



How the St. Petersburg College– Tutor.com Partnership Drove Student Success and Staff Satisfaction During the COVID-19 Pandemic

A case study of St. Petersburg College and Tutor.com
June 2022



Background

St. Petersburg College (SPC) is located in the small, densely populated county of Pinellas in west central Florida.

The College is made up of 11 different learning sites serving 37,000 for-credit and non-credit students.

Of this student body, 31 percent study full-time, while 69 percent are part-time students.

As Jennifer Gregor, SPC's Associate Director of Learning Resources, explained, "Our traditional student is the nontraditional student."

Institution Snapshot

Enrollment:
37,000

Institution Type:
Public state college in the Florida College System offering bachelor's and associate's degrees as well as career-focused credentialing

Tutor.com Partner Since:
2019

Most Popular Subjects:
Essay writing
Finite mathematics
Chemistry
Calculus
Statistics

Access:
Students access Tutor.com via SPC's learning management system (LMS), D2L

Pandemic Context

In fall 2019, 41 percent of SPC's classes were held online. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020, all of SPC's 1,800 face-to-face and blended classes moved to synchronous and asynchronous online environments on the College's LMS, D2L.

With the move to fully online instruction came an increased need for academic support. From the 2019-2020 to the 2020-2021 academic year, the number of online tutoring sessions increased by an incredible 77 percent.

In service of the College's "student-ready" philosophy, SPC had partnered with Tutor.com in 2019 to supplement its own academic support services, especially during days and times outside traditional office hours. Jennifer Gregor, Associate Director of Learning Resources, noted, "It was fortuitous that we had started with Tutor.com in 2019 before we had to rely on it so heavily."



Reimagined Co-Staffing Model

Prior to March of 2020, only 15 of SPC's in-house tutors used the Tutor.com platform to facilitate online tutoring sessions. When the pandemic required a total shift to widespread virtual learning, SPC's president Dr. Tonjua Williams was determined to maintain the employment and wellbeing of the College's staff, and to support students through an unprecedented transition. The solution: Move SPC's tutors to Tutor.com's academic support platform, and implement a new co-staffing model for the two partners.

To facilitate this co-staffing support solution, Tutor.com provided in-person and virtual trainings for SPC tutors, and integrated campus instructional support staff into the network of Tutor.com tutors available to students. The co-staffing model not only quickly expanded the College's support capacity for students; it also offered guaranteed work and flexible schedules for staff who were themselves grappling with pandemic-related challenges.

Thadine Franciszkiewicz, a writing specialist from SPC, shared, "Unexpected growth opportunities in Learning Resources occurred during the pandemic.

I was able to expand my work hours to later in the night and on Sundays, which benefited many night-owl students. On Sundays, I was able to respond to those students who had submitted their essays from Friday to Sunday night. This gave students the chance to revise their drafts in time before the usual submission Sunday night deadline."

Over the 39,100 sessions completed from March 2020 to December 2021, SPC tutors provided 47 percent, while Tutor.com tutors provided 53 percent. With access to Tutor.com's fine-tuned virtual platform and 3,500+ world-class tutors working in tandem with SPC's own instructors, the College maintained personal connections between staff and students while broadening the scope of academic support available during the global health crisis.

Student support wasn't just enduring during the pandemic—it was better than ever.

“ It is really nice to have a one-on-one session with a tutor. I live two hours away from the College, and this really helps me feel closer. ”

— SPC writing and communication student

Academic Support in Practice

From computer programming to statistics to finance, SPC and Tutor.com began offering tutoring in a wider variety of subjects—meeting students where they were in the topics they needed help with most. From 2020 through 2021, the median connection time for a student to be paired with an expert tutor was around 30 seconds. Tutor.com’s drop-off writing review service returned detailed feedback on papers in fewer than 12 hours, with a median turnaround of under eight hours. And on-demand, 24/7 access to Tutor.com’s platform expanded hours of operation dramatically, with 45 percent of tutoring sessions occurring *beyond* the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Monday to Friday.

