

Achieving the Dream Report Series

February 17, 2011



An Update on the Achieving the Dream Strategy: The First Year Experience

A pilot program was administered during the Fall 2010 semester that consisted of 12 sections of the College Success Course (CSS). This is a 3 credit, 3 instructional hour course that satisfies an Open/Free Elective requirement. A total of 208 students enrolled in the course. This course is the central component of NECC's Achieving the Dream Strategy – "The First Year Experience". The intent of the pilot is to provide new students who assess into two or more developmental courses (College Reading and/or writing and/or math) the skills necessary to succeed in college. The overall focus is on techniques and resources to improve self-understanding, information literacy and critical thinking skills, as well as to foster teamwork and community building.

More specifically, students who complete the First Year Experience at NECC, will be able to:

- Analyze and recognize their own learning styles and strengths
- Read texts to identify key points
- Take notes appropriately and note key concepts for review
- Interpret and write about texts
- Use time management skills and strategies to succeed in school
- Promote self-advocacy, self-discovery, and diversity
- Demonstrate an understanding of the college's resources and policies related to its services

The overarching goal is that students who take and complete the CSS course will succeed at a higher rate than those that did not take the course.

Specific outcome measures include:

- CSS course enrollees will complete the course (A – C) at a rate of 75%. The current course completion rate for all students is 69% and for first-time students – 65%.
- CSS completers will attain a developmental course completion rate of 75%. Currently, those students who do not take the course have a rate of 62%.
- CSS completers will have a Fall to Spring retention rate (return rate only) of 80%. Those students who do not take the course return at a rate of 67% (first-time) and 69% for all students.
- CSS completers will have higher Fall to Fall retention rates than those students who did not take the course.
- CSS completers will have a higher overall Grade Point Average than those students who did not take the course.
- CSS completers will have higher total accumulated credits than those students who did not take the course.

We currently have data on three of the six outcome measures.

The overall course completion rate (A – C) for the CSS course was 62%. 128 of the 208 students enrolled received a grade of A – C. Although 62% is below the target (75%) and below the average for all first-time students (65%), we feel that we have identified reasons for it.

- More students withdrew from the CSS course (26%) than on average for all courses offered (15%). This could be a result of poor communication between the student and the college as to the intent or reason for the course. Better marketing/advertising may be necessary.
- Student may have chosen to drop the CSS course for financial reasons. If they did not

fully understand the reason for the course, they may have chosen to drop the CSS course because it did not apply directly towards their program/major requirements.

The developmental course completion rate however appears to show very promising results. Three cohorts were identified (Successful Completers of CSS; Enrollees of CSS; and students not enrolled in CSS but who took developmental courses that Fall). The course completion rates for the developmental courses taken (Math, Reading & Writing – separate and combined) were then analyzed.

A. Developmental Course Completion for Successful Completers of CSS (N=128)

	# Enrolled	# Completed (A-C)	% Complete
MAT	87	61	70%
REA	20	18	90%
WRT	107	96	90%
Total	214	175	82%

B. Developmental Course Completion for Students Enrolled in CSS (N=208)

	# Enrolled	# Completed (A-C)	% Complete
MAT	140	70	50%
REA	32	22	69%
WRT	167	107	64%
Total	339	199	59%

C. Developmental Course Completion for non-CSS students (N=1,567)

	# Enrolled	# Completed (A-C)	% Complete
MAT	1,252	740	59%
REA	787	478	61%
WRT	542	374	69%
Total	2,581	1,592	62%

As you can see, the developmental course completion rate for CSS Completers is much higher (82%) than the developmental course completion rate for non-CSS enrollees (62%). Students who enrolled in CSS but did not complete realized the lowest developmental course completion rate (59%). The developmental course completion rates for CSS completers for Reading (90%) and Writing (90%) were very good, compared to the non-CSS cohort - Reading (61%) and Writing (69%). Developmental Math was also good – CSS completers (70%) compared to non-CSS enrollees cohort – Math (59%).

As for the Fall to Spring retention (return rate only), success in the CSS course seems to improve Fall to Spring retention even if the student did not succeed in their developmental course work.

If the student successfully completed CSS and also successfully completed their developmental course work they returned at a rate of 94%. If the student successfully completed CSS and did not

successfully complete their developmental course work they returned at a rate of 90%, still very high.

For students who enrolled in CSS and successfully completed it or did not successfully complete the CSS course, successful completion of their developmental coursework makes a large difference in Fall to Spring retention. Those students that were enrolled in CSS and successfully completed their developmental coursework returned at a rate of 94%. Those students that were enrolled in CSS and did not successfully complete their developmental coursework returned at a rate of 37%.

For students who did not enroll in CSS, successful completion of developmental coursework is a very important indicator as to whether they returned in the Spring. Ninety percent of the students who successfully completed their developmental coursework returned in the Spring, compared to 46% for those that did not complete.

A. Return rate (Fall to Spring) for Successful Completers of CSS (N=128)

	# Completed (A-C) in F10	# Returned in Sp11	% Returned	# Did not earn A-C in F10	# Returned in Sp11	% Returned
MAT	61	58	95%	26	24	92%
REA	18	16	89%	2	2	100%
WRT	96	91	95%	11	9	82%
Total	175	165	94%	39	35	90%

B. Return rate (Fall to Spring) for Students Enrolled in CSS (N=208)

	# Completed (A-C) in F10	# Returned in Sp11	% Returned	# Did not earn A-C in F10	# Returned in Sp11	% Returned
MAT	70	67	96%	70	32	46%
REA	22	19	86%	10	3	30%
WRT	107	101	94%	60	17	28%
Total	199	187	94%	140	52	37%

C. Return rate (Fall to Spring) for non-CSS students (N=1,567)

	# Completed (A-C) in F10	# Returned in Sp11	% Returned	# Did not earn A-C in F10	# Returned in Sp11	% Returned
MAT	740	658	89%	512	251	49%
REA	478	447	94%	309	142	46%
WRT	374	335	90%	168	62	37%
Total	1,592	1,440	90%	989	455	46%

Further study is needed. These are promising results from the first semester pilot. The college needs to continue to examine these outcomes each and every semester. We also need to look at all the formative and summative measures in order to improve the course offering.

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.

<http://www.necc.mass.edu/irp/planning/dream.php>