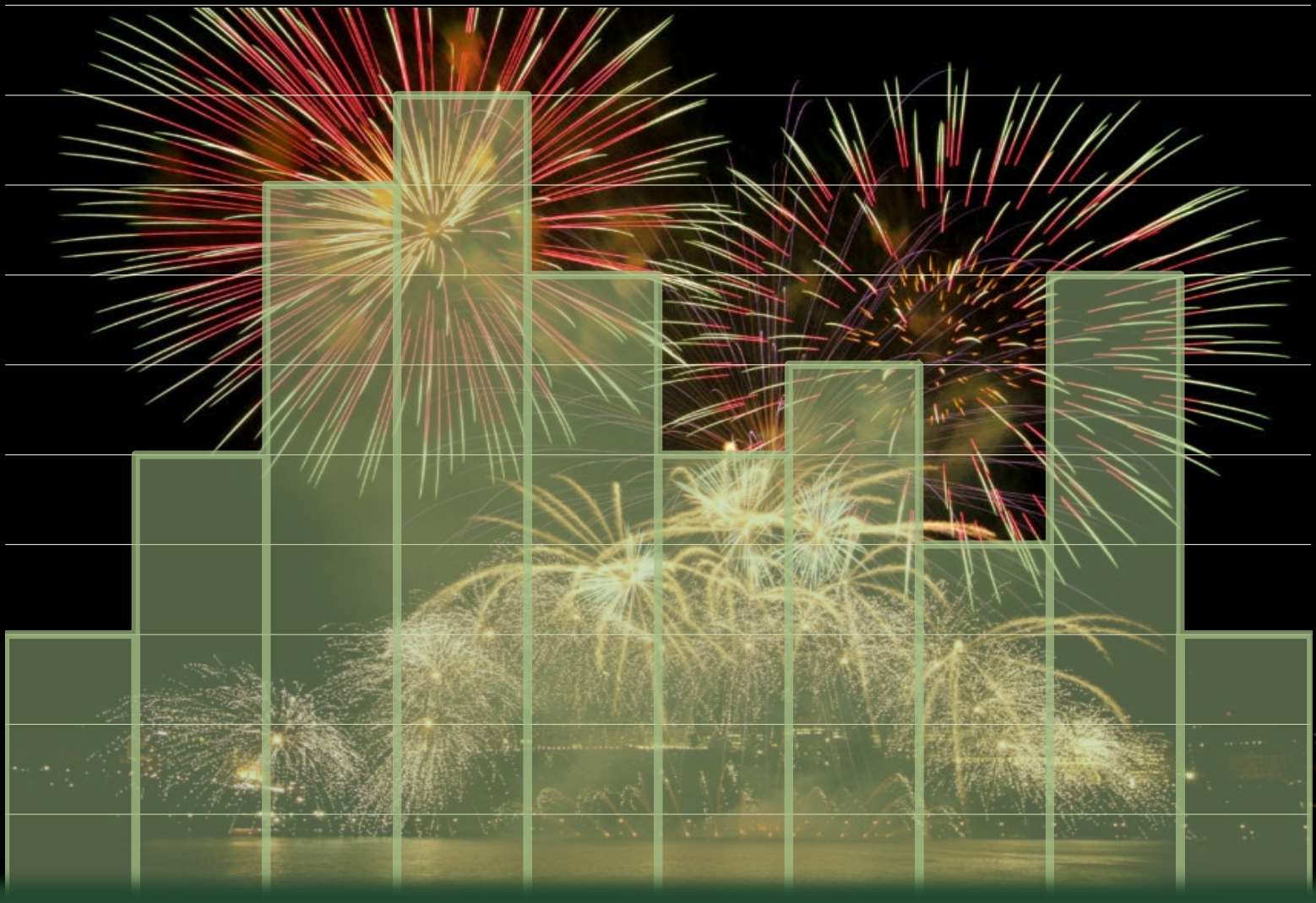
IR CORNER

December 2025 Issue 11



Igniting Curiosity

Let Data be the Spark

Overcoming Barriers
Serving Students with Economic Hardship

Post-Back
From One Finish Line to Another

TARRANT COUNTY COLLEGE
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Igniting Curiosity:

Let Data be the Spark

Holly Stovall

inspIRe

From statistics about economic indicators to predictions on the implications of artificial intelligence, data seem infused into routine conversations about our cultural landscape. Put them in a reel or a tweet and spark engagement by tapping into our innate curiosity – we're wired to want to understand the world around us. So, while higher ed seems focused on important data issues such as access and literacy, should another one, data engagement, be more intentionally leveraged? In other words, perhaps a critical step is continuing to build a desire for data.

To foster this effort, IR will continue to seek novel approaches that lead with why data matter. This clarity of purpose hopefully galvanizes enthusiasm for data insights. Don't be overwhelmed by numbers, just start with a simple question or a hypothesis you have based on patterns you've perceived. Then, explore data to further spark your curiosity.

In this issue, we hope you are intrigued by the introduction of a new concept, the economic hardship index, and how we are serving students with hardships. In an additional article, we delve deeper into learning commons. We explore how first term GPA is correlated with long term outcomes for FTIC students. We present findings from a student survey regarding individual attributes (such as academic attitudes, help-seeking, locus of control, persistence, time management) and investigate connections to success. We determine how many students return to TCC after earning a Bachelor's degree. Lastly, we provide a review of the first year of TCC's quality enhancement plan.

Have we piqued your interest? Keeping reading because we think the data will pull you into some quite captivating stories.

"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge."

**Attributed to Albert Einstein*

CONTENTS



QEP Recharge

Impact of QEP Interventions in Year 1

Overview

The purpose of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for Tarrant County College is to improve the percentage of First Time In College (FTIC) students who enter TSI Liable and become TSI Met within their first year of college. Strategies to achieve this goal include Career Pathway presentations in STSC-0111 courses, visits with faculty mentors, and Career Pathways events. This article summarizes the findings from the first year of the QEP.

Pre and Post Assessments

Students in STSC-0111 took assessments at the start and end of the course regarding their understanding of the role of Career Pathways and the resources available to them. A total of 497 FTIC students enrolled in an STSC-0111 course and completed both the pre and post assessments during 2024FL with valid IDs.

Knowledge of Career Pathways increased from pre-assessment to post-assessment, as did confidence in their chosen Career Pathway. (N=497)

	PRE	POST
Do you know what Career Pathways are at TCC? (Yes)	53%	88%
How confident are you in your chosen Career Pathway? (Very confident)	54%	63%

Overall, there were high levels of agreement for each statement about Career Pathways. Additionally, the percentage of respondents who *strongly agreed* or *agreed* increased for each statement from pre-assessment to post-assessment. (N=497)

	PRE	POST
I understand the purpose of selecting a Career Pathway.	95%	95%
I know what TCC resources are available to support me along my Career Pathway.	82%	93%
I know how to access the available resources at TCC to support me along my Career Pathway.	71%	89%

When asked how many QEP Pathways events they attended during the semester on the post-assessment, more than three-forths of respondents indicated they had not attended any events. About one in five respondents reported attending one event, while fewer attended two events (3%) or three or more events (<1%).

Regarding visits with a faculty mentor about Career Pathways, about half of respondents indicated on the post-assessment they had not visited with a faculty mentor. One in three respondents reported visiting with a faculty mentor once, while about 10% had two visits, and 4% had three or more visits.

To better understand the impact of these QEP interventions on student success outcomes, a QEP index was created using the maximum composite score of the three Career Pathways knowledge items from the pre- and post-assessments, number of times they reported visiting with a faculty mentor, and number of times they reported attending QEP Pathways events. Each component was weighted equally, and the QEP index was used to examine differences in success, cumulative credit hours earned, retention, and TSI status.

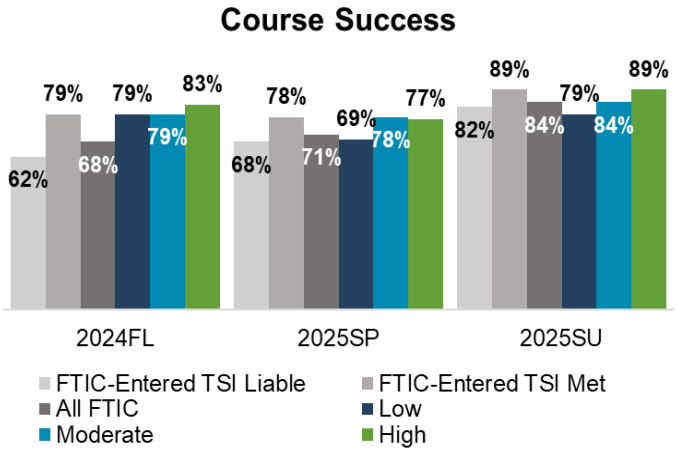
- Low QEP score: >1 standard deviation below the mean (N=83)
- Moderate QEP score: within 1 standard deviation of the mean (N=313)
- High QEP score: >1 standard deviation above the mean (N=101)

All 2024FL FTIC were included as a comparison group to the index groups, as were FTIC students who were not in the pre/post group broken out by those who were TSI Met entering 2024FL and those who were TSI Liable.

Course Success and Credit Hours Earned

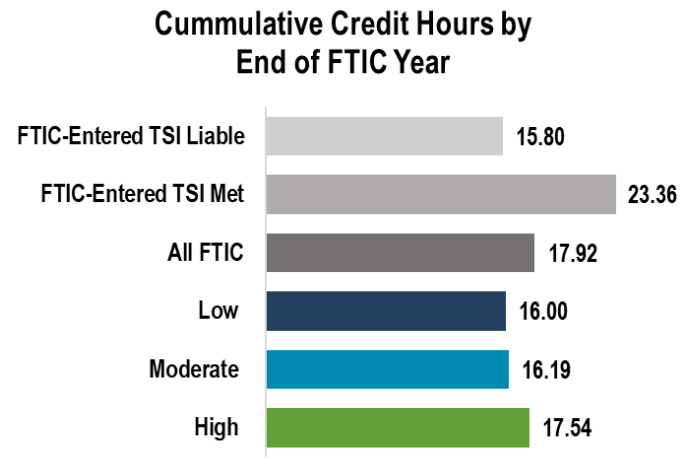
Course success rates were similar across groups but did generally trend upward across the QEP index. Success rates were higher for respondents in 2024FL compared to all 2024FL FTIC. In 2025SP and 2025SU, the Low score group had lower success

rates than all other groups, while the Moderate and High score groups had similar or higher success rates than their peers in the All FTIC group.



Note: Excludes credit types N and D, audits, and missing grades.

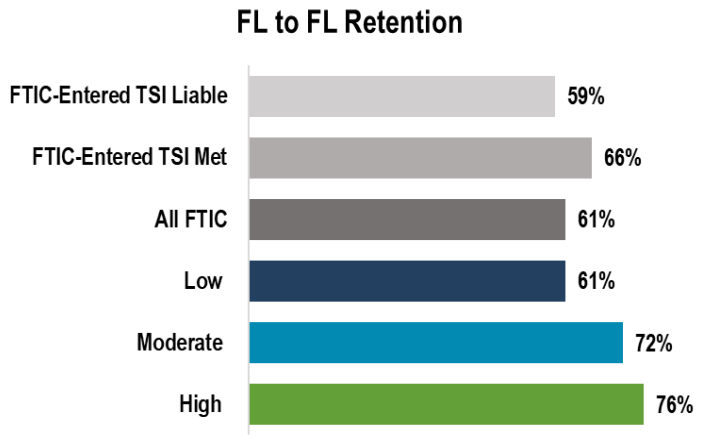
Reflecting the trends in course success rates, those in the Low QEP score group earned an average of 16.00 credit hours in the first year, while those in the Moderate score group earned 16.19 credit hours and those in the High score group earned 17.54 credit hours. All three QEP groups earned more hours than FTIC students who entered TSI Liable (15.80 hours).



