

Start Strong Policy Evaluation Series – Policies 1 & 4: Placement Testing and Enrollment in Developmental English Fall 2013 through Fall 2016

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Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success Initiatives

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OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT SUCCESS INITIATIVES

The purpose of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success Initiatives is to conduct analytical studies and provide information in support of institutional planning, policy formulation, and decision making. In addition, the office provides leadership and support in research related activities to members of the NOVA community engaged in planning and evaluating the institution's success in accomplishing its mission.

When citing data from this report, the Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success Initiatives must be cited as the source.

4001 Wakefield Chapel Road
Annandale, VA 22003-3796
(703) 323-3129
www.nvcc.edu/oir

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Introduction

I. Background

In Fall 2014, as part of NOVA's efforts to increase student success, NOVA enacted six policy changes based on recommendations by NOVA's Achieving the Dream Core Team. Five of these policies apply only to students in NOVA's GPS for Success population: first-time to college (FTIC) students between the ages of 17 and 24.¹ The sixth policy is for all NOVA students.

GPS for Success: Teaching and Learning Through Advising focuses on the Goals, Plans, and Strategies that students must develop to attain their academic objectives and promotes early engagement, class readiness, student preparedness, and goal attainment. By targeting the GPS population, these five policies are designed to promote a strong academic start for FTIC students at NOVA.

Students in this group must:

1. Take placement tests before registration.
2. Attend Student Orientation before registration.
3. Meet with their advisor before registration.
4. Enroll in developmental courses during the first semester, if placed.
5. Complete a Student Development (SDV) course within the first 15 credits at NOVA.

The sixth policy impacts *all* NOVA students:

6. Register before 11:59 p.m. the day before the session begins.

II. Policies 1 & 4: Placement Testing and Enrollment in Developmental English

This Report is part of a series examining the impact of these policy changes on student outcomes and focuses on Policy 1: Take placement tests before registration, and Policy 4: Enroll in developmental courses during the first semester, if placed.

This report presents outcomes for developmental English only. Outcomes for developmental math are presented in a separate report.

Students come to NOVA for many reasons including earning a degree, entering a new career field, or transferring to a four-year university. NOVA strives to provide students with every opportunity to succeed. Step one is evaluating each student's college readiness via the required English and math placement tests. If the tests show that a student needs developmental courses, that student is required to complete those courses during their first semester of college.

Section 1 of this Report presents data on compliance with the policies, and Section 2 presents outcomes, such as success in developmental English. Lastly, Section 3 explores the demographic characteristics of developmental English students.

¹ Excludes transient students and students who are members of the College Pathway Initiative.

Summary of Findings

Students are arriving at NOVA relatively well-prepared for college-level English. Around 80 percent of GPS students complied with the policy to sit for the Virginia Placement Test in English (VPT-English) and less than 30 percent of these students were placed into developmental English. Furthermore, most students qualified to enroll in the highest level of developmental English (ENF 3), a course that allows co-enrollment in college-level English. The majority of students who enrolled in developmental English in their first semester successfully completed their course in their first try.

Compliance with Placement Testing and Enrollment Policies

- The percentage of students who complied with the English placement testing policy increased from 73 percent in Fall 2013 and has since then fluctuated around 80 percent.
- The percentage of students who took the placement test and placed into developmental English decreased from 30 to 22 percent between Fall 2013 and Fall 2016.
 - Around two-thirds of students placed into developmental English were placed into the highest level, ENF 3.
- The percentage of placed students who enrolled in developmental English during the first semester stayed stable at around 82 percent.

Outcomes by Compliance with Placement Testing and Enrollment Policies

Success in Developmental English

- Most students (65 to 67 percent) successfully completed their developmental English course in their first semester. However the lower-level courses (which are worth a higher number of credits) were associated with lower success rates.
 - ENF 1, a course worth 8 credits, generally had the lowest success rates (between 39 and 58 percent).
 - ENF 3, a course worth 2 credits had the highest success rate across all cohorts (70 to 72 percent).

