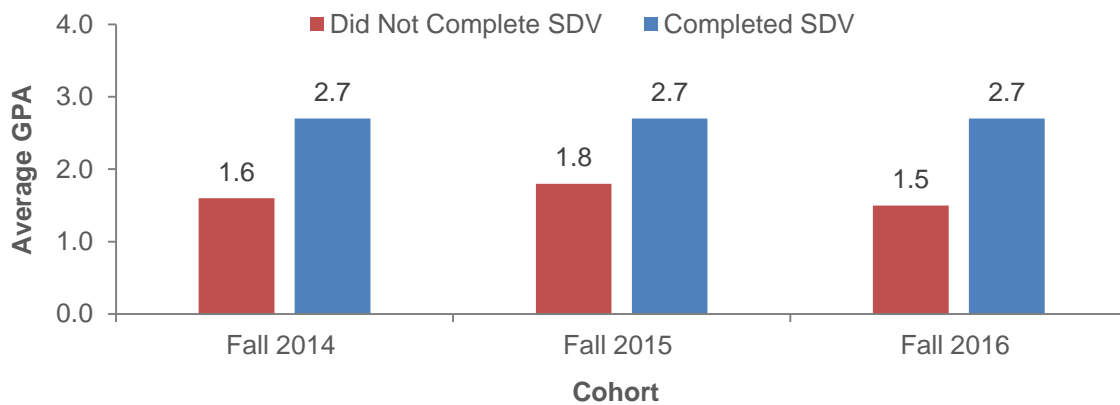
Student Success Outcomes by Completion of SDV

GPA

- **Students who completed SDV in the fall semester had an average GPA that was around 1 point higher than those who did not.**

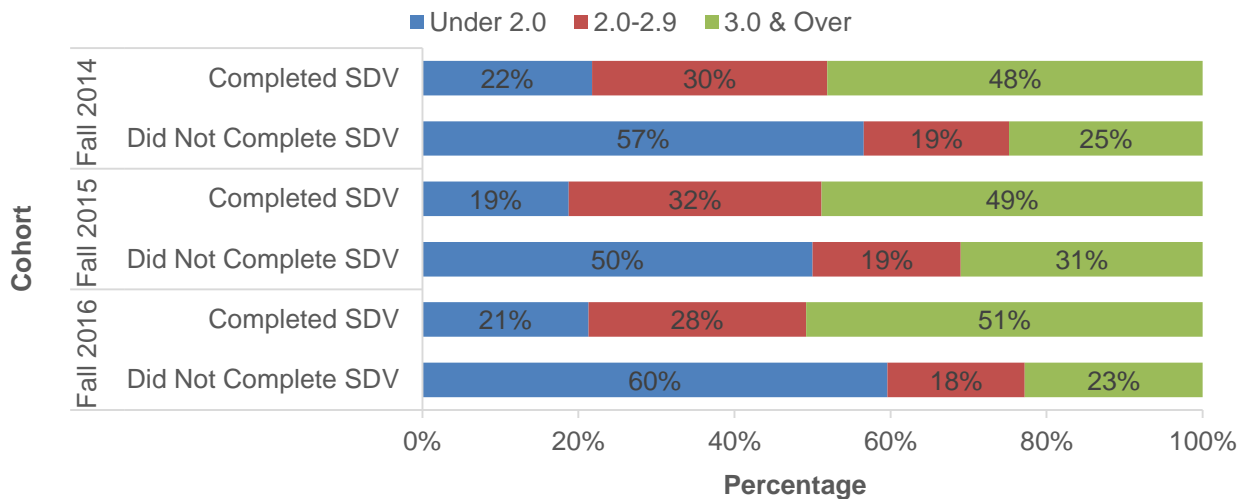
The average GPA of students who completed SDV remained steady across each of these three fall cohorts, at 2.7, while the average GPA of students who did not complete SDV ranged from 1.5 to 1.8 (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Average GPA by Compliance with SDV Policy:
Fall 2014 through Fall 2016 Cohorts**