From January to February of 2020, the most popular day of the week for tutoring sessions and drop-off writing review was Thursday, and the most popular time was 11:00 p.m. With the onset of the pandemic, the shift to virtual learning, and the launch of the SPC-Tutor.com co-staffing model, Monday became the most popular day, while the most popular times were 2:00 p.m. during the height of the pandemic, 12:00 noon from September to December 2020, and 3:00 p.m. during 2021.

Data across the history of the partnership shows that demand generally rose over the course of the morning, plateauing around lunchtime. The wealth of relevant, real-time data and early alerts that Tutor.com provides SPC means that usage trends can be tracked, curricular challenges addressed, and just-in-time support provided.

The SPC-Tutor.com partnership ensured that there were no gaps in support, and students expressed gratitude. Across 2020 and 2021, the service received an average **student satisfaction rating of 4.7 out of 5**, and 97 percent of students who responded to post-session surveys in 2021 said that the service was helping them improve their grades.

“My tutor was very helpful, and I didn’t expect them to reply within minutes on a Sunday!”

— SPC writing student

Percentage of sessions by day and time across 2020 and 2021

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
12am ET	0.30%	0.30%	0.27%	0.34%	0.30%	0.35%	0.30%	2.16%
1am ET	0.22%	0.26%	0.29%	0.22%	0.29%	0.17%	0.25%	1.71%
2am ET	0.22%	0.26%	0.28%	0.28%	0.30%	0.17%	0.23%	1.74%
3am ET	0.28%	0.21%	0.26%	0.29%	0.30%	0.18%	0.23%	1.74%
4am ET	0.31%	0.23%	0.21%	0.23%	0.28%	0.18%	0.24%	1.68%
5am ET	0.32%	0.22%	0.23%	0.37%	0.28%	0.21%	0.25%	1.88%
6am ET	0.30%	0.19%	0.24%	0.27%	0.21%	0.18%	0.25%	1.64%
7am ET	0.29%	0.37%	0.30%	0.31%	0.36%	0.27%	0.29%	2.20%
8am ET	0.38%	0.75%	0.67%	0.72%	0.66%	0.54%	0.44%	4.17%
9am ET	0.48%	0.85%	0.65%	0.63%	0.67%	0.78%	0.61%	4.67%
10am ET	0.64%	1.08%	0.82%	0.66%	0.71%	0.98%	0.78%	5.66%
11am ET	0.77%	1.09%	0.78%	0.87%	0.86%	0.99%	0.77%	6.13%
12pm ET	0.94%	1.08%	0.87%	0.97%	0.88%	0.95%	0.76%	6.44%
1pm ET	1.02%	1.13%	0.81%	0.84%	0.89%	0.88%	0.76%	6.32%
2pm ET	0.95%	1.01%	0.84%	0.98%	1.01%	1.01%	0.71%	6.51%
3pm ET	0.96%	0.88%	0.91%	1.08%	1.01%	0.93%	0.68%	6.44%
4pm ET	0.92%	1.00%	0.93%	0.96%	1.01%	0.79%	0.63%	6.25%
5pm ET	0.94%	0.90%	0.80%	0.93%	1.03%	0.65%	0.51%	5.77%
6pm ET	0.92%	0.84%	0.77%	0.87%	0.91%	0.73%	0.50%	5.54%
7pm ET	0.91%	0.86%	0.78%	0.88%	0.87%	0.68%	0.47%	5.44%
8pm ET	0.96%	0.69%	0.73%	0.67%	0.73%	0.50%	0.46%	4.73%
9pm ET	0.87%	0.66%	0.66%	0.52%	0.72%	0.44%	0.42%	4.29%
10pm ET	0.68%	0.65%	0.51%	0.50%	0.60%	0.48%	0.40%	3.82%
11pm ET	0.48%	0.50%	0.37%	0.41%	0.48%	0.41%	0.40%	3.06%
	15.07%	15.99%	14.00%	14.80%	15.35%	13.44%	11.35%	100.00%

