

RETENTION REVIEW NEWSLETTER



University College
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

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Did You Know?



Metacognitive awareness plays a vital role in student success. Metacognitive awareness—the ability to monitor and regulate one’s own mental activities—helps students set and achieve goals, assess their academic strengths and weaknesses, recognize when they need to ask for help, and otherwise develop and maintain healthy “studenting” habits.

Students often don’t know about the benefits of metacognitive awareness; they may not even know what it is. Yet they may possess greater metacognitive awareness than they realize. Evidence from our own students indicates that this may be true.

Incoming first-year students complete UWSP’s entering student survey a few months before arriving on campus. As part of this survey, respondents assess their level of confidence in setting goals for course performance, understanding their strengths and weaknesses as students, and recognizing when they need help understanding course content. Of the 560 students who completed the survey, 50% lacked confidence in setting goals for course performance (n=281) and in recognizing when they need help understanding course content (n=280). Similarly, 49% (n=272) lacked confidence in understanding their strengths and weaknesses as a student.

Yet the results of a follow-up survey administered in February suggest that our students use metacognitive

awareness more skillfully than they realize. While the number of responses (n=79) to the follow-up survey is relatively small, representing just 14% of students who completed the entering student survey and just 5% of the first-year cohort, the survey results are nevertheless informative.

To complete the follow-up survey, participants used Likert-scale responses to describe how well they understand their strengths and weaknesses as students (“very well”, “somewhat well”, “not very well”, or “not at all well”) and whether it is easy or difficult for them to set goals for course performance and to recognize when they need help understanding course content (“yes, it’s very easy”, “yes, it’s somewhat easy”, “no, it’s not very easy”, or “no, it’s not at all easy”). Over three-quarters of respondents indicated that it is “easy” or “somewhat easy” to set goals for course performance and to recognize when they need help understanding course content. Remarkably, 100% of respondents reported that they understand their strengths and weaknesses “very well” or “somewhat well.” (See chart below for additional details.)

I supplemented students’ responses to the follow-up survey with research on their help-seeking behavior. Using Navigate, I ran a report of all services used by these 79 survey respondents between the first day of the Fall 2024 semester and the first day of Spring Break 2025. During this time period, all of these students met at least once with a staff member in ACAC (Academic and Career Advising), Athletics, DCA (Diversity and College Access), the DRC (Disability Resource Center), or the TLC (Tutoring-Learning Center) for tutoring, coaching, or other forms of academic, personal, or career support. This proactive help-seeking behavior suggests that respondents are not only committed to setting and achieving goals but able to recognize when they need support and how those supports might complement their own strengths and weaknesses. I interpret this combination of proactive help-seeking behavior and confident follow-up survey responses to mean that these students do, indeed, possess a greater level of metacognitive awareness than indicated on the entering student survey.

Now the question remains: do students’ perceptions of their metacognitive abilities change as they successfully use metacognitive awareness to navigate their first semester in college? This sounds like a topic to explore on next year’s follow-up survey!

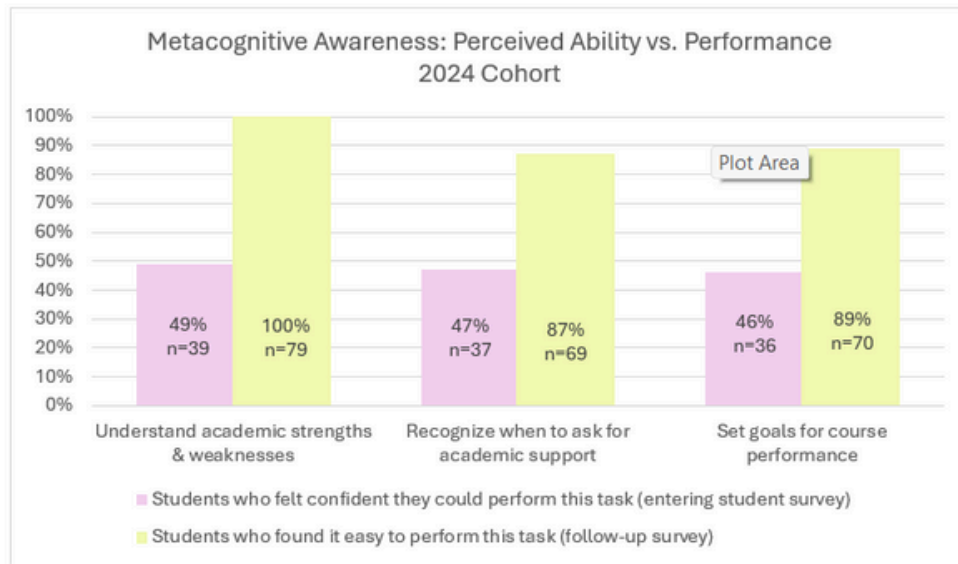
In the meantime, I would like to highlight a few resources that all of us can use to continue supporting students’ ongoing metacognitive growth:

1) CITL (Center for Inclusive Teaching and Learning) has developed excellent teaching tips on [learning how to learn](#) and [metacognition](#).

2) The TLC has created referral cards that make it easier than ever to help students connect with course content tutoring or academic coaching. [Printable copies of the referral cards are linked here](#), and paper copies are available in both the TLC (Collins Classroom Center 234) and the STEM Drop-In Tutoring Center (Chemistry Biology Building 190).

3) For more information on the role of metacognitive awareness in first-year student success, please see [the article linked here](#). Also consider browsing through a copy of Dr. Sandra McGuire's *Teach Students How to Learn*. Digital copies of this book are available through the UWSP Libraries website, and physical copies are available at both the Marshfield and Wausau libraries.

4) Please note that *Teach Students How to Learn* is the companion of a book called *Teach Yourself How to Learn*. This is a great resource to recommend to students! Students can find a copy online through the UWSP Libraries website or in physical format at the Wausau or Marshfield library.



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