Note: Hours reflect cumulative credit hours earned, excluding developmental courses, by the end of their FTIC year.

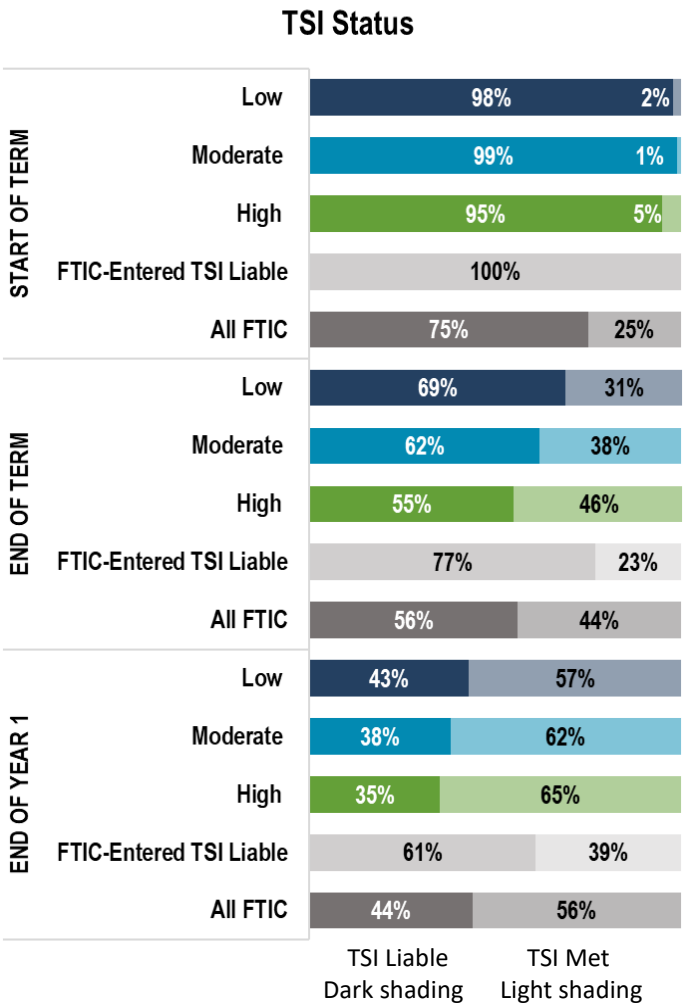
Retention

There were no substantial differences in retention across the QEP index for 2024FL to 2025SP. The overall FL to SP retention for pre/post respondents was 88%, while FL to SP retention for all 2024FL FTIC was 79% and 76% for those who entered TSI Liable. One year retention (FL to FL) was higher for the Moderate QEP score and High QEP score groups compared to the Low QEP score group, which was similar to the overall FTIC cohort.



TSI Status

Most respondents were TSI Liable at the start of the 2024FL term, which is why the QEP chose to focus on STSC-0111 courses as part of their strategy for improvement. While there were improvements for all groups across the QEP index in the first term, a larger percentage of Moderate QEP score and High QEP score groups were TSI Met at the end of 2024FL compared to Low QEP score. By the end of the first year, all QEP groups had a higher TSI Met percentage than the overall FTIC cohort.



Considerations and Future Research

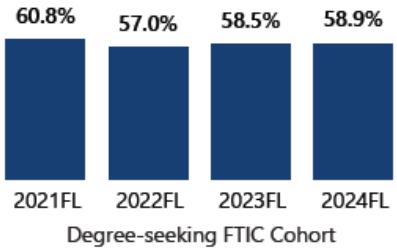
Overall, there are some positive trends in student outcomes for those with exposure to QEP interventions as part of STSC-0111 compared to all FTIC students. TSI met status increased over the course of the first year at higher rates than the overall FTIC cohort. Additionally, first term success and retention were at or above the percentage of all FTIC for all index groups. Cumulative hours earned trended upward with those in the High QEP score group earning on average 1.5 hours more than those in the Low QEP score group.

It should be noted that respondents self-reported the number of QEP Pathways events and visits with faculty mentors they had during the 2024FL term, and there may have been differences in understanding on what events and visits to include in those responses. Also, Career Pathway knowledge, event attendance, and number of mentor visits were all weighted equally in this analysis. It could be that one or more of these factors has a larger impact on student outcomes than the others. Future research can further examine the experience of the faculty mentor visits and events attended (e.g., time spent, topics discussed, learning outcomes, actions taken).

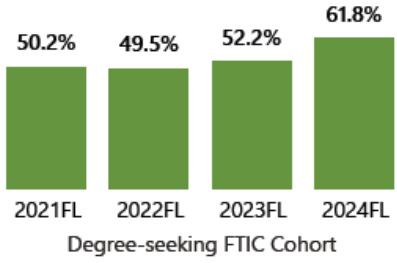
Institutional QEP Metrics

Below are the institutional metrics that are being monitored as part of the QEP for all degree-seeking FTIC students. At the completion of Year 1, all metrics are trending upward from the baseline data and are close to meeting or exceeding the targets set for 2026FL.

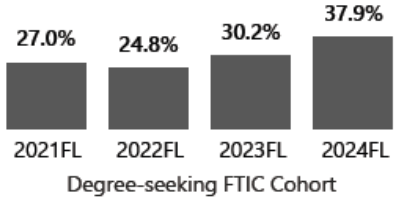
Fall-to-Fall Retention Rates



Percent Registered for Spring in First 30 Days of Open Registration by Term



Percent of those who Entered TSI Liable and were TSI Met By End of First Year



			QEP Metrics			Early Indicators	
	Degree-seeking FTIC Cohort	Cohort Size (N)	Fall-to-Fall Retention	Percent Registered for Spring in First 30 Days of Open Registration	Percent of those who Entered TSI Liable and were TSI Met By End of First Year	Percent of those who Entered TSI Liable and were TSI Met By End of First Term	Fall-to-Spring Retention
Historical	2021FL	2,798	60.8%	50.2%	27.0%	11.5%	78.2%
Historical	2022FL	3,549	57.0%	49.5%	24.8%	11.6%	74.3%
Baseline	2023FL	3,746	58.5%	52.2%	30.2%	15.2%	75.1%
Year 1	2024FL	3,773	58.9%	61.8%	37.9%	22.2%	76.4%
Goal 2026FL DS FTIC Cohort			**60.0%**	**54.0%**	**32.0%**		

Overcoming Barriers

Serving Students with Economic Hardship

Overview

The economic hardship index is a composite score combining six socio-economic indicators of a community. Components of the index include:

- **Unemployment:** the percentage of the population aged 16-64 who are unemployed
- **Age Dependency:** the percentage of the population that is either under 18 or over 64 years old
- **Lack of Education:** the percentage of the population over 25 with less than a high school education
- **Per Capita Income:** the average income per person in community
- **Crowded Housing:** the percentage of occupied housing units with more than one person per room
- **Poverty:** the percentage of the population living below the federal poverty line

The economic hardship index (EHI) ranges from 0 to 100 with higher scores indicating higher economic hardship.

In this article, we focus on Fall 2024 students and examine the relationship between a student's economic hardship index and outcomes such as GPA and progression and whether students with higher scores are being served by TCC resources such as the learning commons and the student empowerment center.

Resource Usage

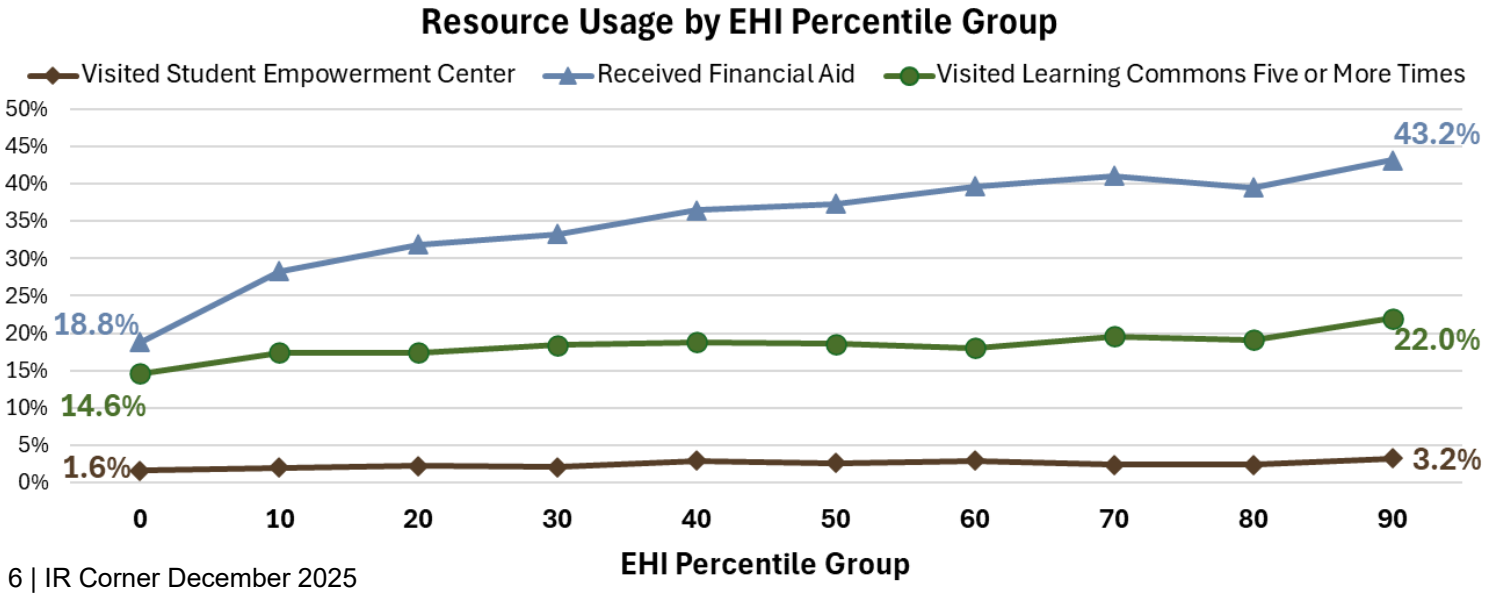
The census tract of 41,284 Fall 2024 students (about 87% of the total population) was determined based on students' addresses. Five-year estimates from the American Community Survey (ACS) provided unemployment, age dependency, etc. for census tracts.[1]

In general, students with higher EHI had higher usage of TCC resources.

Students with an EHI at the 90th percentile or above were twice as likely to visit the student empowerment center compared to students below the 10th percentile, and students with an EHI at the 90th percentile or above were over twice as likely to receive financial aid compared to students below the 10th percentile. Lastly, students with an EHI at the 90th percentile or above were 1.5 times as likely to visit the learning commons five or more times compared to students below the 10th percentile.

Interestingly, while the association between EHI group and receiving financial aid was strong for first time in college (FTIC) students, there was not an association

[1] Census tract – the US Census Bureau designs census tracts to be relatively homogenous units with respect to population characteristics, economic status, and living conditions and average about 4,000 inhabitants. Several tracts commonly exist within a county.

