

# RESEARCH BRIEF

## OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

Volume 10

Number 2

November 2000

### FACTORS RELATED TO HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES READINESS TO ENROLL IN COLLEGE LEVEL COURSES

The purpose of this study is to describe Florida public high school graduates attending St. Petersburg Junior College (SPJC) the next year, and Pinellas County public high school graduates attending Florida public community colleges the next year, with regard to the need for and enrollment in college preparatory courses. Students were grouped on the basis of three criteria: (1) completed the 19 credits required by the State University System, (2) were in the top 20% of their high school class, and (3) met both requirements. The data were selected from a file, developed by the Florida Board of Regents and shared with the Florida Community College System (FCCS), showing high school rank and courses taken in high school for 1997-98 graduates plus the 1998-99 Student Data Base submitted by the colleges. As a rule, the Division of Community Colleges (DCC) does not have any data on high school rank or courses taken, since the FCCS does not have admission standards beyond the requirement of a high school diploma. Colleges do recommend, however, that students planning on attending a community college complete the same 19 credits in high school required by the SUS.

The analyses, based upon an unduplicated list of social security numbers, reduced the original group of graduating students resulting in only 19.88% of the remaining students being classified as belonging to the top 20% of their graduating class statewide. For Pinellas County, this number was 19.94% (Table 1). When the requirement of being in the top 20% was combined with completing the required 19 credits, about 18% of Pinellas County graduates and about 16% of the graduates statewide met the criteria.

Table 1

	With 19 Required Credits		In Top 20% of H. S. Class		19 Credits + In Top 20%	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Pinellas County Public H. S. Grads	3404	73.20%	927	19.94%	857	18.43%
All Florida High School Graduates	57,586	57.67%	19,855	19.88%	16,160	16.18%

About one third of the 1997-98 Florida public high school graduates enrolled in at least one course in the FCCS. A higher percentage of these students had taken the 19 credits than the class as a whole (63% vs. 58%). While more had taken the required courses, fewer were in the top 20% (16% vs. 20%) and thus, fewer met both requirements (12% vs. 16% of the entire class). This was the pattern followed for Pinellas County graduates enrolled in the FCCS and for Florida public high school graduates enrolled at SPJC. Over 78% of students in both groups had taken the required 19 credits, about 13% were in the top 20% of their high school class, and about 12% met both criteria (Table 2). Thus, students entering the FCCS were more likely to have taken the 19 credits required by the SUS, but less likely to be in the top 20% of their class.

Table 2

	With 19 Required Credits		In Top 20% of H. S. Class		19 Credits + In Top 20%	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Pinellas County Grads at any Fl. CC	1,408	78.97%	232	13.01%	215	12.06%
Florida Public H.S. Grads at SPJC	1,385	78.29%	227	12.83%	210	11.87%
Florida H. S. Grads at any Fl CC	21,344	63.09%	5,345	15.80%	4,133	12.22%

Placement test scores of the students enrolled in Florida Public Community Colleges were obtained from the 1998-99 Student Data Base files. Students with all sections of the CPT, SAT or ACT were selected to determine readiness to enroll in college level courses. This requirement reduced the number of students in each group; however, the percent of students meeting the various criteria was similar for Pinellas County graduates and SPJC students. More than 78% had the required 19 credits, over 12% were in the top 20% of their class, and over 11% met both criteria.

Students who had sufficiently high scores to place them in college level courses were deemed College Ready. College Ready students were compared to those needing college preparatory courses. About 40% of Pinellas County graduates in the FCCS and SPJC enrollees were classified College Ready (Table 3). Over 96% of the College Ready students in these groups had taken the required 19 credits. However, over 66% of the students needing college preparatory courses from these groups, also, had taken the required 19 credits. While there is a definite advantage of taking the 19 credits, their completion does not guarantee that the student will be College Ready.

**Table 3**

	Total College Ready		With 19 Required Credits		In Top 20% of H. S. Class		19 Credits + In Top 20%	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Pinellas County Grads at any Fl. CC	588	39.78%	565	96.09%	144	24.49%	140	23.81%
Florida Public H.S. Grads at SPJC	633	40.14%	609	96.21%	153	24.17%	149	23.54%
Florida H. S. Grads at any Fl CC	10,277	38.67%	8,499	82.70%	2,925	28.46%	2,541	24.73%

The effect of making high grades in high school courses is apparent by comparing the percentage of students in the top 20% of their class who had all placement scores to that in the College Ready group of students. About 13% of the Pinellas County graduates and SPJC students with all scores were in the top 20% of their class. In comparison, almost 25% of College Ready Pinellas County graduates and SPJC students were in the top 20% of their high school class. Additionally, less than 5% of those in need of a college preparatory course were in the top 20%. Almost all students in the top 20% of their class, also, had the required 19 credits (Table 2).