Success in Credit Courses

- Placed students who enrolled in developmental English during the first semester had a higher success rate in credit courses than students who did not.
- In Fall 2016, the group of students who enrolled in developmental English had a 54 percent success rate in credit courses. In comparison, the success rate among placed students who did not enroll in developmental English was 46 percent.

Demographic Characteristics of the Fall 2016 Cohort

- While about 10 percent of White students and 11 percent of Asian students enrolled in developmental English, 16 percent of Hispanic students, and 23 percent of Black students enrolled.

Section 1: Compliance with Placement Testing and Developmental Enrollment Policies

A. Compliance with English Placement Testing Policy

- With the implementation of the policy in Fall 2014, the proportion of the cohort that took the VPT-English increased from 73 to 80 percent but has fluctuated since then.

Students who score high enough on the SAT, ACT, GED, or TOEFL iBT tests are exempt from taking the Virginia Placement Test in English (VPT-English). Between Fall 2013 and Fall 2016, the proportion of exempt GPS students increased but remained below 7 percent. This report focuses only on those students who were required to take the VPT-English, and these students are referred to as the English Placement Test Cohort.

Table 1. English Placement Test Cohorts: Fall 2013 through Fall 2016

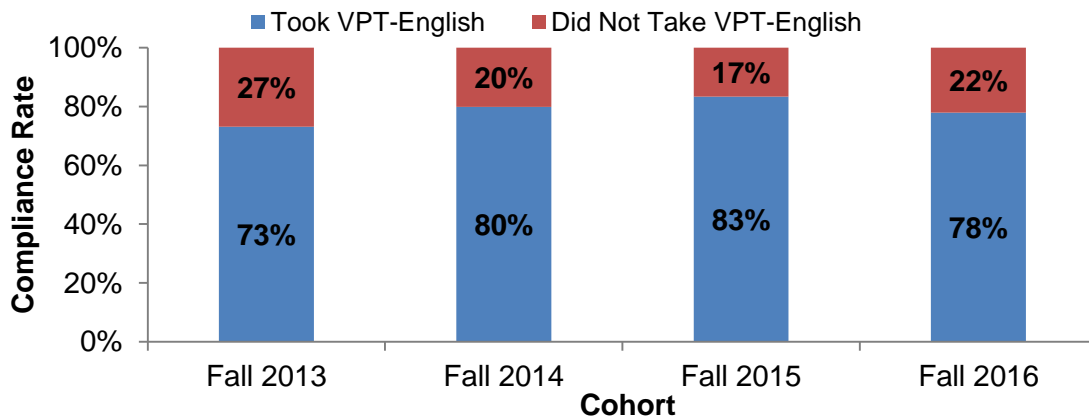
Cohort	Fall 2013 Cohort		Fall 2014 Cohort		Fall 2015 Cohort		Fall 2016 Cohort	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
English Placement Test Cohort	4,705	96.1	4,878	94.9	5,102	94.2	5,238	93.1
<i>Exempt from VPT-English</i>	190	3.9	264	5.1	316	5.8	391	6.9
Total GPS Population	4,895	100.0	5,142	100.0	5,418	100.0	5,629	100.0

In Fall 2013, 73 percent of the English Placement Test Cohort sat for the VPT-English. Once the policy was implemented in Fall 2014, the rate at which students took the VPT-English increased to 80 percent and has ranged between 78 and 83 percent since then.

**Table 2. Compliance with English Placement Testing Policy:
Fall 2013 through Fall 2016 Cohorts**

Compliance Status	Fall 2013 Cohort		Fall 2014 Cohort		Fall 2015 Cohort		Fall 2016 Cohort	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Took VPT-English	3,439	73.1	3,898	79.9	4,251	83.3	4,080	77.9
Did Not Take VPT-English	1,266	26.9	980	20.1	851	16.7	1,158	22.1
English Placement Test Cohort	4,705	100.0	4,878	100.0	5,102	100.0	5,238	100.0