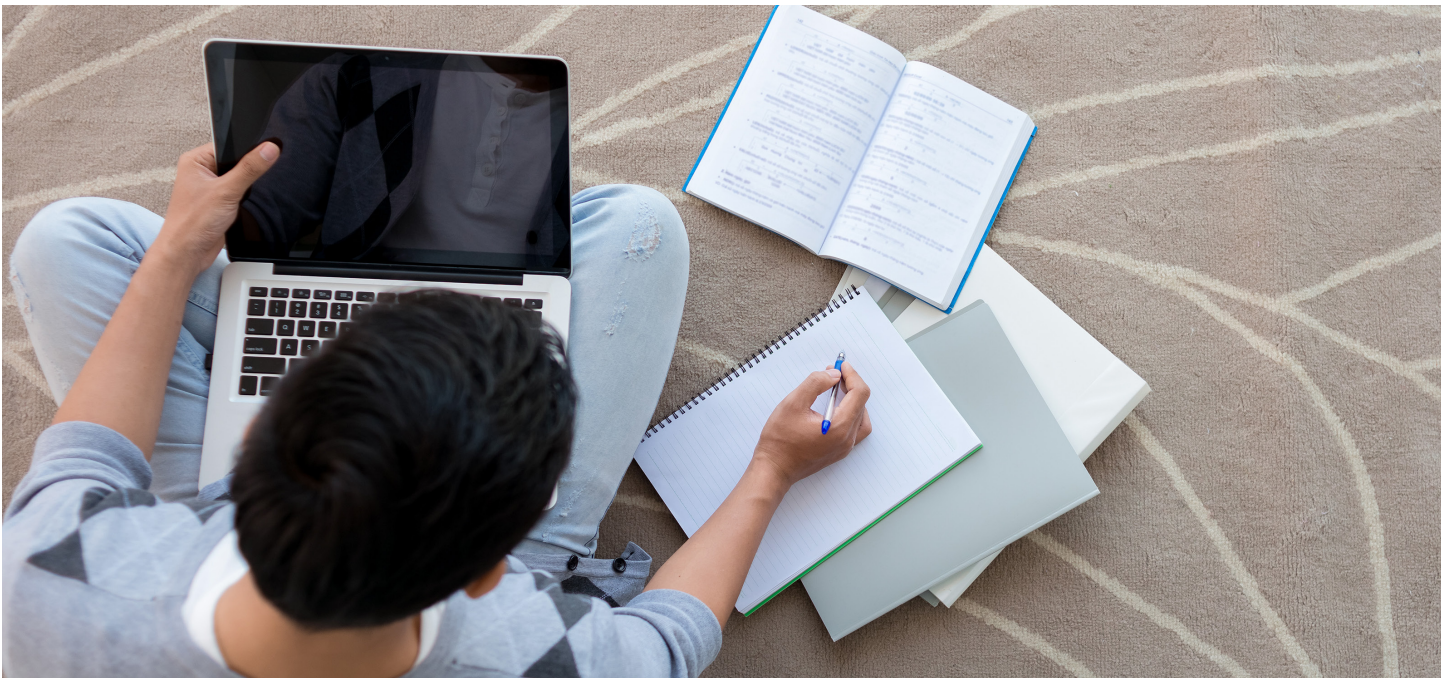
Shared Ethos

The growing scope of support attests to SPC's forward-thinking approach to higher education and a shared ethos with Tutor.com: Rather than asking whether students are "college-ready," SPC is dedicated to ensuring that the College is "student-ready."

Both partners remain committed to staying nimble to support students' emerging academic and workforce needs. As students moved online, for instance, Tutor.com added student success subjects in English and Spanish to provide support with using technology, developing healthy habits, and managing stress. With similar responsiveness, SPC developed its Rapid Credentialing Scholarship Program geared toward lifting up community members faced with layoffs, furloughs, and financial hardships.

