
DATE: 7/24/18

TO: AB 705 Implementation Team

FROM: Doreen Finkelstein, Research Analyst

RE: English throughput and course success for students with a high school GPA below 2.6

Introduction:

The passage of Assembly Bill (AB) 705 introduced new requirements for the placement of students into gateway, transfer-level English (e.g., ENGL 1A) and for evaluating the college's placement system. The state is interested in knowing the following information:

1. Are students "highly unlikely" to succeed in a course they are denied access to, and
2. Would placing students into a different course increase their throughput rate?

"Highly unlikely": There is as yet no exact standard for the meaning of "highly unlikely" in this context, but a recent memorandum from the state suggests that a pass rate as low as 28% does *not* meet the state's criterion for students being "highly unlikely" to succeed (CCCCO, 2018).

Throughput rate: The throughput rate is the percent of students who complete transfer-level English within one year (three primary terms — Fall, Winter, Spring) after they begin the English sequence. While individual course success rates are still important, throughput is the more important metric, as it relates to the final outcome measure of interest: completion of the gateway, transfer-level English course.

Accelerated coursework alternative: Foothill College has an accelerated English course sequence, ENGL 1S and ENGL 1T, traditionally offered to students who would otherwise have been placed below transfer-level. Successful completion of both courses is equivalent to successfully completing ENGL 1A, but students must complete both courses in order to receive any transferable units.

The state's placement rules for English say that students with a high school GPA below 2.6 should be placed directly into transfer-level English, with additional supports recommended (CCCCO, 2018). A question for consideration is whether these students do better when placed into the ENGL 1S/1T sequence, or if they do better when placed directly into ENGL 1A.

This study focuses on students with a self-reported high school GPA below 2.6,ⁱ and compares their throughput rates based on whether they begin the English sequence with ENGL 1A or with ENGL 1S. In addition, the study looks at success in ENGL 1A when these students take it as their first English course.

Results Overview:

- Students with a high school GPA below 2.6 did not differ in their throughput rates based on whether they began the English sequence with ENGL 1A or began it with ENGL 1S. The throughput rate for both groups was around 60%.
- When these students successfully completed transfer-level English within a year, 94% of those who began with ENGL 1A took a single term to complete. The quickest possible time to completion for students who begin with ENGL 1S is two terms.
- 56% of students with a high school GPA below 2.6 who began with ENGL 1A passed it on their first attempt.

Results Detail:

Throughput rates. Table 1 below shows the throughput rates — the percent of students who completed transfer-level English within one year — for students with a self-reported high school GPA below 2.6 who began the English sequence with either ENGL 1A or with ENGL 1S.

The results show that throughput rates were virtually identical between the two groups (60% vs. 61%). The 1% difference is negligible, and equivalent to one single student having a different outcomeⁱⁱ.

Table 1			
Throughput Rates for Students with GPA Below 2.6			
Group	Headcount	Throughput (completed transfer-level English within one year)	
		Count	Percent
Began with ENGL 1A	168	100	60%
Began with ENGL 1S	56	34	61%

Time to completion. While the throughput rates for these students were the same regardless of whether they began with ENGL 1A or with ENGL 1S, the time they took to complete transfer-level English was not. Table 2 below shows time to completion for the subset of students who successfully completed transfer-level English within one year. When students began with ENGL 1A, 94% completed within a single term; when they began with ENGL 1S, none completed within a single term, because the quickest possible time to completion for this group was two terms.

Table 2 Time to Successful Completion for Students with GPA Below 2.6			
Group	Headcount	Completed Transfer-level English Within One Term	
		Count	Percent
Began with ENGL 1A	100	94	94%
Began with ENGL 1S	34	0	0%

Success rate in ENGL 1A. Table 3 below shows the percent of students with a high school GPA below 2.6 who began the English sequence with ENGL 1A and passed the course on their first attempt. A total of 94 out of 168 students passed, for a course success rate of 56%. While this success rate is far lower than the first-attempt pass rate for all students (76%), it was achieved without corequisite or other specialized instructional support. Adding supports geared towards the needs of these lower-GPA students is likely to raise their course success rate, and also consequently raise their throughput rate.

Table 3 Success Rate in ENGL 1A for Students with GPA Below 2.6		
Headcount	Passed ENGL 1A on First Attempt	
	Count	Percent
168	94	56%

Methodology

Analyses looked at students who began the English sequence with ENGL 1A or ENGL 1S between Fall 2014 and Fall 2017, tracking them through Spring 2018. GPAs were self-reported at the time of application to Foothill. Students who took ESLL prior to taking English were excluded from the analyses.

References

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) (2018, July 11). *Memorandum on Assembly Bill (AB 705) implementation*. Sacramento, CA: CCCCCO.

ⁱ GPA information is only available for students who applied, or re-applied, to the college after spring 2017, when GPAs began to be collected.

ⁱⁱ The ENGL 1A throughput rate of 60% has a margin of error (95% confidence interval) of 7% ($n = 168$). The ENGL 1S throughput rate of 61% has a margin of error (95% confidence interval) of 13% ($n = 56$). The difference between the two throughput rates is within the margins of error, so it is not statistically significant.