

El Camino College

Project Success Three-Year Program Report: G.P.A. and Basic Skills Course Outcomes



Research Questions

This report presents data to address five research questions about students enrolled in Project Success at El Camino College (ECC) from Fall 2013 to Spring 2016:

Overall Performance

1. In each term, what was the average G.P.A. for Project Success students?
2. How does the average G.P.A. for Project Success students compare to the average G.P.A. for ECC African American students and the entire population of ECC students?

Basic Skills Course Outcomes and Progression

3. How many Project Success students took English and math courses below transfer level after joining the program?
4. How did the basic skills course outcomes for Project Success students compare to the outcomes for all ECC African American students?
5. How many Project Success students who took basic skills or developmental courses progressed to transfer level English and math courses?

Key Findings

Overall Performance

- The average G.P.A. for Project Success students reached a low of 2.06 in the 2013-2014 academic year and has since increased, reaching a high of 2.43 in Fall 2015.
- From Fall 2013 to Spring 2016, Project Success students had an average G.P.A. that was lower than the average for all ECC students. However, they outperformed the population of ECC African American students in each of those terms.

Basic Skills Course Outcomes and Progression

- New Project Success students enrolled in basic skills and/or developmental math and English courses at high rates, with the exception of the most recent cohort. In the 2015-2016 cohort, only 23% of students enrolled in basic skills or developmental math over the course of two terms (compared to 71% in the 2014-2015 cohort and 78% in the

2013-2014 cohort). However, enrollment in these courses is likely to increase if students remain in Project Success in subsequent terms.

- African American students – the target population for Project Success – had lower success rates in basic skills English and math courses than the larger ECC population, and were more successful in basic skills English courses than math courses.
- Across the three cohorts of incoming Project Success students, basic skills and developmental course pass rates were relatively high, ranging from 79% to 81% in English and 57% to 68% in math. However, even when students were successful, subsequent enrollment in a transfer level course was relatively low, ranging from 31% to 68% in English and 25% to 41% in math. Project Success students were more successful at progressing through English courses than math courses.
- The 2013-2014 cohort of Project Success students was less successful at progressing from basic skills to transfer level than the 2014-2015 cohort. Even though the 2013-2014 cohort had eight terms to progress from basic skills to transfer level English, only 36% of basic skills beginners did progress to transfer level, compared to 68% in the 2014-2015 cohort. The overall 2013-2014 cohort transfer level pass rate was 37%, which was lower than the 55% pass rate for the 2014-2015 cohort.
- Project Success students who began in basic skills or developmental courses and later took a transfer level course passed at low rates, with cohort success rates ranging from 13% to 36% in English and 13% to 24% in math.

Overall Performance: G.P.A.

The tables below compare average G.P.A. for Project Success students to all ECC students and to all ECC African American students over six terms. We use ECC African American students as a comparison group, since they are the target population for Project Success. However, while a majority of Project Success students are African American, students who identify with other ethnic groups, or with more than one ethnic group, have participated, as well.

Table 1. Average G.P.A. by Term

	All Students ¹		African American ²		Project Success ³	
	Enrollment	GPA	Enrollment	GPA	Enrollment	GPA
Fall 2013	23,993	2.43	4,053	2.03	88	2.16
Spring 2014	22,791	2.45	3,703	2.04	88	2.06
Fall 2014	24,263	2.44	3,905	2.05	91	2.32
Spring 2015	22,667	2.50	3,474	2.15	91	2.28
Fall 2015	24,000	2.44	3,515	2.11	84	2.43
Spring 2016	22,208	2.52	3,079	2.20	84	2.35

Table 2. Average G.P.A. for Project Success Students vs. African American Students

	African American	Project Success	Difference (PS - AA)	Percent Difference
Fall 2013	2.03	2.16	0.12	+ 6%
Spring 2014	2.04	2.06	0.02	+ 1%
Fall 2014	2.05	2.32	0.27	+ 13%
Spring 2015	2.15	2.28	0.13	+ 6%
Fall 2015	2.11	2.43	0.32	+ 15%
Spring 2016	2.20	2.35	0.15	+ 7%

In each term, the average G.P.A. for African American and Project Success students was lower than the average G.P.A. for the entire population of ECC students. However, Project Success students outperformed the larger group of African American students. Project Success students had an average G.P.A. that was from one percent (Spring 2014) to 15 percent (Fall 2015) higher than the average G.P.A. for all African American students. There is some evidence that grades for Project Success students have improved over time. The average G.P.A. for Project Success students was the lowest in the 2013-2014 academic year (2.16 in the Fall and 2.06 in the Spring), but has since improved, varying from 2.28 to 2.43 in subsequent terms,

¹ "All students" includes all African American and Project Success students.

