

Los Medanos College
Analysis of persistence data and the impact of the Counseling Partnership
Developmental Education Committee
Spring 2008

Overview:

The Counseling Partnership is a collaboration between the Developmental Education Program and the Counseling Department that provides information about early academic counseling right in the classroom. Counselors visit English 70 (two-levels below 1A) and Math 12 (Prealgebra, three-levels below 1A) classrooms to provide information about student support services and educational planning. Instructors require students to see a counselor and develop an educational plan. Many instructors also incorporate other assignments into their curriculum that build on the counseling presentations.

Research supporting the Counseling Partnership:

Early intervention for academically weak community college students, through counseling or other student support services, correlates with improvements in their persistence and academic performance (Grubb, 2003; Summers, 2003). Summers (2003), in a review of the literature on the impact of counseling on attrition, indicated that studies have found that counseling increases the retention of students who are identified as highly likely to drop out.

Vincent Tinto (2002), a nationally recognized expert on factors related to retention and persistence and author of *Leaving College*, addressed the impact of academic advising and goal-setting in a conference presentation entitled “Enhancing Student Persistence: Connecting the Dots”:

... students are more likely to persist and graduate in settings that provide clear and consistent information about institutional requirements and effective advising about the choices students have to make regarding their programs of study and future career goals. It is important to note that most students are either undecided at entry about their field of study or change their minds, at least once, during their college years.

References:

- Grubb, W.N. (2003). Using community colleges to reconnect disconnected youth. Menlo Park, CA: The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- Summers, M.D. (2003). ERIC Review: Attrition research at community colleges. *Community College Review*, 30(4), 64-84.
- Tinto, V. (2002). “Enhancing Student Persistence: Connecting the Dots,” conference Optimizing the Nation’s Investment: Persistence and Success in Postsecondary Education.

Analysis of LMC persistence research as it pertains to the Counseling Partnership:

We have yet to track and compare the persistence of students who complete educational plans with those who do not. However, we do have more general persistence information from which we can draw inferences if we are willing to assume that all (or at least all but a few) Eng 70 and Math 12 instructors participate in the Counseling Partnership.

The implementation of the Counseling Partnership into English 70 correlates with positive and significant increases in persistence into the next course in the sequence, English 90. In Fall 1999 (no counseling intervention) 44% of those who successfully completed English 70 went on to enroll in English 90 the next semester. In Fall 2001 (counseling intervention), 64% of those who succeeded in English 70 went on to enroll in English 90 the next semester.

In Fall 2003 we pared down the Counseling Partnership from a case management approach, in which students met with a counselor throughout the semester, to a series of two in-class counseling presentations with one individualized out-of-class academic counseling session focused on educational planning. This change correlated with a slight reduction in semester-to-semester persistence (Eng 70 to Eng 90), from 64% in Fall 2001 to 59% (n=147) in Fall 2003. However, 74% (n=163) of the original 2003 cohort who successfully passed Eng 70 eventually enrolled in Eng 90 by FA 06.

In Fall 2003 we also implemented a pared-down Counseling Partnership for the first time in Math 12 (Pre-algebra) and the persistence results paralleled those of English 70.

Math 12 (n=155) : Counseling Partnership

57% (n=88) of those who succeeded in Math 12 in FA 03 enrolled in Math 25 the next semester, 77% (n=88) by FA 06.

We do not have the Counseling Partnership in Math 25. The persistence rates from Math 25 into Math 30 are not as high as those detailed above for Math 12 and English 70. This observation again suggests that the Counseling Partnership has a positive impact on persistence.

Math 25 (n=292) : no Counseling Partnership

52% (n=160) of those who succeeded in Math 25 in FA 03 enrolled in Math 30 the next semester, 64% (n=185) of the original cohort who successfully passed Math 25 eventually enrolled in Math 30 by FA 06.

The Counseling Partnership is designed to encourage semester-to-semester persistence in the English and math sequences. The data suggests that this is a laudable goal if we are to impact student success in transfer-level English and math. For this cohort “stopping out” after successfully completing Eng 70, in other words taking one or more semesters “off” before enrolling in Eng 90 had a significant impact on successful completion of Eng 100 (the equivalent of 1A). Specifically,

41% (n = 87) of those successfully completing Eng 70 in FA 03 who then enrolled in Eng 90 the next semester, successfully completed Eng 100 by FA 06

12% (n = 26) of those successfully completing Eng 70 in FA 03 who then “stopped out” and enrolled in Eng 90 later than SP 04, successfully completed Eng 100 by FA 06

We see a similar pattern with the Math 25 cohort. For this cohort, if a student who successfully passed Math 25 stopped out for a semester or more, the likelihood of that student successfully completing a transfer math course decreased from 47% to 25%.

47% (n = 83) of those successfully completing Math 25 in FA 03 who then enrolled in Math 30 in SP 04, successfully completed a transfer math course by FA 06

25% (n = 17) of those successfully completing Math 25 in FA 03 who then enrolled in Math 30 later than SP 04, successfully completed a transfer math course by FA 06.