

Research In Brief

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Pre-AA English Tracking Study

Introduction: The current study was done as part of a Spring 2007 research initiative focused on students who enter into Palomar's English, Reading, ESL or Math credit course curriculum at the Pre-AA Level. The information objectives of the research included describing such students in terms of their:

- Demographics;
- Course Flow (progress);
- Term-to-term persistence.

Caveat: All information that will be shared herein is "descriptive" in nature. There is no intention here to draw conclusions regarding cause and effect.

Methodology: The research was executed in the form of a *cohort* tracking study. A *cohort* is a group of students who share common characteristics. In this case, cohorts were formed based on two characteristics:

- Level of students' first English course;
 - Pre-AA (Catalog#'s 1-49)
 - AA Degree Applicable (50-99)
 - Transfer Level (100 and above)
- Term that first course was attempted.

For the purpose of forming the cohorts, only transcript grade enrollments were considered (i.e. grades of A, B, C, CR, D, F, FW, NC, W). Grade files were searched back through Summer'88 to find the first term in which a given student enrolled in an English course. The level of that course was then classified as Pre-AA, AA or Transfer level based on its catalog number. In cases where students enrolled in more than one

course during their first English enrollment term, the lowest catalog number was used for classification purposes. Students whose first English course was taken prior to Summer'95 were eliminated from the study to optimize correct identification of "first" English enrollments at Palomar. Sacrificing the Summer'88 through Spring'95 data ensured that the identified course was the first English course taken in at least seven years.

For the 24 terms beginning Summer'95 and ending Spring'03, a total of 11,163 students were identified whose first English enrollment was at Pre-AA Level and was taken during the respective term (see Table 1). The course taking behaviors and course outcomes for each of those students were then tracked for four years (12 terms). Thus, the most recent cohort that could be tracked was Summer'03 since their twelfth term fell in Fall'06 -- which was the last term for which grades were available for analysis. All 24 terms of English Pre-AA entry cohorts were collapsed together for the purposes of the analyses that follow.

Table 1
Pre-AA English Cohort Sizes

	Summer	Fall	Spring	Total
2002-03	167	680	510	1,357
2001-02	175	750	646	1,571
2000-01	151	659	539	1,349
1999-00	146	722	512	1,380
1998-99	143	683	581	1,407
1997-98	159	720	496	1,375
1996-97	150	709	536	1,395
1995-96	140	659	530	1,329
Total:	1,231	5,582	4,350	11,163

Demographics: In order to put demographics of the English Pre-AA students in perspective, Table 2 contrasts them against the demographics of students who entered the English curriculum at AA Level or higher. The methodology used to form the latter cohorts paralleled that described on the first page.

Table 2
Demographics of English Pre-AA Entry Cohorts
Versus Cohorts that Entered at AA Level or Higher

	Pre-AA Level	AA Level	Transfer Level
# in Cohort	11,163	8,582	12,590
Gender			
Female	49%	50%	57%
Male	51%	50%	43%
Ethnicity			
Asian/PI	6%	6%	8%
Black	6%	3%	3%
Filipino	5%	4%	3%
Hispanic	29%	17%	11%
Nat.Am.	2%	1%	1%
White	46%	63%	66%
Unknown	6%	6%	8%
Age			
17 & Under	9%	9%	7%
18-20	57%	61%	52%
21-24	12%	13%	18%
25-29	7%	6%	8%
30-34	5%	4%	5%
35 & Over	10%	7%	11%
Full-Time First Semester			
Yes	50%	62%	62%
No	50%	38%	38%
Citizenship			
Yes	88%	93%	92%
No	12%	7%	8%
Had Financial Aid First Year			
Yes	24%	18%	16%
No	76%	82%	84%
EOPS First Semester			
Yes	10%	5%	4%
No	90%	95%	96%

- **Gender:** Pre-AA English students are evenly split Female/Male and stay so until Transfer Level English (57%/43%)
- **Ethnicity:** Pre-AA cohorts are diverse and include a full 29% who are Hispanic
- **Age:** Two thirds (66%) of Pre-AA students are under 21 which is slightly less than is true for their AA Level

counterparts (70%) and slightly more than is the case for Transfer Level (59%)

- **Full-Time/Part-Time Status:** Exactly half (50%) of students who entered English at Pre-AA Level were part-time in their first semester -- 12 percentage points more than those who entered at AA or Transfer Level
- **Financial Aid/EOPS Status:** Almost a quarter (24%) of Pre-AA English students had financial aid during their first academic year and one in ten (10%) was in EOPS their first English term

Performance in Pre-AA English: The key performance measures summarized in Table 3 include:

