

# Achieving the Dream Report Series



July 31, 2008--- Revised April 8, 2011

## *A Comparative Analysis on the Effect of Age on Course Completion Rates For Developmental and Gatekeeper Courses*

In this AtD report, course completion rates by age for developmental and “gatekeeper” courses are compared between Fall 2006 and Fall 2007. The age groups used for the purposes of this study are students age 25 or younger ( $\leq 25$ ) and students over age 25 ( $>25$ ). In terms of course completion, “success” is defined by a final grade of C or better (C- is excluded).

Overall, younger students continued to complete course work less successfully than older students; however, between the two fall terms the rate of successful completion for the younger cohort increased. The only course where a decrease in successful completion occurred for students  $\leq 25$  years old is English Comp. (101) where there was a -7% decline between the two terms.

The highest levels of improvement among NECC’s younger students were observed in Developmental Reading (021) and gatekeeper Sciences (BIO 103, 121 and 122) with 19% and 13% increases, respectively. In Fall 2007, younger students completed both College-level Math (120/130) and Basic Writing (010) 6% more successfully than in Fall 2006. In Developmental Math (022) there was no change in course completion between the two terms.

Although students in the older age group continued to outperform their younger counterparts, they did not experience the same level of increase in

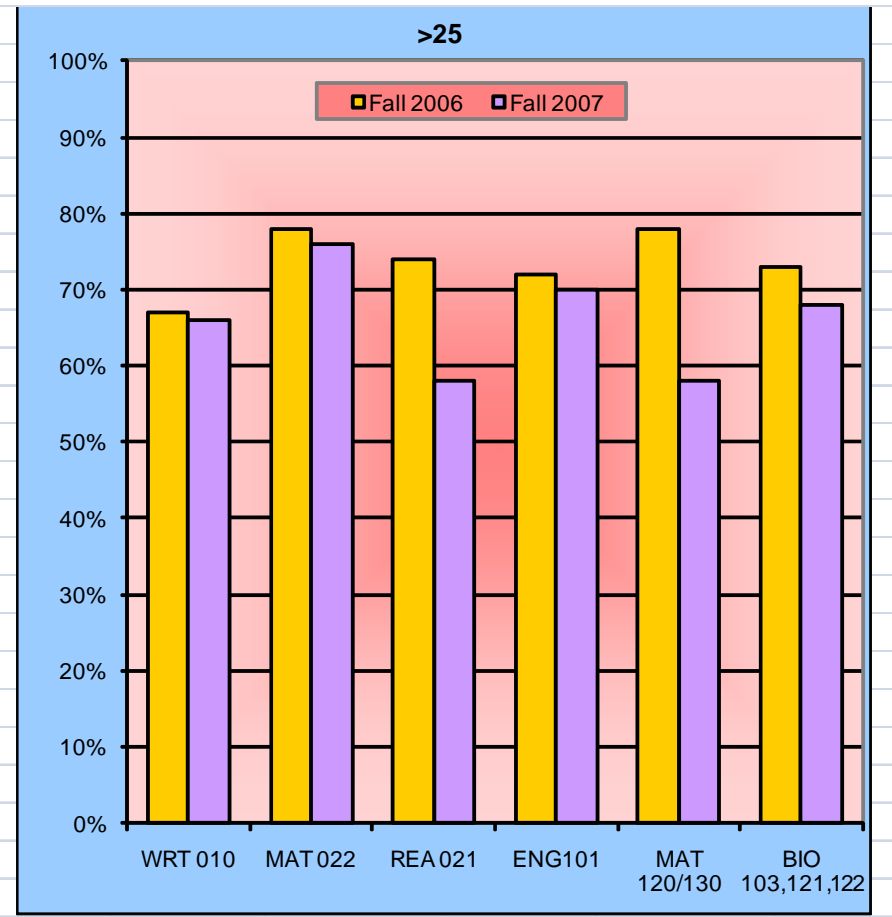
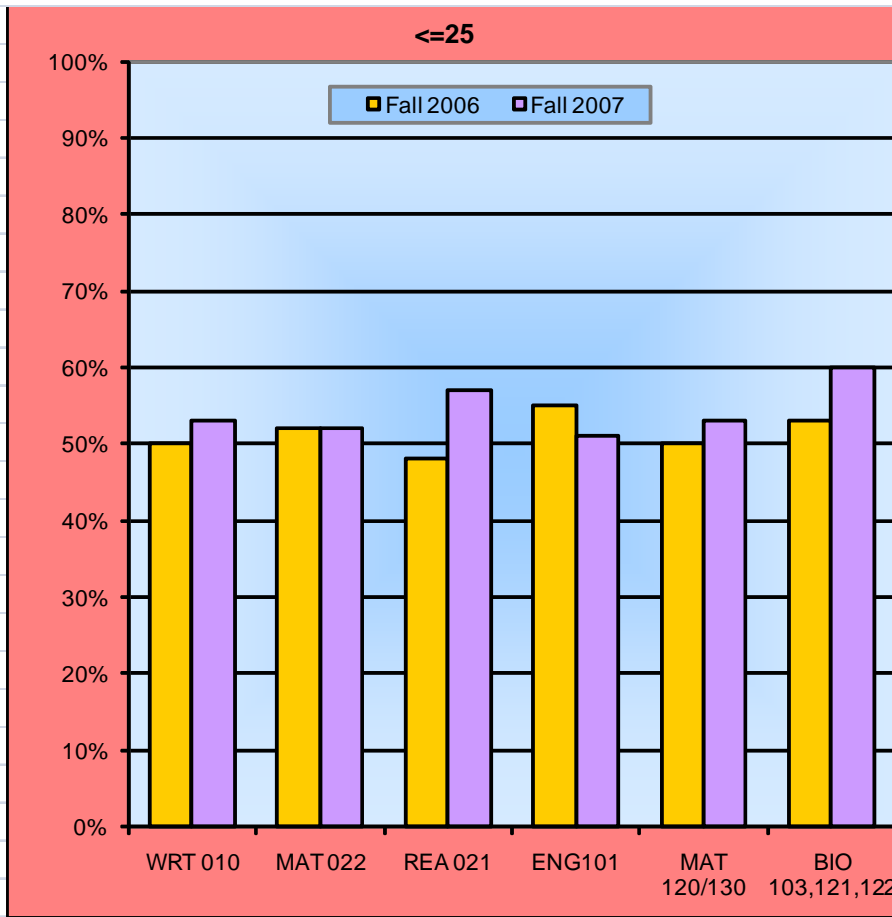
successful completion rates. In fact, the completion rates for students over age 25 decreased in all subject areas between the 2 fall terms.