**Figure 1. Compliance with English Placement Testing Policy:
Fall 2013 through Fall 2016 Cohorts**



B. Placement in Developmental English

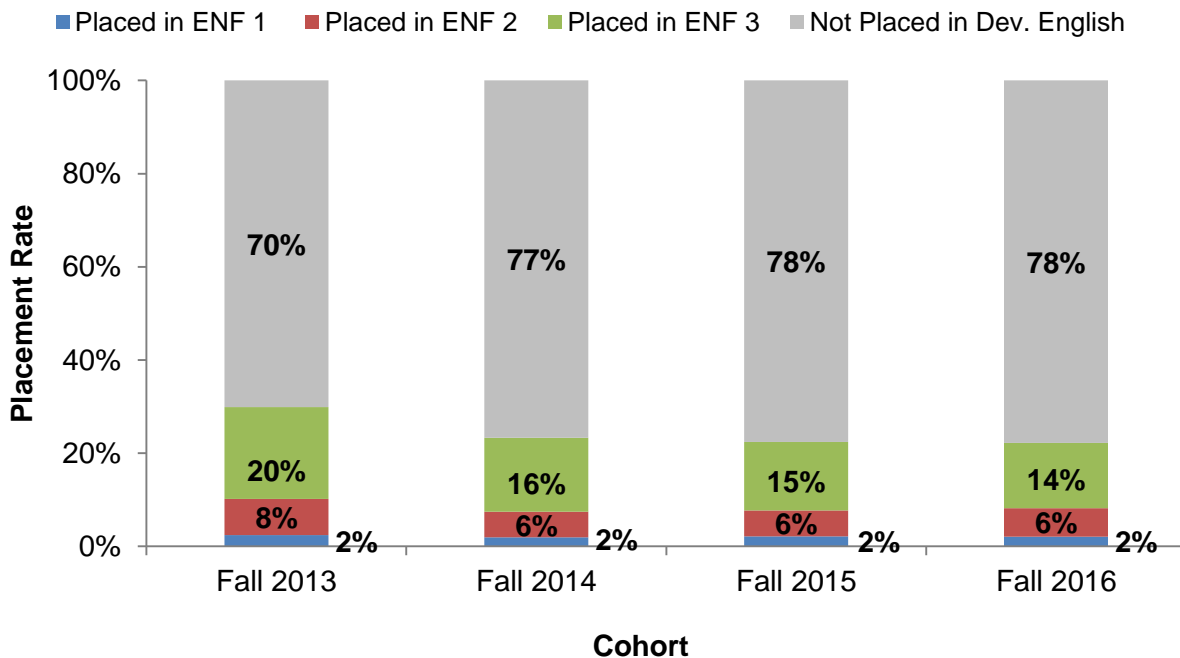
- The rate at which students have been placed into developmental English decreased from 30 percent in Fall 2013 to 22 percent in Fall 2016.

There are three developmental English courses: ENF 1 (8 credits), ENF 2 (4 credits), and ENF 3 (2 credits). Students placed in ENF 3 may be allowed to co-enroll in college-level English (see Figure 7 of the Appendix). Across the cohorts, between 70 and 78 percent of students were not placed in developmental English and another 14 to 20 percent were placed in ENF 3. As such, it appears that only around 8 percent of students who took the VPT-English were wholly unprepared for college-level English (placed below ENF 3).

Table 3. Developmental English Placement of Students Who Took the VPT-English: Fall 2013 through Fall 2016 Cohorts

Developmental English Placement	Fall 2013 Cohort		Fall 2014 Cohort		Fall 2015 Cohort		Fall 2016 Cohort	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Placed in Dev. English	1,028	29.9	909	23.3	953	22.4	903	22.1
ENF 1	83	2.4	74	1.9	88	2.1	85	2.1
ENF 2	269	7.8	214	5.5	238	5.6	248	6.1
ENF 3	676	19.7	621	15.9	627	14.7	570	14.0
Not Placed in Dev. English	2,411	70.1	2,989	76.7	3,298	77.6	3,177	77.9
Total (Who Took VPT-English)	3,439	100.0	3,898	100.0	4,251	100.0	4,080	100.0

Figure 2. Developmental English Placement of Students by Course: Fall 2013 through Fall 2016 Cohorts



C. Compliance with Developmental English Enrollment Policy

- Despite the policy implementation in Fall 2014, there was no marked increase in the rate at which placed students enrolled in developmental English. Between Fall 2013 and Fall 2016, enrollment rates remained stable, around 81 to 82 percent.

