

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT
BOARD RULE 400.0100.00
COMPLETION RATES IN TRANSITIONAL STUDIES
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING: JULY 22, 2010

Belmont Technical College strives to help all students reach their educational goals and to foster the development of students as lifelong learners. In addition, Belmont Technical College employs strategies to foster success for all students beginning with entry into their certificate, degree, or transfer program. One such strategy is mandatory assessment and placement into developmental, or *transitional studies*, courses for students who do not demonstrate college level skills in one or more areas (reading, English, mathematics).

When students are admitted to Belmont Technical College, they either take an “Accuplacer” placement test or provide the college with scores from an accepted instrument (ACT, SAT, “Compass”). These tests help determine students’ ability to experience success in college-level courses. Data reveal that some of the students who enter or re-enter the education system at the post-secondary level are not adequately prepared for college-level coursework. These students are then placed in appropriate transitional studies courses.

Transitional studies courses are designed to help students prepare for subsequent college-level work and for success in higher education. Each transitional studies area has at least two, sequenced courses, as follows:

Reading

ENG081, “Reading I”

ENG082, “Reading II”

English

ENG093, “Sentence Writing”

ENG094, “Paragraph Writing”

Mathematics

MAT094, “Prealgebra”

MAT095, “Elementary Algebra I”

MAT097, “Elementary Algebra II”

Placement into each area’s sequence is dependent on results of students’ Accuplacer, ACT, SAT or Compass scores. The University System of Ohio (USO) has determined and mandated *cut-off* scores for all colleges and universities in Ohio. For each course in the above sequences students are placed according to the mandated cut-off scores. The College monitors the success rates of students who are enrolled in transitional studies courses, and a key indicator of students’ success can be interpreted from transitional studies course-completion rates. Student success in transitional studies courses is monitored by the Transitional Studies Coordinator, and completion rates are reported annually in accordance with Board of Trustees, *Ends Policies*, Section IV, 400.0100.00 Student Development.

Data

Data for this report are displayed in two tables and were drawn from the student information system without personal identifiers. The first table shows data from fall

2009, and the second displays data from fall 2008. “Success” in transitional studies classes is defined as a grade of ‘C’ or higher, and students are required to achieve this minimum grade before they may enroll in the next course in reading, English, or math transitional studies or English and math college-level courses. Data are presented in tables displaying the course label, such as ENG081, the total number of students who were awarded grades for that course during the fall 2009 term, the percent of students who completed the course successfully, and the percent of students who did not complete the course with a grade of “C” or higher.

Table 1: *Fall 2009 Completion rates in transitional studies courses*

Course label	Number of students receiving grades	Percent successful	Percent not successful
ENG081	47	62%	38%
ENG082	61	70%	30%
ENG093	52	67%	33%
ENG094	233	70%	30%
MAT094	119	63%	37%
MAT095	348	64%	36%
MAT097	39	31%	69%

In order to make a comparison between two fall quarters, Table 2 reports completion rates in transitional studies courses from fall 2008

Table 2: *Fall 2008 Completion rates in transitional studies courses*

Course label	Number of students Receiving grades	Percent Successful	Percent not successful
ENG081	39	38%	62%
ENG082	62	58%	42%
ENG093	55	51%	49%
ENG094	206	75%	25%
MAT094	82	71%	29%
MAT095	290	64%	36%
MAT097	10	20%	80%

Analysis

The data for fall quarter 2009 reveal that overall, 64.4 percent of the students who enrolled in transitional studies courses completed those courses with a grade of “C” or higher. The completion rate for the preceding fall quarter, fall 2008, was 64.5 percent, which suggests there was a one-tenth percent decrease in the overall completion rate for this past fall quarter. The apparent decrease in successful completions results from *rounding error* when the data for courses were aggregated.

