

**Assessment Test Results
New Students from High School
El Camino College, Fall 2004 to Fall 2008**

This report displays course placement rates for new high school graduate-aged students entering El Camino College (ECC) over 5 years. Because graduation date information is not complete and new students to El Camino College can be of any age, the “direct from high school” cohort is defined as students aged 17 or 18 with a recent test score. The report includes results for these students from tests administered between March 1 and the September census date of each year. Students aged 17-18 represent about half of all examinees who enroll in fall.

Assessment tests are offered in 5 subjects at ECC: Chemistry, Mathematics, Reading, Writing and English as a Second Language (ESL).¹ The Math test consists of 3 different levels: Arithmetic, Algebra and College-level math. Students are diverted to different levels of the math test depending on performance on early test questions following a computer-based adaptive model. The ESL assessment places students into listening/speaking, reading and writing courses.

Table 1 highlights the number of students, regardless of age, taking each test or test level between March 1 and the September census date of each year listed. Students repeating the same test are counted only once. These test counts typically mirror fluctuations in college enrollment. The number of tests reached a low point in 2004 and has since climbed to a 5-year high in 2008, due to both ECC enrollment growth and the addition of Compton Center test administrations. Tests administered at Compton Community Educational Center are included beginning in 2006, but enrolled students (last row) represent only those enrolled at the main Torrance campus. See the associated Compton report for a breakdown of enrolled students at the Compton Center.

Table 1: Number of Students Taking Placement Tests by Test, March-September

| Test | Subject | Number of Students Taking Each Test or Level * | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
| Arithmetic | Math | 4,310 | 4,237 | 4,671 | 5,629 | 6,326 |
| Algebra | Math | 5,742 | 5,967 | 6,621 | 7,707 | 8,684 |
| College-level Math | Math | 1,389 | 1,518 | 1,688 | 1,872 | 2,061 |
| Reading Comprehension | Reading | 5,601 | 5,826 | 6,514 | 7,706 | 8,506 |
| Sentence Skills | Writing | 5,614 | 5,835 | 6,516 | 7,703 | 8,491 |
| English as a Second Language | ESL | 653 | 611 | 586 | 617 | 951 |
| Total Tests (duplicated) | | 23,309 | 23,994 | 26,596 | 31,234 | 35,019 |
| Students Tested (unduplicated) | | 7,348 | 7,449 | 8,162 | 9,556 | 10,532 |
| Tested Students Enrolled in Fall | | 4,639 | 4,898 | 5,084 | 5,349 | 6,536 |

* Repeats of the same test by the same student have been excluded.

¹ Results from the Chemistry test are excluded from this analysis.

Results

The Reading, Writing and Mathematics tests place students in a variety of levels depending on test performance, ranging from 3 to 7 levels of course work. For this study, placements are grouped into categories of similarly-leveled courses. These groups are 1) transfer-level courses that are transferable and equivalent to courses at a 4-year institution, 2) college-preparatory—courses that immediately precede transfer-level courses, and 3) basic skills—courses defined by El Camino College as developmental or basic skills courses. The specific ECC courses within each group and their levels below transfer level are listed in the appendix of this report.

Placement results for the 5 years of this study are summarized in Table 2 below by number and percentage in each subject and course group. In addition, charts tracking the placement percentages of each begin on page 3.