Students enrolled in college preparatory courses were examined regarding the completion of the 19 credits required by the SUS. While 78% of Pinellas County graduates and SPJC students met this requirement (Table 2), the percentage enrolled in college preparatory courses meeting this requirement varied from a low of 57% in English college preparatory courses to a high of 65% for mathematics courses (Table 4). Grades earned while in high school appeared to substantially impact enrollment of students in college preparatory courses. Enrollment of students who were in the top 20% of their high school class in college preparatory courses varied from a low of about 3% in English and mathematics to a high of about 4% in Reading for SPJC students (5% in Reading for Pinellas County). For students meeting both criteria (that is, having the required 19 credits and being in the top 20% of their class), the percentages enrolled in college preparatory courses were even less. The percentages varied from a low of 2.6% in English to a high of 4.2% in reading for Pinellas County students enrolled in a Florida public community college. The percentages were lower in all subject areas for SPJC students ranging from a low of 2.0% in English to a high of 3.3% in reading.

**Table 4**

	With 19 Required Credits		In Top 20% of H. S. Class		19 Credits + In Top 20%	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>English Prep Courses</b>						
Pinellas County Grads at any Fl. CC	220	57.44%	12	3.13%	10	2.61%
Florida Public H.S. Grads at SPJC	230	56.93%	11	2.72%	8	1.98%
Florida H. S. Grads at any Fl CC	3,542	45.23%	430	5.49%	209	2.67%
<b>Math Prep Courses</b>						
Pinellas County Grads at any Fl. CC	516	65.48%	26	3.30%	20	2.54%
Florida Public H.S. Grads at SPJC	522	64.84%	27	3.35%	20	2.48%
Florida H. S. Grads at any Fl CC	6,207	51.72%	679	5.66%	392	3.27%
<b>Reading Prep Courses</b>						
Pinellas County Grads at any Fl. CC	291	60.88%	25	5.23%	20	4.18%
Florida Public H.S. Grads at SPJC	297	61.11%	21	4.32%	16	3.29%
Florida H. S. Grads at any Fl CC	4,387	46.86%	617	6.59%	302	3.23%

The purpose of the Dual Credit Program is to provide high achieving high school students the opportunity to earn college credit prior to completing high school. The social security numbers of students graduating in 1997-98 were matched against dual enrollment course records for 1997-98 and 1996-97 to determine those participating in the Dual Credit Program. By the time they had graduated, about 93% of the Pinellas County graduates and SPJC students enrolled in dual credit courses had completed the required 19 credits. Over 27% of these dual enrolled students were in the top 20% of their classes and over 26% met both criteria. Additionally, about 51% of the students meeting both criteria from Pinellas County and those attending SPJC had enrolled in dual credit courses. Based upon this data, the program is serving the more talented high school students.

In conclusion, prior public high school graduates enrolled in SPJC were more likely to have taken the 19 credits required by the SUS than the high school graduating class as a whole. Two fifths of the SPJC enrollees were College Ready. Almost all had completed the 19 required credits. There was a definite advantage of taking the 19 credits, however, their completion does not guarantee that the student will be College Ready. On the other hand, grades earned while in high school appeared to substantially impact the need for college preparatory courses. About one fourth of the College Ready SPJC enrollees were in the top 20% of their high school class. Almost all students in the top 20% had the required 19 credits.

Over three fourths of the SPJC students enrolled in college preparatory courses also had completed the 19 credits. For these students as well as the College Ready students, grades earned in high school appeared to substantially impact enrollment in college preparatory courses. For a copy of the full report, please contact Dr. Susanne Fischer, Director of Institutional Research.