When viewing individual courses, a different picture emerges. In fall 2008, the completion rate in ENG081 (Reading I) was 38 percent, and in fall 2009, the completion rate was 62 percent. This comparison shows a 24 percent increase for this past year. ENG082 (Reading II) indicates a 12 percent increase for fall 2009, ENG093 (Sentence Writing) indicates a 16 percent increase, and MAT097 (Elementary Algebra II) indicates an 11 percent increase. ENG 094 (Paragraph Writing) reflects a 5 percent decrease, and

MAT094 (Pre-algebra) indicates an 8 percent decrease, One of the seven transitional studies courses reflects neither an increase nor decrease; the completion rate for MAT095 (Elementary Algebra I) was 64% in fall 2008 and 64% in fall 2009. Completion rates are one way of looking at preparation of students for college level work. Another way to consider preparation for college level coursework is to examine transitional studies students' success in subsequent, college-level classes. Transitional studies students' success in subsequent courses will be addressed in the August, 2010 monitoring report.

Discussion

The July 2009 monitoring report posited a series of recommendations that warrant review in this report. In addition, the July 2008 monitoring report posed a question that warrants an additional response in this report. The July 2008 question and July 2009 recommendations (in italics) and responses follow.

- *(2008) How do transitional studies students compare with students in other two year institutions? Find a sound basis for comparison so we can interpret data and make recommendations.*

The July 2009 monitoring report highlighted national developmental coursework success rates as reported by Gerlaugh, Thompson, Boylan, and Davis (2009) and discussed comparisons of those success rates with Belmont Technical College students' transitional studies success rates. It was noted that students' pass rates appeared lower than their national counterparts' pass rates, and the discrepancy might be due to the counting of withdrawals in Belmont Technical College's calculations; the national sample did not include student withdrawals. Recently, the Ohio Board of Regents provided Ohio community colleges with data¹ that offers a basis for comparison among community colleges. These data give a clearer picture of Belmont Technical College students' success rates, and answers the call for a "sound basis for comparison." Developmental course completion rates for Ohio community college students and Belmont Technical College students are represented in Table 3.

Table 3: *Developmental course completion rates, 2009, Ohio community colleges and Belmont Technical College*

Subject Area	Ohio Community Colleges	Belmont Technical College
English (Reading and English)	58.3%	71%
Math	58.8%	76%

The comparison reflected in Table 3 reveals that Belmont Technical College students' English completion rate was 71 percent and their Ohio community college counterparts' completion rate was 58.3 percent in 2009. Belmont Technical College

¹ Glenn, Darrell. "Developmental Education/Community College Student Success Data Meeting." 3 June 2010. E-mail and attachments to Chief Academic Officers, Community and Technical Colleges. 15 June, 2010.

students' math completion rate was 76 percent. Ohio community college students' completion rate was 58.5 percent. The data suggests that Belmont Technical College students complete their transitional studies course sequence with a higher degree of success than Ohio community college students. However, a cautionary note must be included; in order to assure that grade inflation is not a factor in Belmont Technical College's completion rates, a more reliable measure of student success is success in subsequent, college-level courses. This data will be reported in August 2010.

- *Calculate success rates without voluntary/administrative withdrawals so that Belmont Technical College's transitional studies students may be compared with a national sample and interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations may then be made.*

In the July 2009 monitoring report, Gerlaugh, Thompson, Boylan, and Davis's (2007) survey was presented, which reflected developmental course pass rates from a national sample of 29 community and technical colleges. Withdrawals were not counted in the survey's pass calculations. The national pass rates are presented in Table 4, and Belmont Technical College's fall 2009 success rates in transitional studies courses, without voluntary/administration withdrawals, are shown in comparison

Table 4: *Retention and Pass Rates of Developmental Studies in 29 Two-year Institutions and in Belmont Technical College*

Subject Area	National Pass Rate	Belmont Technical College Pass Rate
Reading	76%	73%
Writing	73%	75%
Math	68%	67%

In the July 2009 monitoring report, it was noted that, on the surface, Belmont Technical College's students did not perform as successfully in their transitional studies classes as did students in the national sample. That comparison included withdrawals in the Belmont Technical College student population and did not include withdrawals in the national sample. The table above shines a different light on Belmont students' performance in transitional studies courses. When compared to a national sample, students performed three percent below the national sample in reading, two percent above the national sample in writing, and one percent below the national sample in math. Overall, Belmont Technical College students perform slightly above a national sample in writing and slightly below a national sample in math and reading.

