

Report to the Student Success Coordinating Committee

**Basic Skills Instruction
at
Saddleback College**

Fall 2015

Submitted by the Completion, Persistence, and Retention Workgroup

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Student Success Coordinating Committee Charge and the Saddleback College Strategic Plan

The Student Success Coordinating Committee (SSCC) is expected to “coordinate and recommend policies, procedures and programs related to student success in the areas of student preparation and learning at Saddleback College.” In Fall 2015, the Completion, Persistence, and Retention (CPR) workgroup of the SSCC has addressed two interrelated action steps in the college’s Strategic Plan:

2.1.1 Perform a comprehensive review of current student needs, capture rates, and achievement gaps from a student perspective for face-to-face and online instruction.

2.1.2 Establish and implement a plan that promotes student completion of their basic skill courses as outlined in their educational plan.

Summary of the Workgroup’s Findings Concerning Basic Skills Programs

The CPR workgroup’s review of basic skills “achievement gaps,” documented by the Community College Data Mart Basic Skills Tracker and research from the Office of Matriculation, reveals an ongoing record of disappointing achievement at Saddleback.

Data analysis and collegial, interdepartmental evaluation show that basic skills instruction does not fully prepare students for success in college level courses. BSI cohorts complete the college level courses in small numbers – with repeated attempts necessary for completion. Basic skills students comprise the majority of students placed on academic probation.

The workgroup’s findings indicate that several institutional and instructional factors are responsible for Saddleback’s record in basic skills, including support for the needs of basic skills students, institutional policies, departmental curriculum, and teacher training.

Summary of the Workgroup’s Recommendations

In the report that follows, the CPR workgroup addresses the barriers to success for basic skills programs at Saddleback and makes multiple recommendations for strategic improvement – in some cases, department-specific solutions. Several overarching departmental and institutional steps are essential:

- Each department with a basic skills program should review data indicating what percentage of its basic skills students, starting 1, 2, or 3 levels below transfer, are passing its college-level course.
- Using that information, each department should initiate a comprehensive review of its basic skills course offerings, consulting instructional and pedagogical research from state and national experts for innovative approaches to instruction and curriculum.
- Basic skills departments should contextualize their instructional materials, so that courses are relevant to the future academic and work-related goals of our undergraduates.
- Student support, which must address the affective and academic needs of our students, should be increased at all levels of basic skills instruction.
- Basic skills departments should take advantage of the many programs available on campus (i.e., personal tutoring and mentoring, embedded tutoring, accelerated instruction, Early Alert, Refresh, first-year Counseling courses, and AVID), which currently offer additional instructional strategies and personal support.
- Increased training and professional development should be provided on campus for basic skills instructors.

The committee believes that Saddleback faculty and administration have an ethical obligation to reconstitute and revitalize basic skills instruction on our campus. As an open-enrollment college, we must provide wide-ranging, innovative support to ensure all of our students’ success.

Basic Skills Progress Tracker Results

Fall 2012- Fall 2015

This data is available at http://datamart.cccco.edu/Outcomes/BasicSkills_Cohort_Tracker.aspx

English- Writing (2 levels below)

Report Data & Format Area									
Report Area									
Fall 2012-Fall 2015									
	+ Two Levels Below Transfer			+ One Level Below Transfer			+ Transferable		
	Students	Attempts	Success	Students	Attempts	Success	Students	Attempts	Success
[-] Saddleback Total									
English - Writing	395	418	308	261	293	231	197	359	167