Table 2: Assessment Test Results by Test and Course Group *

| Test | 2004 (n=2,403)** | | 2005 (n=2,648) | | 2006 (n=2,800) | | 2007 (n=2,879) | | 2008 (n=3,215) | |
|--------------------|---------------------|------|-------------------|------|-------------------|------|-------------------|------|-------------------|------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Reading *** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Transfer-level | 985 | 43.9 | 987 | 38.9 | 979 | 36.5 | 1,085 | 39.5 | 1,215 | 40.0 |
| College-prep | 446 | 19.9 | 560 | 22.0 | 634 | 23.7 | 640 | 23.3 | 700 | 23.1 |
| Basic Skills | 813 | 36.2 | 993 | 39.1 | 1,066 | 39.8 | 1,024 | 37.2 | 1,121 | 36.9 |
| Total | 2,244 | | 2,540 | | 2,679 | | 2,749 | | 3,036 | |
| Writing *** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Transfer-level | 832 | 37.1 | 939 | 37.0 | 942 | 35.1 | 896 | 32.5 | 975 | 32.1 |
| College-prep | 952 | 42.4 | 1,098 | 43.2 | 1,279 | 47.7 | 1,433 | 52.0 | 1,587 | 52.2 |
| Basic Skills | 460 | 20.5 | 504 | 19.8 | 459 | 17.1 | 425 | 15.4 | 476 | 15.7 |
| Total | 2,244 | | 2,541 | | 2,680 | | 2,754 | | 3,038 | |
| Math | | | | | | | | | | |
| Transfer-level | 178 | 7.9 | 197 | 7.8 | 235 | 8.9 | 213 | 7.9 | 272 | 8.9 |
| College-prep | 1,046 | 46.6 | 1,311 | 51.8 | 1,422 | 53.6 | 1,502 | 55.8 | 1,705 | 55.7 |
| Basic Skills | 1,019 | 45.4 | 1,021 | 40.4 | 997 | 37.6 | 976 | 36.3 | 1,084 | 35.4 |
| Total | 2,243 | | 2,529 | | 2,654 | | 2,691 | | 3,061 | |

* Specific courses under each “Course Group” are listed in the Appendix of this report.

** The “n” figures at the top represent the total number of students aged 17 or 18 who took assessment tests between March 1 and the September census date in the year noted.

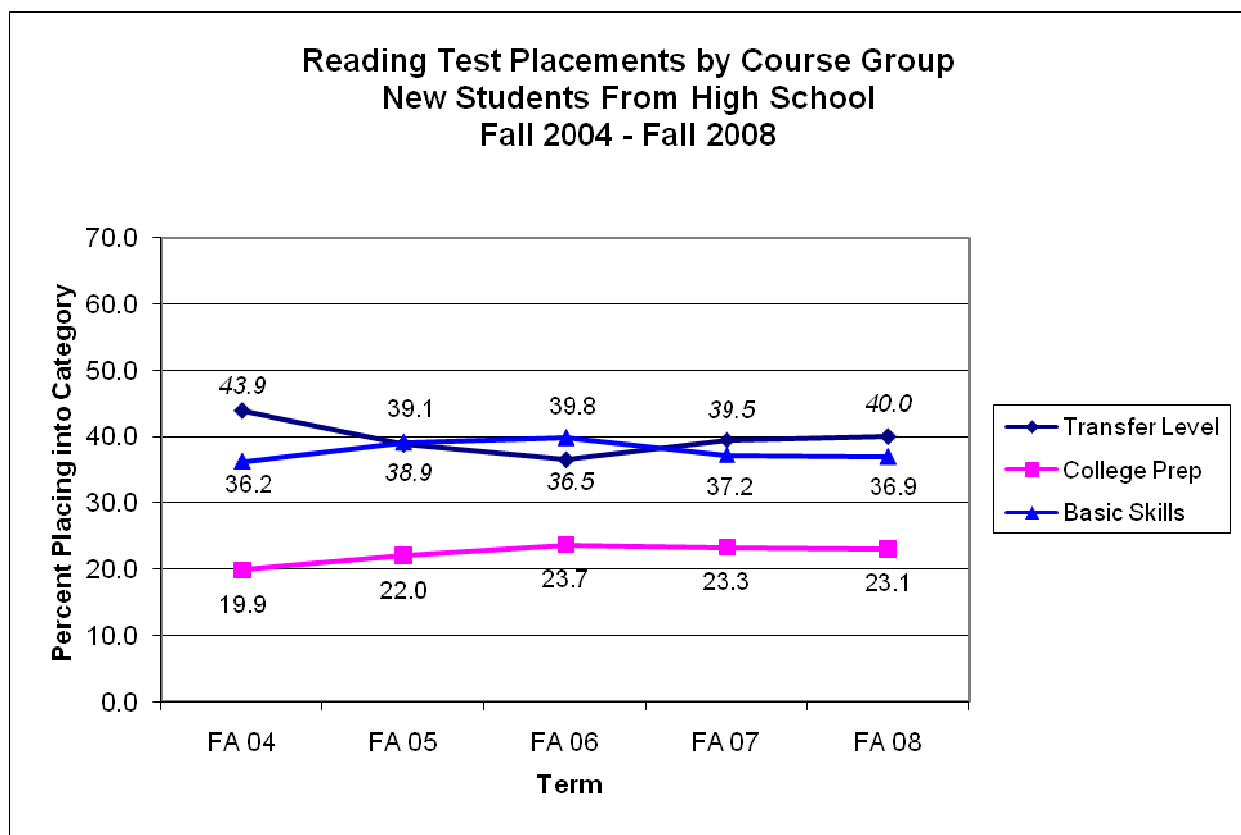
*** Transfer-level placements for Reading and Writing reflect only that portion of the test, and thus, general preparation in reading and writing. To qualify for *enrollment* in English 1A, examinees must achieve a qualifying score on both the Reading and Writing portions of the assessment test (see pages 3-4).