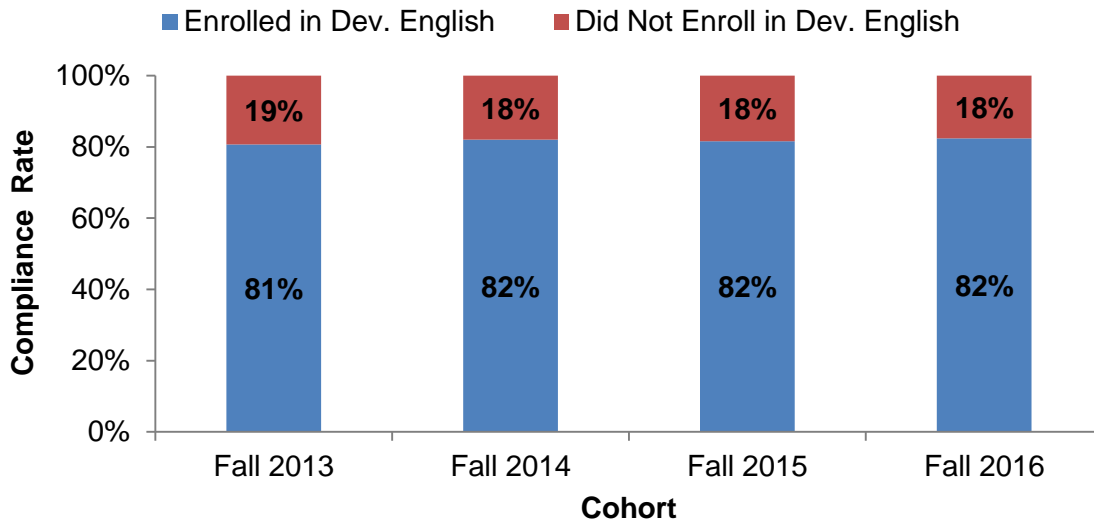
Regarding those placed students who enrolled in developmental English, approximately two-thirds enrolled in ENF 3, 24 to 27 percent enrolled in ENF 2, and under 10 percent enrolled in ENF 1 (see Table 5).

**Table 4. Compliance with Developmental English Enrollment Policy:
Fall 2013 through Fall 2016 Cohorts**

Compliance Status*	Fall 2013 Cohort		Fall 2014 Cohort		Fall 2015 Cohort		Fall 2016 Cohort	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Enrolled in Developmental English	830	80.7	745	82.0	778	81.6	744	82.4
Did Not Enroll in Developmental English	198	19.3	164	18.0	175	18.4	159	17.6
Total Placed in Developmental English	1,028	100.0	909	100.0	953	100.0	903	100.0

*Enrollment in developmental English is taken as a proxy for compliance for this policy. Actual compliance may involve additional parameters.

**Figure 3. Compliance with Developmental English Enrollment Policy:
Fall 2013 through Fall 2016 Cohorts**



**Table 5. Enrollment in Developmental English by Course:
Fall 2013 through Fall 2016 Cohorts**

Course	Fall 2013 Cohort		Fall 2014 Cohort		Fall 2015 Cohort		Fall 2016 Cohort	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
ENF 1	62	7.5	62	8.4	60	7.7	59	7.9
ENF 2	217	26.2	178	24.0	189	24.3	201	27.0
ENF 3	550	66.3	502	67.7	529	68.0	484	65.1
Total Enrolled in Developmental English	829	100.0	742	100.0	778	100.0	744	100.0

Note: There is one missing value in Fall 2013 and three missing values in Fall 2014.

