PLAGIARISM WORKSHOPS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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Motivation

Professors at Saint Paul University observed that many international students were unclear about what constitutes plagiarism and academic fraud in North America. In order to address this issue, a pilot project consisting of a series of specialized plagiarism workshops designed by the Library was undertaken with the goal of helping international students understand what is expected from them in a North American academic context.

International student population at Saint Paul University:

14 %
international students

Literature Review

International students studying in North America face unique challenges as compared to North American students. Students from non-Western cultures tend to have different views about respect for authority and, in some cultures, imitation may be "considered the highest form of flattery" (Park, 2003, p. 473). In addition to "cultural differences and linguistic barriers, international students may also find that their understanding of source use and textual borrowing practices differs from the expectations held at American universities" (Amsberry, 2009, p. 31). As a result of unclear expectations, international students may find themselves committing plagiarism unintentionally. In fact, according to McCuen (2008), "most acts of plagiarism are likely acts of ignorance rather than intended acts of deception or fraud" (p. 152).

Collaboration between professors and learning advisers is key when implementing methodologies for reducing incidents of plagiarism (Duff, Rogers, & Harris, 2006). Instead of focusing on the punitive and policy aspects of plagiarism, it is preferable to take an educational approach when teaching students (Gunnarsson, Kulesza, & Pettersson, 2014).

Methodology

The workshops were designed in collaboration with the International Student Office and the Academic Writing Help Centre. They were held in both English and French, and lasted 1.5 hours each. In addition to having a traditional presentation, students were given time for hands-on activities and practice questions. Presentation slides were placed on all the library research guides for easy access.

A "dry-run" trial workshop including a free pizza lunch was presented to several international students to obtain their feedback. To invite participants, an e-mail message was sent to all the international students. Additionally, each Dean sent out e-mails to professors reminding them to encourage their students to attend the workshops. The workshops were also advertised in multiple places some of which include the TV at the entrance to the university, the library, and the student council office bulletin.

Out of a total of 149 international students registered at Saint Paul University, 29 participants attended the four workshops (17 in English, 12 in French).

A pre test serving as a baseline evaluation was administered at the beginning of the workshops. The test was repeated at the end of the workshops (the post test). The test consisted of 10 questions: 3 were self-evaluation of participants' knowledge about plagiarism, 7 were true/false questions testing their knowledge of what constitutes plagiarism. A Plagiarism Workshop Feedback Form was also administered in order to evaluate the workshop based on usefulness, format, future application, and general feedback.

Cited references

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McCuen, R. H. (2008). The plagiarism decision process: The role of pressure and rationalization. IEEE Transactions on Education, 51(2), 152-156.
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Preliminary Findings

The results indicate that participants' knowledge of what constitutes plagiarism improved significantly as a result of the workshops. In the pre-test, the average score for the 7 true/false situational questions was 71%; in the post test, it was 89%. 27 participants (93%) submitted the pre and post tests; 26 participants (90%) filled out the workshop evaluation form.

Students' self-reported knowledge about plagiarism:
- ❖ In the pre test, the average score of the students' level of confidence with their knowledge of what plagiarism means was 6.2 out of 10.
- ❖ In the post test, the average score was 8.9 out of 10.

True/False test scores

PRE TEST	71%
POST TEST	89%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%
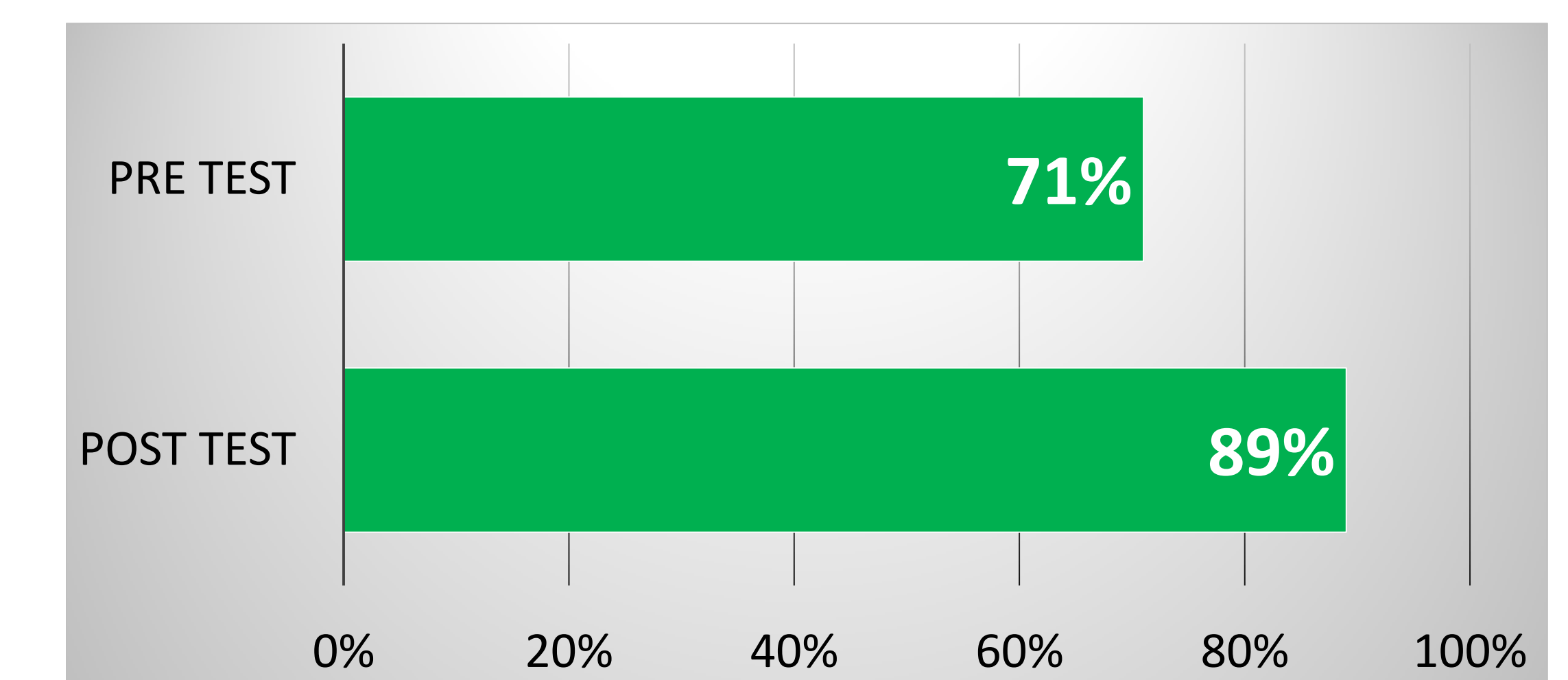
Students' level of confidence related to their knowledge of what plagiarism means*