“ I cannot overstate how much I love this service and the staff you have. By the time I get here, I am usually at my limit and every time the tutors put me in a better mood as well as help me find the solution. ”

— SPC computer science student



Impact of Expanded Support

The SPC-Tutor.com “student-ready” philosophy has yielded measurable results on student outcomes.

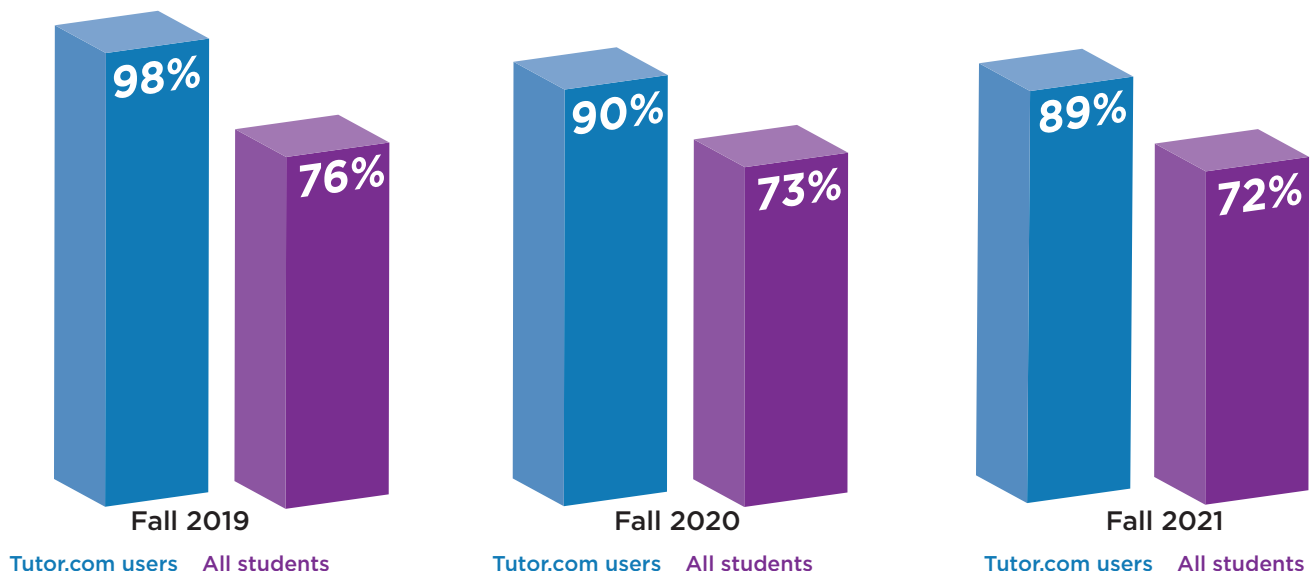
Students who use Tutor.com services have higher success rates.

This is demonstrated by student pass rates in SPC’s first-year composition course during the 2019, 2020, and 2021 fall terms. Of the students who used the Tutor.com platform in 2019, **98 percent earned a passing grade of A, B, or C.** Of the students who used the platform in 2020, **90 percent** passed the course with an A, B, or C. And of the students who used the platform in 2021, **89 percent** passed with one of those top three grades. These pass rates are particularly striking when compared to the overall class pass rates of 76 percent in 2019, 73 percent in 2020, and 72 percent in 2021.



The message is clear: **Support translates to higher grades.**

Student Pass Rates (Percentage of first-year composition students who received an A, B, or C grade)



Results for Faculty, Staff, and Students

In collaborating with Tutor.com to meet student needs, SPC has promoted positive student outcomes and staff retention.