Section 2. Outcomes by Compliance with Placement Testing and Developmental Enrollment Policies

A. Success in Developmental English

- Overall, between 65 to 67 percent of the cohort that enrolled in developmental English successfully completed their course in the first semester.
- Generally, the lower the level of developmental English in which students enrolled, the less likely they were to succeed in developmental English.

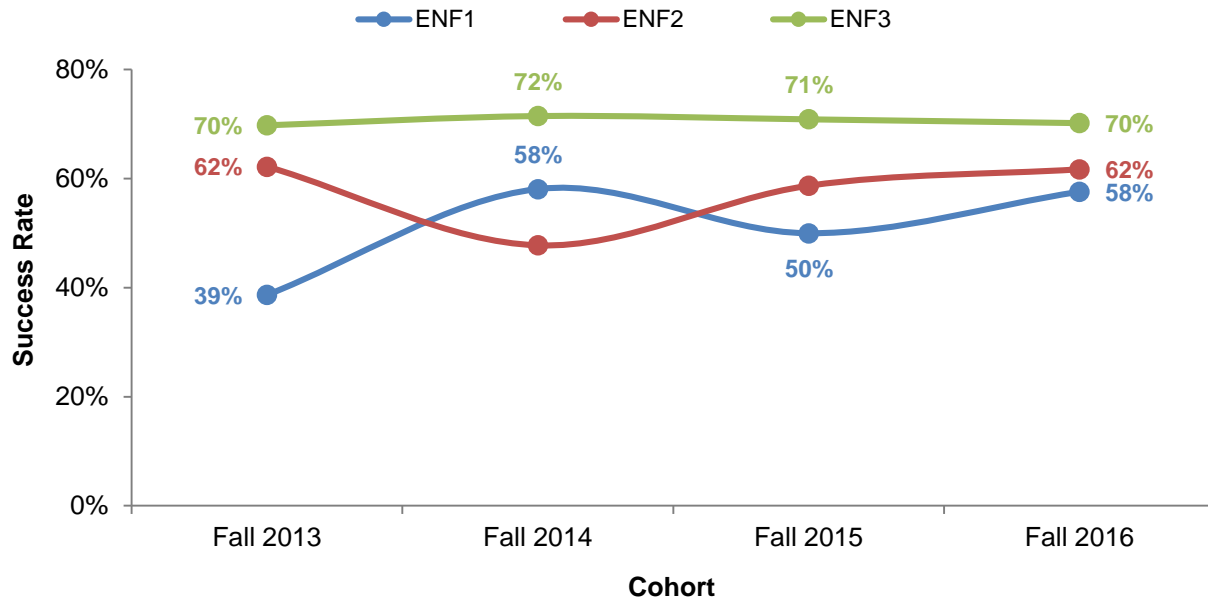
As shown in Figure 4, ENF 1 (8 cr.) typically had the lowest success rates. However, success in this course increased from 39 percent in Fall 2013 to 58 percent in Fall 2014 and has fluctuated between 50 and 58 percent since then. ENF 3 (2 cr.) had the highest success rate in all years and remained stable around 70 to 72 percent.

**Table 6. Success in Developmental English by Course:
Fall 2013 Through Fall 2016 Cohorts**

Course	Fall 2013 Cohort			Fall 2014 Cohort			Fall 2015 Cohort			Fall 2016 Cohort		
	N	Successful		N	Successful		N	Successful		N	Successful	
		#	%		#	%		#	%		#	%
ENF1	62	24	38.7	62	36	58.1	60	30	50.0	59	34	57.6
ENF2	217	135	62.2	178	85	47.8	189	111	58.7	201	124	61.7
ENF3	550	384	69.8	502	359	71.5	526	373	70.9	484	340	70.2
Total	829	543	65.5	742	480	64.7	775	514	66.3	744	498	66.9

Note: "N" includes students who withdrew from the course. Additionally, from the "Enrolled in Developmental English" subtotals in Table 4, there is 1 missing value in Fall 2013, and 3 missing values in Fall 2014 and Fall 2015.