**Table 3**

	Total College Ready		With 19 Required Credits		In Top 20% of H. S. Class		19 Credits + In Top 20%	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Pinellas County Grads at any Fl. CC	588	39.78%	565	96.09%	144	24.49%	140	23.81%
Florida Public H.S. Grads at SPJC	633	40.14%	609	96.21%	153	24.17%	149	23.54%
Florida H. S. Grads at any Fl CC	10,277	38.67%	8,499	82.70%	2,925	28.46%	2,541	24.73%

The effect of making high grades in high school courses is apparent by comparing the percentage of students in the top 20% of their class who had all placement scores to that in the College Ready group of students. About 13% of the Pinellas County graduates and SPJC students with all scores were in the top 20% of their class. In comparison, almost 25% of College Ready Pinellas County graduates and SPJC students were in the top 20% of their high school class. Additionally, less than 5% of those in need of a college preparatory course were in the top 20%. Almost all students in the top 20% of their class, also, had the required 19 credits (Table 2).

Students enrolled in college preparatory courses were examined regarding the completion of the 19 credits required by the SUS. While 78% of Pinellas County graduates and SPJC students met this requirement (Table 2), the percentage enrolled in college preparatory courses meeting this requirement varied from a low of 57% in English college preparatory courses to a high of 65% for mathematics courses (Table 4). Grades earned while in high school appeared to substantially impact enrollment of students in college preparatory courses. Enrollment of students who were in the top 20% of their high school class in college preparatory courses varied from a low of about 3% in English and mathematics to a high of about 4% in Reading for SPJC students (5% in Reading for Pinellas County). For students meeting both criteria (that is, having the required 19 credits and being in the top 20% of their class), the percentages enrolled in college preparatory courses were even less. The percentages varied from a low of 2.6% in English to a high of 4.2% in reading for Pinellas County students enrolled in a Florida public community college. The percentages were lower in all subject areas for SPJC students ranging from a low of 2.0% in English to a high of 3.3% in reading.

**Table 4**

	With 19 Required Credits		In Top 20% of H. S. Class		19 Credits + In Top 20%	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>English Prep Courses</b>						
Pinellas County Grads at any Fl. CC	220	57.44%	12	3.13%	10	2.61%
Florida Public H.S. Grads at SPJC	230	56.93%	11	2.72%	8	1.98%
Florida H. S. Grads at any Fl CC	3,542	45.23%	430	5.49%	209	2.67%
<b>Math Prep Courses</b>						
Pinellas County Grads at any Fl. CC	516	65.48%	26	3.30%	20	2.54%
Florida Public H.S. Grads at SPJC	522	64.84%	27	3.35%	20	2.48%
Florida H. S. Grads at any Fl CC	6,207	51.72%	679	5.66%	392	3.27%
<b>Reading Prep Courses</b>						
Pinellas County Grads at any Fl. CC	291	60.88%	25	5.23%	20	4.18%
Florida Public H.S. Grads at SPJC	297	61.11%	21	4.32%	16	3.29%
Florida H. S. Grads at any Fl CC	4,387	46.86%	617	6.59%	302	3.23%

The purpose of the Dual Credit Program is to provide high achieving high school students the opportunity to earn college credit prior to completing high school. The social security numbers of students graduating in 1997-98 were matched against dual enrollment course records for 1997-98 and 1996-97 to determine those participating in the Dual Credit Program. By the time they had graduated, about 93% of the Pinellas County graduates and SPJC students enrolled in dual credit courses had completed the required 19 credits. Over 27% of these dual enrolled students were in the top 20% of their classes and over 26% met both criteria. Additionally, about 51% of the students meeting both criteria from Pinellas County and those attending SPJC had enrolled in dual credit courses. Based upon this data, the program is serving the more talented high school students.

In conclusion, prior public high school graduates enrolled in SPJC were more likely to have taken the 19 credits required by the SUS than the high school graduating class as a whole. Two fifths of the SPJC enrollees were College Ready. Almost all had completed the 19 required credits. There was a definite advantage of taking the 19 credits, however, their completion does not guarantee that the student will be College Ready. On the other hand, grades earned while in high school appeared to substantially impact the need for college preparatory courses. About one fourth of the College Ready SPJC enrollees were in the top 20% of their high school class. Almost all students in the top 20% had the required 19 credits.

Over three fourths of the SPJC students enrolled in college preparatory courses also had completed the 19 credits. For these students as well as the College Ready students, grades earned in high school appeared to substantially impact enrollment in college preparatory courses. For a copy of the full report, please contact Dr. Susanne Fischer, Director of Institutional Research.