Reading

Placements into reading courses were variable over the past 5 years. Placements into the transferable level (English 1A) have stabilized in the past 2 years after a recent decline. Overall, 2008 placements remain 4 percentage points below levels in 2004. The average percentage of 17-18 year old students placing at the transfer level for the period was 40%.

College preparatory placements have remained level for 3 years following a 2-year increase. The placement rate into college-prep courses (English 84 or 7) is about 22%.

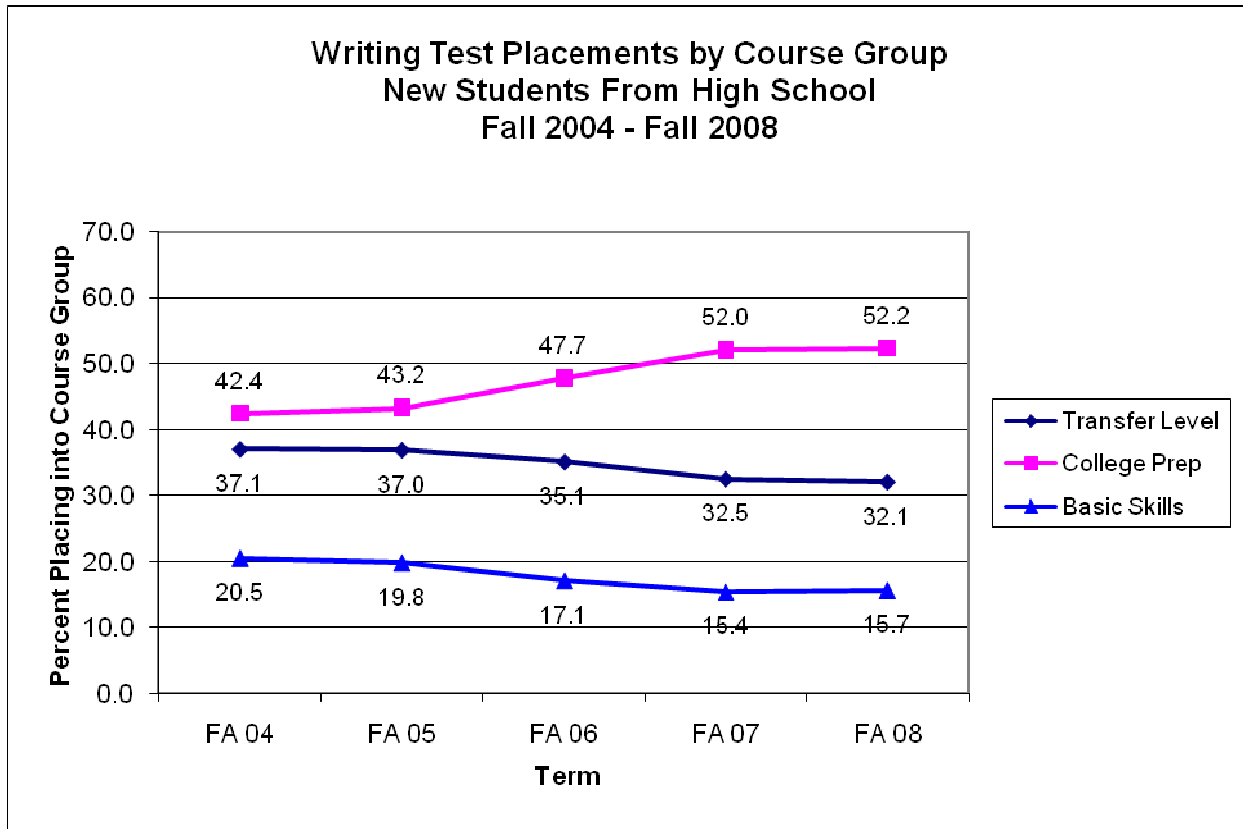
The percentage of basic skills placements remained about even over the past 2 years after a recent increase. Beginning in Fall 2007, this category now consists of 2 basic skills courses (English 82 and English 80). About 5% of students place at the English 80 level. No adjustment was made to the English 82 placement cut score. The 5-year average placement rate into basic skills reading courses was about 38%.