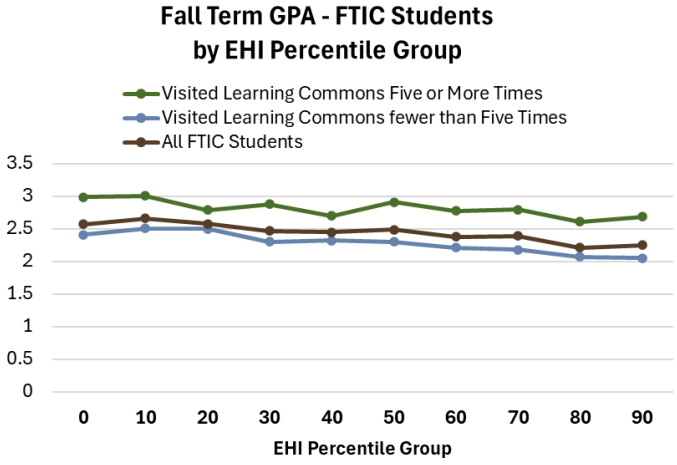


between EHI group and usage of the student empowerment center or usage of the learning commons for this subset of students.

Outcomes

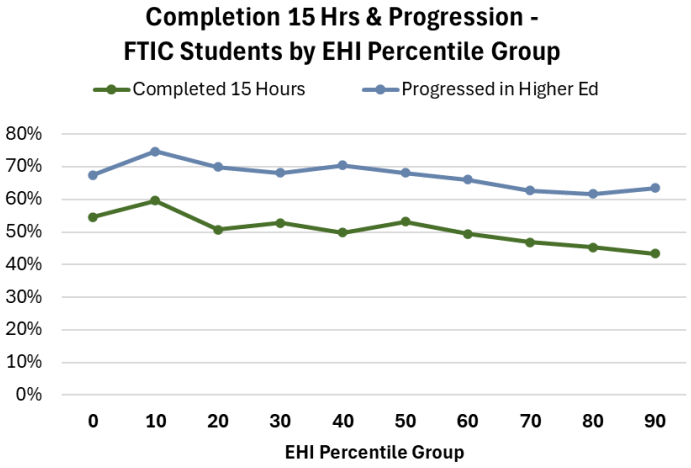
Fall Term GPA

Overall, students with a higher economic hardship had lower fall term GPAs. Students with an EHI at the 90th percentile had mean GPA (2.7) that was about 0.4 points lower than students below the 10th percentile (3.1). Specifically, for FTIC students, FTIC with an EHI at the 90th percentile had a mean GPA (2.3) that was about 0.3 points lower than students below the 10th percentile (2.6). Moreover, for FTIC students, visiting the learning commons five or more times had a substantial impact on their first fall term GPA; FTIC students with five or more visits had a roughly 0.5 point higher mean GPA for almost all EHI groups. In fact, FTIC students with an EHI at the 90th percentile or above (high hardship) and who visited the learning commons five or more times had a GPA better than FTIC students below the 10th percentile and who visited the learning commons less than five times.



Completing 15 Hours & Progression

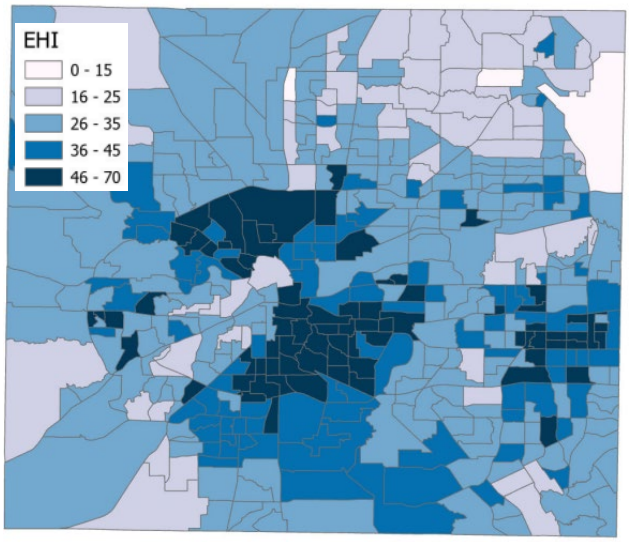
When analyzing the entire population, there was not a strong association between earning 15 or more non-developmental hours during the year and EHI group, and there was not a strong association between progression (returning in 2025FL or graduating by 2025SU) and EHI group. However, for FTIC students there was an association. FTIC students with higher hardship (top three EHI Groups) had a progression rate that was more than eight percentage points lower than those with lower hardship (bottom three EHI groups). In addition, the percentage of FTIC students completing 15 non-developmental hours in their first year was about 10 percentage points lower for FTIC with higher hardship compared to those with lower hardship.



Conclusion & Considerations

Students with higher economic hardship were more likely to utilize TCC resources such as the student empowerment center and the learning commons and were more likely to receive financial aid. However, there may be an opportunity to better connect FTIC students with the learning commons especially since there seems to be such a strong connection between high usage and first term GPA. Economic barriers seem to potentially impact GPA regardless of whether the student is new to college (FTIC) or continuing, but these barriers seem to potentially have less impact on momentum such as completion of 15 hours and progression when the student is not new (not FTIC).

Tarrant County Census Tracts by EHI



Source: SingleStop, TracCloud, Student Awards, ACS, enrollment by term

Maintaining Momentum: How First & Second Term Performance of FTIC Students Impacts Graduation

Introduction

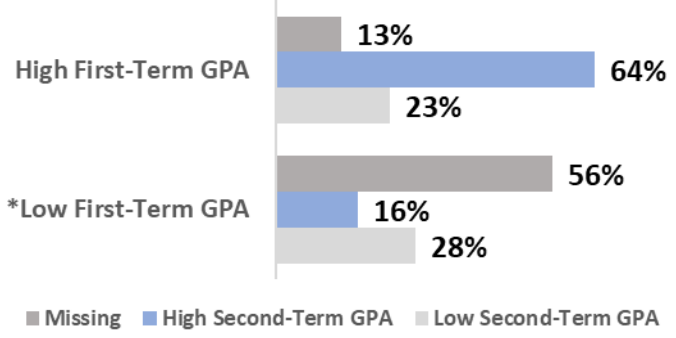
When it comes to college, starting off on the right foot seems as though it would be extremely important to eventual success and completion. In this article, we examine the early performance of degree-seeking first time in college (FTIC) students to see if any interesting patterns emerge that tell us more about their experience.

Degree-seeking FTIC students were examined starting in their fall terms, from 2011 to 2018. The resulting cohorts had an average size of about **5,000** students; in total, **N = 39,141** students were considered during the analysis.

Each student's first term GPA was put into one of two groups (High GPA (> 2.0), or Low GPA (<= 2.0)) and was then paired with their GPA in their second semester to give a rough idea of their first-year experience (*Note: Some students were missing GPA's for their FTIC term (e.g. a student enrolled in only developmental courses); these students were included in the Low GPA group).

First Year Performance

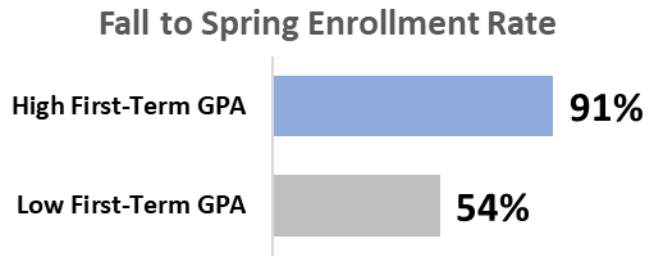
Overall, first term performance was a near even split, with about **46%** of students achieving a GPA above 2.0 and the remaining **54%** having either a missing term GPA or a GPA less than or equal to 2.0. Perhaps unsurprisingly, first term performance appears to be related to second term performance.



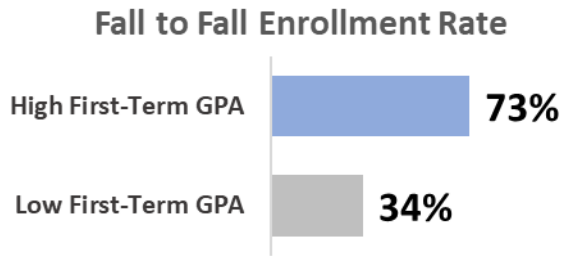
Note: The missing second term GPA group included those who did not enroll in the spring term.

First Term GPA & Retention

A student's performance in their FTIC term appears to be related to their decision regarding enrollment in the following spring semester. Students who had a fall GPA greater than 2.0 enrolled in the following spring term at **nearly twice the rate** of students who had a low first term GPA.



The same trend also holds true (to an even stronger extent) for whether a student returns in the following fall semester. Students with a high first term performance were **over twice as likely** to be retained to the following fall when compared to those with a low first term GPA.



Effects of First Year on Completion

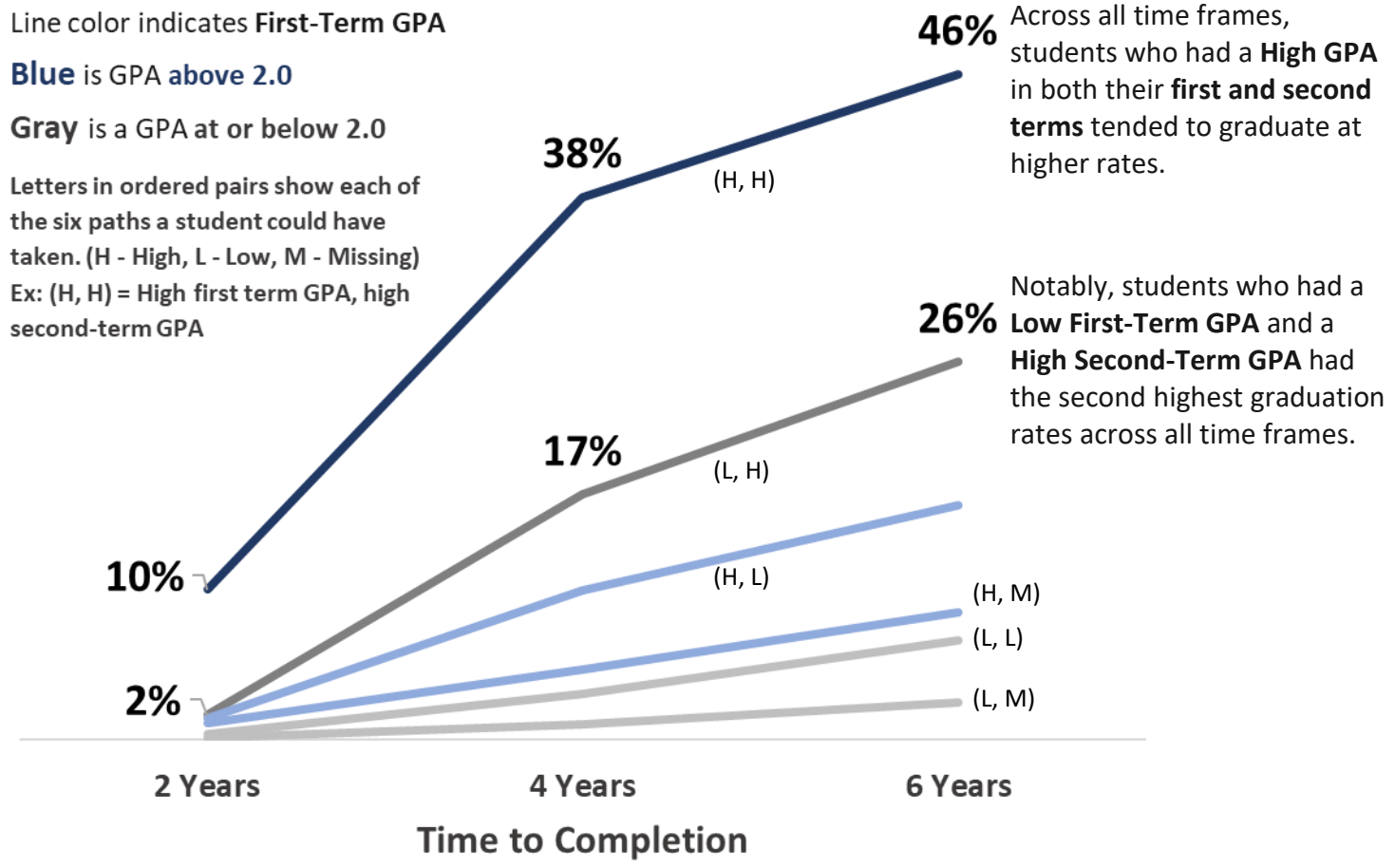
About **20%** graduated within six years of their FTIC term. Graduation rates varied considerably between each of the performance buckets that students fell into. Students who had a GPA of greater than 2.0 in their first term graduated at a rate of about **one in three (34%)**. Interestingly, students who were enrolled in the spring, regardless of their FTIC term GPA, graduated within six years at ***much*** higher rates

than those who stopped out after their first term (about **27%** compared to **3%**). When all possible paths that a student could take were considered (based on first and second term GPA), the students least likely to graduate were those with low first term performance and a missing second term GPA. Conversely, nearly half of those students who achieved a GPA above 2.0 in both semesters would go on to graduate within six years of their FTIC term.

