

Achieving the Dream Report Series

December 14, 2007



The Effect of Taking Developmental Courses Immediately Upon Receipt of Assessment Results on Three-Year Positive Persistence Rate

NECC has a well developed and active assessment office. All entering students are tested using the Accuplacer Placement Test to determine their academic level for Writing, Reading and Mathematics. All students take the tests unless they have received an exemption. Students who receive scores above the cut-off score are allowed to take college-level "gatekeeper" courses such as English Composition I, Psychology, Sociology or College Algebra. Those that test below the cut-off score are directed to take various developmental courses.

This study follows two cohorts of students from the Fall 2004 semester.

Cohort 1: Students who assessed into one or more of the developmental courses (Writing, Reading or

Mathematics) and then registered for and completed the course with a grade of A through C (excluding C-) in Fall 2004.

Cohort 2: Students who assessed into one or more of the developmental courses and then either registered for and completed the course with a grade less than C, withdrew from the course, or chose not to take the course in Fall 2004 (**Figure 1**).

The cohorts were then followed for three years to determine their respective Positive Persistence Rate (PPR). The PPR is a measure that combines the positive outcomes of graduation, transfer to a 4 year college and remaining students enrolled after a three-year period (*final calculations for Fall 2004 PPR will be available in January 2008*).

Figure 1.

	COHORT 1		COHORT 2
	Tested Into Developmental Course in Fall 2004	Took Course & Completed Successfully (Grade A-C) in Fall 2004	Did Not Take or Did Not Complete Course Successfully (Grade <C or Withdrew) in Fall 2004
Basic Writing	218	106	112
College Reading	125	55	70
Basic Algebra 2	636	166	470

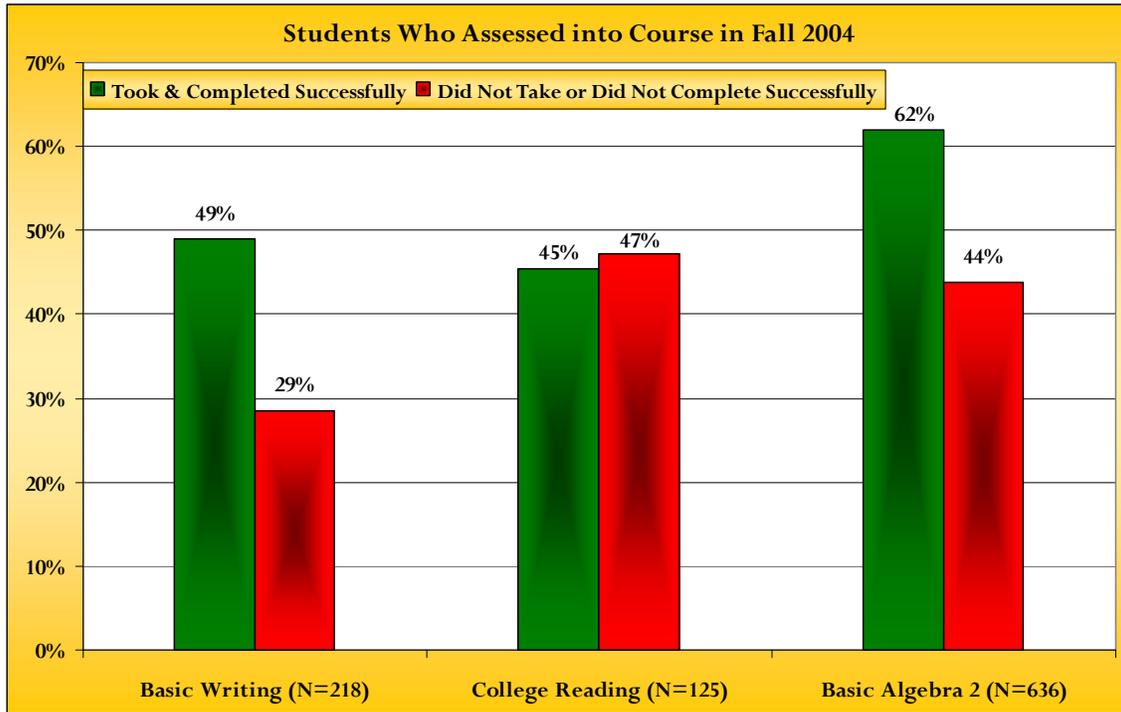
Students in Cohort 1 represent 49% of those that assessed into Basic Writing; 44% for College Reading and 26% for Basic Algebra II. **These rates show that less than half of our first-time students (only a quarter of Basic Algebra) move into their second semester having completed one or more of the developmental courses they assessed into.**

Next, the three year PPR was determined for each cohort. One would suspect that those students who completed developmental courses on schedule would persist for a longer period in college and attain better outcomes as measured by cumulative credits earned and overall GPA.

For Basic Writing and Basic Algebra II, students in Cohort 1 attain higher PPR rates (**Chart 1**). College

Reading does not show the same relationship for the PPR at this time.

Chart 1.



Another way of quantifying student success is to identify the number of earned credits and the overall GPA of the two cohorts for each course over the three-year period. The differences between cohorts are large for these two measures and the positive relationship between taking prescribed developmental courses in a timely fashion and

overall student success is evident for all three courses. **Students who register for the developmental course that they tested into in the same semester and complete with a grade of A – C, earned almost twice as many credits and achieved a much higher GPA over the three-year period (Figure 2).**

Figure 2.

	COHORT 1			COHORT 2		
	Overall Cumulative Credits Earned (as of Sp07)	Average Credits Earned per Student	Overall GPA (as of Sp07)	Overall Cumulative Credits Earned (as of Sp07)	Average Credits Earned per Student	Overall GPA (as of Sp07)
Basic Writing	3,425	32	2.62	1,216	11	1.27
College Reading	2,048	37	2.63	1,521	22	1.81
Basic Algebra 2	6,294	38	2.69	11,172	24	2.03

In summary, successful completion of developmental courses in a timely fashion appears to increase rates of student success. Further study will take place, especially in College Reading, to determine why the PPR did not increase. Basic Reading outcomes will be added to the study.

Interpretations of these findings as well as suggestions for further analysis are always welcome. Please direct questions and comments to Thomas Fallon, Dean of Institutional Research and Planning, via phone at 978-556-3866 or email at tfallon@necc.mass.edu.