Writing

In 5 years, transfer-level course (English 1A) placements remained even with last year, following a 2-year decline of nearly 5 percentage points. Placements into college-prep (English A) have also stabilized after a 9-point climb over three years. The placement rate into the basic skills course (English B) is even with 2007 levels. Basic skills placements declined about 5 points in 5 years.

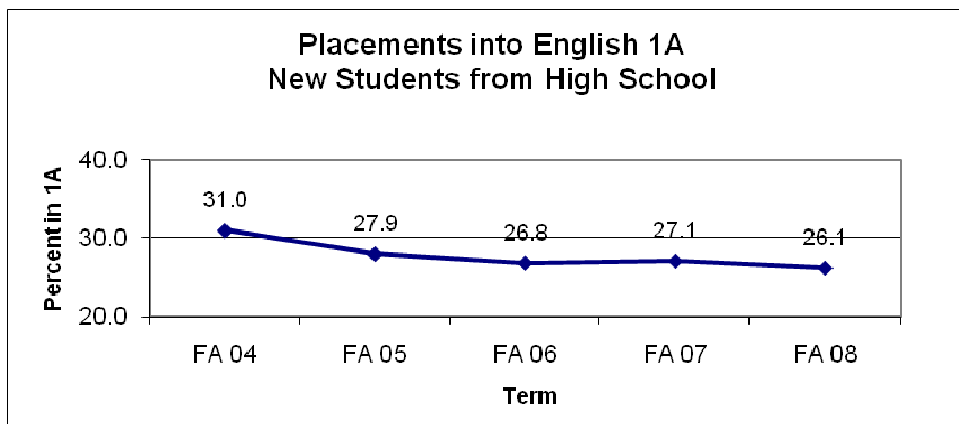
Five-year average placements into transfer-level, college-prep and basic skills writing courses were 35%, 48% and 18%, respectively.



English 1A

To qualify for English 1A (transfer-level reading and writing), examinees must pass both the Reading and the Writing portions of the assessment test. The two tables above reflected placement rates into the transfer-level course (English 1A) based only on one of these two criteria in order to show academic preparation by subject. The table below reflects actual course placement rates using both the reading and writing qualifying test scores.