Approximately half of students who completed SDV had a GPA of 3.0 or higher; in contrast, only about a quarter of students who did not complete SDV had a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Over half of students who did not complete SDV had GPA lower than 2.0, compared to around only 20 percent of those who completed (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2. First Semester GPA by Compliance with SDV Policy:
Fall 2014 through Fall 2016 Cohorts**

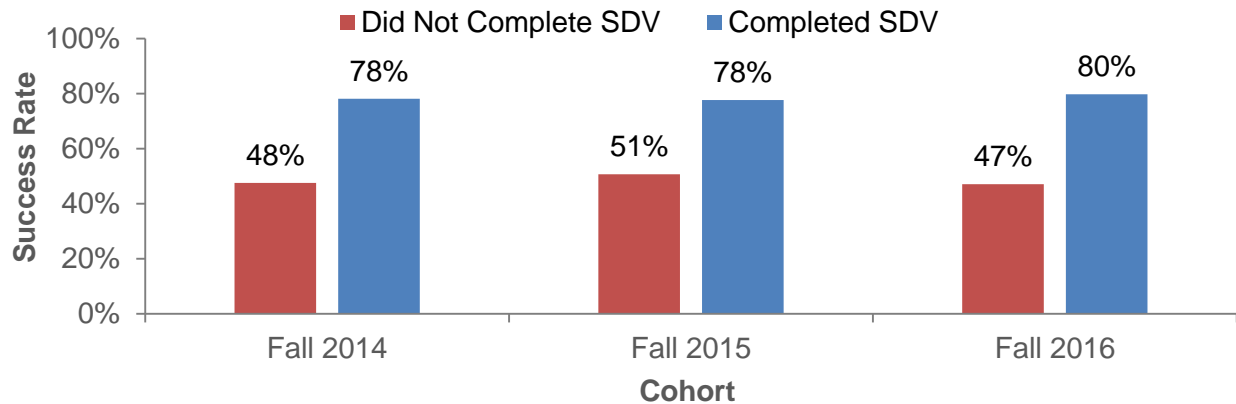


Success in Credit Courses

- Overall, students who completed SDV in the fall semester were successful in nearly 80 percent of their credit courses while students who did not complete SDV were successful in only around half of their credit courses.

In Fall 2016, the course success rate (success is defined by a grade of C or better in a credit course) of students who completed SDV was 33 percentage points higher than that of students who did not complete SDV.