**Figure 4. Success in Developmental English by Course:
Fall 2013 Through Fall 2016 Cohorts**



B. Success in Credit Courses

- The overall success rate in credit courses increased from 52 to 54 percent among students who enrolled in developmental English.
- The overall success rate in credit courses decreased from 50 to 46 percent among students who did not enroll in developmental English.

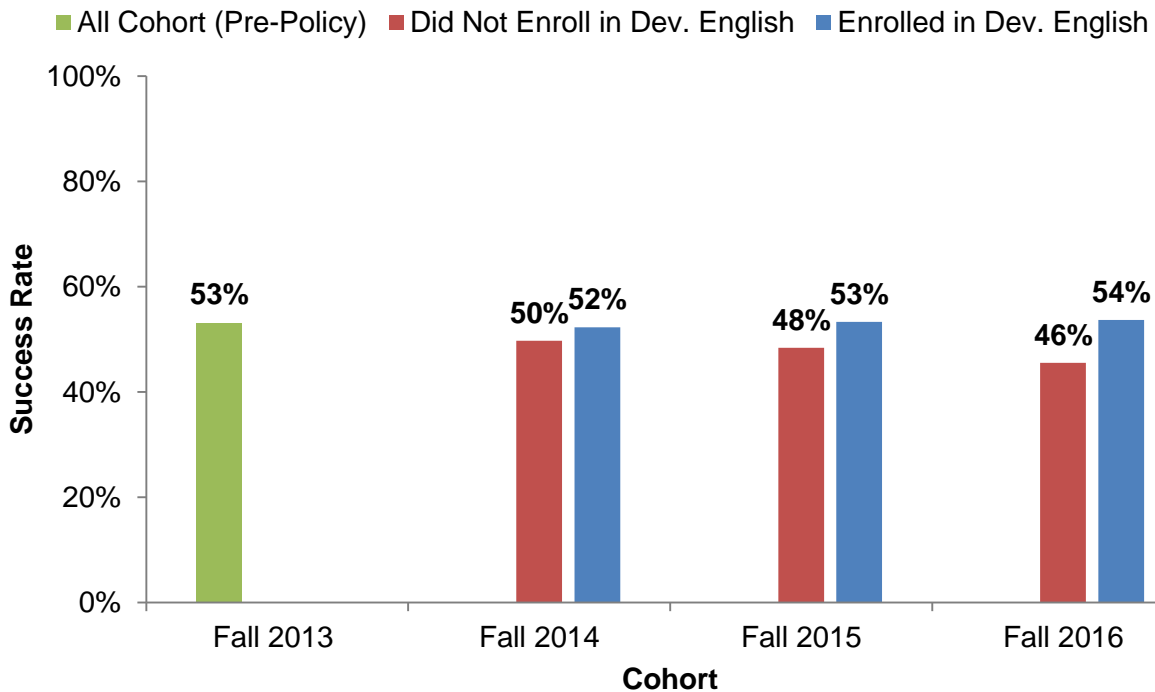
Success in a credit course is defined as earning a grade of “C” or higher. As shown in Table 7 and Figure 5, in each cohort from Fall 2014 through Fall 2016, students who enrolled in developmental English were slightly more successful in credit courses than students who did not. Over time, the percentage point difference in success between the groups has increased in favor of students who enrolled in developmental English.

Table 7. Success in Credit Courses by Compliance with Developmental English Enrollment Policy: Fall 2013 through Fall 2016 Cohorts

Course Outcome	Fall 2013 Cohort		Fall 2014 Cohort				Fall 2015 Cohort				Fall 2016 Cohort			
			Did Not Enroll in Dev. English		Enrolled in Dev. English		Did Not Enroll in Dev. English		Enrolled in Dev. English		Did Not Enroll in Dev. English		Enrolled in Dev. English	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Success	2,218	53.2	229	49.7	1,681	52.3	217	48.4	1,785	53.3	192	45.5	1,738	53.7
Fail	1,952	46.8	232	50.3	1,532	47.7	231	51.6	1,567	46.7	230	54.5	1,500	46.3
Total	4,170	100.0	461	100.0	3,213	100.0	448	100.0	3,352	100.0	422	100.0	3,238	100.0

Notes: Earning a grade of ‘C’ or higher is considered an indicator of success in credit courses. Students in each cohort who did not enroll in any credit courses in the fall semester are excluded. Missing/audit courses are not included.

