

University of South Carolina Lancaster

Act 629 - Summary Reports on Institutional Effectiveness

Fiscal Year 2001 - 2002

Introduction

This report includes: Assessment of General Education, Achievement of Students Transferring from Two to Four-Year Institutions and Policies and Procedures to Ensure that Academic Programs Support the Economic Development Needs in the State by Providing a Technologically Skilled Workforce.

A reporting schedule for USC Columbia and Regional Campuses can be found at <http://kudzu.ipr.sc.edu/IEReports/a629schd.htm>.

Assessment of General Education

For 2001-2002, USC Lancaster has assessed its General Education program by focusing on freshman English and mathematics. English 101 and 102 are required for all degree programs, and mathematics courses are at the core of all degree programs in science and business. In addition, entering freshmen are given initial placement instruments and can be tracked for success and progression.

English

Before 1997, USC Lancaster administered a Writing Placement Test to entering freshmen to determine how many would need the developmental course, ENGL 100. When that course was dropped from its catalog, the campus started using a standardized Writing, Grammar, and Usage instrument drawn from a style and grammar handbook widely used by the English faculty. Students scoring in the 95th percentile or higher can qualify for advanced placement into ENGL 102. All other students take ENGL 101. During the last few years, USC Lancaster students have averaged between 440 and 450 on the verbal portion of the SAT, well below the national average, and the average score on the assessment instrument is only 23 items correct out of 40. The English faculty members address these initial deficiencies by a variety of strategies, including collaborative writing exercises, computer-assisted instruction, regular revision conferences for essays, and direct instruction in grammar and usage in class. Additionally, USC Lancaster students have access to supplemental instruction through the Opportunity Scholars Program and the Academic Success Center. These services offer peer tutoring supervised by an English faculty member and computer laboratories for online research and document preparation.

A study of ENGL 101 and 102 success and progression for 2001-2002 yielded the following results:

Freshman English Success (Defined as a grade of C or better)

Total ENGL 101 enrollment for Fall, 2001: **233**

Total number of Fall, 2001, ENGL 101 students making C or better: **159**, or **68%**

Total ENGL 102 enrollment for Spring, 2002: **184**

Total number of Spring, 2002, ENGL 102 students making C or better: **127**, or **69%**

Total ENGL 101 enrollment for Spring: **47**

Total number of Spring, 2002, ENGL 101 students making C or better: **24**, or **51%**

Freshman English Progression

Successful Fall, 2001, ENGL 101 students progressing to Spring, 2002, ENGL 102: **139**

Of the 139 successful Fall, 2001, ENGL 101 students progressing to Spring 2002, ENGL 102, **99**, or **71%** were also successful in ENGL 102. This number of students successful in both ENGL 101 and 102 in 2001-2002 represents **42%** of the original ENGL 101 enrollment in Fall, 2001, of 233.

Unsuccessful Fall, 2001, ENGL 101 students re-taking ENGL 101 in Spring, 2002: **13**

Unsuccessful Fall, 2001, ENGL 101 students successful ENGL 101 in Spring, 2002: **5**, or **38%**.

Conclusions Concerning English

The general success rates of students in ENGL 101 and 102 of nearly 70% indicate that the support structures provided by the campus and pedagogical approach of USC Lancaster English faculty members have been reasonably effective.

The progression statistics are somewhat less favorable, with only 42% of the original Fall, 2001, ENGL 101 cohort ultimately successful in Spring, 2002, ENGL 102. It is important to note, though, that twenty of the 159 successful Fall, 2001, ENGL 101 students chose not to progress to Spring, 2002, ENGL 102 for reasons of their own. The success rate in Spring, 2002, ENGL 101 is also rather low, but many of these students have either already had difficulty in ENGL 101 in the fall or postponed taking English 101 because they lacked confidence in their writing skills. An exit assessment at the end of ENGL 101 might help the English faculty identify basic writing skills concerns that might be addressed more specifically in ENGL 102 to improve the ultimate success rate.

Mathematics

USC Lancaster assesses entering freshmen students mathematics skills using the two Mathematics Placement Tests developed by the USC Mathematics Department. The "A" test is administered to students who plan majors in science or engineering, while the "B" test is administered to student who plan majors in humanities, social sciences, or business. Students taking the "A" test are placed into MATH 115, Pre-calculus Mathematics, or MATH 141, Calculus I. Students taking the "B" test are placed in MATH 111I, Basic College Mathematics (with tutoring), MATH 111, Basic College Mathematics, or MATH 122, Calculus for Business Administration and Social Sciences. During the last few years, USC Lancaster students have scored around 450 on the SAT, slightly better than their verbal scores, but still well below the national average. The tutoring and computer resources of the Opportunity Scholars Program and Academic Success Center are available to deal with the initial deficiencies. The MATH 111I course, with an extra class hour of class for tutoring from the instructor, is also available to students who score very low on the "B" placement test.

Freshman Mathematics Success (Defined as a grade of C or better.)