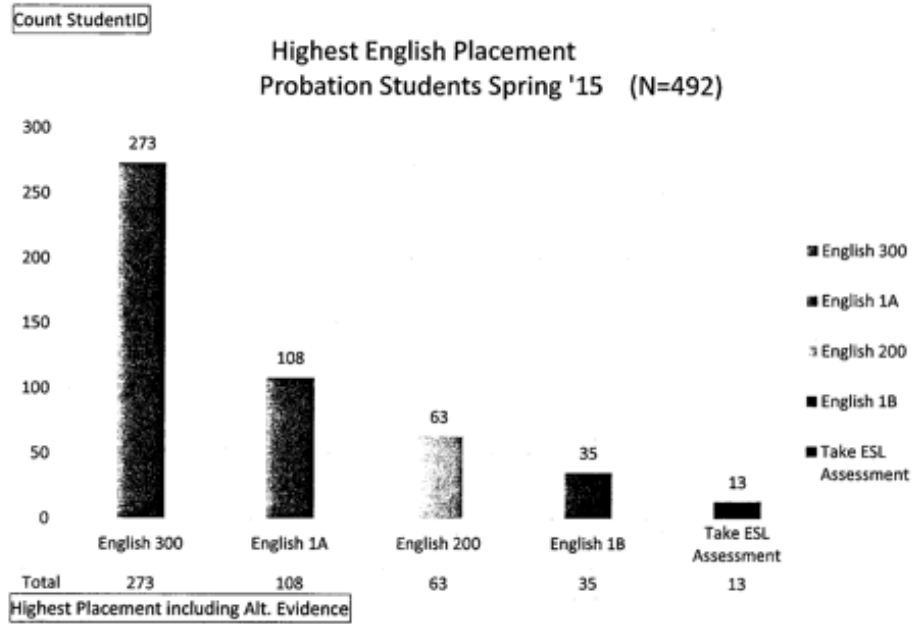
- Two levels below completion = 78% and on average 1.04 attempts
- One level below completion for total cohort = 58% and on average 1.12 attempts
- Transfer level completion for total cohort = 42% and on average 2.01 attempts

Mathematics (3 levels below MATH 351)

Report Data & Format Area									
Report Area									
Fall 2012-Fall 2015									
	+ Three Levels Below Transfer			+ One Level Below Transfer			+ Transferable		
	Students	Attempts	Success	Students	Attempts	Success	Students	Attempts	Success
[-] Saddleback Total									
Mathematics	549	664	354	311	639	177	57	88	32

- Three levels below completion = 64% and on average 1.2 attempts
- One level below completion for total cohort = 32 % and on average 2.05 attempts
- Transfer level completion for total cohort = 6% and on average 1.5 attempts

**Last Two Years Test Placement
Probation Students**



Data Source: SOCCCD inFORM Data Warehouse
Prepared by J. Perez on 08.03.15

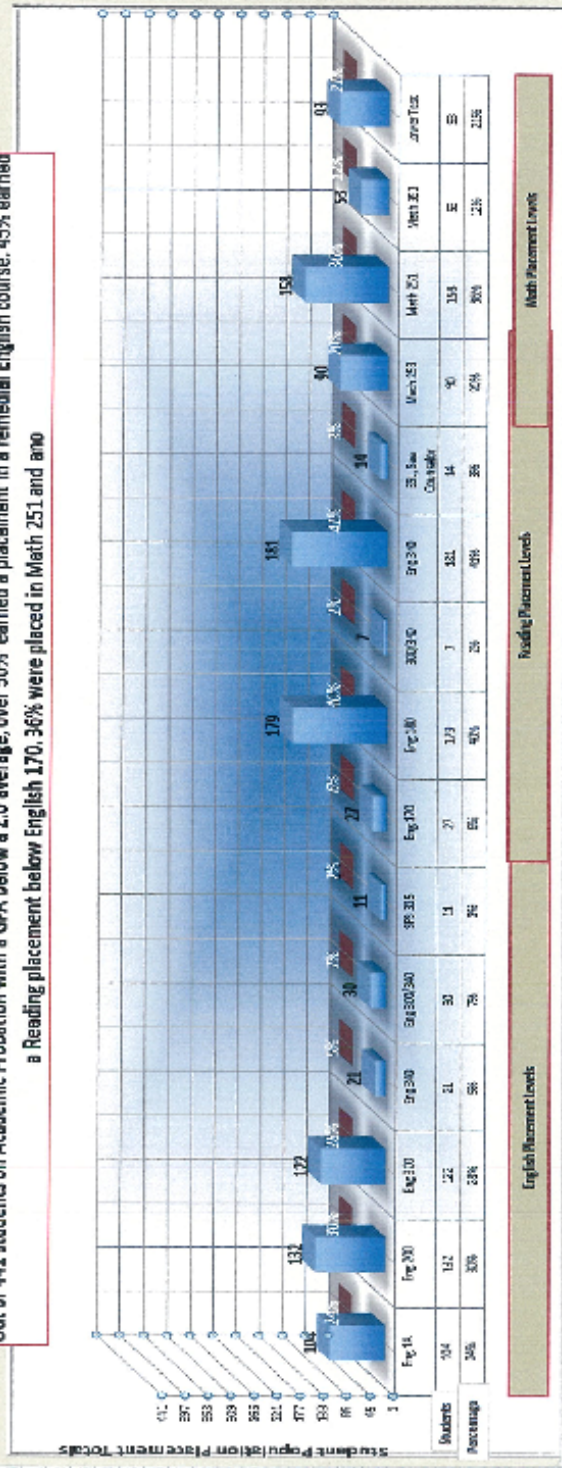
Presented to the Student Success Literacy Committee on 3/1/15