Figure 5. Success in Credit Courses by Compliance with Developmental English Enrollment Policy: Fall 2013 through Fall 2016 Cohorts



Section 3. Demographics

In order to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of students enrolled in developmental English, the demographics of the Fall 2016 cohort are presented in this section.

Demographics

- Male and female GPS students enrolled in developmental English at relatively similar rates, about 13 percent.
- Around 10 percent of White GPS students and 11 percent Asian GPS students enrolled in developmental English. In comparison, 16 percent of Hispanic students and 23 percent of Black students enrolled in developmental English.

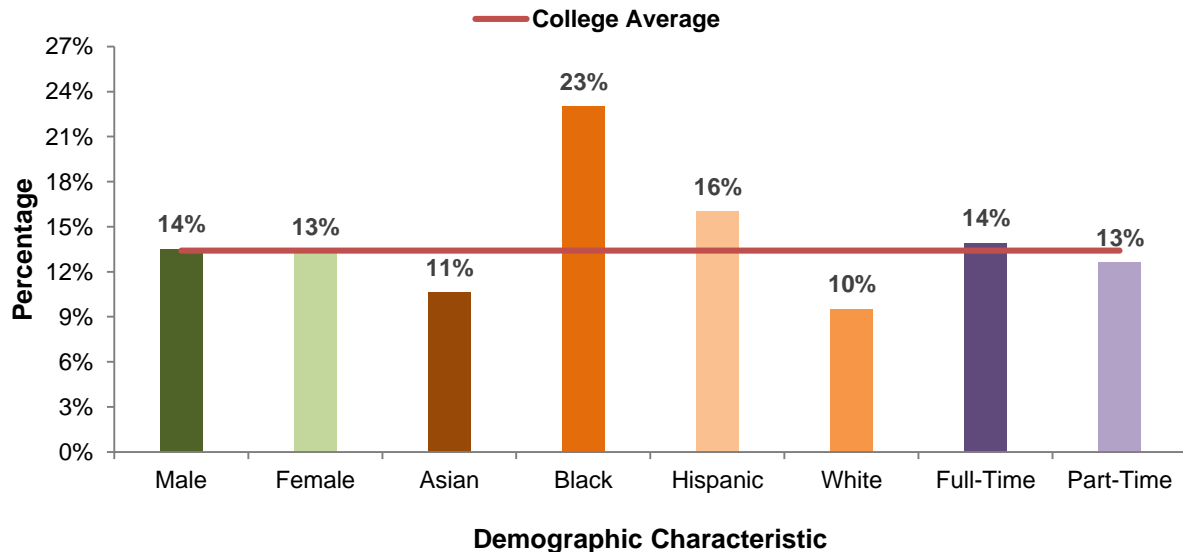
**Table 8. Demographics of GPS Students Enrolled in Developmental Courses:
Fall 2016 Cohort**

Demographic Characteristic	Total GPS Cohort	Enrolled in Developmental English	
		#	%
Gender			
Male	3,053	413	13.5
Female	2,483	331	13.3
Race/Ethnicity			
Asian	827	88	10.6
Black/African American	836	192	23.0
Hispanic	1,435	229	16.0
White	2,017	191	9.5
Enrollment Status			
Full-time	3,526	491	13.9
Part-time	2,010	253	12.6
Total	5,536	744	13.4

Source: IRIS

Note: From the GPS total cohort in Table 1, there are 93 missing values.

