

# Comp Quickreads

CSULA Department of English

September 28, 2009

## Summary of 2009 Report on Placement and Retention

### Data Highlights

Average (Eventual) Grade in ENGL 101 for Students Placed

Directly in 101	2.95
in ENGL 101 with ENGL 100	2.70
in ENGL 096	2.51
in ENGL 095	2.80

Percentage of Students Still Enrolled at the University after Two Years (2-yr Retention) (based on 2005-2006 data) Placed

in ENGL 101 and earned B or higher	70%
in ENGL 101 and earned B- or lower	38%
in ENGL 096 and earned a CR	70%
in ENGL 096 and earned an NC	26%
in ENGL 095 and earned a CR	68%
in ENGL 096 and earned an NC	33%

Percentage of Students Still Enrolled at the University after Two Years (2-yr Retention) (based on 2005-2006 data)

All Students	61%
Exempt from EPT	57%
Placed in ENGL 101	58%
Placed in ENGL 101/100	66%
Placed in ENGL 096	60%
Placed in ENGL 095	62%

At the beginning of 2009, the Department of English at CSULA initiated a statistical review of its developmental writing program (i.e. “remedial” writing courses). The need for this review was suggested by several factors, including “high” pass rates for ENGL 095 and ENGL 096, little data on the effectiveness of ENGL 100, and questions about the efficacy of the EPT in placing students in their first writing course.

The high pass rates in ENGL 095 and ENGL 096 can be interpreted in a variety of ways. For example, the current placement mechanism might be placing students too low. Such a downward shift of the placement criteria appeals to the extreme budget environment of 2009.

The findings of this study, however, disproved this and other assumptions. While the pass rates in ENGL 095 and ENGL 096 might be “high” (bearing in mind that “high” and “low” are relative terms based on no known standard), short-term and long-term measures of student performance suggest that the current placement mechanism effectively places developmental students, that these students are effectively “remediated,” and that this “remedial” population not only performs at levels comparable to the non-remedial population but is more likely to stay at the university.

The purpose of the developmental writing courses (ENGL 095, ENGL 096, and ENGL 100) is to prepare students to be successful in ENGL 101. Ultimately, of course, the goal is larger, the aim of all writing courses being to help students succeed at the university. Student performance in ENGL 101 provides an appropriate measure of the first goal, and student

two-year retention provides a measure of the second goal. By both measures the developmental writing program has been successful.

First, developmental writing courses are effectively preparing students for success in ENGL 101. Students placed in ENGL 095 eventually earn grades in ENGL 101 that are comparable to the grades earned by students placed directly into ENGL 101. Students placed in ENGL 096 eventually earn grades in ENGL 101 that are slightly below the average for the course. In general, these two findings suggest that grades earned in ENGL 101 directly correlates to time spent in developmental writing courses.

Second, students enrolled in developmental writing courses are more likely to stay at the university than students not enrolled in such courses. Some possible explanations include the smaller class size of developmental writing courses, which foster greater student engagement, as well as the connection between developmental writing courses and academic support services such as the University Writing Center.

Furthermore, ENGL 100 not only effectively helps developmental students bypass developmental writing courses, but appears also to have a significant effect on student retention. Students enrolled in ENGL 100 are 12% more likely to stay at the university regardless of their performance in ENGL 101.

In short, the developmental writing program effectively prepares students for success at the university. Our goal for this and upcoming years is to build on these successes.

Comments and suggestions should be directed to Jim Garrett at [jgarret@calstatela.edu](mailto:jgarret@calstatela.edu)

The entire report can be downloaded from

<http://www.calstatela.edu/academic/english/Report-CompProgram2009-Rev-090905.pdf>