MyFoundationsLab / MyWritingLab

School Name	Grand Rapids Community College, Grand Rapids, MI
Course Name	FastTrack/OnTrack Program
Course Format	Lab-based; emporium; modular; non-credit-based remediation

Key Results 78 percent of referred students have completed the English and Reading FastTrack/OnTrack programs, and 70 percent of those students successfully retested on the Accuplacer and placed out of developmental education, thus saving $505,800 in tuition and 52,266 contact hours.

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Course materials
Reading: MyFoundationsLab
Writing: MyWritingLab

Setting

Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) is an urban, public institution currently enrolling 15,700 undergraduate students annually on one main campus and four satellite locations. In fall 2014, 32.2 percent of students attended school full-time, Hispanic students comprised 9.9 percent of the student body, and African-American students 10.8 percent.[1]

As part of an on-going commitment to student success, GRCC joined the Achieving the Dream initiative in 2010 to identify new strategies to improve student success. Throughout its 100-year history, GRCC has maintained a solid reputation as a premier transfer institution and is nationally recognized for both its liberal arts and occupational programs.

Challenges and Goals

In fall 2011, 51 percent of the entering class needed developmental education, and 48 percent of students taking developmental courses were successful in moving on to credit-bearing courses. Improving the success and retention rates for students placing into developmental education has long been a goal at GRCC. In 2012, we created FastTrack with the support of a U.S. Department of Education Title III grant. The FastTrack program is designed to help First-Time In Any College (FTIAC) students bypass developmental education with an emphasis on retention and completion.

The goals of the FastTrack program are to:

- Achieve a FastTrack completion rate of 70 percent or higher.

- Achieve a FastTrack success rate (bypassing developmental course) of 60 percent or higher.

- Reduce the incidence of developmental education from the 2011 rate of 51 percent.

- Increase retention of FastTrack students over non-Fast-Track developmental students.

- Increase the college-wide retention rate.

- Increase the success rate for students in any developmental education course over the 2011 rate of 48 percent.

Implementation

FastTrack is an intensive three-week, 14-hour per week learning lab in which students remediate English, reading, or math skills through a combination of web-based and tutor-guided activities. Reading FastTrack labs use MyFoundationsLab and English labs use MyWritingLab (as of summer 2015). We selected Pearson MyLabs because of their ability to accelerate skill building and provide personalized, mastery-based learning.

The FastTrack program includes two levels of coursework: Fast-Track and OnTrack. FastTrack is for students falling at the high end of the developmental spectrum/placement score. OnTrack is for students who are squarely in the developmental range. Eligible students are referred to the FastTrack program at either the FastTrack or OnTrack level once they have completed the Accuplacer exam. The program is free for new students who have at least one score that falls within the required ranges (Table 1).

We offer three different start dates for summer FastTrack courses, and one each in the spring and fall semesters. In the summer, 550–600 students enroll, in fall 100–120, and in spring

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[1] http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2014/11/grcc_charts.html

Across the institution, we have reduced the number of developmental courses by 38 sections, and we calculate that revenue has increased by more than $300,000 by way of retention.

Subject	Accuplacer Score Range	Developmental Score	College-Ready Scores	Target Scores for FastTrack (FT) / OnTrack (OT)*
Reading	0-120	0-70	71-120	55-70 (FT); 40-52.4 (OT)
English	0-8	0-4	5-8	4 (FT) 3 (OT)

Table 1. Accuplacer Scores for Students Referred to the FastTrack Program

40–50. Students may only enroll in one lab at a time. Each Fast-Track lab has an enrollment capacity of 22 students. Students attend lab Monday through Thursday for 3-1/2 hours each day for three weeks. Highly-trained professional tutors act as session facilitators. Within the context of the review session, the facilitators play a guiding role, answering clarifying questions about the program and general concepts, rather than providing answers to content-related questions.

Reading: The reading review session focuses on reading comprehension, vocabulary skills, and fluency. The content of MyFoundationsLab has been modified to cover thirty-seven topics/course objectives.