Prepared by Penny Skaff & Matt Miller

Eng 1A	Eng 200	Eng 340	Eng 360/340	SPS 325	Eng 170	Eng 180	300/240	Eng 149	ESL	See Counselor	Math 253	Math 251	Math 351	Inventory Test
104	132	122	21	30	11	27	179	7	181	14	90	158	53	93
24%	30%	28%	5%	7%	2%	6%	40%	2%	41%	3%	20%	36%	12%	21%

Student Probation Data | Spring 2013

Out of 441 students on Academic Probation with a GPA below a 2.0 average, over 50% earned a placement in a remedial English course. 45% earned a Reading placement below English 170. 36% were placed in Math 251 and ano



Student Factors Related to Basic Skills Instruction

There are a number of factors that affect the completion, persistence, and success of students enrolled in basic skills classes. Several of these needs can be addressed on campus by our faculty and staff; other needs demand strengthened partnerships with local communities and schools.

Academic Preparedness Lack of reading, writing, mathematical, and critical thinking skills were the historical impetus for the BSI movement a decade ago. Today, a majority of our students continue to arrive on campus without college-level capabilities – but campus data tells us that our success rates with underprepared students have not increased markedly in the past ten years, indicating that curriculum and pedagogy for basic skills must change. Equally important, relationships with high schools must be strengthened, so that our college expectations are communicated clearly to high school students, counselors, teachers, and administrators. Departmental Professional Learning Communities must encourage reforms in high school curriculum that will address college academic standards.

Recommended Solutions: High School Student Preparation

- Provide all stakeholders -- students, parents, high school teachers, counselors -- with accurate, easily accessible information about college preparedness for specific courses and careers.
- Publicize Saddleback's academic standards.
- Ensure that appropriate high school courses in the senior year align with general education/BSI courses.
- Advocate dual and concurrent enrollment for all students.
- Increase the number and availability of placement test preparation courses at high school and on our own campus.
- Establish summer reading programs.
- Offer prospective students tours of campus resources: library/LRC and counseling, health, and transfer offices.
- Increase the high school math requirement from two years to four years at feeder high schools.
- Establish an "opt out" for parents to release a student from junior and senior year math.
- Establish a senior math curriculum that reinforces preparation for community college common math assessment.

Addressing the "Whole Student" Research shows that the most successful college developmental programs are those that deal with the holistic development of the student, addressing metacognitive, affective, and social aspects of student growth, as well as cognitive learning. Basic skills instructors note that essential motivation to succeed is oftentimes lacking, because the student does not have a clear idea of how college works, including the degree of personal responsibility necessary to fulfill attendance and assignment requirements. Students enrolled in basic skills classes are often deficient in organizational skills and academic study strategies, which are essential for success in the college environment. In short, developmental students often face the challenge of learning "how to be a college student."

Financial Literacy Often students lack the knowledge of how to pay for college -- books and supplies, as well as tuition. Many basic skills students have multiple commitments to work and family, so they opt for part-time enrollment. These students sometimes experience disruption in education due to life events, childcare issues, or transportation problems. Students must be aware of the financial responsibilities that come with an education -- not only what loans and scholarships are available, but also how financial decisions and commitments impact one's future wellbeing. "Financial literacy" is essential.

