CSM STUDENT ACADEMIC SUCCESS
Successful Course Completion Rates, Fall 1993 - Spring 1997

INTRODUCTION
This report presents information on the performance of College of San Mateo [CSM] in fulfilling its mission of meeting the educational needs of students. It is part of a series of accountability reports which address both State and local interests in institutional performance. In general, these accountability reports follow a format developed by the State Chancellor’s Office.

This particular report focuses on the accountability area pertaining to student academic success as measured by successful course completion. [A report on Districtwide student course completion rates was presented to the SMCCCD Board, Report No. 98-4-1C.]

DEFINITION OF MEASURE
The successful course completion rate is defined by regulation as “the proportion of students attempting a class who receive an official end-of-term letter grade of A, B, C, or Credit.”

The data presented are student success rates for eight consecutive academic terms, Fall 1993 through Spring 1997 [Summer sessions are excluded from the analysis]. This report analyzes the academic performance of 96,551 CSM students [duplicated count] engaged in 250,855 credit course enrollments. The report also examines successful course completion rates for ethnic, gender, and age sub-populations. For purposes of comparison, Districtwide and
Statewide student success rates are also presented.

SUCCESSFUL COURSE COMPLETION: FALL 1993 - SPRING 1997

- Figure 1 presents course completion rates for all CSM students enrolled in eight consecutive terms. These data indicate minor term-specific variations in academic success—less than three percentage points between Fall 1993 and Spring 1997.
- Ethnicity. White and Asian students earn the highest successful course completion rates at 74.3% and 73.2%, respectively. [See Figure 2] Successful course completion rates for other groups are as follows:
  - Filipino - 64.5%
  - Native American - 64.0%
  - Hispanic - 63.4%
  - Pacific Islander - 58.7%
  - African American - 55.8%
- Gender. Figure 3 displays completion rates by gender. These data indicate that female students successfully complete coursework at a rate greater than that of male students: 72.1% vs. 68.6%.
- Age. Older students consistently complete coursework with a grade of A, B, C, or CR at a rate significantly greater than younger students. [See Figure 4] These rates range from a high of 80.4% for students aged 40 years or older to a low of 63.9% for students 19 years old or younger.
- Figure 5 presents overall SMCCCD and College-specific course completion data for an eight term average:
  - Districtwide - 69.9%
  - Cañada - 70.4%
  - CSM - 70.3%
  - Skyline - 68.8%
- Statewide Comparison. Figure 6 compares CSM data with the most recently available data for all California Community Colleges. These data indicate that for three consecutive Fall terms [1993 - 1995], CSM students consistently completed their coursework at a greater rate than their Statewide counterparts: 71.3% vs. 68.2%, 70.2% vs. 66.6%, and 68.9% vs. 66.8%.

CONCLUSION

The rate at which students complete courses which earn credit towards a degree, certificate, transfer objective, or other attendance goal is perhaps the single most basic measure of how well a community college carries out its instructional mission. These data indicate that CSM students successfully complete their coursework at a greater rate [two to three percentage points] than that of their counterparts at all other California Community Colleges. These data speak well of the quality and effectiveness of CSM instructional offerings and support services.

However, it is recognized that measures such as
course completion rates do not capture the totality of learning and teaching that takes place in CSM classrooms. Those familiar with the educational enterprise fully understand the shortcomings of efforts to capture educational quality with any single statistical measure. Notwithstanding the above, rates of course completion are among the most commonly agreed upon measures of community college effectiveness. Accordingly, this report is intended to provide some useful measures by which to assess our efforts to help students realize their educational objectives. Future CSM Research Briefs will analyze the course completion rates of students enrolled in basic skills coursework [English, Reading, Mathematics] and ESL coursework for non-native speakers of English.
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