- *Calculate Belmont Technical College students' success rates in first college-level courses without voluntary/administrative withdrawals so that Belmont Technical College's transitional studies students may be compared with a national sample and interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations may then be made.*

The calculations and data will be presented in the August 2010 monitoring report.

- *Continue to employ practices/approaches, such as active learning, cooperative and team learning, developmental instructor training, supplemental instruction, critical thinking, and updated texts and technology so that success rates will increase in AY 2009-2010.*

Training in each of the areas mentioned above occurred in the 2009-2010 academic year and will continue in 2010-2011.

- *Continue to provide training to instructors regarding: grade inflation, expectations for students, active learning, and delivering a challenging curriculum and assignments.*

Efforts to eliminate potential effects of grade inflation and increase rigor in transitional studies courses will continue to be led by the Transitional Studies Coordinator; this focus will continue through 2010-2011.

- *Continue to involve transitional studies students in the Student Success Center's PASTTIME program.*

The Student Success Center's PASTTIME program, now known as the "Triage" program, continues to be a source of support for transitional studies students. Through the program, students can access support and assistance that meets their individual needs. This support will continue through the 2010-2011 academic year.

- *Collaborate with English and math faculty members to develop seamless outcomes for courses in transitional studies throughout the college-level curriculum.*

A set of outcomes for MAT094, 095, and 097 has been developed, but the outcomes may have been developed unilaterally and need to be reviewed. Course outcomes will be discussed further and revised. Input from all full-time math faculty members, including those full-time math faculty members who will begin their employment in August 2010, will be considered during the revision process. The English courses will be redesigned beginning in the 2011 academic year.

Conclusions/Recommendations

As was mentioned in the July 2009 monitoring report, these data present a one-dimensional view of "success" for courses designed to meet the needs of underprepared students. The August 2010 monitoring report will provide another dimension in monitoring success in transitional studies courses by tracking students' success in their first college-level courses. Students' success in first college-level courses may be the most important and true indicator of the effectiveness of transitional studies courses.

In addition, these data, the discussion above, and recent initiatives on the state level lead to a number of questions and recommendations:

- Success rates in fall 2009 transitional studies courses reflect an increase from fall 2008. Does success in subsequent, college-level courses show similar increases? If not, what are ways in which the transitional studies program can maintain rigor and promote greater success for students?
- Continue to employ practices/approaches, such as active learning, cooperative and team learning, developmental instructor training (grade inflation, expectations for

- students, active learning, and delivering a challenging curriculum and assignments), supplemental instruction, critical thinking, and updated texts and technology so that success rates will increase in the 2010-2011 academic year.
- The Ohio Board of Regents has realigned state funding with the goals of the University System of Ohio's Strategic Plan. Termed "success points," the state funding will be directly tied to seven, specific student success and achievement points, three of which are directly tied to student success in developmental education; this updated approach to state funding will begin fiscal year 2011. Identify and implement updated program goals, objectives, specific program elements and actions, and methods of data collection/analysis at Belmont Technical College to maximize student success in transitional studies courses and state funding received by Belmont Technical College.
 - Additional initiatives sparked by the Ohio Board of Regents are the "Developmental Education Innovators" work group and the Community College/ABLE Developmental Education Pilot. To the maximum extent possible, participate in the initiative and pilot to augment developmental education at Belmont Technical College and within the state of Ohio.
 - Ohio is one of five states participating in a national developmental education initiative funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Educational Foundation.
 - One possible vehicle for guiding the development of updated transitional studies program goals and objectives and the identification of appropriate data collection/analysis is the National Association of Developmental Education's *Self-Evaluation Guide* (Thayer and Cole, 2009). Explore this tool and consider its use as a transitional studies program guide for the coming academic year.
 - Assess and record student success in transitional studies courses and foster student success through the development and implementation of learning outcome assessment rubrics. Develop rubrics for all developmental courses and pilot their use, in an incremental manner, beginning fall 2010.
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