Recommended Solutions: Student Behavioral and Affective Needs

- Increase Student Services presence in the classroom: schedule regular, mandatory, in-person visits from counseling, advising, and transfer services representatives to basic skills classes.
- Provide Links to Student Services through syllabi and course listings on Blackboard and MySite.
- Create an awareness of the types of support available for students who are experiencing personal and academic problems. Instructors and staff must know where to refer students for all types of support.
- Utilize student mentors to assist first-semester basic skills students in navigating the college environment.
- Implement First Year Experience programs with workshops on academic behaviors for success.
- Utilize embedded tutors to model academic behaviors and educational practices.
- Institute training and workshops for counselors to deal with the issue of “math anxiety” in order to better support students.
- Establish a collaborative math tutoring/mentoring opportunity that includes collaboration with counseling for students to “talk” about their math fear/anxiety.
- Create a Saddleback College campaign that desensitizes math. It is unacceptable for students, counselors, and instructors to accept the attitude “I am not good at math.”
- Incentivize full time registration.
- Prioritize “just-in-time” advising through Early Alert.
- Increase financial literacy workshop availability face-to-face and online.

Contextualized Instruction Since the content of many basic skills classes is not contextualized or linked to the “real world” of work, career, or discipline-area courses, students often do not see the relevance of developmental learning. The RP Group asserts that contextualized learning “enhances student motivation and helps to translate often abstract concepts into concrete examples.” It is essential that departments teaching basic skills classes review their curriculum, so that contextualized instruction is embedded in instruction.

Recommended Solutions: Student Instructional Needs

- Incorporate the principles of contextualized learning into basic skills course materials.
- Encourage departments offering basic skills courses to work with discipline areas across campus, so that the principles taught in the basic skills can be applied to content courses.
- Develop curriculum in all BSI courses that promotes career awareness, skills, and access.
- Ensure that Basic Skills courses utilize Carnegie units.
- Institutionalize the BSI Math Tutoring Center. This is a separate location in the LRC for our basic skills students. Students can go to this center without feeling intimidated by our higher level math students. The tutor/student ratio is higher, so students receive more attention, which minimizes their frustration.
- Expand and institutionalize Basic Skills Embedded tutoring program, with the aim of having an embedded tutor in every Math 351 and 353 class. This implementation targets both social and academic barriers, so that students connect with their class tutor and are linked to campus resources. The embedded tutor enables students to seek help and assistance, enabling a proactive approach to success in math classes.

Faculty Factors Related to Basic Skills Instruction

Faculty Recruitment and Assignment Basic skills instruction is a specialized field with a wealth of resources and guidance available. However, many of our basic skills courses are taught by faculty with little to no training in basic skills education, who may use a "skills and drills," decontextualized approach to learning. Compounding this problem, a large number of basic skills classes are taught by adjunct instructors, whose teaching commitments at multiple campuses limit their availability to Saddleback students. Recruiting and retaining well-qualified adjunct faculty to teach basic skills courses are continuing challenges at Saddleback College.

Division assignment statistics confirm the lack of full-time faculty invested in basic skills instruction. According to the *2014 Mathematics Program Review*, "The ratio of full-time to part-time faculty members teaching Beginning Algebra and Intermediate Algebra is about 3:5 and for Pre-Algebra the ratio is about 3:13. This is significant, as approximately 60% of students enrolled in math classes are in Pre-Algebra, Beginning Algebra, or Intermediate Algebra. *Primarily part-time instructors are teaching the classes with the most at-risk students.*"

In Spring 2016, seven of fifteen English 300 sections and 31 of 38 English 200 sections will be taught by adjunct instructors.

Faculty Training Saddleback College does not provide or mandate regular professional development for its full-time or part-time basic skills faculty. Instructors are not paid for professional development training on campus, except for isolated special events. Faculty do not have regular and frequent opportunities to discuss and refine teaching pedagogy with their colleagues.

Recommended Solutions: Faculty Needs and Responsibilities

- Hire more full-time faculty with specializations in developmental education to design and teach basic skills courses.
- Recruit qualified adjunct instructors and incentivize long-term teaching at Saddleback.
- Incentivize professional development opportunities in basic skills education to all faculty who teach basic skills courses.
- Establish mentorship programs for new faculty teaching basic skills courses.
- Offer frequent opportunities within departments and divisions for collaborative discussion and reflection aimed at addressing "the whole student's" needs.

Departmental and Divisional Factors Related to Basic Skills Instruction

Curriculum Basic skills courses often delay students' progress through programs of study, sometimes indefinitely. Two key statistics underscore the fact that developmental courses have little impact in increasing student success rates and preparing them for transfer-level work. At Saddleback, almost 7 in 10 of our students on academic probation were placed in our developmental sequence. Between the Fall 2012 and Fall 2015 semesters, only 40% of students placed in English 300 successfully completed English 1A – and completion of the sequence required an average of 2 attempts per student.