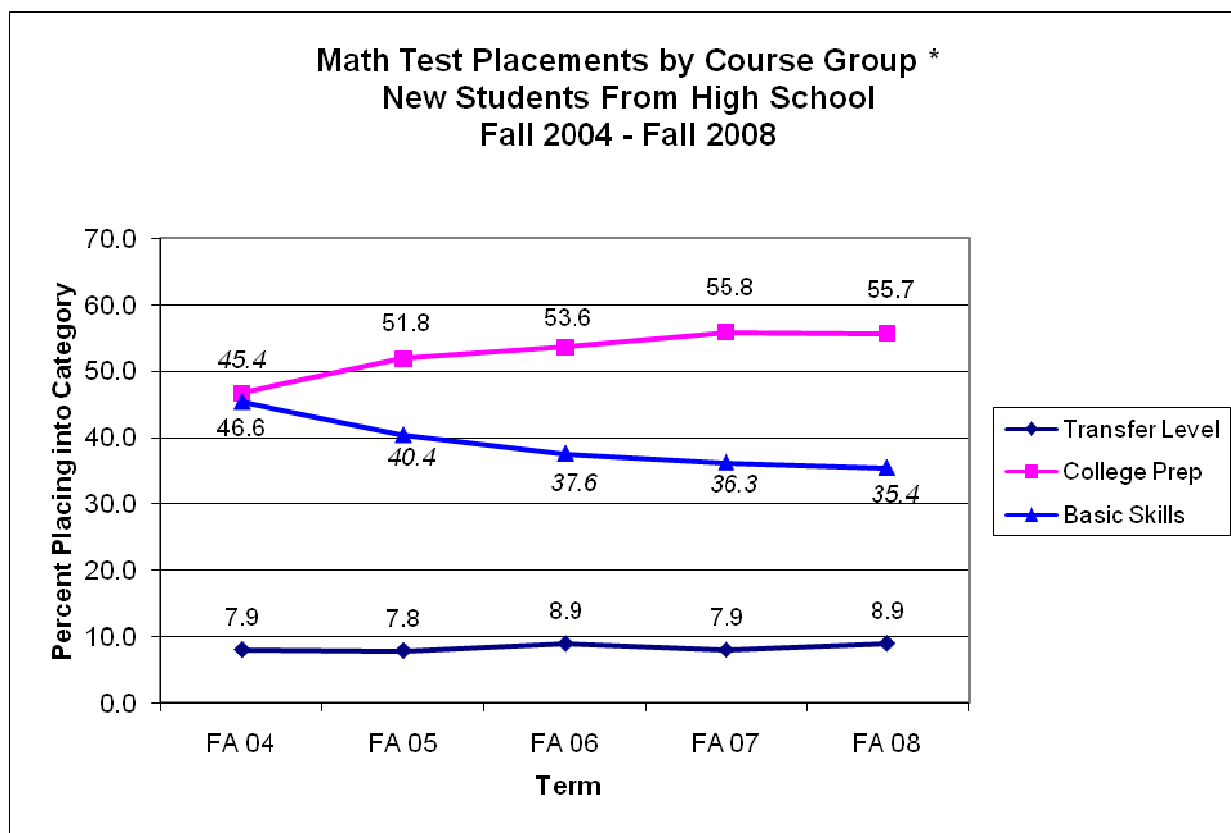
Placement rates fluctuated by as much as 4 percentage points over 5 years, with rates stabilizing over the past 2 year. The 5-year average was 28%.



Mathematics

Placements into the transfer level courses remained stable for the last 5 years, but increased slightly in 2008. Average rates are around 8% (see Appendix for a complete list of these courses.).

Over the 5 years of the study, math experienced an overall decline in placements into basic skills courses (pre-algebra, arithmetic) with a corresponding increase in placements into the middle category, representing college-preparatory algebra and geometry. College-prep placements climbed (and basic skills declined) between 9 and 10 points during the period. Average placement percentages into college-prep and basic skills math courses were 53% and 39%, respectively.



English as a Second Language Test Results

The English as a Second Language (ESL) assessment consists of a computerized reading skills test, a questionnaire, an English writing sample, an oral interview, and an orientation to the College. A very small percentage of students aged 17-18 (<3%) take the ESL test.

As stated above, the ESL assessment places students into Listening/Speaking (Oral), Reading and Writing courses. These courses are listed by level in the Appendix. A 5-year trend of placement results is found in Table 3 below. In 2008, the percentages of students placing at the college-preparatory level were 89% for Listening/Speaking, 85% for Reading and 73% for Writing. These percentages reflect a moderate increase over the previous year for oral and

reading courses, but very little change for writing. The reading rate has shown a continual increase since 2005, while the writing rate has slowly declined during the same period. Over 5 years, younger students placing into basic skills ESL courses range from 7%-14% for oral, 15%-26% for reading and 15-27% for writing, with rates declining over time for reading and increasing for writing.

