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This study explored the effectiveness of online homework vs. traditional textbook homework in a College Algebra course. This project extends an already presented SoTL project on homework in a Calculus course. In that study we found that, compared to written homework, when students completed online homework: (1) they did homework more frequently during the week, (2) they made repeated attempts to master assignments, and (3) they had less office contact time with the professor but missed that contact. To build on this study, the current study used a control group/experimental group paradigm and matched courses as much as possible except for the homework modality.

We posit that the more frequent, regimented practice found in online homework should change the time distribution of homework over the week and increase the passage rate and test scores for the experimental group vs. the control group. However, the “answer focused” online homework system may lead to explanations which are less rich in the experimental group. Finally, we want to see whether the decrease in office contact in the previous study will replicate.

Results (completed 12/2012) will be used to inform future decisions about homework and to check academic progress in beginning mathematics. (Received September 24, 2012)