Conclusions

A student's first-term GPA is well known to be a predictor of long-term success. The findings from this analysis further support this established knowledge; degree-seeking FTIC students with a first-term GPA above 2.0 tended to have higher rates of graduation compared to those with a low first-term GPA. Further, the first term GPA also appeared to be related to the students' performance in their spring term and even whether they returned at all. When comparing the long-term success of students, those who achieved a first-term GPA above 2.0 tended to outperform those with a low first-term GPA with the notable exception of those students who had a low first term GPA (difficult first semester) and **then a high second-term GPA** (returned and succeeded the following spring; shown in dark gray in the graph below), which shows that having a "win" early in their college career can substantially boost chances of completion. Ultimately, what is demonstrated here is that when it comes to advising students who have a rough start, the data suggests that remaining persistent in their efforts gives them the best chance of success.

Graduation rates by first year performance



Across all time frames, students who had a **High GPA** in both their **first and second terms** tended to graduate at higher rates.

Notably, students who had a **Low First-Term GPA** and a **High Second-Term GPA** had the second highest graduation rates across all time frames.

Success in English

A reflection on policies & practices including HB 2223

Overview

In the June 2025 issue of *IR Corner*, we examined success in math courses to assess the impact of major policy and practice changes over the last decade or so. Many of these changes along with others impacted English courses. Changes included:

- TCC integrated developmental reading and writing.
- The TSI test with associated "college-ready" scores for college English was implemented in 2013 with cut scores for English later changed in 2017. The redesigned test (TSI2) launched 2021 with TCC altering AE cut scores in 2022.
- House Bill 2223 mandated the use of a co-requisite model beginning in Fall 2018. Thus, "stand-alone" (sequential) developmental INRW courses were phased out over the next couple of years.

The aim of this article is to explore success in English.

Trends

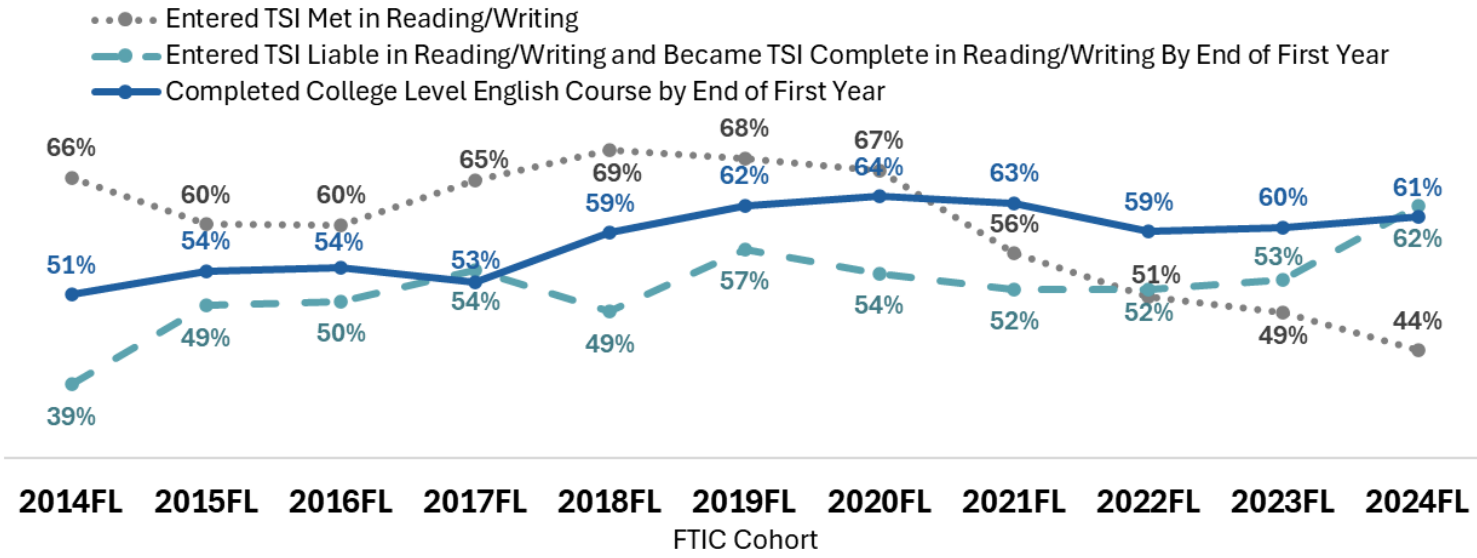
The percentage of FTIC students who entered TSI Met in reading/writing decreased over the past decade from about 66% for the 2014FL cohort to 43% for the 2025FL cohort. A marked decline began with the 2021FL cohort. The recent decline could be a lingering result of the pandemic.

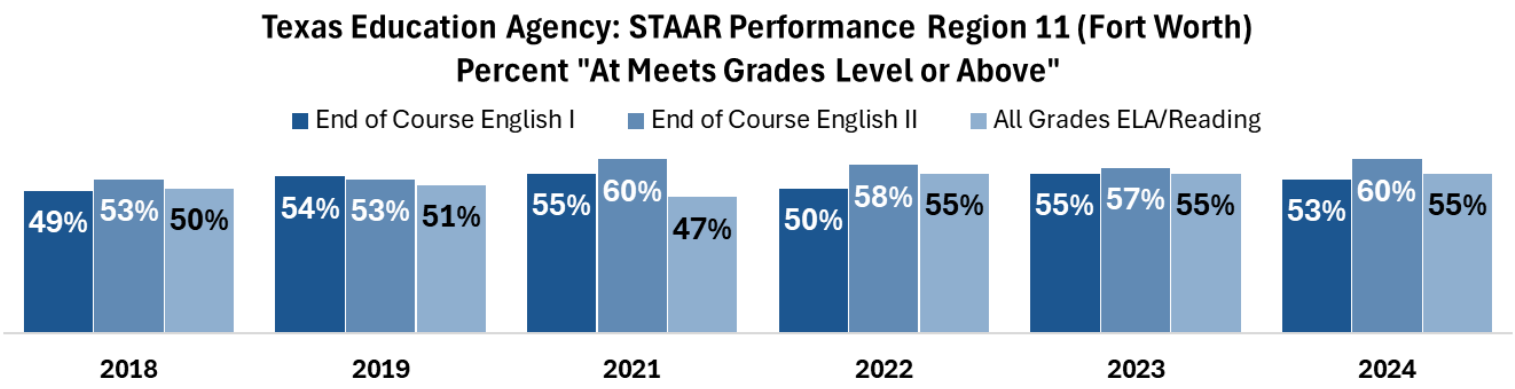
Interestingly, however, region 11: Fort Worth STAAR test data[1] indicated a sharp one-year decrease post pandemic followed by an increase. For all grades ELA/Reading about 50% of students tested at meets grade level or above from 2018 to 2019. That percentage dropped to 47% in 2021 and increased to 55% since 2022.

While the percentage of FTIC students who entered TSI met in reading/writing drastically decreased recently, the percentage who entered TSI liable and became TSI met by the end of their first year increased from about 39% for the 2014FL cohort to about 62% for the 2024FL cohort. Thus, TCC has helped a larger portion of FTIC students become "college-ready" in English.

In addition, the percentage of FTIC students who completed a college level English course by the end of their first year increased from about 51% for the 2014FL cohort to about 61% for the 2024FL cohort. Note that there was a change after 2017FL – the percentage was below 55% and then shifted to about 60% or higher.

[1] TEA TAPR reports

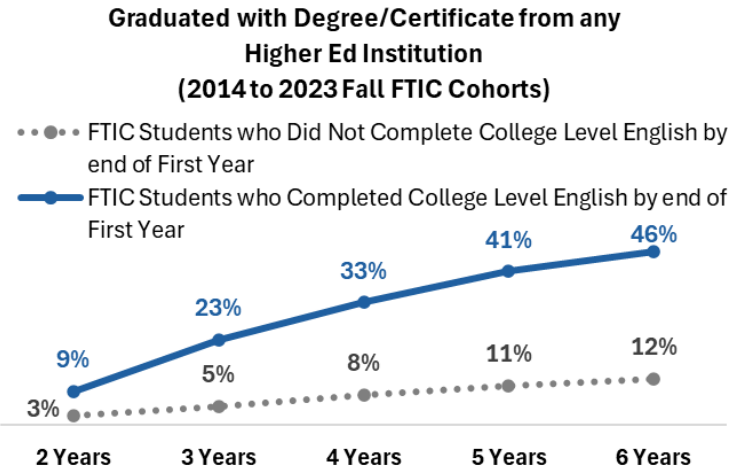




Gateway to College Completion

FTIC students who completed a college level English course by the end of their first year were over **four times more likely to complete a degree/certificate** from any higher ed institution in four years than FTIC students who did not complete a college level English course by the end of their first year. Moreover, this substantial gap in graduation rates remained even after five and six years.