English: The English session focuses on the following topics: sentence skills, punctuation, mechanics, spelling, usage and style, and the craft of writing. The content of MyWritingLab has been modified to cover twenty-five topics/program objectives.

On the first day of the session, students take the Path Builder diagnostic in the MyLab and begin to master topics based on their Path Builder results. Students must gain mastery (80 percent or higher) in all required topics.

A typical day involves a brief question and answer period, two hours of work in the MyLab, and two 30-minute discussions or activities—led by the facilitator—to help students better understand the material. Students must also demonstrate proper Cornell note-taking skills in the course. During every session, students take notes on the content and turn them in for the facilitator to review.

In addition to working in the MyLab, students are required to:

- Attend a one-on-one conference with the lab facilitator to review work.
- Work with a college success coach (follow-up/monitoring, classroom visits).

- Attend a new student orientation.
- Complete the financial aid application process (if applicable).
- Complete a student success plan with an advisor or counselor.
- Complete the "Roadmap to Success" (a pre-semester checklist).
- Take an affective assessment.

Students complete the course by taking the Mastery Check in the MyLab and are then eligible to retake the Accuplacer exam for that subject. If a student's score falls into the college-ready range (Table 1), he or she can then move directly into college-level courses. Students do not earn credit for the FastTrack program. The incentive to participate is the opportunity to bypass developmental education, saving a substantial amount of time and money.

Results and Data

The FastTrack program (including OnTrack) has shown great promise at GRCC. Since 2012, 1016 students have been recruited for the English and Reading programs, and 789 students have finished—a 78 percent completion rate. About 10 percent of students finish the program early (in the second week). Of 789 completers, 552 were successful in their retake of the placement test and were able to avoid one or more developmental education course, a success rate of 70 percent (Table 2).

The FastTrack program specifically targets First-Time In Any College (FTIAC) students. Between 2012–2014, FTIAC students comprised 62 percent of all students needing developmental education ($N = 8,164$). Of these 5,089 FTIAC students, 20 percent ($n = 1,013$) were served by the FastTrack program.

While the primary objective of the FastTrack program is to lower the incidence of students needing to take developmental

Program	Subject	Students Recruited	Students Completing	Completion Rate	Successful Students*	Success Rate
FastTrack	English	548	418	76%	300	72%
	Reading	292	241	83%	155	64%
OnTrack	English	85	57	67%	54	95%
	Reading	91	73	80%	43	59%
TOTAL		1,016 students	789	78%	552	70%

Table 2. FastTrack and OnTrack Results, 2012–2015 (English/Reading only) *Please note:* The success rate is calculated based on the number of students completing the program who re-tested on the Accuplacer and placed out of developmental education.

education courses, a secondary goal—for students who don't test out after the three-week program—is to increase the eventual success rate of students who do take developmental education courses. We believe the FastTrack and OnTrack programs have played a part in achieving these goals to date (Figure 1). Each year, the percent of students needing developmental education has decreased while the percent of students succeeding in developmental education courses has increased subsequent to participating in the FastTrack program (Figure 2).

Since implementing the program, students have saved 52,266 contact hours and $505,800 for bypassing placement into developmental education. Additionally, financial aid eligibility has been extended to these students. The program has also benefitted students by giving them experience with the culture and environment of college.

Across the institution, we have reduced the number of developmental courses by 38 sections. We calculate, using the Noel-Levitz Retention Revenue Estimator, that revenue has increased by more than $300,000 by way of retention.

The Student Experience

Though FastTrack has been well received by our students, many continue to face challenges despite access to the FastTrack program, including socioeconomic challenges, test anxiety, and awareness and understanding of the placement test and developmental education program.

Ninety-four percent of students who completed English/Reading FastTrack/OnTrack courses responded to our survey about their experience at the end of the summer 2015 session. Figure 3 highlights summary data from this survey.

The following quotes highlight specific feedback on Pearson MyLabs from the student survey:

- "They [the modules] caught me up on a lot of things I forgot."

