

Canning, Elizabeth (2016). **Testing a Utility Value Intervention in Two-Year**

Colleges.

Abstract

Students often lose interest in critical foundational courses that act as a gateway to successive courses and careers. Utility value writing interventions have been designed to help students find the personal relevance and value of course material in order to promote interest and performance. However, little is known about how best to implement the intervention, in terms of the optimal type of scaffolding required, particularly in the 2-year college context where students may have different goals and motives than the traditional college samples studied in previous research. Using a randomized field experiment, this study tested two different ways of scaffolding a utility value writing intervention by varying the source of utility value information which was framed to be generated by former students in the course or the instructor, compared against a control writing assignment. In the context of introductory courses at several 2-year UW-college campuses, we examined how these interventions work, and for whom they are most effective, in terms of academic performance, interest, and perceived utility value.