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## WWC QUICK Review

### “Are Tenure Track Professors Better Teachers?”

#### What is the study about?

The study examined whether taking a course with a tenured/tenure track professor versus a non-tenured/tenure track professor for first-term freshman-level courses (e.g., introductory economics) was associated with whether students enrolled and performed well in future classes in the same subject.

The study used data from 15,662 students who entered Northwestern University in Illinois as freshmen between fall 2001 and fall 2008. Students who took a first-term freshman-level class with a tenured/tenure track professor were compared to students who took a first-term freshman-level class with a non-tenured/tenure track professor.

#### What did the study report?

The study authors reported that taking a course with a tenured/tenure track professor in a first-term freshman-level class was associated with (a) a 7.3 percentage point reduction in the likelihood that a student would take another class in the same subject, and (b) lower grades in the next class the student took in the same subject (about one-tenth of a grade point). These differences were statistically significant.

#### How does the WWC rate this study?

The study uses a quasi-experimental research design. As such, it could potentially meet WWC evidence standards with reservations. However, the WWC does not have enough information about baseline equivalence to determine the study rating at this time. A more thorough review

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#### Handy Definitions

- ▼ *quick review*
- ▼ *study rating*
- ▼ *meets WWC evidence standards without reservations*
- ▼ *meets WWC evidence standards with reservations*
- ▼ *does not meet WWC evidence standards*

See the *full glossary* ►

(forthcoming) will determine the rating for the study and report more fully on its results.

## Citation

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