Older students presented a considerable decrease in course completion rates in both College-level Math (120/130) and Developmental Reading (021) at -26% and -22%, respectively. English Comp. (101), the gatekeeper Sciences (BIO 103, 121 and 122) and Developmental Math (022) showed a decrease for students  $>25$  years old between the two terms (-3%, -7% and -3% respectively). Basic Writing (010) completion decreased by -1%.

Looking at those students who successfully completed Basic Writing (010) in the Fall and then went on to complete English Comp. (101) in the subsequent Spring, there is a 14% increase for NECC’s younger students (age  $\leq 25$ ), and a 25% increase for students age 25 and older between the 2 years of 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](mailto:tfallon@necc.mass.edu).*





	Age <=25					Age >25				
	Fall 2006		Fall 2007		1 Year	Fall 2006		Fall 2007		1 Year
	# Enrolled	% Complete	# Enrolled	% Complete	Change	# Enrolled	% Complete	# Enrolled	% Complete	Change
Basic Writing (WRT 010)	309	50%	334	53%	6%	89	67%	100	66%	-1%
Dev. Math (MAT 022)	719	52%	730	52%	0%	158	78%	159	76%	-3%
Dev. Reading (REA 021)	210	48%	235	57%	19%	54	74%	45	58%	-22%
English Comp. (101)	858	55%	871	51%	-7%	144	72%	128	70%	-3%
College Math (120/130)	255	50%	272	53%	6%	63	78%	89	58%	-26%
Science (BIO 103,121&122)	411	53%	441	60%	13%	331	73%	368	68%	-7%