² African American students include those Project Success students who identified as African American and no other ethnic group when they applied to ECC. However, there are Project Success students who do identify with other ethnic groups. The removal of Project Success students from the totals for all African American students would have a negligible effect on the average G.P.A. for that group.

³ Project Success students were identified using a list provided by Project Success administrators and may differ slightly from lists obtained from the MIS database.

Basic Skills Course Outcomes

Table 3 and Table 4 present student outcomes (success and retention rates) in English and math basic skills courses for all ECC students, African American students, and Project Success students, over six terms. Project Success students were enrolled in three English and three math basic skills courses: ENGL-80, ENGL-82, ENGL-B, MATH-12, MATH-23, MATH-37. It is worth noting that Project Success students accounted for less than 1% of total enrollment in each term; therefore, it is difficult to draw conclusions by comparing these groups.

While success and retention rates for all ECC students were relatively stable over time, the same metrics for Project Success students varied widely across terms, due to the small number of students. Overall, African American students – the target population for Project Success – had lower success and retention rates than the entire ECC student population in each of the six terms. African American students succeeded in basic skills math courses at lower rates than in basic skills English courses in each term.

Table 3. English Basic Skills Course Outcomes

		All Students	African American	Project Success
Fall 2013	Enrollment	1,530	382	10
	Retention Rate	86.5%	81.4%	90.0%
	Success Rate	62.4%	50.3%	80.0%
Spring 2014	Enrollment	1,072	314	4
	Retention Rate	81.3%	71.7%	75.0%
	Success Rate	60.1%	48.4%	75.0%
Fall 2014	Enrollment	1,703	382	13
	Retention Rate	82.8%	73.6%	92.3%
	Success Rate	61.9%	44.0%	92.3%
Spring 2015	Enrollment	1,040	238	3
	Retention Rate	76.5%	71.4%	33.3%
	Success Rate	55.6%	44.1%	0.0%
Fall 2015	Enrollment	1,623	309	7
	Retention Rate	81.9%	69.3%	85.7%
	Success Rate	59.0%	46.3%	57.1%
Spring 2016	Enrollment	983	221	3
	Retention Rate	74.6%	66.1%	66.7%
	Success Rate	56.5%	47.5%	66.7%

Table 4. Math Basic Skills Course Outcomes

		All Students	African American	Project Success
Fall 2013	Enrollment	1,564	379	13
	Retention Rate	79.5%	74.9%	84.6%
	Success Rate	53.8%	44.1%	30.8%
Spring 2014	Enrollment	886	225	7
	Retention Rate	75.8%	64.0%	57.1%
	Success Rate	55.3%	42.2%	42.9%
Fall 2014	Enrollment	1,176	249	8
	Retention Rate	78.3%	66.3%	87.5%
	Success Rate	54.3%	40.2%	50.0%
Spring 2015	Enrollment	967	207	5
	Retention Rate	78.5%	71.0%	100.0%
	Success Rate	54.5%	44.0%	80.0%
Fall 2015	Enrollment	1,273	260	11
	Retention Rate	74.2%	67.3%	54.5%
	Success Rate	49.8%	39.2%	27.3%
Spring 2016	Enrollment	1,068	213	5
	Retention Rate	74.1%	67.6%	60.0%
	Success Rate	52.9%	43.2%	20.0%

Progression to Transfer-Level Courses

Project Success Cohorts

In order to track the movement of Project Success students from courses below transfer level (basic skills and developmental courses) to transfer-level English⁴ and math courses, we first defined three cohorts of students. A cohort is a group of students who are new to Project Success in a given academic year. We do not differentiate between students who entered in the Fall and Spring terms. It is important to note that the earlier cohorts we followed had more opportunities to progress during this period of study. At the time of this analysis, the most recent cohort (2015-2016) had only completed two terms at ECC, whereas the oldest cohort (2013-2014) had eight terms to take courses (including summers) between Fall 2013 and Spring 2016. These cohorts are described in the table below.

