Summary Report of DSP Program Evaluation

In Fall 2006, Fresno State implemented a 5-year pilot of the Directed Self-Placement (DSP) program for freshmen English. This program replaced English classes in which students were required to take a specific English class (English 1, or English 1 with a lab) based on results of the English Placement Test (EPT). In the DSP, students can choose to enroll in a one-semester English class (English 10) or a two semester sequence (English 5A and 5B) regardless of their EPT score. This study examines first-year freshman retention rates and course passing rates as two measures of the DSP's effect.

Four cohorts of 3788 first-time freshmen who took Eng 1, Eng 10 or Eng 5A in their first semesters were selected for the study. These students were further classified into 15 student-course groups and Chi-square tests were applied to identify significant differences between student success in the DSP program and the previous English courses (See Appendix for detailed technical report).

Major Findings

- Eng 5A5B appears to have a positive effect on retention rates, especially among students who needed remediation and failed English 5B. (Table 1)

- In the first year of DSP implementation, the passing rates significantly decreased for multiple groups. Passing rates of students who tested into remediation and only enrolled in Eng 5A were lower than for the comparable group that enrolled in English 1LA. (Table 2)

- In the 2nd year, students needing remediation who completed English 5A5B passed at higher rates than comparable students who took English 1 LB in the pre-DSP program. (Table 2)


This study will be repeated with the three subsequent cohorts in the pilot-test period to determine whether these findings persist.

1. Comparison of First-Year Retention Rates

Student group classification: To detect possible effects of the DSP program, students are first classified into two groups of remedial and non-remedial students in terms of their EPT status, and then further divided into subgroups of passing and failing based on their grades. See Methodological Note in box below.

Comparison group		Retention rates			Comparison+		Findings
Pre DSP courses in Fall 2005	DSP courses in Fall 2006 and 2007	Fall 2005	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2006 to Fall 2005	Fall 2007 to Fall 2005	
EPT remedial students							
Eng1LA Passing	Eng5A5B Passing	90.9% (363)	92.3% (479)	96.0% (549)	# increase	*** increase	**Findings:**
Eng1LA Failing	Eng5A5B Failing	52.3% (44)	86.2% (87)	74.1% (58)	*** increase	** increase	Eng 5A5B appears to have a positive effect on retention rates, especially among students who failed Eng 5B. This effect appears to be more evident for students who test into needing remediation.
Eng1LB Passing	Eng5A5B Passing	93.2% (336)	92.3% (479)	96.0% (549)		* increase	
Eng1LB Failing	Eng5A5B Failing	52.2% (69)	86.2% (87)	74.1% (58)	*** increase	** increase	
Eng1LA Passing	Eng10 Passing	90.9% (363)	86.8% (152)	92.4% (79)			
Eng1LA Failing	Eng10 Failing	52.3% (44)	63.3% (30)	57.1% (14)	# increase		
Eng1LB Passing	Eng10 Passing	93.2% (336)	86.8% (152)	92.4% (79)	** decrease		
Eng1LB Failing	Eng10 Failing	52.2% (69)	63.3% (30)	57.1% (14)	# increase		
Eng1LA Passing	Eng5A Passing	90.9% (363)	90.3% (589)	91.9% (627)			
Eng1LA Failing	Eng5A Failing	52.3% (44)	51.4% (111)	57.9% (133)			
Eng1LB Passing	Eng5A Passing	93.2% (336)	90.3% (589)	91.9% (627)			
Eng1LB Failing	Eng5A Failing	52.2% (69)	51.4% (111)	57.9% (133)			
EPT non-remedial students							
Eng1Only Passing	Eng5A5B Passing	89.9% (386)	94.9% (177)	94.4% (124)	* increase	# increase	
Eng1Only Failing	Eng5A5B Failing	46.7% (30)	85.7% (35)	50.0% (12)	*** increase		
Eng1Only Passing	Eng10 Passing	89.9% (386)	86.0% (222)	91.8% (147)			
Eng1Only Failing	Eng10 Failing	46.7% (30)	39.1% (23)	44.4% (18)			
Eng1Only Passing	Eng5A Passing	89.9% (386)	92.0% (226)	87.0% (146)	# increase		
Eng1Only Failing	Eng5A Failing	46.7% (30)	40.0% (25)	44.0% (18)			

+ The comparison baseline is Fall 2005 cohort. This baseline was chosen for two reasons: first, it is the cohort closest to the change over to the DSP; second, the retention rate of this cohort approximates the average of the past five cohorts in terms of university-wide retention rates. Chi-square tests are applied to identify significant differences. Used Fisher's Exact test for small groups of failing students. *, ** and *** mean significant differences at the level of 0.1, 0.05 and 0.01. Blank cells mean no significant differences. # means the differences may be of practical significance even though not statistically significant, considering that it counters the university-wide retention trend. In one case, the finding nears statistical significance (0.132) and is very similar in magnitude to the first DSP cohort finding (Eng 1Only Passing to Eng 5A5B Passing in Fall 2007).