- "The fact that it was easy to get on to from any computer was wonderful. I enjoyed working on the modules at home."
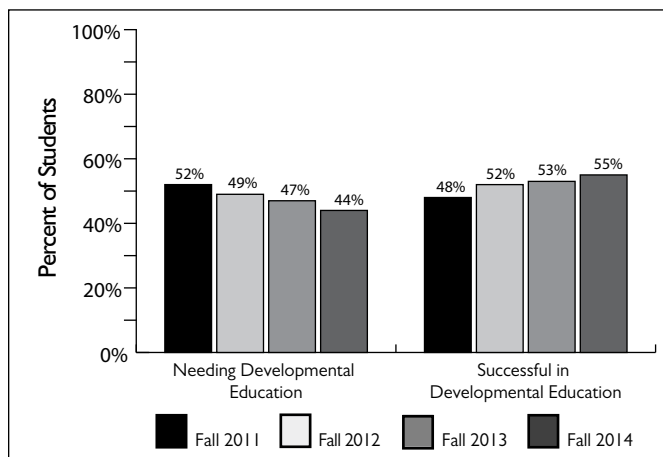

Figure 1. Percent of All Students (Not Just FTIAC) Needing Developmental Education and Percent of Students Successful in Developmental Education (English, Reading, and/or Math): Fall 2011 ($n = 3,231$) Fall 2012 ($n = 2,813$) Fall 2013 ($n = 2,923$) Fall 2014 ($n = 2,428$)
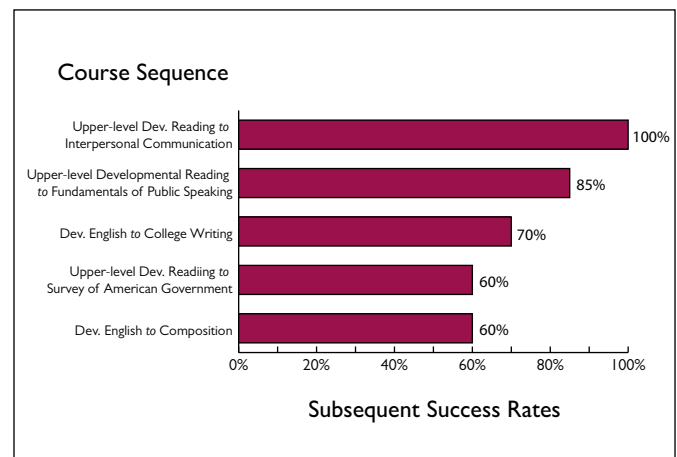