Source: Enrollment by Term

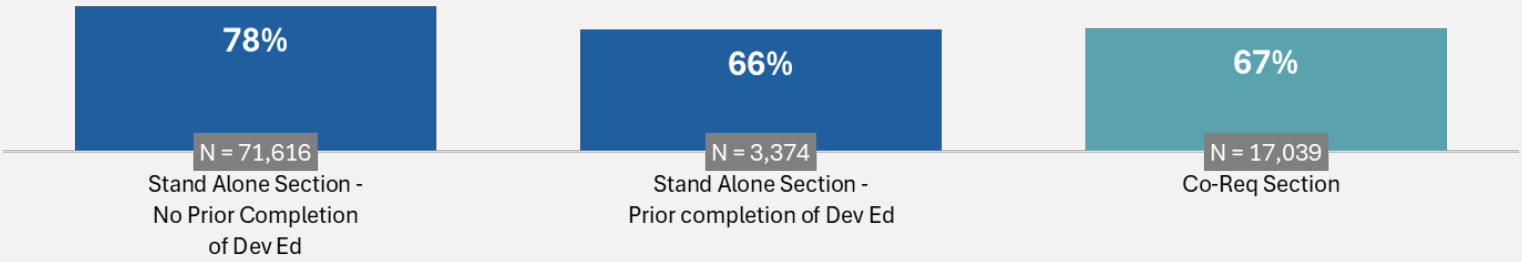


English 1301 First Attempt

Based on students whose first attempt in ENGL-1301 was between 2018FL and 2025SU:

Students who took ENGL-1301 as a stand-alone section and had not completed (A, B, C, D) a dev ed course prior had the highest success rate (A, B, C) at 78%. Since these students started college ready, there still seems to be an association to initial college readiness (TSI score). Students who used a sequential model in which they completed developmental English requirements and then took ENGL-1301 had the lowest success rate (66%). While the success rate for students who used the co-requisite model in which they took ENGL-1301 alongside a developmental course (67%) was only slightly higher than students who used a sequential model, they were ultimately completing ENGL-1301 more quickly since their dev ed and college enrollment were at the same time. Note, however, that the sequential and co-req students aren't completely comparable because term is a confounding factor. The co-req model was phased in starting in 2018, and within a few years all TSI liable students used the co-req model since the sequential model was phased out.

Success Rate (A,B,C,CR) on First ENGL-1301 Attempt



Prior completion of dev ed includes older courses such as RDNG courses

Post-Back: From One Finish Line to Another

Overview

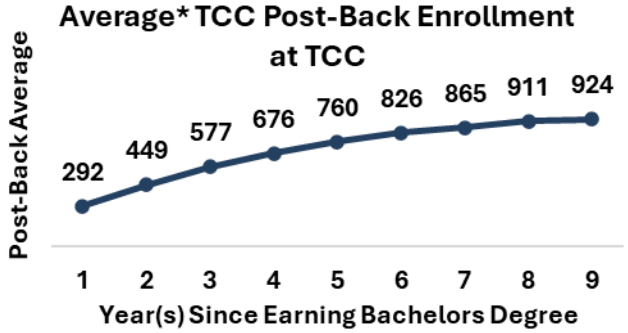
When you hear the words "I'm going back to school!" most assume they are returning to finish a degree or starting a master's degree program. But how many of these students come back to community college? And why? This report explores a unique group of students that we will refer to as TCC Post-Backs, students who have earned their first bachelor's degree and later enrolled at Tarrant Count College. For them, "going back to school" takes on a new meaning.

Cohort Years

For this report, we used data from the National Student Clearinghouse to identify TCC Post-Backs. These students attended TCC between 2007 and 2025, earned a bachelor's degree, and had subsequent TCC enrollment. Their cohort was based on the calendar year in which they were awarded their first bachelor's degree. For example, if a student received their first bachelor's degree at any point during the year 2017, they were placed in Cohort 2017. This report explores Cohorts 2015 through Cohort 2024. (Note: Some Post-Backs were returning for a second experience at TCC. Of the 6,841 TCC Post-Backs, we found 1,247 (18%) of them had a TCC award prior to their bachelor's degree.)

TCC Post-Back Enrollment Trends

TCC Post-Back cohorts 2015 through 2024 totaled 6,841. When considering cohorts 2015 through 2023, an average* of 449 TCC Post-Backs enrolled at TCC within two years of earning a bachelor's degree.



While the average number of TCC Post-Backs roughly doubles from year 1 to year 3, the rate of growth slows over time - signaling that Post-Backs tend to enroll at TCC soon after completing their bachelor's degree rather than later. The growth rate from year 5 to year 6 is less than 10% and the rate from year 8 to year 9 is about 1%.

*Note: Successive years remove cohorts for which the window is invalid. For example, students in cohort 2023 are not considered to determine the average number of students who returned within 9 years, as only two years have passed between 2023 and 2025

Journey to TCC Completion

For all 6,841 TCC Post-Backs the top five bachelor's degrees by CIP codes were:

1. 26.0101 - Biology/Biological Sciences
2. 31.0505 - Exercise Science and Kinesiology
3. 42.0101 - Psychology
4. 24.0102 - General Studies
5. 30.9999 - Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies

The top five institutions from which the TCC Post-Backs graduated were:

Institution	Percentage
University of Texas - Arlington	21.9%
University of North Texas	13.9%
Texas A&M University	5.3%
Tarleton State University	4.8%
Texas Woman's University	4.1%

Upon enrolling at TCC, the top five programs by CIP, which TCC Post-Backs chose were:

1. 24.0102 - General Studies
2. 99.9999 - Undeclared
3. 52.0201 - Business Admin. and Management
4. 11.0101 - Computer and Information Sciences
5. 22.0302 - Legal Assistant/Paralegal

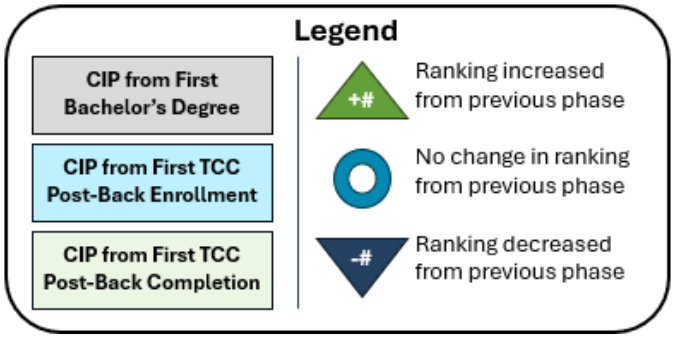
Among the 6,841 TCC Post-Backs, 727 earned a degree or certificate at TCC after their bachelor's degree as of Summer 2025. The top five programs in

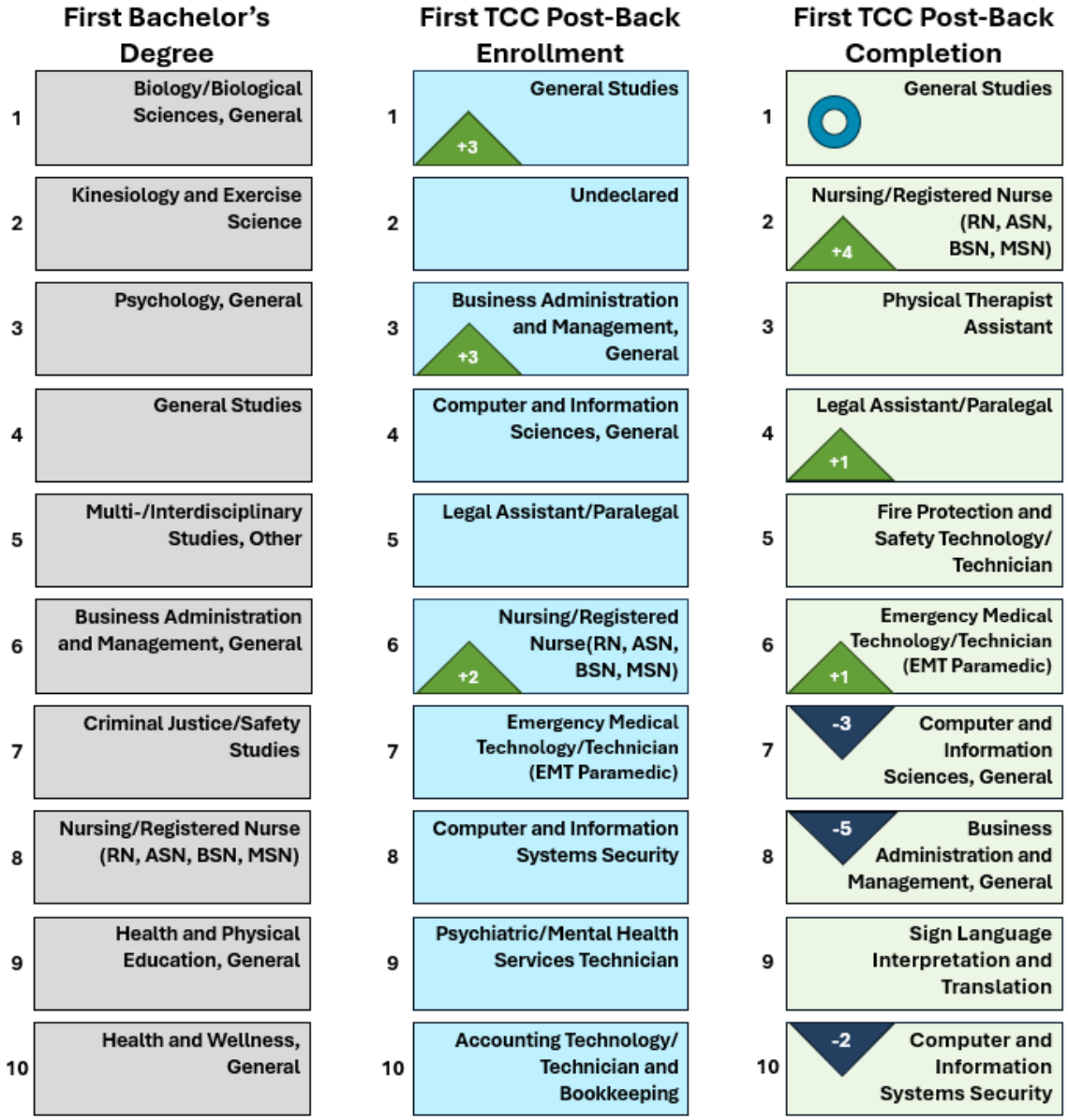
which they were awarded a degree or certificate based on CIP were:

1. 24.0102 - General Studies
2. 51.3801 - Nursing/Registered Nurse
3. 51.0806 - Physical Therapist Assistant
4. 22.0302 - Legal Assistant/Paralegal
5. 43.0201 - Fire Protection and Safety Technology/Technician

Top 10 CIP Codes from Bachelor's Degree to TCC Completion

The chart below displays the top 10 degree CIP rankings for TCC Post-Backs, with the highest-ranked program at the top and the lowest-ranked at the bottom. For example, the CIP for Nursing/Registered Nurse was ranked 8th among First Degree completions. Among all initial TCC Post-Back enrollments, the same Nursing/Registered Nurse CIP was ranked 6th. Finally, when considering all TCC Post-Back students who earned their first credential, Nursing/Registered Nurse was ranked 2nd. *(Note: Only changes in rank within the top 10 are shown.)*





TCC Post-Back Course Enrollment Trends

An interesting observation emerged regarding students who have already earned a bachelor's degree and subsequently enrolled at TCC under the General Studies CIP. In addition, some students were labeled as a "specialized admission" in their Enrollment Major without a CIP code in their line of information in the NSC data. Note that CIP 25.0102 (General Studies) is assigned to the Associate of Arts and Associate of Science programs at TCC. This prompted the question of *which courses are TCC Post-Back students taking within six months of enrolling at TCC after completing their bachelor's degree?*

Using NSC data, we identified the 6,841 TCC Post-Back students and retrieved their enrollment records using internal TCC data sources. The analysis showed that the top ten courses taken within six months of enrollment were primarily prerequisites for health-related admission programs, including Nursing and Dental Hygiene.

