

RESEARCH BRIEF

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DO STUDENTS IN NEED OF REMEDIATION COMPLETE DEGREE REQUIREMENTS?

Introduction

As a community college, St. Petersburg Junior College adheres to the open door policy, accepting students with high school diplomas without regard to their actual preparation. Moreover, approximately two-thirds of our students are part-time attendees, enrolling for fewer than 12 semester hours during the fall and spring sessions, or fewer than nine semester hours during the summer session.

The emphasis in education accountability, coupled with the tentative state support colleges received in the past year and the dismal financial outlook for the coming year, makes it obligatory for them to examine the acceptability of enrolling students not prepared for college work. Additionally, the calls for institutional effectiveness mandate that colleges develop student tracking systems, whose cost of maintenance is largely dependent upon the number of years student cohorts are tracked.

These diverse factors coalesced into a need to examine whether students in need of remediation complete their degree programs and, if they do, in how many semesters are they enrolled from first attendance to degree award. The academic records of students who graduated from St. Petersburg Junior College at the end of the 1990-91 reporting year (summer semester 1990, fall semester 1990, and spring semester 1991) were analyzed so that the following questions could be answered:

- How many students graduated in the reporting year?
- How many graduating students had taken one or more college preparatory classes?
- How many semesters do the majority of students attend the college in order to complete the degree requirements?
- Is there a difference for the majority of students in the number of semesters needed to complete the A.A. degree compared to the A.S. degree?
- What is the effect of participation in college preparatory classes on the number of semesters needed to complete degree requirements?

Findings

Two thousand seven hundred forty-five (2,745) students graduated from St. Petersburg Junior College during reporting year 1990-91. The majority of graduates (1,772 or 64.6%) received the A.A. degree. This is interesting in light of the distribution of student enrollments between programs leading to the A.A. degree and those leading to the A.S. degree. For example, in fall 1990, that distribution was 80.2% A.A. degree-seeker enrollments compared to 19.8% for the A.S. degree. One thousand one hundred eighty-three (1,183 or 43.1%) of the graduates had enrolled in one or more college preparatory classes during their tenure at SPJC. Table 1 shows the number of graduates by degree earned and participation in remediation. More students in the group receiving the A.A. degree were remediated than in the group of students receiving the A.S. degree (45.3% vs. 39.1%). While it is gratifying to learn that students who come to SPJC in need of remediation can be successful in terms of degree completion, this brief does not address the number of students who enroll in but never complete college preparatory classes.

TABLE 1
NUMBER OF GRADUATES WHO WERE/WERE NOT REMEDIATED
BY DEGREE AWARDED

Reporting Year 1990-91

<u>Semester Graduated</u>	<u>A. A. DEGREE</u>		<u>A. S. DEGREE</u>	
	<u>Remediation</u>	<u>No Remediation</u>	<u>Remediation</u>	<u>No Remediation</u>
Semester 3 '90	251	267	73	99
Semester 1 '90	244	290	143	248
Semester 2 '91	308	412	164	246
Total	803	969	380	593
Percent	45.3%	54.7%	39.1%	61.0%

The majority of students (1,727 or 62.9%), whether or not they had taken college preparatory classes and without regard to full-time/part-time attendance, completed the degree requirements in nine semesters of attendance or less. Among students who had not taken college preparatory classes, almost three-fourths (71.3%) completed the degree requirements in nine semesters of attendance or less, and about one-half (49.7%) graduated in six semesters or less. Even for students who took college preparatory classes, more than one-half (51.8%) completed the degree requirements in nine semesters or less, and more than four-fifths (83.2%) graduated in 12 semesters or less. Table 2 shows the number of semesters of actual student enrollment to receipt of degree by remediation status.

TABLE 2

NUMBER OF SEMESTERS ENROLLED TO COMPLETE DEGREE REQUIREMENTS BY REMEDIATION STATUS

Reporting Year 1990-91

	NUMBER OF SEMESTERS				PERCENT			
	6 or less	7 - 9	10 - 12	13 or more	6 or less	7 - 9	10 - 12	13 or more
<u>A.A. Degree</u>								
Remediation	179	253	249	122	22.3%	31.5%	31.0%	15.2%
No Remediation	446	262	178	83	46.0%	27.0%	18.4%	8.6%
<u>A.S. Degree</u>								
Remediation	109	72	122	77	28.7%	19.0%	32.1%	20.3%
No Remediation	330	76	104	83	55.7%	12.8%	17.5%	14.0%
<u>TOTAL</u>								
Remediation	288	325	371	199	24.3%	27.5%	31.4%	16.8%
No Remediation	776	338	282	166	49.7%	21.6%	18.1%	10.6%

About one-half of the students (49.7%) completed degree requirements in six semesters or less when there was no college preparatory classes taken. There was some variation above or below this figure depending upon degree completed (46.0% for A. A. degree, 55.7% for A.S. degree). More than two-thirds of the students (71.3%) graduated in 9 semesters or less, with some variation depending upon the degree completed (73.0% for A.A. degree, 68.5% for A.S. degree) and 89.4% completed them in 12 semesters or less.

Even with remediation, about one-fourth (24.3%) of the students completed their degree requirements in six semesters or less, and over one-half (51.8%) completed them in nine semesters or less (53.8% for A.A. degree, 47.7% for A.S. degree). By the end of twelve semesters, 83.2% of the graduates who had been remediated had completed their programs, with some variation depending upon the degree earned (84.8% for A.A. degree, 79.8% for A.S. degree).

Summary

Students who come to the community college in need of remediation can be successful and can complete their degree programs. Almost one-half of the 1990-91 graduates had participated in one or more college preparatory classes. Students in need of remediation may take longer to earn their degrees, but within four years (12 semesters) of attendance over eighty percent of the students completed their programs whether or not they were in need of remediation. This completion timeline has important implications for the length of time student tracking systems should follow cohorts to be cost efficient.