- **Number of enrollments;**
- **Success rate** (count of A,B,C,CR grades divided by total A,B,C,CR,D,F,FW,NC, W grades);
- **Retention rate** (count of non-W grades divided by total grades);
- **Success units** (earned with grades of A,B,C, or CR);
- **Number of terms until first success grade.**

Table 3
Performance in Pre-AA English
Within 4 Years (12 Terms) of Cohort Entry

	Number of Cohort Members = 11,163	
	Passed A,B,C,CR	Never Passed
ENG		
#Students	7,120	4,043
%Students	64%	36%
Avg Enrolls	1.17	1.21
Success Rate	85%	
Retention Rate	98%	75%
Avg Success Units	4.01	
Avg Terms to 1st Success	1.44	

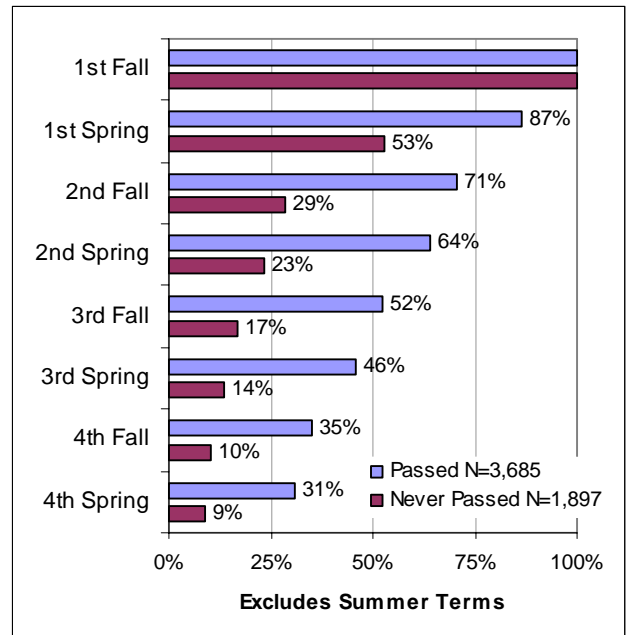
- Almost two thirds (64%) of English Pre-AA students passed one or more Pre-AA English courses during the 4 years they were tracked.
- However, the remaining 36% never passed Pre-AA English during that 4-year period of time.

- Both those who passed and those who never passed averaged about 1.2 Pre-AA English enrollments.
- Those who passed exhibited an 85% success rate in the Pre-AA English courses they took.
- Retention in Pre-AA English was considerably higher among those who passed (98% versus 75%).
- Those who passed earned an average of 4.01 success units in Pre-AA English.
- On average, those who passed took less than a term and a half (1.44) to achieve their first success in Pre-AA English.

- On Average, it took those students 3.62 terms (one year plus half a term) to pass their first AA Level English course.
- One in four (24%) passed a Transfer Level English course.
- On Average, it took those students 5.70 terms (slightly under two years) to pass their first Transfer Level English course.

Term-to-Term Persistence: Figure 1 displays the persistence rates of all Fall English Pre-AA cohorts from one primary term to the next.

Figure 1
English Pre-AA Students
Term-to-Term Persistence
(Fall Cohorts Only)



Flow Through the English Course Sequence: Table 4 shows the extent to which the English Pre-AA students progressed through higher levels of the English course sequence.

Table 4
Performance in Higher Level English Sequence
Within 4 Years (12 Terms) of Cohort Entry

Number of Cohort Members = 11,163	Passed Never Didn't		
	A,B,C,CR	Passed	Take
ENG	AA Level (50-99)		
#Students	3,897	1,171	6,095
%Students	35%	10%	55%
Avg Enrolls	1.22	1.33	
Success Rate	83%		
Retention Rate	97%	76%	
Avg Success Units	3.98		
Avg Terms to 1st Success	3.62		
ENG	Transfer Level (100+)		
#Students	2,720	541	7,902
%Students	24%	5%	71%
Avg Enrolls	1.53	1.36	
Success Rate	85%		
Retention Rate	95%	74%	
Avg Success Units	5.11		
Avg Terms to 1st Success	5.70		

- Over one third (35%) passed an AA Level English course.

- Students who passed a Pre-AA English course exhibited considerably more persistence than their counterparts who never passed such a course.
- By the fourth Spring since their initial entry, 31% of students who passed were still enrolling in Palomar courses versus less than a third as many (9%) of those who never passed.