Post-Back's Top 10 Courses Taken Within Six Months of Enrollment

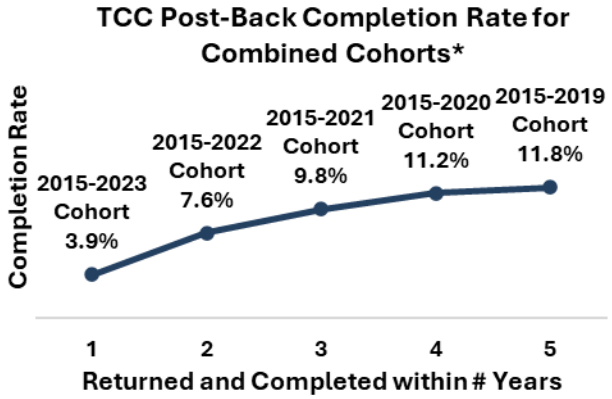
Course	Course Title
BIOL-2401	Anatomy & Physiology I
BIOL-2402	Anatomy & Physiology II
PSYC-2314	Life Span Growth/Development
MATH-1342	Elementary Statistical Methods
BIOL-2420	Microbiology non-Sci Majors
PSYC-2301	General Psychology
CHEM-1411	General Chemistry I
MATH-1314	College Algebra
HPRS-1206	Essentials Medical Terminology
BIOL-1406	Biol Science Majors I

Considering the Top 10 CIP Codes from bachelor's degree to TCC completion, Nursing moves from rank 6 in TCC enrollments to rank 2 in TCC completions. This supports the hypothesis that a portion of post-baccalaureate students are taking courses to meet entry requirements for these competitive health programs.

TCC Post-Back Completion Analysis

We examined the first TCC credential distribution after a bachelor's degree and saw that there were 796 awards. Of these, approximately 62% were associate degrees and 38% were certificates.

As for the completion rates, the one-year graduation rate for TCC Post-Backs was almost 4%. The two-year graduation rate almost doubled, and the four-year graduation rate was over 11%.



**Completion rate was based on all cohorts from 2015 to 2023 that had completed the tracking window.*

Conclusion

Approximately 55% of the 6,841 post-baccalaureate students who enrolled at TCC after earning their first bachelor's degree selected General Studies or Undecided. This pattern may indicate that the General Studies associate degree serves as a default option for students seeking prerequisite or leveling courses while maintaining degree-seeking status.

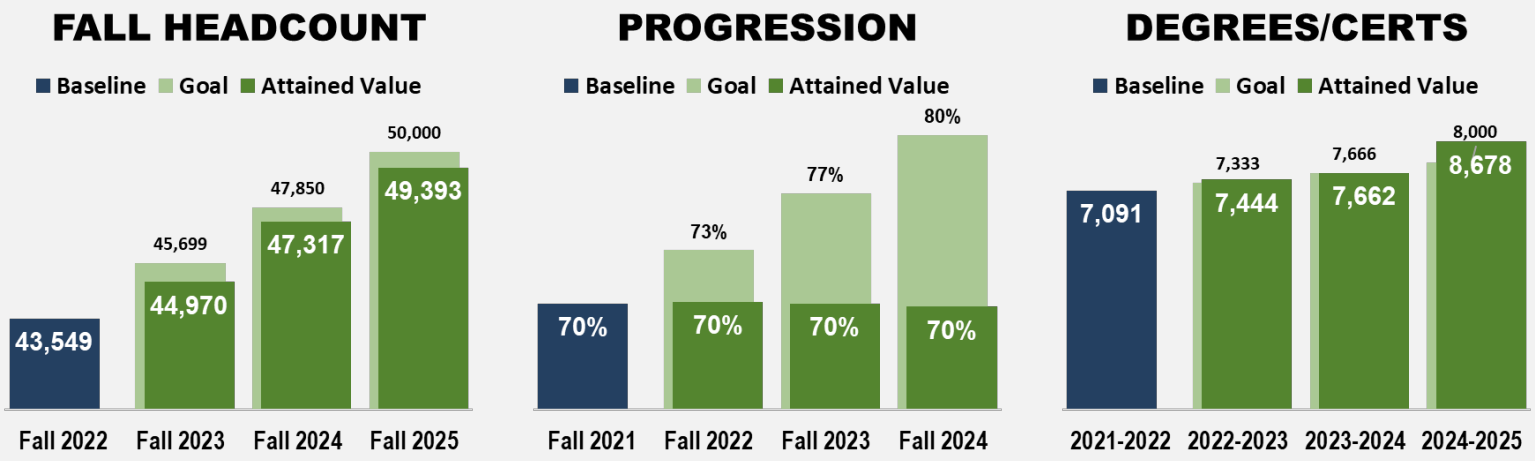
Additionally, about 1,300 students had missing CIP codes, primarily because their programs were classified as 'specialized admission.' Together, these trends raise important questions about student motivations: Are they encountering barriers to selective programs, seeking additional skills, or preparing for a career change?

While some students have returned to TCC to upskill, others appeared to change career paths completely. Regardless, this creates an opportunity for TCC to strengthen support through targeted initiatives such as skill-based certifications tailored to degree-holding professionals, helping advance TCC Post-Back's careers, and positioning TCC as a strategic partner in lifelong learning.

Source: National Student Clearinghouse and Enrollment by Term

YEAR 3 IN REVIEW

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, & COMPLETION



As TCC moves towards monitoring key performance indicators for the new strategic plan, Trailblazing Together: 2030, it is important to reflect on the progress that has been made, which should provide momentum for our new plan. With a substantial decline in headcount and degrees/certificates during the pandemic, TCC embarked on 3-year recruitment, retention, and completion (RRC) goals coming out of the pandemic. These RRC goals represented a plan to return to where we'd once been in terms of headcount and completion; whereas our new strategic plan represents an aim to foster completion at a level beyond what TCC has ever seen.

Goal 1: Increase Fall Headcount to 50,000 in Fall 2025

Baseline: Fall 2022 ~43,500

Headcount: the number of credit students enrolled on the fall term's census date.

For a decade (Fall 2010 to Fall 2019), TCC's fall headcount was about 50,000. Headcount declined during the pandemic and decreased to a low of about 40,500 by Fall 2021. Fall 2022 brought signs of recovery with about a 7% increase in headcount from Fall 2021. While the year 1 and year 2 milestone goals were not met, there were substantial increases in headcount. Fall headcount increased about 3% from about 43,500 in Fall 2022 to about 45,000 in Fall 2023, and it increased 5% from about 45,000 in Fall 2023 to about 47,000 in Fall 2024. Overall, the goal was not quite met but Fall 2025 headcount was another year-over-year gain with a 4% increase from about 47,500 in Fall 2024 to about 49,500 in Fall 2025. In total, headcount increased 13% from Fall 2022 to Fall 2025.

Goal 2: Increase Progression to 8 in 10 Students for Fall 2024 Cohort

Baseline: Fall 2021 ~70% (7 in 10)

Progression: the number of credit fall students who were retained to TCC the following fall, retained to any other institution the following fall, graduated from TCC in the academic year, or graduated from any other institution in the academic year.

The 2016 to 2020 Fall cohorts had a progression rate just under 70%. Most recently, the rate has reached 70% or just slightly above for the past four cohorts and remained flat. Research presented in *IR Corner Issue 8, June 2024* showed that stopping out one year after a student started (FTIC term) was a common stop out point for those who stopped out.

Goal 3: Increase Degree/Certificates to 8,000+ in 2024-2025

Baseline: 2021-2022 ~7,100

Degrees/Certificates: the number of degrees and certificates awarded by TCC in the academic year.

From academic years 2015-2016 to 2020-2021, the number of degrees/certificates awarded was near 8,000. This number decreased to about 7,100 in 2021-2022. From academic years 2021-2022 to 2022-2023, there was about a 5% increase to almost 7,500 in 2022-2023. As such, TCC met the year 1 milestone goal of 7,333 degrees/certificates in 2022-2023. The year 2 milestone goal was met, and the year 3 outcome far exceeded the goal with about a 13% increase from the prior year. In sum, this goal was met with about a 22% increase from 2021-2022 to 2024-2025

Source: ODR, NSC, DA Degrees, Stat handbook

Individual Attributes & Connections to Success

Overview

As introduced in the June 2025 IR Corner article *Looking Beyond TCC: Life Factors*, a student must take the Online Readiness Assessment before enrolling in an online course at TCC. One section, Individual Attributes, is comprised of questions about characteristics such as prior academic success, willingness to ask for help, time management, and tendency toward task completion. The 24 questions in this section are mapped to 6 sub-scales: academic attributes, help seeking, locus of control, persistence, procrastination, and time management.

This article presents the results of the survey for over **56,000 students** who took the assessment between January 2024 and August 2025.

Note that since students took this survey as part of the process to enroll in an online course, online students were likely more represented in the results, so findings might not generalize to all students.

Academic Attributes

More than 8 in 10 respondents described themselves as someone who never dropped out of an academic program, and almost all (98%) described themselves as interested in taking college courses to earn a specific degree. Notably, there were respondents who described themselves as unable to express themselves well in writing or uncomfortable reading for more than 30 minutes at a time.

10% indicated "I am able to express myself well in writing" was *not much like me* or *not like me at all*.

5% indicated "I am comfortable reading for more than 30 minutes at a time." was *not much like me* or *not like me at all*.

Help Seeking

Almost all respondents (96%) described themselves as someone who would ask for help if faced with a problem they couldn't solve, and a large percentage (91%) described themselves as someone who does not like to figure things out on their own; however, a large percentage (70%) described themselves as hesitant to ask the instructor for help.

Locus of Control

Almost all (98%) described themselves as someone who feels that if they set realistic goals, they can succeed no matter what; however, beliefs about elements within their control varied.

43% indicated "I feel that chance has a lot to do with being successful." was *somewhat like me* or *very much like me*.

26% indicated "I think that some people are naturally more intelligent than others." was *somewhat like me* or *very much like me*.

55% indicated "I agree that school success is mostly a result of one's socio-economic background." was *somewhat like me* or *very much like me*.