Basic skills courses often have little connection to students' college-level coursework, further removing students from interesting and practical content that will engage them in academic life and motivate them to achieve their academic goals. The curriculum of these courses must be redesigned to offer better alignment with college-level coursework and programs of study. Basic Skills courses must engage students in rigorous, relevant, and thinking-oriented curriculum.

Recommended Solutions: Department and Division Curriculum

- Address the variety of Saddleback data regarding completion of college-level coursework for students who begin in developmental programs.
- Revise basic skills course curriculum to follow the theory of “backwards design.”
- Create basic skills courses that offer the essential critical thinking, reading, and writing skills needed for college-level coursework.
- Recognize the value of academic tutoring and advocate for its increased use in developmental courses.

Approach to Undergraduate Education Currently, the “silo approach” to basic skills education predominates at Saddleback College. Departments teach basic skills courses in isolation, with insufficient attention to the overarching academic and personal needs of its students.

Critical thinking and “soft skills” must be featured in developmental courses and in programs of study, so that transfer, certificate, and CTE students are fully prepared for the rigors of continuing education and the workplace.

Cooperation between departments, divisions, and areas is essential to incorporate the many innovative approaches to learning that are currently practiced on our campus and throughout the state.

Recommended Solutions: Department and Division Approaches to Undergraduate Education

- Increase cooperation between departments, divisions, and areas to promote innovative approaches currently practiced on our campus and throughout the state.
- Align basic skills courses closely with programs of study, recognizing that each semester of remediation a student is required to complete constitutes a potential barrier to completion.
- Ensure that all programs of study feature curricular and pedagogical objectives aimed at increased student awareness, maturity, social engagement and commitment.

Institutional Factors Related to Basic Skills Instruction

While faculty appear at the forefront of the discussion surrounding basic skills instruction, our collective of institutional members – all our administration, staff, and faculty -- can play a vital role in the improvement and the evolution of basic skills instruction.

Resource Allocation Developmental education has not received the financial support needed to make impactful change. Current prioritization of college resources, plus a funding model that discourages the modification or the reconfiguring of basic skills programs, makes it all but impossible for our institution to encourage change in basic skills offerings. Even when a successful program has been identified, institutionalizing that project can be challenging. While there is a shared governance process at Saddleback for prioritizing successful BSI pilot projects, limited general funds make it difficult to institutionalize noteworthy programs.

Resources from the state are equally lacking. California’s Basic Skills Initiative, which was launched almost 10 years ago, does not provide our institution with enough funding to substantially impact BSI statistics. With over 2000 basic skills students enrolled in the Fall 2015 semester, Saddleback received a total of \$127,500 to improve basic skills instruction for the *entire academic year*.

In fact, the state’s current funding model discourages improvement of basic skills instruction. Saddleback’s enrollment, including its enrollment in basic skills courses, directly impacts state funding. Even with low success rates, basic skills courses increase state funding allocations. This funding model discourages an honest analysis of basic skills success rates, especially since community colleges have struggled to rebound since the 2008 financial crisis and now contend with enrollment decline.

Recommended Solutions: Institutional Resources

- Prioritize basic skills programs and instruction requests during the resource allocation process.
- Fund professional development opportunities for basic skills faculty.
- Support institutional research efforts which track and report progress of basic skills students and programs.
- Encourage innovation in BSI curriculum, best practices, and course modification.
- Assist with cross discipline conversations relating to basic skills instruction.

Placement Saddleback’s placement policies do not ensure course or program completion. A majority of our students place into at least one basic skills course. Research shows that developmental course sequences create exponential attrition through multiple exit points. The Community College Research Center recognizes the danger of exit points, arguing that, “lengthy developmental sequences give students multiple opportunities to drop out. Many students -- even those who perform well in their developmental courses -- withdraw before they reach college-level courses.”

Student underplacement must be addressed. Placement policies, including measures of academic preparation for college-level work, need to be revised, acknowledging that the chances for long-term student success are significantly improved when students are placed in college-level courses.

Recommended Solutions: Placement

- Revise placement policies to align with research-based policies that create the largest gains in student completion of college-level coursework.
- Incorporate multiple measures in placement policies as indicators of college readiness.
- Align curriculum and pedagogy with our K-12 partners, with particular emphasis on English and mathematics.