CSM PUENTE PROGRAM
Facilitating Transfer Readiness

INTRODUCTION

This report examines the academic success of Puente Program participants at the College of San Mateo [CSM]. Specifically, the progression of Puente students from pre-transfer level English [ENGL 800, “Writing Development”] to subsequent completion of transfer level English [ENGL 100, “Composition and Reading”] is examined through a longitudinal and comparative analysis of the CSM student academic history database. The study was guided by the following research questions:

- How many Puente Program participants successfully complete pre-transfer level English [ENGL 800] compared to non-Puente students?
- How many ENGL 800 Puente Program participants subsequently enroll and successfully complete transfer level English [ENGL 100] compared to non-Puente students?
- How does the academic success of ENGL 800/100 Hispanic students not participating in the Puente Program compare to that of Puente participants?

To address these questions, we tracked Puente Program participants’ academic history for three semesters [1998 - 2000]. For purposes of comparison, we examined a cohort of comparable non-Puente students enrolled in the same English coursework–i.e., ENGL 800 and 100. In addition, we examined the academic performance of Hispanic students enrolled in non-Puente sections of ENGL 800 and 100.

THE PUENTE PROGRAM

The Puente Program began at Chabot College in 1981 and has become widely recognized by educators and policymakers for its innovations. CSM enrolled its first Puente students in ENGL 800 during the Spring 1998 semester. The original mission of the Puente Program was to increase the number of Hispanic

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Figure 1

CSM PUENTE STUDENT ACADEMIC OUTCOMES:
Pre-Transfer to Transfer Level Coursework

ENGL 800 → ENGL 100

[3 PUENTE COHORTS 1998 - 2000]
CSM STUDENT ACADEMIC OUTCOMES:
Pre-Transfer to Transfer Level Coursework

ENGL 800 → ENGL 100
[ Fall 1996 – Summer 2000 ]

Figure 2 presents the results of a long-term study of student success in ENGL 800 and 100, Fall 1996 - Summer 2000. These data indicate the following:

- 69.4% of students initially enrolling in ENGL 800 successfully complete this course with a grade of “C” or better.
- 70.0% of ENGL 800 students eligible for ENGL 100 subsequently enroll in this course.
- 80.0% of ENGL 100 students successfully complete this course.
- Of the total number of students initially enrolling in ENGL 800, 38.9% eventually complete ENGL 100 with a grade of “C” or better.

How does the performance of Puente students compare to that of the general population of CSM students attempting the transition from pre-transfer level English to transfer level English coursework? Figure 2 presents the results of a long-term study of student success in ENGL 800 and 100, Fall 1996 - Summer 2000. These data indicate the following:

- 88.9% of Puente students initially enrolling in ENGL 800 successfully complete this course with a grade of “C” or better.
- 88.9% of Puente ENGL 800 students eligible for ENGL 100 subsequently enroll in this course.
- 75.4% of Puente ENGL 100 students successfully complete this course.
- Of the total number of Puente students initially enrolling in ENGL 800, 59.3% eventually complete ENGL 100 with a grade of “C” or better.

STUDY RESULTS

Figure 1 provides an overview of the succession of Puente students progression from initial enrollment in pre-transfer level English [ENGL 800] to successful completion of transfer level English [ENGL 100], 1998 - 2000. [Note: Throughout this study, “successful completion” is defined as earning a grade of “A,” “B,” “C,” or “Cr.” A grade of “C” or better in ENGL 800 is also a pre-requisite for enrolling in ENGL 100.] Study results indicate the following:

- 88.9% of Puente students initially enrolling in ENGL 800 successfully complete this course with a grade of “C” or better.
- 88.9% of Puente ENGL 800 students eligible for ENGL 100 subsequently enroll in this course.
- 75.4% of Puente ENGL 100 students successfully complete this course.
- Of the total number of Puente students initially enrolling in ENGL 800, 59.3% eventually complete ENGL 100 with a grade of “C” or better.

How does the performance of Puente students compare to that of the general population of CSM students attempting the transition from pre-transfer level English to transfer level English coursework?
Figure 3
ENGL 800 Course Completion Rates
Puente Program Participants vs. General Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Puente Students (N=81)</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Puente Students (N=3,842)</td>
<td>69.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Non-Puente Students (N=779)</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Puente Students [1998-2000]
All English 800 Enrollments Fall '96 - Summer '00

Figure 4
ENGL 100 Course Completion Rates Students
Puente Program Participants vs. General Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Puente Students (N=64)</td>
<td>75.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Puente Students (N=1386)</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Non-Puente Students (N=372)</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Puente Students [1998-2000]
All English 100 Enrollments Fall '96 - Summer '00

Hispanic Students Enrolled in Non-Puente ENGL 800 Sections Fall '96 - Summer '00
comparison of 3 comparable student populations: [1] students enrolled in Puente sections; [2] students enrolled in the “general population” or non-Puente sections; and [3] Hispanic students enrolled in the “general population” or non-Puente sections.

Figure 3 indicates that Puente students significantly out-perform the general population of ENGL 800 students in terms of successful course completion: 88.9% vs. 69.4%. Puente students performance gains are even greater when compared to ENGL 800 Hispanic students not participating in Puente: 88.9% vs. 63.4%.

However, the academic performance of Puente students in ENGL 100 is somewhat lower than that of the comparable ENGL 100 population: 75.4% vs. 80.0%. Yet when compared to ENGL 100 Hispanic students not participating in Puente, Puente students do slightly better: 75.4% vs. 73.7%. [See Figure 4]

CONCLUSION

Overall, the ability of CSM’s Puente Program enabling students to successfully make the transition from pre-transfer level English to transfer level English is illustrated in Figure 5. As these data indicate, 59.3% of Puente students initially enrolling in ENGL 800 eventually become transfer ready by completing ENGL 100. This figure compares to only 38.9% of the general CSM population attempting to make this transition. This 20 point differential is even greater when the success of Hispanic non-Puente students is considered: 59.3% vs. 35.2%. [See Figure 5]

It is important to note that high failure rates in all types of pre-transfer level or remedial coursework have long been the norm at both two-year and four-year postsecondary institutions throughout California and the United States. As the expansion of open-access to higher education brings greater numbers of under-prepared students who need basic skills and pre-transfer level coursework, the challenge of providing effective remediation may become even greater.

Although a relatively new program at CSM and still in its stages of early development, the Puente Program had demonstrated an ability to effectively ensure completion and persistence into transfer level general education English coursework. The importance of completing ENGL 100 cannot be overemphasized. All students intending to complete a baccalaureate degree program must complete college level writing [ENGL 100] prior to transfer. Along with transfer-level mathematics [a course above Intermediate Algebra], ENGL 100 is known as the “transfer-gatekeeper” for California Community College students. The data presented here, although preliminary in terms of the youth of CSM’s Puente Program, strongly suggest that the Puente experience fosters effective learning in English gatekeeper courses.

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