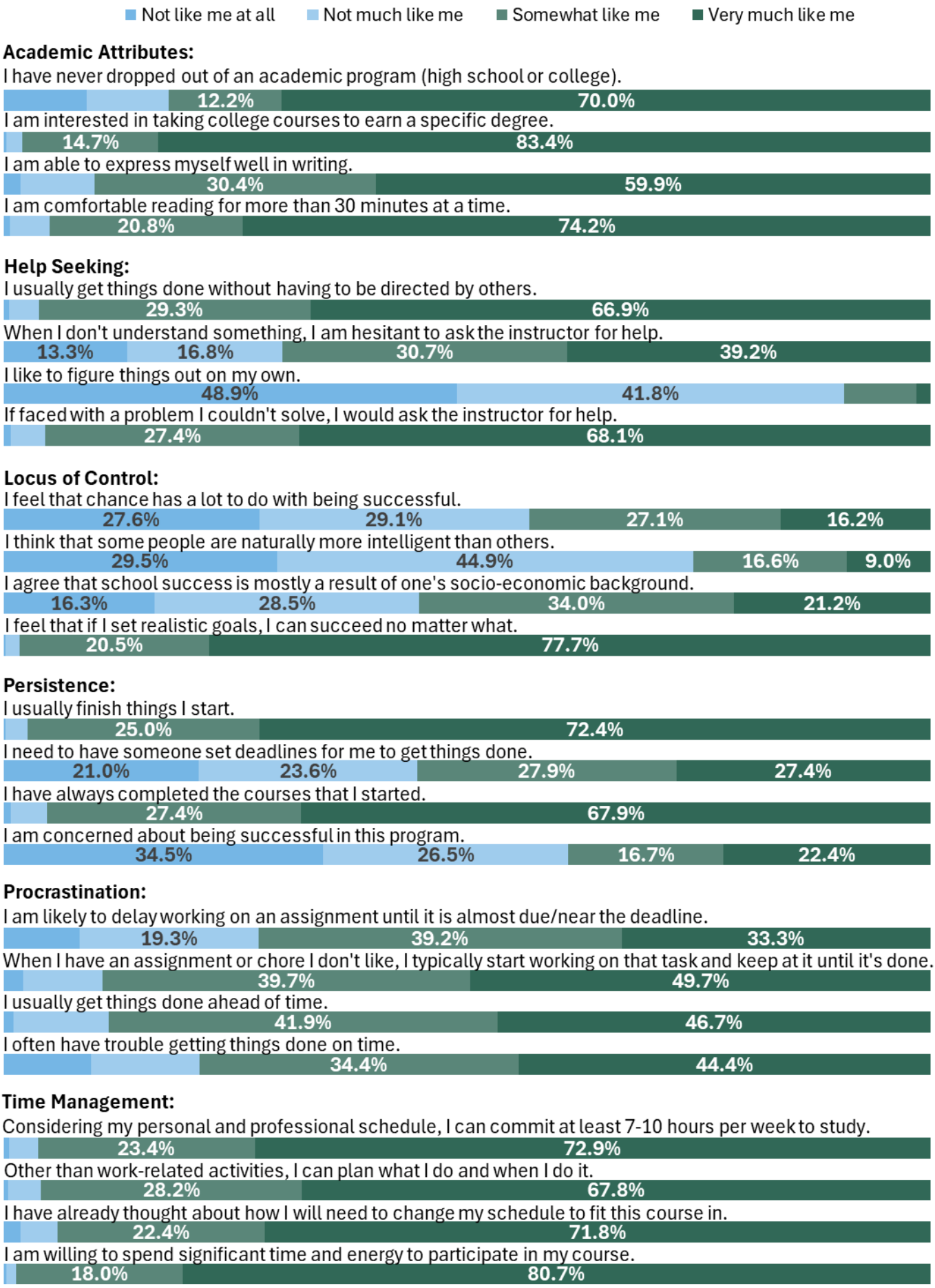
Persistence

About 55% of respondents described themselves as someone who needs to have set deadlines to get things done. About 39% described themselves as concerned about being successful in this program.

Time Management

About 96% of respondents described themselves as someone who can commit at least 7-10 hours per week to study when considering their personal and professional schedule. Similarly, about 99% of respondents described themselves as willing to spend significant time and energy to participate in their course.

Individual Attributes Questions:



Connections to Success

Of the approximately 6,700 Fall 2024 first time in college (FTIC) students, about 50% (~3,400) took the online readiness assessment in 2024. These respondents' scores on the life factors scales (time, place, reason, resources, and skills) and the individual attribute scales (academic attributes, help seeking, locus of control, persistence, procrastination, time management) were mapped to their first term GPA to examine connections to success.

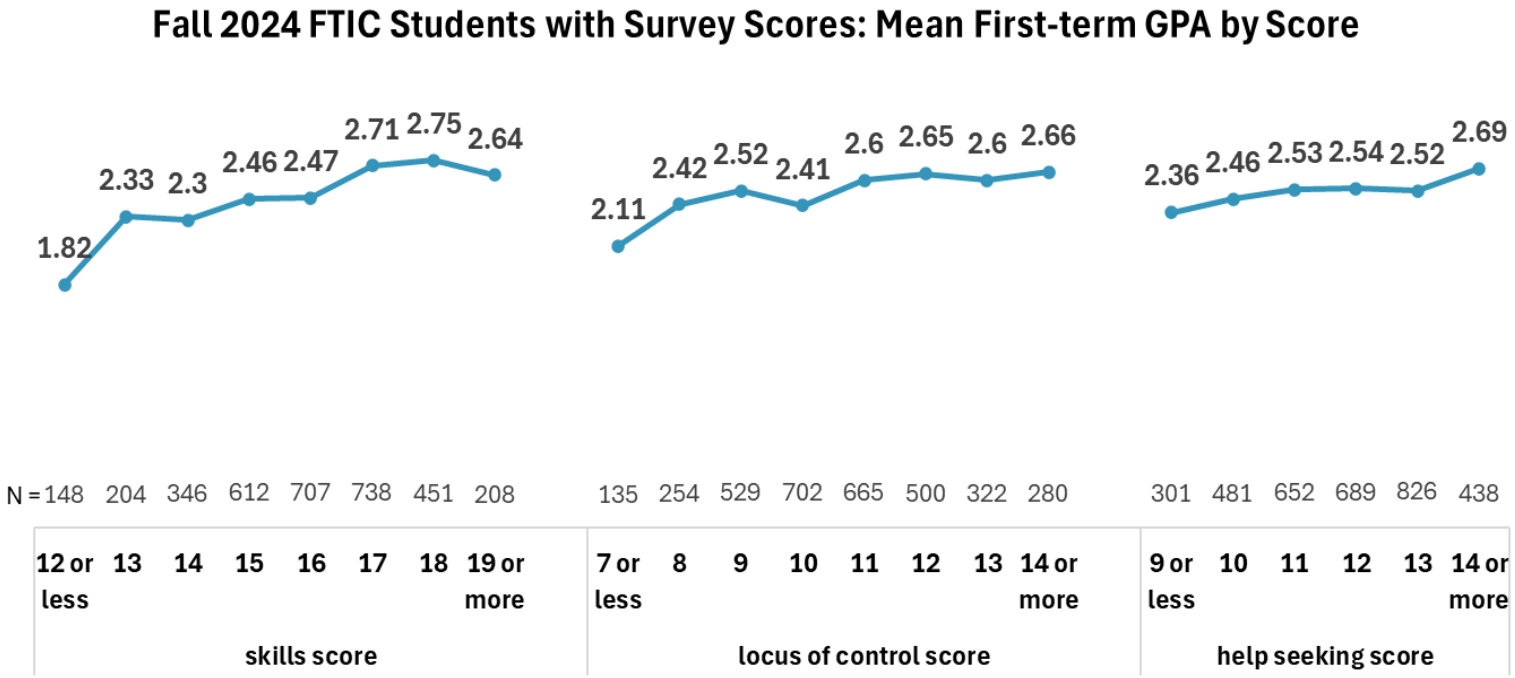
First term GPA was most correlated with the skills subscale. This subscale included questions regarding typical grades on prior schoolwork, number of times they had ever dropped a college course, and self-perceived ranking of academic ability. FTIC students scoring in about the upper 5% of the scale had a mean term GPA about 1.5 times higher than those scoring in about the lower 5% of the scale.

First term GPA was second most correlated with the locus of control subscale. FTIC students scoring in about the upper 5% of the scale had a mean term GPA about 1.3 times higher than those in about the lower 5% of the scale.

First term GPA was third most correlated with the help-seeking subscale. FTIC students scoring in about the upper 5% of the scale had a mean term GPA about 1.1 times higher than those in about the lower 5% of the scale.

Conclusions

Based on results from the survey and connections to success, there may be opportunities to connect with and enhance support for students who do not feel as academically prepared. Some students are aware of gaps in writing scales or ability to read for more than 30 minutes. Students who self-reported lower grades in prior courses had lower GPAs. Students appear to want help as evidenced by fewer wanting to figure something out on their own. While many seemed to suggest that they would ask an instructor for help when faced with a problem, there was potentially hesitation to do so. Thus, instructors and academic support services such as the Learning Commons may need to continue to be proactive in marketing resources and developing new ways in meeting students in student-centered environments. Lastly, there may be opportunities for student workshops and events regarding self-efficacy.



Why Anonymity Matters: Building Trust in Survey Research

By: Abbie Arellano

Overview

Anonymity is a key component of ethical and effective survey research. It encourages honest responses, protects participants, and improves the overall quality of the data collected. In survey research, anonymity involves collecting data without obtaining any personal identifying information, while confidentiality refers to keeping private information secure and limiting access to only authorized individuals.

Surveys administered at TCC by the Office of Institutional Research are anonymous with the exception of pre and post assessments used for accreditation purposes. This means your responses are not linked to your identity in any way, ensuring your privacy and promoting open, candid feedback.

Improved Data Quality Through Anonymity

When surveys are anonymous, respondents are more likely to share their genuine thoughts and experiences. This reduces social desirability bias, which is the tendency to give answers that seem more socially acceptable rather than truthful.

Anonymous data tends to be more representative and reliable, as it removes the fear of being judged or facing retaliation. Additionally, knowing that responses are anonymous often leads to higher participation rates, especially when surveys focus on sensitive or personal topics.

How It's Achieved

To protect anonymity in surveys, responses are collected through anonymized survey links. No identifying information such as names, email addresses, IP addresses, or location data is gathered.

Additionally, results are reported in aggregate, meaning individual responses are combined and summarized to reflect group trends, not individual responses. These practices ensure that feedback remains private and cannot be traced back to the respondent.

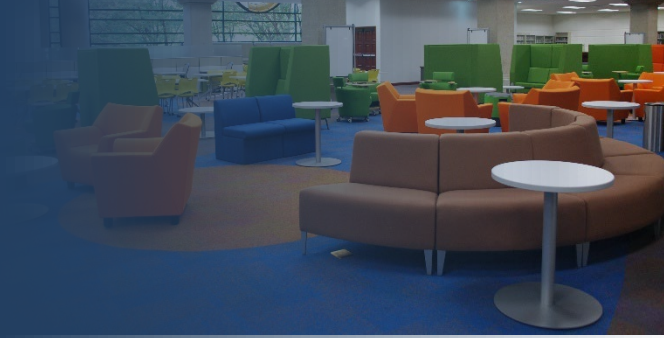
Challenges to Anonymity

While anonymity offers many benefits, it also presents some challenges. In order to analyze responses by group (e.g., by campus or part-time/full-time status), surveys must include additional demographic questions. This can make surveys longer, which can in turn impact the user experience. Furthermore, longitudinal tracking of responses over time is not possible with anonymous surveys. This limits the ability to study changes in individual perspectives or behaviors over time.

Despite these challenges, our commitment to anonymity reflects TCC's dedication to ethical research and respect for participant privacy.

Learning Commons

Providing Academic Support



		Visits	Hours	Students	Avg. Number of Visits Per Student	Avg. Length of Visit
	2022FL	101,769	122,816	16,991	6.0	1.2
FL	2023FL	113,596	140,423	17,845	6.4	1.2
	2024FL	111,106	132,454	19,799	5.6	1.2
	2023SP	85,140	106,659	14,199	6.0	1.3
SP	2024SP	100,975	130,621	14,969	6.7	1.3
	2025SP	85,210	104,070	15,677	5.4	1.2

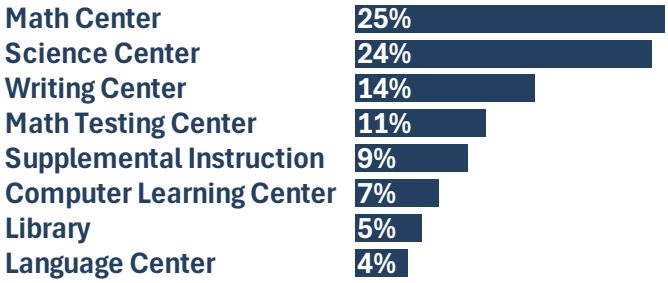
Overview

The learning commons at TCC served about 15,000 to 20,000 students each fall and spring term since Fall 2022. Students who utilized the learning commons averaged about six visits during the term with an average length of about an hour and ten minutes per visit. In this article, we analyze data from Fall 2022 to Spring 2025 (excluding summers) to provide a student profile for those who visited as well as explore connections between usage and success.

