

## Achieving the Dream Report Series

December 7, 2007--- Revised April 5, 2011



### *The Effect of Age on Course Completion Rates for Developmental and Gatekeeper Courses*

This week's Achieving the Dream report focuses on the effect of age on successful course completion. Through review of Fall 2006 course and grade data, the Data Team identified the significant role that age plays in successful completion of developmental and gatekeeper courses as well as online and traditional coursework. For the purposes of this research, the age groups are: those students less than or equal to 25 years old or those students over the age of 25.

"Success" is defined as course completion with a grade of C or better (for the purposes of this analysis, C- is excluded). Figures 1-4 provide examples of how students over the age of 25 are considerably more successful than younger students in developmental and gatekeeper courses as well as online and traditional coursework.

In developmental courses (Figure 1), developmental Math presents the largest difference between age groups with a 19% higher completion rate among older students. In Basic Writing, students over the age of 25 have a 17% higher rate of successful completion. Developmental Reading shows students over age 25 with a completion rate 16% higher than that of students age 25 and younger.

Figure 2 shows a relatively similar pattern within course completion rates for gatekeeper courses. Again, Math yields the most noteworthy difference where students over the age of 25 were 23% more successful than student's age 25 or younger. Completion rates for older students in the Sciences and English 101 were 17% higher and 16% higher, respectively, than their younger peers.

There are considerable differences between the age groups for online and traditional successful course completion (Figures 3 and 4). Particularly among rates for online course completion, there are extreme variations between the age groups. In Psychology 101 and English 101 the older age group had much higher completion rates than the younger age group (31% and 38%, respectively). In traditional coursework, older students completed College Math with a 25% higher rate than their younger counterparts.

*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](mailto:tfallon@necc.mass.edu).*



Figure 1

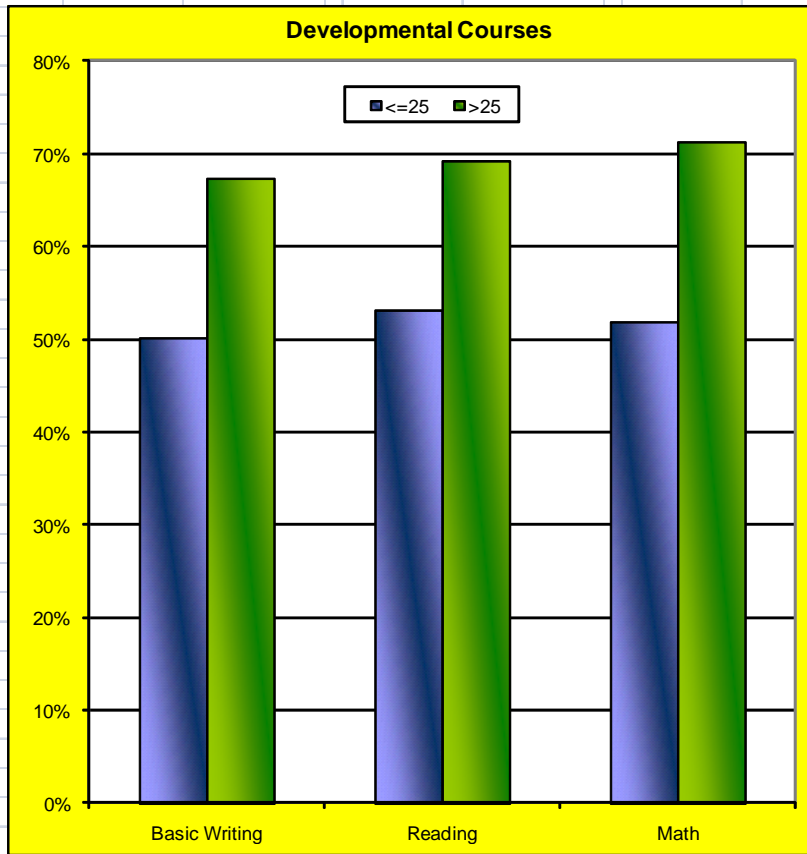
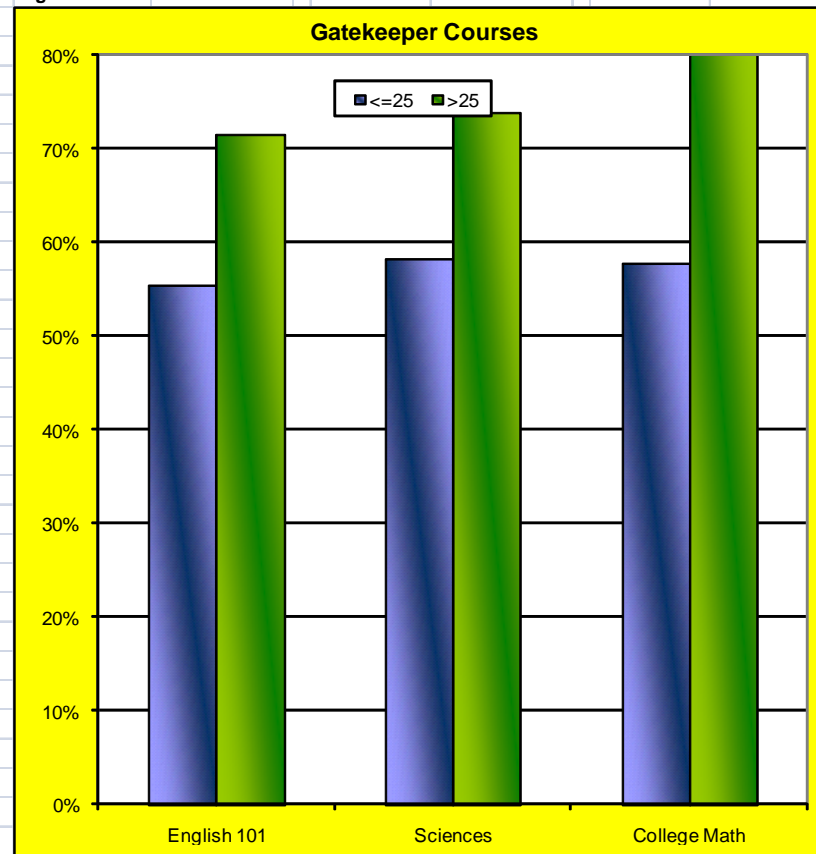