PRE TEST	6.2
POST TEST	8.9

0 2 4 6 8 10
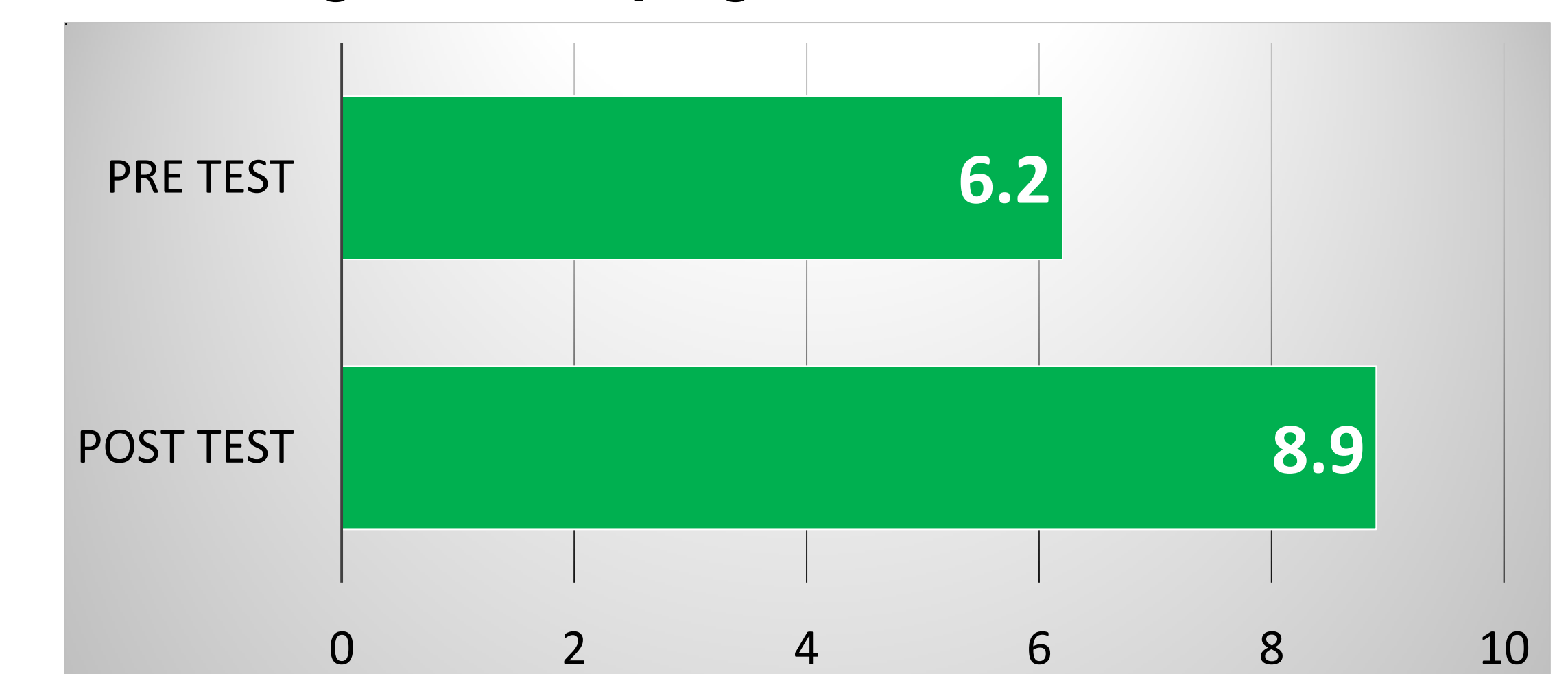
*on a scale from from 1 to 10; 1 being the lowest, and 10 the highest

Future Directions

In order to better support Saint Paul Universty students, the following future steps will be undertaken:

- ❖ Making the workshops mandatory for all incoming international students
- ❖ Extending the workshops to all Saint Paul students

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