Table 3: Assessment Test Results by ESL Test Category and Course Group *

| ESL Section | 2004 (n=2,403) | | 2005 (n=2,648) | | 2006 (n=2,800) | | 2007 (n=2,879) | | 2008 (n=3,215) | |
|----------------|-------------------|------|-------------------|------|-------------------|------|-------------------|------|-------------------|------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Oral | | | | | | | | | | |
| College-prep | 74 | 91.4 | 52 | 89.7 | 58 | 93.5 | 72 | 85.7 | 73 | 89.0 |
| Basic Skills | 7 | 8.6 | 6 | 10.3 | 4 | 6.5 | 12 | 14.3 | 9 | 11.0 |
| Total | 81 | | 58 | | 62 | | 84 | | 82 | |
| Reading | | | | | | | | | | |
| College-prep | 61 | 75.3 | 46 | 74.2 | 48 | 77.4 | 67 | 80.7 | 72 | 84.7 |
| Basic Skills | 20 | 24.7 | 16 | 25.8 | 14 | 22.6 | 16 | 19.3 | 13 | 15.3 |
| Total | 81 | | 62 | | 62 | | 83 | | 85 | |
| Writing | | | | | | | | | | |
| Transfer-level | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 3.3 | 1 | 1.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| College-prep | 69 | 85.2 | 47 | 77.0 | 46 | 74.2 | 61 | 73.5 | 62 | 72.9 |
| Basic Skills | 12 | 14.8 | 12 | 19.7 | 15 | 24.2 | 22 | 26.5 | 23 | 27.1 |
| Total | 81 | | 61 | | 62 | | 83 | | 85 | |

Conclusion

The major finding from this study is that basic skills placements have been in decline in Reading for the past 4 years and in Mathematics and Writing for the past 5 years. These changes are accompanied by increases in placements into the middle courses during the same time period.

It is not clear why basic skills placements are declining so dramatically. El Camino College may now be attracting a larger number of better-prepared students. Another possible contributing factor may be the institution of the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE). A passing score on the CAHSEE was required for high school graduation beginning in 2006. Students not passing the CAHSEE (who would likely place into the basic skills level at a community college) may be opting out of college altogether. This possible factor along with others will be explored in future studies.

This study provided a general analysis of the El Camino College student coming directly from high school (or shortly thereafter). Follow up studies are planned that will examine the placements of students over 18.

Appendix – Courses by Group

READING & WRITING

| Course Group | Levels Below Transfer | Reading | Writing |
|---------------------|-----------------------|--|---|
| Transfer-level | -- | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English 1A – Reading & Composition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English 1A – Reading & Composition |
| College-preparatory | 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English 84 (formerly Engl-2R) – Developmental Reading & Writing English 7 – Speed & Power Reading | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English A – Writing the College Essay |
| Basic Skills | 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English 82 (formerly Engl-R) – Introduction to Reading Skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English B – Introduction to the Composing Process |
| | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English 80 – Basic Language Skills | |

MATHEMATICS

| Course Group | Levels Below Transfer | Course |
|---------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Transfer-level | -- | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Math 190 – Calculus Math 160 – Business Calculus Math 170 – Trigonometry Math 180 – Pre-Calculus Math 150 – Elem. Probability & Statistics Math 140 – Finite Math Math 130 – College Algebra Math 120 – Nature of Math Math 115 – Prob. & Stats for Elementary Teachers Math 110 & 111 – Math for Elem. Teachers Computer Science 1, 5, 10 |
| | -- | |
| | -- | |
| College-preparatory | 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Math 70 – Intermediate Algebra Math 60 – Elementary Geometry Math 40 or 41A – Elementary Algebra |
| | 2 | |
| Basic Skills | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Math 25 – Pre-Algebra Review Math 23 – Pre-Algebra Math 10A/12 – Basic Arithmetic Skills |
| | 4 | |

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL)

| Course Group | Levels Below Transfer | Oral (Listening/ Speaking) * | Reading | Writing |
|---------------------|-----------------------|--|--|---|
| Transfer-level | -- | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English 1AX - Reading & Composition for ESL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English 1AX - Reading & Composition for ESL |
| College-preparatory | 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESL 51C – (Advanced) ESL 51B – (Intermediate) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESL 52C – (Advanced) ESL 52B – (Intermediate) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English A-X – Writing the College Essay ESL 53B – (Intermediate) |
| Basic Skills | 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESL 51A – Intro to English Conversation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESL 52A – Intro to Reading and Vocab. Building | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESL 53A – Elementary Writing/Grammar |

* Although Listening/Speaking courses indicate “levels below transfer,” they do not directly lead to a transfer-level course such as English 1A.