**Figure 3. Success in Credit Courses by Compliance with SDV Policy:
Fall 2014 through Fall 2016 Cohorts**

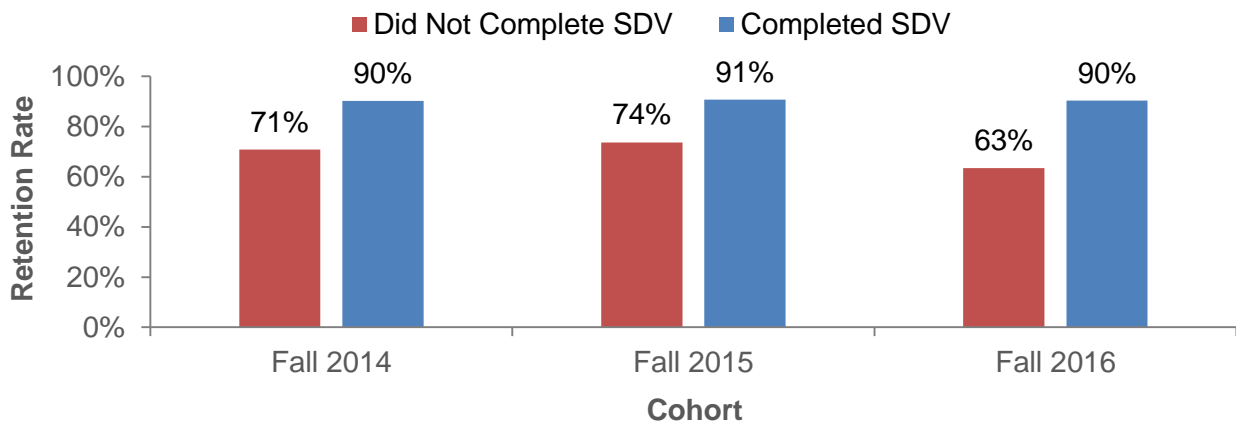


Fall-to-Spring Retention

- Students who completed SDV returned to NOVA in the spring at a rate of 90 percent, while the fall-to-spring retention rate for those students who did not complete was around 20 percentage points lower.

In Fall 2016, the fall-to-spring retention rate of students who completed SDV was 27 percentage points higher than that of those who did not (90 percent versus 63 percent).

**Figure 4. Fall-to-Spring Retention by Compliance with SDV Policy:
Fall 2014 through Fall 2016 Cohorts**

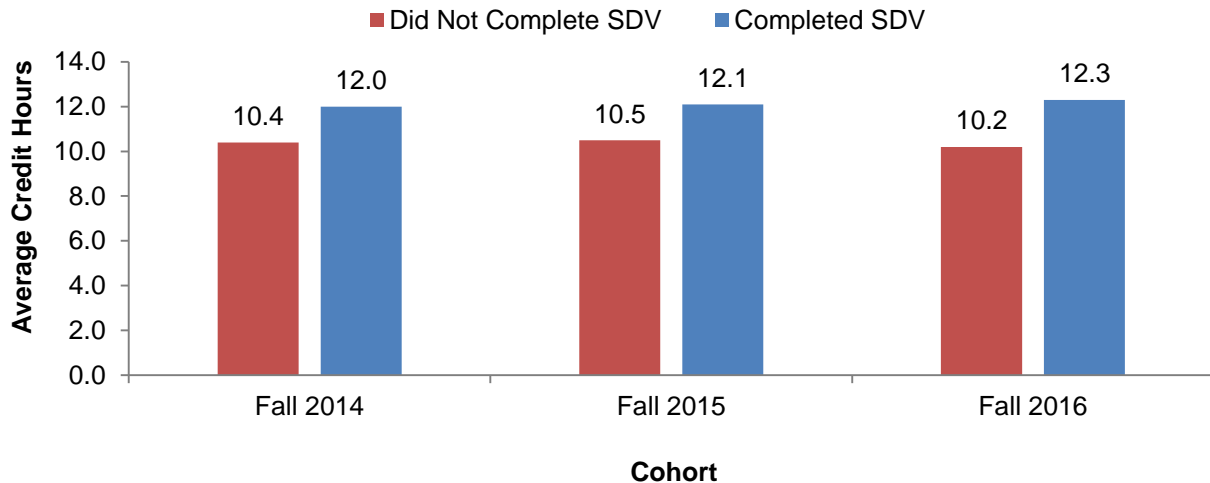


Average Credit Hours

- On average, students who completed SDV were enrolled in around 2 more credit hours in the fall semester than those who did not.

Students who completed SDV took an average of 12 credits per semester, compared to around 10 credits per semester for those who did not complete SDV.

**Figure 5. Average First Semester Credit Hours by Compliance with SDV Policy:
Fall 2014 through Fall 2016 Cohorts**



Conclusion

Overall, students who completed SDV (with a grade of D or better) were more successful at NOVA in terms of GPA, success in credit courses, and fall-to-spring retention than those students who did not complete SDV.

On average, students who completed SDV:

- Attained an **average GPA** that was **around 1 point higher** than those who did not, even though they were also enrolled in approximately **2 more credit hours** in the fall semester than those who did not complete SDV.
- **Earned a grade of C or better** in nearly 80 percent of their credit courses, which was around **30 percentage points higher** than those who did not.
- **Returned in the spring** at a rate of 90 percent which was around **20 percentage points higher** than those who did not.