⁴ Transfer level English refers specifically to English 1A. When reporting data on basic skills and developmental English course enrollment, we do not distinguish between the reading and writing courses that are prerequisites for enrollment in English 1A.

Table 5. Project Success Cohorts

	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Number of terms since joining Project Success	8	5	2
Number of students	28	31	36

Progression through English and Math Course Sequences

Table 6 shows the percent of students in each cohort that enrolled in courses below transfer level after joining Project Success. We label these students as “basic skills beginners.”⁵ It is possible that these students also took basic skills or developmental English and math courses prior to entering Project Success, just as some students attempted transfer level courses in prior terms. However, in this study we are interested in how students progressed toward transfer level courses once they received support from Project Success.

Table 6. First English and Math Courses Attempted After Joining Project Success

Cohort	Number of Students	English Basic Skills Beginners	Math Basic Skills Beginners
2013-2014	28 ⁶	52%	78%
2014-2015	31	61%	71%
2015-2016	36 ⁷	46%	23%

In the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 cohorts, more students took a below transfer level math course than a below transfer level English course. This pattern is different for the 2015-2016 cohort. It is possible that these students decided to delay enrolling in a math course during that academic year. This table does not identify students who were enrolled in below transfer level courses in both disciplines, nor does it identify students placed below transfer level, but chose not to enroll in a basic skills or developmental course during the study period.

⁵ We use this term in reference to students who first took a basic skills or a developmental course after joining Project Success.

⁶ We were unable to find data for one student in the 2013-2014 cohort. Therefore, enrollment and outcome data for that cohort include the 27 students for whom data was available.

⁷ We were unable to find data for one student in the 2015-2016 cohort. Therefore, enrollment and outcome data for that cohort include the 35 students for whom data was available.

We tracked the basic skills beginners and calculated the following metrics:

- **Basic skills course pass rate:** the number of passing grades in basic skills or developmental courses, as a percent of the total number of basic skills or developmental course enrollments.
- **Transfer level course attempt rate:** the number of basic skills beginners who later attempted a transfer level course, as a percent of all basic skills beginners.
- **Transfer level pass rate:** the number of basic skills beginners who eventually passed a transfer level course, as a percent of all basic skills beginners.

We also evaluated the outcomes for all students in the cohort who attempted a transfer level course, regardless of whether or not they began at the basic skills or developmental level. Again, we do not isolate students who may have taken a transfer level course prior to joining Project Success. The metrics we use are similar to those described above, but are calculated for the entire cohort. They are defined as follows:

- **Cohort transfer level course attempt rate:** The number of students in a cohort who enrolled in a transfer level course while in Project Success, as a percent of the students in that cohort.
- **Transfer level pass rate among enrollees:** The number of students who passed a transfer level course, as a percent of those who enrolled in a transfer level course.
- **Overall cohort transfer level course pass rate:** The number of students in a cohort who passed a transfer level course, as a percent of all the students in that cohort.

Tables 7 and 8 present the progression data for English and math courses, respectively. We do not note the number of attempts students made at passing courses at any level.

Results for English Courses

In general, the data presented in Table 7 show that basic skills pass rates are high, but subsequent enrollment in English 1A, a transfer level course, is low. In addition, the cohort pass rates in English 1A are lower than observed in the courses below transfer level. The key findings related to each cohort's progression through English courses are presented below.

Table 7. Progression through English Courses

		2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Cohort Description	Number of Terms to Attempt Courses	8	5	2
	Number of New Students ⁸	28	31	36
Basic Skills Beginners	Percent of Cohort	52%	61%	46%
	Basic Skills Course <i>Pass Rate</i>	79%	90%	81%
	Transfer Level Course <i>Attempt Rate</i>	36%	68%	31%
	Transfer Level <i>Pass Rate</i>	36%	47%	13%
Cohort Transfer-Level Course Success	Cohort Transfer Level Course <i>Attempt Rate</i>	48%	74%	43%
	Transfer Level <i>Pass Rate</i> Among Enrollees	77%	74%	60%
	Overall Cohort Transfer Level Course <i>Pass Rate</i>	37%	55%	26%

2013-2014 Cohort: About half (52%) of the 2013-2014 cohort began in a basic skills or developmental English course. After eight terms, 79% of the basic skills beginners passed at least one of those courses and 38% passed English 1A. Overall, about half of the cohort (48%) attempted English 1A after joining Project Success and 77% of them passed. By the end of eight terms, over a third (37%) of the entire cohort had passed English 1A.