Prof. Matthew Bodie, SPC's Executive Director of Learning Resources, remarked, "When campuses closed in March 2020 due to the pandemic, SPC Learning Resources had just a couple of days to train and move a staff of more than 100 individuals to a fully online operation, and **without Tutor.com, we wouldn't have been able to make that transition.** We went from 400 weekly on-campus hours to more than 1,000 hours online, each week, available for tutoring and assistance. **Tutor.com's co-staffing model has proven effective at helping students not only better understand academic content, but it also has given them the connections and confidence they need in a rather uncertain time.**"

"By leveraging our existing co-staffing model partnership with Tutor.com, SPC was able to easily transition to a full-service online platform that successfully supported our students when and how they needed it during the pandemic and beyond."

"It's a win-win-win scenario: student needs are being met, student usage has improved, and student success has increased."

— Dr. Sabrina Crawford
AVP of Institutional Effectiveness
and Academic Services, SPC



Survey Results*

98%

of students say they are glad
SPC offers Tutor.com

98%

of SPC students say Tutor.com
helps them be more confident
about their schoolwork

96%

of SPC students say Tutor.com
helps them complete their
homework assignments

97%

of SPC students say Tutor.com
helps them improve their grades

96%

of SPC students would
recommend Tutor.com to a friend

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* Compiled from SPC student post-session surveys during 2021

Appendix:

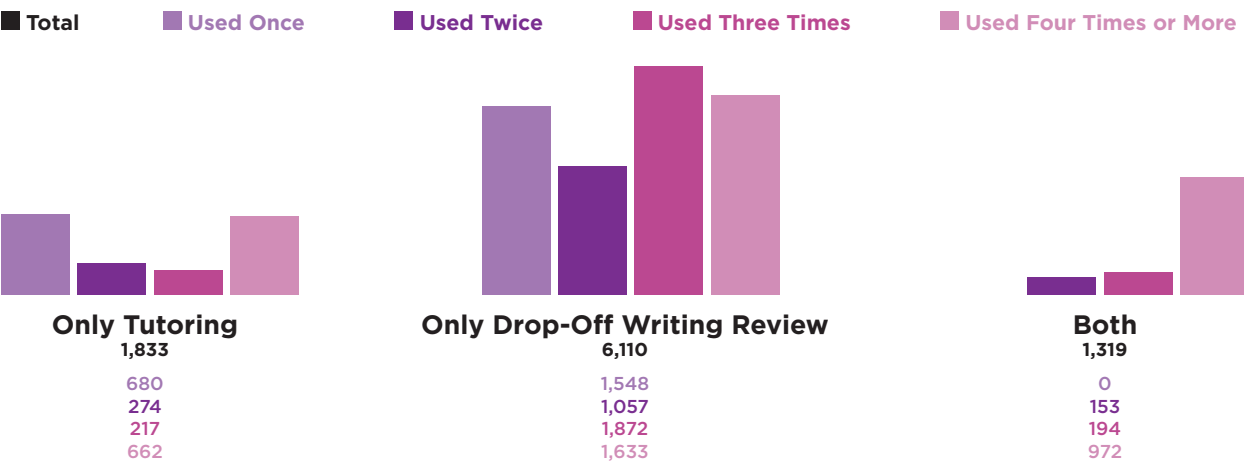
Further Data Insights Powered by Tutor.com



St. Petersburg College (SPC) | 2019–2021

Tutor.com and St. Petersburg College are committed to using real-time student engagement data to meet emerging learner needs.

Students who engaged with 1-to-1 tutoring found it helpful—and were highly likely to use it again. From 2019 through 2021, 59.9 percent of students who used Tutor.com did so three or more times. The more students used 1-to-1 tutoring, the more likely they were to use drop-off writing review, as well. Of the students who used both services, 11.6 percent participated in two sessions, 14.7 percent participated in three, and a noteworthy **73.7 percent participated in four or more sessions**.



“This is a great service. I will be utilizing this more!”