Total freshman mathematics enrollment for Fall, 2001(MATH 111I, MATH 111, MATH 115, MATH 122, MATH 141): **243**

Total number of Fall, 2001, freshman mathematics students making C or better: **90**, or **37%**

Success Rate by Course (Fall, 20010

MATH 111I: 22 of 58, **38%**

MATH 111: 37 of 82, **45%**

MATH 115: 8 of 40, **20%**

MATH 122: 17 of 29, **59%**

MATH 141: 16 of 34, **47%**

Total freshman mathematics enrollment for Spring, 2002: **131**

Total number of freshman mathematics students in Spring, 2002, making C or better: 79, or **60%**

Success Rate By Course (Spring, 2002)

MATH 111I: 20 of 33, **60%**

MATH 111: 6 of 24, **25%**

MATH 115: 15 of 27, **55%**

MATH 122: 23 of 30, **77%**

MATH 141: 15 of 17, **82%**

Freshman Mathematics Progression

Since basic mathematics courses have progression options, progression in freshman mathematics is best presented by statistics from each Spring 2002 course.

MATH 115: 10 MATH 111 and 111I students progressed to MATH 115, of whom 6, or **60%** were successful. Eight unsuccessful MATH 115 students from Fall re-took MATH 115, and 3, or **38%**, were successful.

MATH 122: 25 MATH 111 and 111I students progressed to MATH 122, of whom 19, or **76%** were successful. Two unsuccessful MATH 122 students from Fall re-took the course, and one was successful.

MATH 141: Five MATH 115 students progressed to MATH 141, and 4, or **80%**, were successful. Six unsuccessful MATH 141 from Fall re-took the course, and 6, or **100%**, were successful.

Conclusions Concerning Mathematics

Clearly, students who survive the basic courses and progress to the higher level are generally successful. The concern arising from these data is the high rate of

failure and withdrawal in the basic courses, particularly MATH 115. A review of the placement and advising procedures has revealed that the high rate of failure in MATH 115 is attributable in some degree to inconsistencies in the administration of the mathematics placement tests and the subsequent advisement process. Often, entering freshmen are unaware of the mathematics requirements of the course of study they are intending to pursue. Thus, many students state a preference for a major requiring mathematics for which they have had no preparation in high school. Too often, students take the "A" placement test when they have not had more than Algebra I in high school. MATH 115 is the lowest level course for which they can qualify on the "A" test, and if the advisor does not query the student about her or her actual preparation, students with minimal high school mathematics preparation have little chance of success.

USC Lancaster is presently revising its advising procedures to train advisors to be aware of the MATH 115 problem and to question students more closely on their academic preparation. In addition, a member of the mathematics faculty is now volunteering in the Academic Success Center to provide weaker students with more expert support.

Overall Conclusions

Since English and mathematics are so fundamental to academic requirements in so many degree programs, students' progression in these courses must play a crucial role in the overall retention strategy for the campus. Students who cannot complete these "gatekeeper" courses successfully are effectively blocked from continuing their academic careers, no matter what their success in other disciplines or their satisfaction level with the campus in general. A commitment to overall student success in English and mathematics must begin with initial orientation and advising the summer before the freshman year. Students must understand the actual mathematics requirements for each course of study, be given the proper placement test, and put into mathematics classes with due regard to high school preparation. Once students start their classes, USC Lancaster has readily available student support services, but these can be enhanced by active faculty evaluation of support materials and staff as well as by an aggressive referral policy for students who are struggling in the classroom.

Faculty commitment to individual student success must be reinforced. Student evaluations are a valuable assessment tool, but they may be misleading if large numbers of students in a section have officially withdrawn or just given up coming to class before the evaluation instrument is administered. Class sections with high withdrawal and failure rates must be identified and appropriate mentoring and support resources made available to the faculty members whose students have had particular difficulty. The English assessment instrument given

to all orientation sections each summer has provided consistent data, and the English faculty should consider using it as an exit instrument for either ENGL 101 or 102 to provide more specific information about student growth in writing skills.

Despite the areas where the campus could improve, USC Lancaster does extremely well on the ultimate measure of General Education success and retention, graduation rate within 150% of program time. USC Lancaster's **35%** graduation rate this past Performance Year was nine percentage points higher than any other Regional Campus, and the campus has averaged more than a **30%** graduation rate for the past four years.

Achievement of Students Transferring from Two to Four-Year Institutions

Transfer reports for the USC Regional Campuses can be found at <http://kudzu.ipr.sc.edu/IEReports/transfers/tran2002.doc>

Policies and Procedures to Ensure that Academic Programs Support the Economic Development Needs in the State by Providing a Technologically Skilled Workforce

This year, USC Lancaster gained re-accreditation through an intense SACS review process which emphasized Information Technology. As required by SACS, "The institution **must** demonstrate that its graduates of degree programs are competent in reading, writing, oral communication, fundamental mathematical skills and the basic use of computers."

General education goals of USC Lancaster graduates include competencies in communication skills (written and oral), critical thinking (including mathematical and/or computational skills, cultural literacy (including skills in science and technology), and student development. These goals are met within individual classes across the curriculum. As well, each degree program requires successful completion of classes that specifically address the listed competencies.