2014-2015 Cohort: Almost two-thirds of the 2014-2015 cohort began in a basic skills or developmental English course. After five terms, 90% of them had passed at least one basic skills or developmental course and 68% progressed to English 1A. In total, 47% of the basic skills beginners and over half (55%) of the entire cohort eventually passed English 1A. Though they had fewer terms to attempt courses and more students beginning in basic skills or developmental courses, this cohort was more successful than the previous cohort (2013-2014) at progressing through the English course sequence.

2015-2016 Cohort: Similar to the previous cohorts, just under half (46%) of the 2015-2016 cohort began in a basic skills or developmental English course. In two terms (Fall 2015 and Spring 2016), 81% of those students passed at least one basic skills or developmental course, which is comparable to the other cohorts, even though they had been enrolled in Project

⁸ Data are only available for 27 students in 2013-2014 and 35 students in 2015-2016. Metrics are presented as percentages of those students for whom data is available.

Success for fewer terms. In that same time period, 43% of the cohort attempted English 1A, and 60% of them passed. Though that success rate is lower than that of previous cohorts, most of these students did not yet have the opportunity to repeat the course, should they choose to do so. At the end of two terms, about a quarter of the cohort passed English 1A. It is logical to expect that this cohort will reach success rates comparable to the 2014-2015 cohort after an additional academic year.

Results for Math Courses

The data for math courses are similar to the data presented for English courses. As with the English courses, the number of basic skills students who attempt a transfer level course is lower than the number of students who pass a basic skills or developmental math course. There were more basic skills beginners in math courses than in English courses, and pass rates were lower in math courses at all levels.⁹ The key findings related to each cohort's progression through math courses are summarized below.

Table X. Progression through Math Courses

		2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Cohort Description	Number of Terms to Attempt Courses	8	5	2
	Number of New Students ¹⁰	28	31	36
Basic Skills Beginners	Percent of Cohort	78%	71%	23%
	Basic Skills Course <i>Pass Rate</i>	57%	68%	63%
	Transfer-Level Course <i>Attempt Rate</i>	38%	41%	25%
	Transfer-Level <i>Pass Rate</i>	24%	27%	13%
Cohort Transfer-Level Course Success	Cohort Transfer-Level Course <i>Attempt Rate</i>	30%	42%	11%
	Transfer-Level <i>Pass Rate</i> Among Enrollees	63%	69%	75%
	Overall Cohort Transfer-Level Course <i>Pass Rate</i>	19%	29%	9%

⁹ There is one exception. In the 2015-2016 cohort, the pass rate among enrollees in transfer level courses was 75% in math, which was higher than the 60% observed in English. This may be due to the fact that only 4 students in the 2015-2016 cohort attempted a transfer level math course in the 2015-2016 academic year.

¹⁰ Data are only available for 27 students in 2013-2014 and 35 students in 2015-2016. Metrics are presented as percentages of those students for whom data is available.

2013-2014 Cohort: Almost 80% of the 2013-2014 cohort began in a basic skills or developmental math course. After eight terms, 57% of the basic skills beginners passed at least one of those courses and 24% passed a transfer level math course. Overall, 30% of the cohort attempted a transfer level math course after joining Project Success. By the end of eight terms, only 19% of the entire cohort had passed a transfer level math course since joining Project Success.

2014-2015 Cohort: Over two-thirds of the 2014-2015 cohort began in a basic skills or developmental math course. After five terms, 68% of attempters had passed at least one basic skills or developmental course and 41% progressed to a transfer level course. In total, only 27% of the basic skills beginners and 29% of the entire cohort eventually passed a transfer level math course. This cohort was more successful at progressing from basic skills and developmental math courses to transfer level courses than the previous cohort.

2015-2016 Cohort: Only 23% of the 2015-2016 cohort attempted a basic skills or developmental math course in Fall 2015 or Spring 2016. While this rate is much lower than that in previous cohorts, it is possible that more students will enroll in math courses in subsequent terms. The pass rate in basic skills and developmental math courses (63%) was similar to that in the other two cohorts. By the end of two terms, 11% of the 2015-2016 cohort (only four students) had attempted a transfer level math course and 9% of the cohort had passed a transfer level math course. These rates are likely to increase as students enroll in courses in subsequent terms.