Figure 2. Developmental Course Success Rates for FastTrack Students, 2012–2014. From top to bottom ($n = 9$); ($n = 13$); ($n = 126$); ($n = 20$); ($n = 55$)
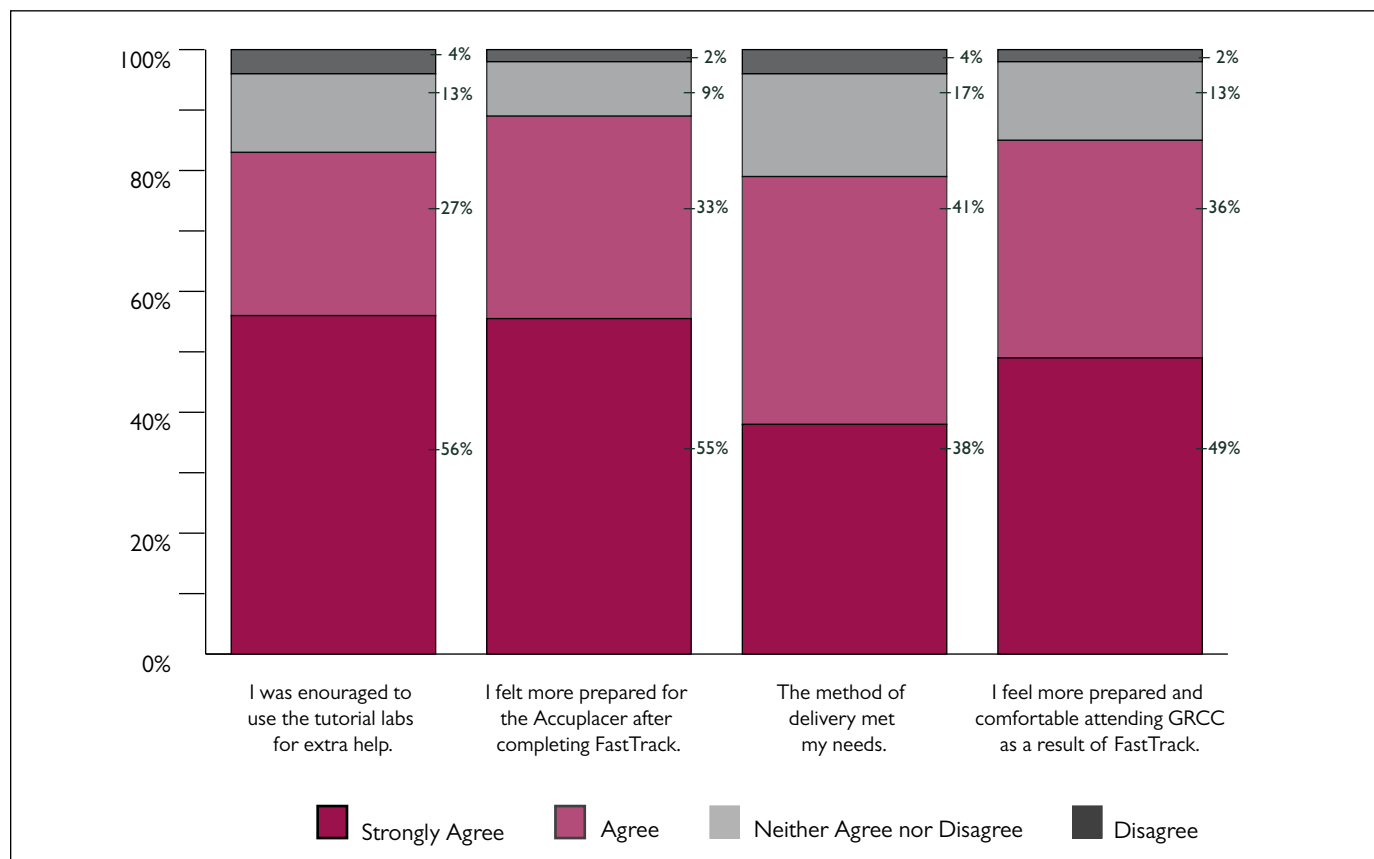
Figure 3. Student Survey Responses for English and Reading FastTrack Programs, Summer 2015 (*n* = 254)

- "I enjoyed the modules and how I could re-do them if I got something wrong and (then do) it better the next time."

- "I loved the fact that there were videos to watch and the quizzes along with them."

- "My favorite part of the FastTrack program was the modules. The modules not only helped me so much in understanding the basics of writing but also helped by breaking down each little thing in an essay. They also helped because I could get them done at the time I wanted."

Conclusion

FastTrack could be adapted at other institutions. At GRCC, the per-student cost for a three-week session averages $104. This cost includes a professional tutor to facilitate the session, a peer tutor to assist, Accuplacer retake cost, software, and materials.

Although our Title III grant expires in September 2016, it is our intent to institutionalize this program. We are already paying for some of the program costs, but we see this as a valuable investment.

For more information on the FastTrack program, please visit:
http://www.grcc.edu/collegesuccesscenter/fasttrackontrackprogram
http://www.grcc.edu/communications/press/grccsfasttrackprogramreceivesnationalaward

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N = total number of learners

Implementation and results case studies share actual implementation practices and evaluate possible relationships between program implementation and student performance. The findings are not meant to imply causality or generalizability within or beyond these instances. Rather, they can begin to provide informed considerations for implementation and adaptation decisions in other user contexts. For this case study, mixed-methods designs were applied, and the data collected included qualitative data from interviews, quantitative program usage analytics, and performance data. Open-ended interviews were used to guide data collection.

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