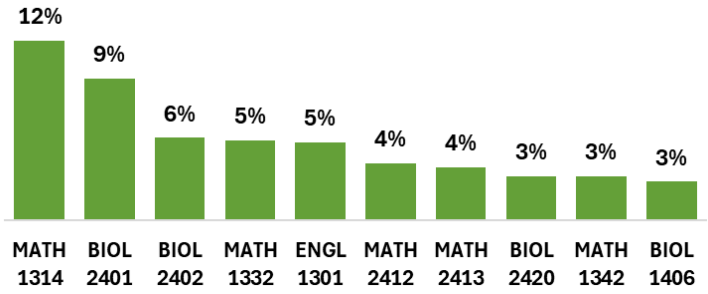
Visits

The math and science centers accounted for about half of all visits with most of the "top ten" courses for visits being either a math or biology course. About 5% of visits were online, and about one-third of visits were "passive" visits including general assistance, general computer use, open lab, etc.

Percentage of Total Visits:



Top Ten Courses



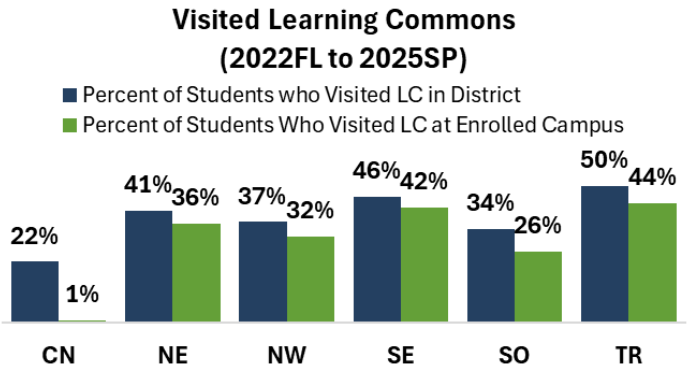
Student Profile

About 35% of all fall (UG) students and about 30% of all spring (UG) students visited the learning commons*.

- **Dual Enrolled:** Fall non-dual enrolled students were about twice as likely to visit compared to fall dual enrolled students. Spring non-dual enrolled students were over 2.6 more likely to visit compared to spring dual enrolled students.
- **Gender:** Visit rates did not differ markedly between males and females.
- **Age Group:** Students aged 18 to 24 were the most likely to visit.
- **Race/Ethnicity:** Visit rates did not differ markedly between Asian, Black or African, and Hispanic/Latino students. Rates were lower among White students.
- **First Gen:** First generation students were about 1.1 times more likely to visit than students who were not first gen.
- **FTIC:** FTIC students were over 1.5 more likely to visit than non-FTIC students.

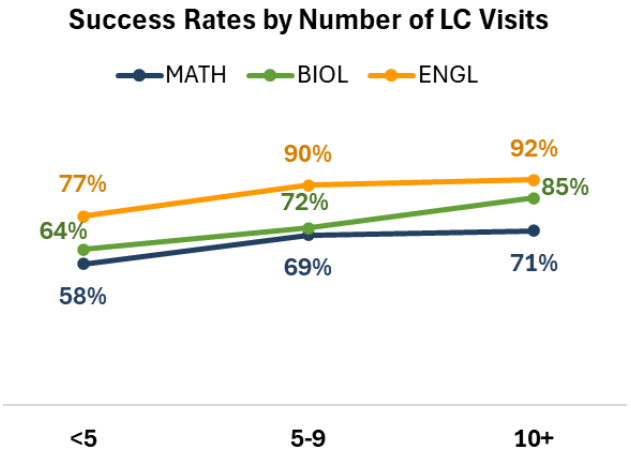
Campus of Visit

Students tended to visit the campus at which they were enrolled. However, a small percentage used a different campus. For example, while 44% of Trinity River students visited the TR learning commons, an additional 6% of TR students used learning commons on a different campus.



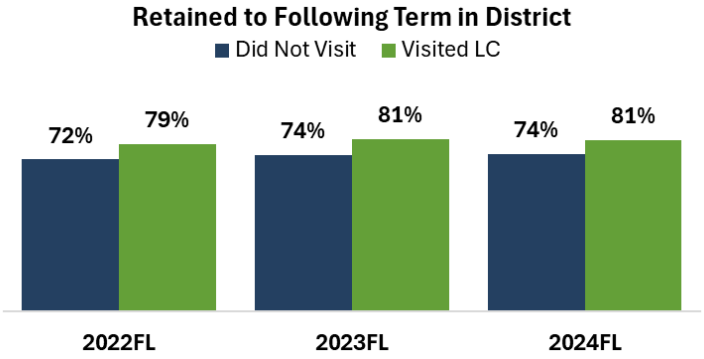
Success

For high enrollment subjects with high learning commons usage such as MATH, BIOL, and ENGL, there was a strong association between success rates and number of visits. For Math as an example, the success rate was about 10 percentage pointer higher for students who visited five to nine times compared to those who visited fewer than five times.



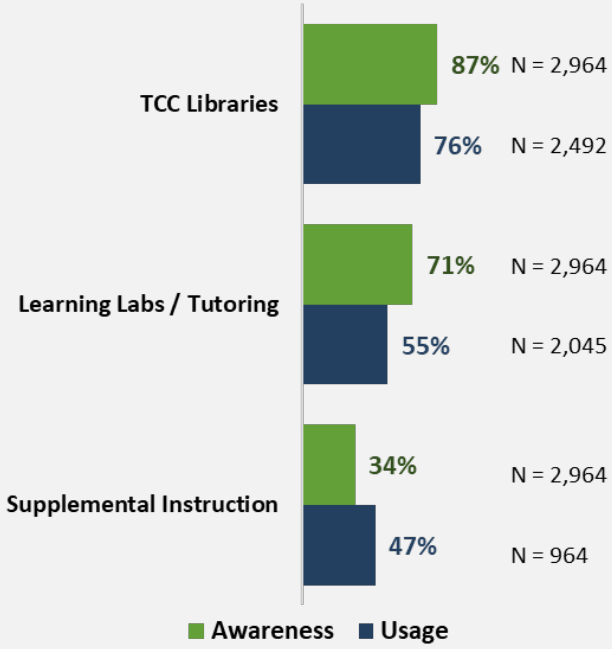
Retention

Students who visited the learning commons in the fall were more likely to return in the spring. The percentage of Fall 2024 students who returned to TCC in Spring 2025 was about 81% for those who visited the learning commons compared to about 74% for those who did not visit the learning commons.



Self-Reported Awareness and Usage

Respondents to the Fall 2025 *Student Experience Survey* reported their awareness of learning commons services. For those aware of the service, they further reported their usage and satisfaction. Respondents reported high awareness of TCC libraries and learning labs but lower awareness of SI. Dual enrolled students had much lower awareness of SI. Note that higher awareness correlated with higher self-reported usage. The three services had high satisfaction rates with roughly 95% indicating, "I have used this service, and it was helpful" for each service.



Source: TracCloud, Enrollment by term, 2025FL Student Experience Survey

* Visited learning commons – student visited any learning commons in District regardless of enrolled campus

Course Sequences-
Modality Trends

Overview

In a previous IR Corner article, (*June 2025, Course Sequences - pg. 10*) we examined enrollment trends of **six** same subject course sequences present within the core curriculum between 2016FL to 2025SP.

This initial article revealed that for those enrolled in a sequence **at least two out of three** students attempted the second course within *1 to 3 terms*. **At least 61%** of students enrolled at the *same campus* across all sequences, while **at least 64%** *changed faculty* when enrolling in the second course of any given sequence.

This article examines the relationship within a given sequence - specifically what percentage of students switch modality, and how success rates vary among those who may have switched modality across more recent post-COVID terms (2021FL to 2025SP).

Note: Only post-Covid terms were considered because the pandemic forced most online which may have caused a modality switch that was not the student's choice.

Section Modality Change/Success

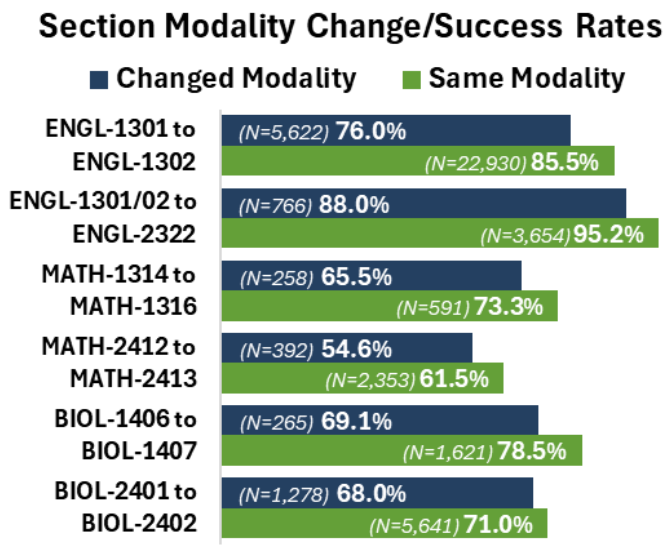
Most students examined *did not change modality* between the first and second course within a given sequence:

Sequence (2021FL-2025SP)	Changed Modality	Same Modality
ENGL-1301 to ENGL-1302 *(N=28,552)*	19.7%	80.3%
*ENGL-1301/02 to ENGL-2322 *(N=4,420)*	17.3%	82.7%
MATH-1314 to MATH-1316 *(N=849)*	30.4%	69.6%
MATH-2412 to MATH-2413 *(N=2,745)*	14.3%	85.7%
BIOL-1406 to BIOL-1407 *(N=1,886)*	14.1%	85.9%
BIOL-2401 to BIOL-2402 *(N=6,919)*	18.5%	81.5%

***NOTE**: For the ENGL-1301/02 to ENGL-2322 sequence, the ENGL-1302 first completed modality was used.

- Over **80%** of students in 5 out of the 6 sequences stayed in the same modality between courses, while about **two out of three** students changed modality between MATH-1314 and MATH-1316.

Additionally, students who *did not change* instructional method had a higher success rate in the second course regardless of sequence with their success rate ranging from roughly **3% to 9% higher.**



Conclusion

Most students examined *did not change* course modality when enrolling in the second course of same subject sequence. Students who *did not change* modality also had a **higher rate of success** in the second course than those who switched modality.

Since campus and modality are related, the result from this article aligns with results from the previous IR Corner article that showed students tended to enroll in sequence courses on the same campus and tended to have higher success rates when they stayed on the same campus.

Additional research should continue to investigate whether a student's behavior is driven by choice versus schedule design. For example, it is possible students are selecting the same campus or same modality because that's what they prefer or rather schedule design is forcing this behavior.

Source: Enrollment by Term, IR Section

CONTACT US

Have you found an article interesting or used some research from IR Corner? Let us know!

Recently, our team participated in a scavenger hunt inspired by the Analytics and Planning division's mission statement. Driven to find the most "state-of-the-art" item in the room, one group snapped a photo of an unfamiliar item mounted high on the wall because they wondered if anyone knew what it did. Their curiosity led them to notice something others had overlooked, earned them a prize and led to further conversations about the possible functionality of the item.

"Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose."

- Zora Neale Hurston

While this may seem like a lighthearted example, it illustrates a powerful truth: curiosity drives research. The questions we ask often begin with noticing something others miss. Every observation matters. So, take a moment to look around, explore, and ask "why?" Curiosity is often where great research begins.

-Team IR

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