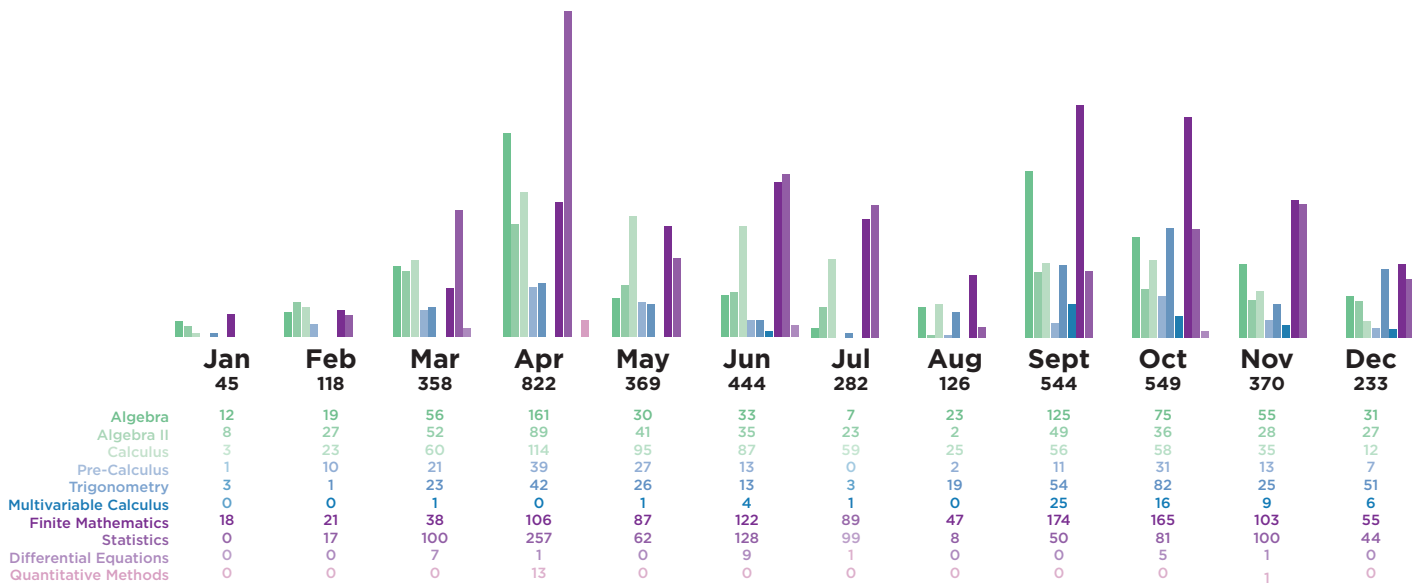
— SPC statistics student

Statistics: Sessions and Early Alerts

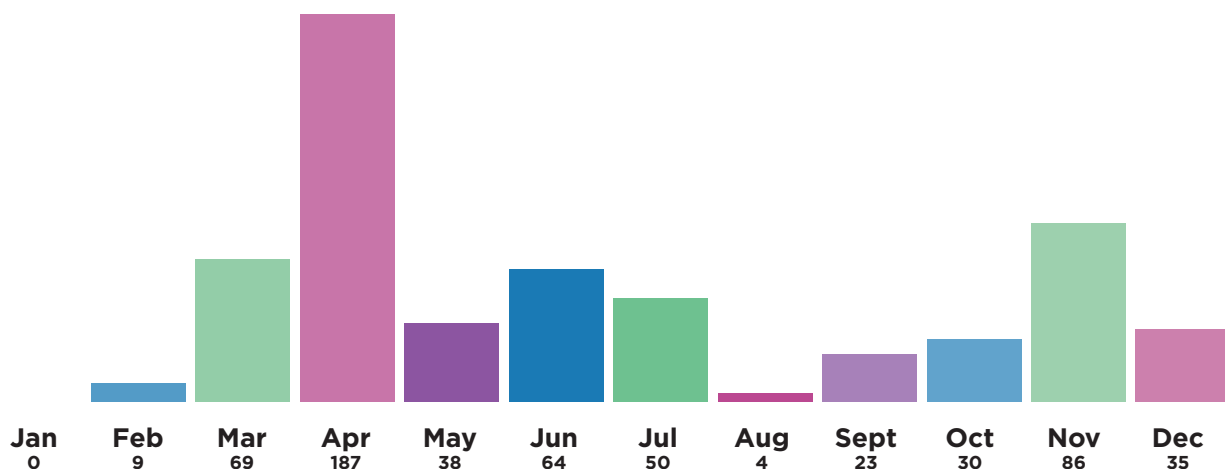
The cycle—that is, support begetting success and encouraging further support—is illustrated by students' engagement with statistics tutoring in 2020. The subject saw a spike in usage during April, with more than 250 sessions. A corresponding surge in early alerts—tutor-issued and automated indicators that a student may benefit from additional support—occurred in April.