Figure 6. Proportion of GPS Students Enrolled in Developmental English by Various Demographics: Fall 2016



APPENDIX: Progression Through Developmental English

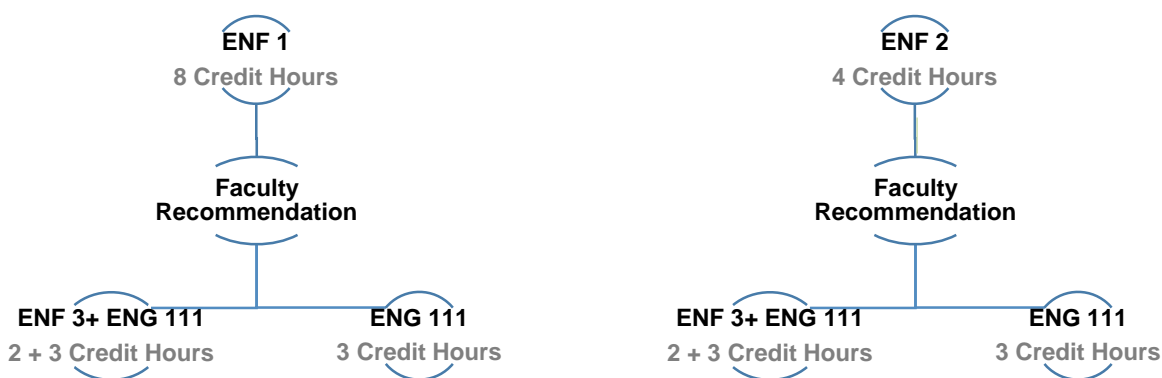
Students who test into developmental English via the Virginia Placement Test (VPT-English) have demonstrated the need to improve their basic academic skills to prepare for college-level English courses. The redesigned sequence of developmental English courses integrates the teaching of reading and writing skills.²

Students can enter the developmental English sequence at three levels, depending on their English Placement Test score:

- ENF 1 Preparing for College English I, an eight-credit course;
- ENF 2 Preparing for College English II, a four-credit course;
- ENF 3 Preparing for College English III, a two-credit course that is co-enrolled with ENG 111, College Composition I, the entry-level college composition class.

After students **pass either the ENF 1 or the ENF 2 courses**, teachers will recommend them either to the **ENF 3 class co-enrolled with credit-level English (ENG 111)**, or to the **ENG 111 class without ENF 3**.²

Figure 7. Progression through Developmental English to College-Level English



² Source: NOVA Developmental English Program webpage. Available at <http://www.nvcc.edu/academics/developmental/english.html>

NOVA Mission and Strategic Goals

Mission

With commitment to the values of access, opportunity, student success, and excellence, the mission of Northern Virginia Community College is to deliver world-class in-person and online post-secondary teaching, learning, and workforce development to ensure our region and the Commonwealth of Virginia have an educated population and globally competitive workforce.

Strategic Goals

- I. **STUDENT SUCCESS** – Northern Virginia Community College will move into the top tier of community colleges with respect to the college readiness, developmental course completion, retention, graduation, transfer, and career placement of its students.
- II. **ACCESS** – Northern Virginia Community College will increase the number and diversity of students being served to mirror the population growth of the region.
- III. **TEACHING AND LEARNING** – Northern Virginia Community College will focus on student success by creating an environment of world-class teaching and learning.
- IV. **EXCELLENCE** – Northern Virginia Community College will develop ten focal points of excellence in its educational programs and services that will be benchmarked to the best in the nation and strategic to building the College's overall reputation for quality.
- V. **LEADERSHIP** – Northern Virginia Community College will serve as a catalyst and a leader in developing educational and economic opportunities for all Northern Virginians and in maintaining the quality of life and economic competitiveness of the region.
- VI. **PARTNERSHIPS** – Northern Virginia Community College will develop strategic partnerships to create gateways of opportunity and an integrated educational system for Northern Virginians who are pursuing the American Dream.
- VII. **RESOURCES** – Northern Virginia Community College will increase its annual funding by \$100 million and expand its physical facilities by more than one million square feet in new and renovated space. This includes the establishment of two additional campuses at epicenters of the region's population growth, as well as additional education and training facilities in or near established population centers.
- VIII. **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS** – Northern Virginia Community College will be recognized as a leader among institutions of higher education in Virginia for its development and testing of emergency response and continuity of operation plans.

NOVA

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