DSP began
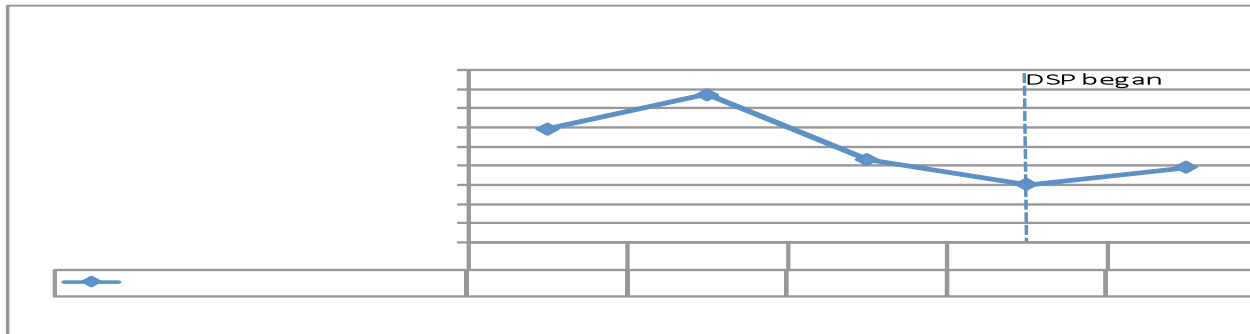
Methodological note:
The overall retention rate of students taking English courses parallels the university's full time freshmen retention rate. Consequently, the comparison groups in this table were developed in an attempt to separate potential program effects from the overall trend.

2. Comparison of Passing Rates

Comparison group		Passing rates			Comparison*		Findings
Pre DSP courses (Fall 2005)	DSP Course (Fall 2006 and Fall 2007)	Fall 2005	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2006 to Fall 2005	Fall 2007 to Fall 2005	
EPT remedial students							In the first year of DSP implementation, the passing rates significantly decreased for multiple groups. Passing rates of students who tested into remediation and only enrolled in Eng 5A were lower than for the comparable group that enrolled in English 1LA. In the 2nd year, students needing remediation who completed English 5A5B passed at higher rates than comparable students who took English 1 LB in the pre-DSP program.
Eng1LA	Eng5A5B	89.2% (407)	84.6% (566)	90.4% (607)	** decrease		
Eng1LB		83.0% (405)	84.6% (566)	90.4% (607)		*** increase	
Eng1LA	Eng10	89.2% (407)	83.5% (182)	84.9% (93)	* decrease		
Eng1LB		83.0% (405)	83.5% (182)	84.9% (93)			
Eng1LA	Eng5A	89.2% (407)	84.1% (700)	82.5% (760)	** decrease	*** decrease	
Eng1LB		83.0% (405)	84.1% (700)	82.5% (760)			
EPT non-remedial students							
Eng1Only	Eng5A5B	92.8% (416)	83.5% (212)	91.2% (136)	*** decrease		
	Eng10	92.8% (416)	90.6% (245)	89.1% (165)			
	Eng5A	92.8% (416)	90.0% (251)	89.0% (164)			

* The comparison baseline is Fall 2005 cohort. Chi-square tests are applied to identify significant differences and *, ** and *** mean significant differences at the level of 0.1, 0.05 and 0.01. Blank cells mean no significant differences.

References:

Royer, Daniel J. and Roger Gilles. *Directed Self-Placement*, Hampton Press, Incorporated (March 1, 2003)

Janice Chernekoff, "*Introducing Directed Self-Placement to Kutztown University*", Chapter 6, *Directed Self-Placement*

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David Blakesley, Erin J. Harvey, Erica J. Reynolds, "*Southern Illinois University Carbondale as an Institutional Model: The English 100/101 Stretch and Directed Self-Placement*", Chapter 10, *Directed Self-Placement*

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Appendix: Technical report

1. **Student-course subgroup classification**

Program effects are usually small and can be difficult to detect given that so many factors influence the outcome of human and systems behavior. To detect potential effects of the DSP program, we developed comparison groups by controlling for the influences of remediation status, the type of DSP course chosen, and, for retention rates, passing or failing the course. Given that the differences in students' English proficiency level and the type of English courses taken by students may affect the evaluation of DSP program effects, students are first broken down into two groups of remedial and non-remedial students in terms of their EPT status, and then further broken down into different course subgroups as below. In evaluating the effect of DSP program on the retention rate, students are further broken into two groups of passing and failing based on their grades received.

Student classification:
Remedial students: consists of students who tested into remediation based on their EPT status. In pre-DSP English, these students enrolled in Eng 1 along with a lab (Eng 1LA or 1LB). In the DSP program (beginning Fall 2006), they can enroll in either Eng 10 or the Eng 5A5B sequence.
Non-remedial students: consists of students whose EPT status does not require remediation. In pre-DSP English, these students usually took Eng 1. In the DSP program, they can enroll in either Eng 10 or Eng 5A and 5B.

Course classification
Pre_DSP course groups:
Eng 1 Only: consists of freshmen who took Eng 1 and no lab in fall 2004 or 2005.
Eng 1 LA: consists of freshmen who took Eng 1 and Lab A in fall 2004 or 2005.
Eng 1 LB: consists of freshmen who took Eng 1 and Lab B in fall 2004 or 2005.
DSP course groups:
Eng 10 (accelerated option of DSP program): consists of freshmen who enrolled in Eng 10 in fall 2006 or 2007.
Eng5A5B (stretched option of DSP program): consists of freshmen who enrolled in Eng 5A in fall 2006 or 2007 and then took Eng 5B the following semester.
Eng 5A: consists of freshmen who enrolled in Eng 5A in fall 2006 or 2007.