Given the increase in demand and coinciding increase in early alerts, students seem to have had an especially challenging time with statistics at the beginning of the pandemic.

Math Tutoring Sessions in 2020



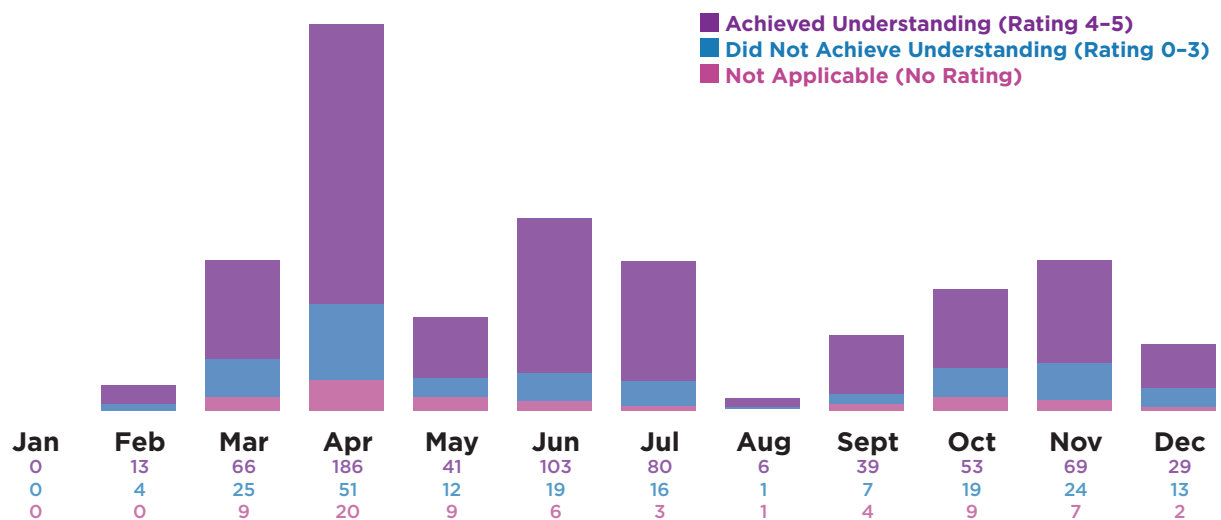
Early Alerts in 2020



Statistics: Achievement of Understanding

We can see from the data that the number of early alerts decreased over the course of 2020, as students adjusted to new models of online instruction and support.

According to session data from this time period, 72.4 percent of tutors providing statistics support in April of 2020 indicated that their students had achieved understanding during their sessions. This percentage remained high—between 65.4 and 80.8 percent—for May through December of 2020.



What we see from pairing session and early alert data with data on achievement of understanding is that, as students sought academic support due to challenges in April, they cultivated valuable skills during their interactions with tutors. The focused attention they received during 1-to-1 online tutoring sessions helped students achieve measurable success during a challenging moment.

“ I love knowing I have instant access to help when I’m stuck. ”
— SPC statistics student

“ [My tutor] really helped walk me through some frustrating problems and was very encouraging. ”
— SPC statistics student