Figure 2



Age	Basic Writing		Reading		Math		English 101		Sciences		College Math	
	# Enrolled	% Complete	# Enrolled	% Complete	# Enrolled	% Complete	# Enrolled	% Complete	# Enrolled	% Complete	# Enrolled	% Complete
<=25	309	50%	408	53%	901	52%	858	55%	1070	58%	643	58%
>25	89	67%	104	69%	276	71%	144	72%	632	74%	167	81%

Figure 3

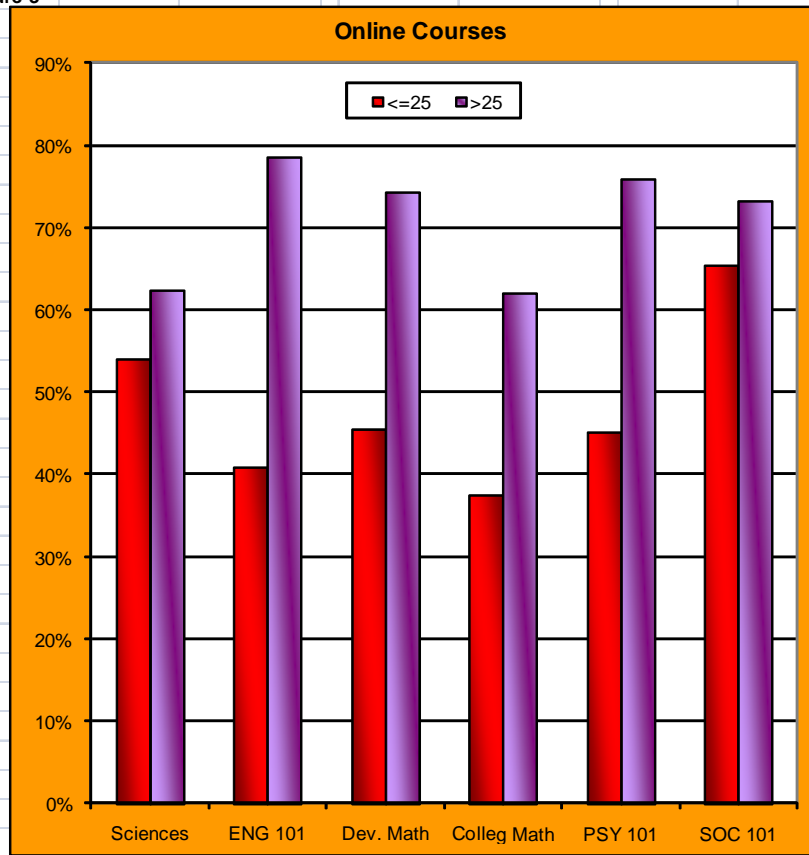
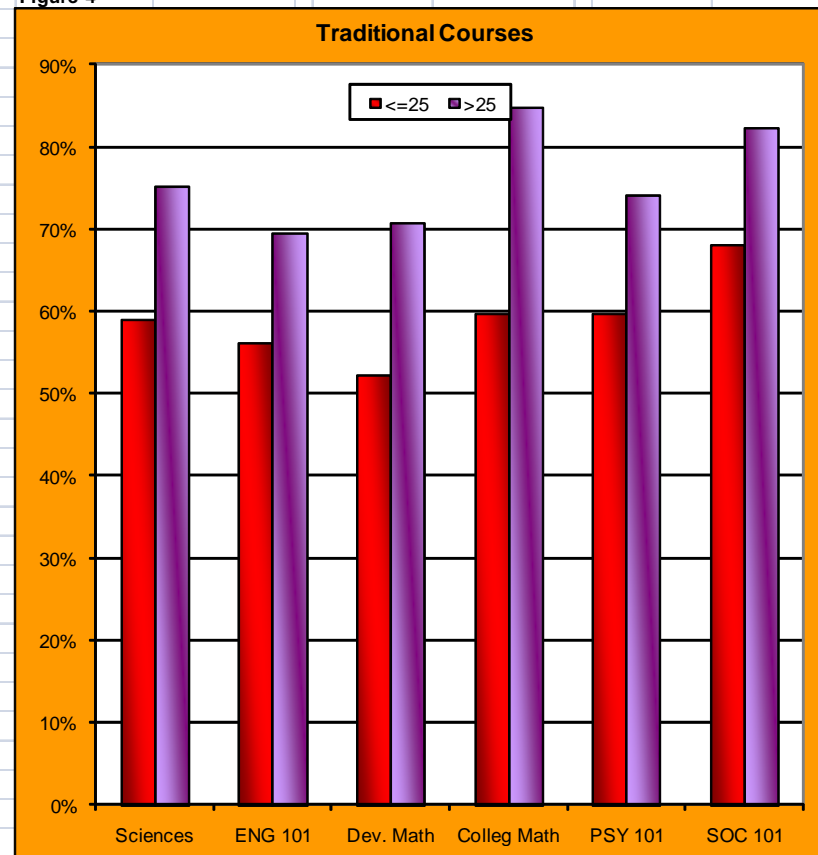


Figure 4



Sciences			ENG 101		Dev. Math		Sciences			ENG 101		Dev. Math	
Age	# Enrolled	% Complete	# Enrolled	% Complete	# Enrolled	% Complete	# Enrolled	% Complete	# Enrolled	% Complete	# Enrolled	% Complete	
<=25	113	54%	44	41%	44	45%	930	59%	784	56%	833	52%	
>25	56	63%	14	79%	39	74%	557	75%	125	70%	236	71%	

Colleg Math			PSY 101		SOC 101		Colleg Math			PSY 101		SOC 101	
Age	# Enrolled	% Complete	# Enrolled	% Complete	# Enrolled	% Complete	# Enrolled	% Complete	# Enrolled	% Complete	# Enrolled	% Complete	
<=25	48	38%	42	45%	52	65%	560	60%	540	60%	307	68%	
>25	29	62%	25	76%	30	73%	132	85%	112	74%	74	82%	