Table 5

4-Year (12 Term) Progress of English Pre-AA Entry Cohorts in Other Subjects

Number of Cohort Members = 11,163	Pre-AA Level (1-49)			AA Level (50-99)			Transfer Level (100+)		
	Passed A,B,C,CR	Never Passed	Didn't Take	Passed A,B,C,CR	Never Passed	Didn't Take	Passed A,B,C,CR	Never Passed	Didn't Take
READ									
#Students	454	171	10,538	955	268	9,940	519	184	10,460
%Students	4%	2%	94%	9%	2%	89%	5%	2%	94%
Avg Enrolls	1.46	1.12		1.05	1.10		1.11	1.09	
Success Rate	92%			97%			96%		
Retention Rate	98%	80%		99%	84%		99%	68%	
Avg Success Units	2.13			4.06			3.75		
Avg Terms to 1st Success	2.40			1.94			3.44		
ESL									
#Students	54	8	11,101	15	1	11,147	116	21	11,026
%Students	0%	0%	99%	0%	0%	100%	1%	0%	99%
Avg Enrolls	1.57	1.25		1.47	1.00		1.95	1.33	
Success Rate	91%			100%			84%		
Retention Rate	98%	70%		100%	100%		98%	75%	
Avg Success Units	3.23			3.60			8.03		
Avg Terms to 1st Success	4.07			3.93			3.99		
MATH									
#Students	2,653	1,421	7,089	3,667	1,862	5,634	1,441	536	9,186
%Students	24%	13%	64%	33%	17%	50%	13%	5%	82%
Avg Enrolls	1.39	1.38		2.22	1.54		2.43	1.66	
Success Rate	80%			64%			70%		
Retention Rate	96%	78%		92%	74%		93%	71%	
Avg Success Units	3.21			5.65			6.17		
Avg Terms to 1st Success	2.21			3.01			5.15		
Other Subjects									
#Students	519	93	10,551	1,374	385	9,404	8,212	1,641	1,310
%Students	5%	1%	95%	12%	3%	84%	74%	15%	12%
Avg Enrolls	2.02	1.10		1.81	1.16		10.98	2.44	
Success Rate	90%			89%			72%		
Retention Rate	97%	63%		98%	81%		93%	76%	
Avg Success Units	3.71			2.67			22.36		
Avg Terms to 1st Success	3.65			3.19			1.78		

Performance in Other Disciplines: Table 5 shows performance of the English Pre-AA students in other coursework they took during the 4-year tracking period. Reading, ESL and Math are shown separately, while all other non-English disciplines are rolled together into the “Other Subjects” category.

- Generally, English Pre-AA students did not enroll in ESL courses -- the percent who *Didn't Take* ranged from 99% to 100%.
- Pre-AA Reading was taken by 6%, AA Level Reading by 11% and Transfer Level by 6% -- the percentages who passed were 4%, 9% and 5%, respectively.

- Math enrollments were much more common with one quarter (24%) passing Pre-AA Math, a third (33%) passing AA Level Math and an eighth (13%) passing Transfer Level.
- Most (88% i.e. 100% minus the 12% who *Didn't Take*) enrolled in “Other” Transfer Level courses.
- Those who were successful in Other Transfer Level courses earned, on average, 22.4 units.

Overall 4-Year Progress: As was reported earlier (Table 3), not all English Pre-AA students actually passed a Pre-AA English course – 64%

did and 36% did not. Moreover, in Figure 1 it was noted that those two types of students differed substantially in terms of their term-to-term persistence – those who passed a Pre-AA English course were much more likely to persist. Thus, it would be of interest to quantify the “overall” progress that those two types of students made over the course of the 4-year (12 term) tracking period. Table 6 attempts to accomplish that objective by using average success units earned as the metric.

- On average, those who *passed* Pre-AA English earned over five times as many units as those who *never passed* (37.20 versus 7.03).
- More importantly, those who passed earned five times as many AA & Transfer Level units (31.88 versus 6.47).

Closing Remarks: The caveat prominently displayed on page #1 clearly states that “There is no intention here to draw conclusions regarding cause and effect”. It is indeed tempting, though. Wouldn’t you agree?

Table 6
Units* Earned During 4-Year Study Period
By Cohort Members Who...
Passed Versus Didn't Pass Pre-AA English

	Passed A,B,C,CR	Never Passed	Total
#Students:	7,120	4,043	11,163
Basic Skills Units	5.31	0.57	3.59
AA Level Units	5.71	0.79	3.93
Transfer Level Units	26.17	5.68	18.75
Total:	37.20	7.03	26.27

* Average success units across all disciplines

More information? Please contact the Office of Institutional Research and Planning if you have any questions about this or other research and planning issues (Ext. 2360)