

# Research & Analysis

A service of the division of Strategic Planning & Analysis, Institutional Research & Grants, and Management Information Systems, **October 2009**

## STUDENT SUCCESS: EXITING COLLEGE PREPARATORY READING

In 2008 the Board of Trustees reaffirmed nine planning initiatives of strategic importance for Hillsborough Community College to pursue. The first is a charge to “increase the college preparatory course completion rate in *reading* to the state average” among our First Time in College (FTIC) students. This is also one of the long-standing Accountability Measures used by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) to evaluate the effectiveness of the 28 institutions within the Florida College System (FCS). The data are shared locally in our annual [Critical Success Factor](#) report.

This brief will present our historical performance on the measure; report recent findings; and present partial evidence of the effectiveness of an alternate method used by the college for an accelerated early exit of select students out of prep reading and writing.

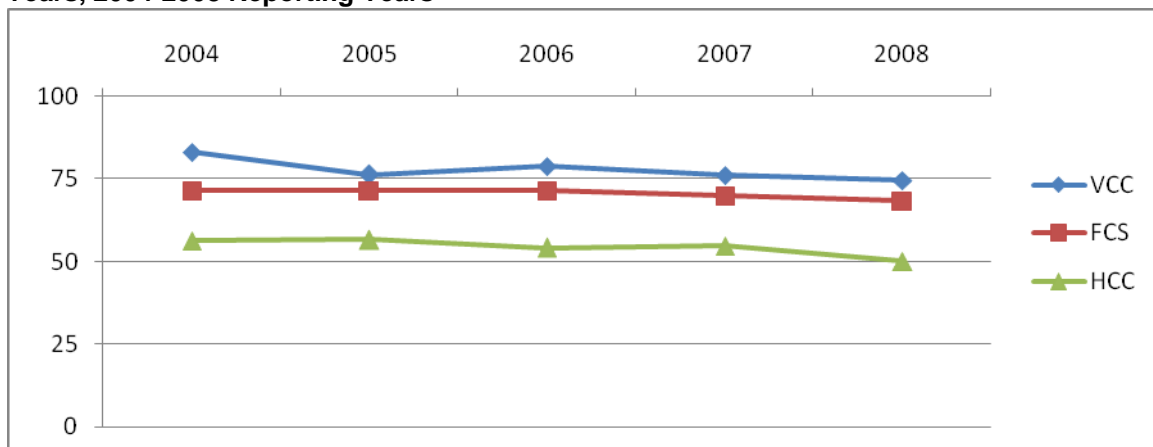
### The Measure

Performance on the Accountability Measure is detailed in the annual *College Preparatory Success Report* from the FDOE. For each area of prep (math, writing, and reading) the measure identifies degree-seeking students entering as First Time in College in a fall term that place into prep as determined by the College Placement Test (CPT). Students who enroll in a prep course are tracked and a percentage is calculated of those that complete all prep requirements within two years for each of the three areas. Consequently for a given “reporting year” (i.e. 2008), data are presented on the performance of the fall 2005 cohort following two years (i.e. 2005-06 and 2006-07 through summer 2007). The strategic initiative of the college addresses reading, thus this report will focus on that area.

### HCC Performance

For many years, HCC has been the lowest, or among the lowest, performing institution in the state as portrayed by the Accountability Measure for students in prep reading. Figure 1 below compares HCC performance with that of the FCS for five reporting years. As revealed in the graph, a strategic initiative to reach the state average will be challenging. By way of comparison, the performance of Valencia Community College is also displayed.

**Figure 1. Percentage of FTIC Cohort Passing all Prep Reading Requirements in Two Years, 2004-2008 Reporting Years**



Prior to the 2004 reporting year, HCC performance was at 73.3% passing which was equivalent to the state average at the time.

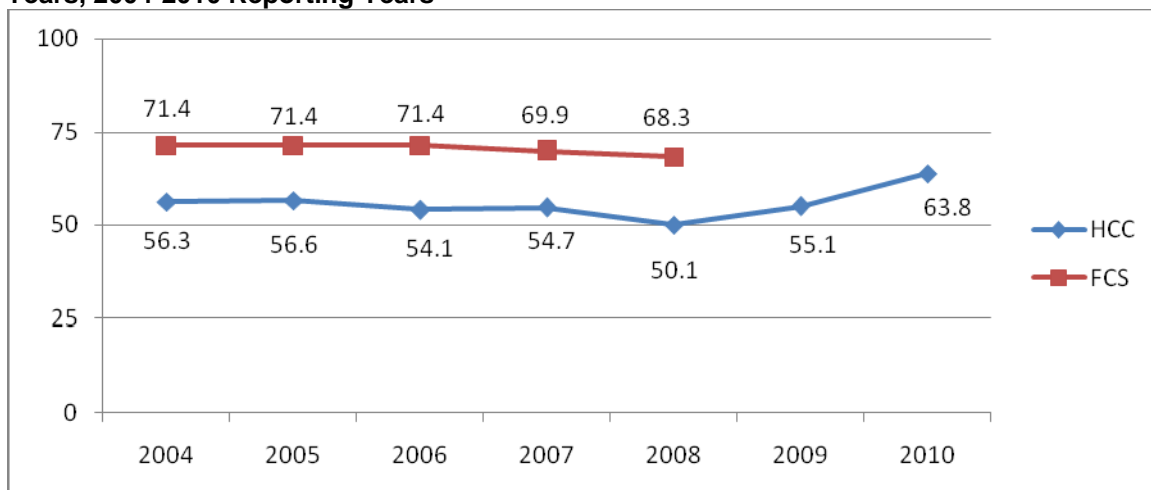
#### Recent Findings

The college has made efforts to improve student performance including a means to accelerate qualified students through prep reading. If a faculty member judges a student qualified, students completing the lowest level of prep reading may sit for the College Preparatory state exit exam. If the student passes they bypass enrollment in prep reading level two. This practice has expanded to four of the five campuses.

In the meantime, the departments of Management Information Systems and Institutional Research & Grants uncovered errors in programming used to report performance from the student database including those specific to prep reading performance. The final 2008-09 data certification for HCC during July of 2009 was flagged by the FDOE for anomalies in the reporting of prep students. The errors were attributed primarily to not accurately capturing exits from prep.

Programming changes were made to correct these errors; though due to the two year tracking period, the more accurate data will not be reported by the state until 2010. However, these data are available to the college. See figure 2 for prep reading performance as it will be displayed by the state for the 2009 and 2010 reporting years. The state averages for these years cannot be known at this time.

**Figure 2. Percentage of FTIC Cohort Passing all Prep Reading Requirements in Two Years, 2004-2010 Reporting Years**



Two observations can be made from figure 2:

1. Performance as reported in 2009 displays the first improvement since 2005; and
2. Performance as projected for 2010 will place the college within reach to achieve the state average, assuming it remains relatively constant.

#### The Acceleration Mechanism

Use of the accelerated early exit method holds promise in allowing students to more quickly enroll in their college level courses and advance toward graduation. However, the question arises, are the students truly prepared to be successful at college level in the absence of completing the entire sequence of developmental courses in prep reading?

Use of the acceleration method is practiced at all campuses except Ybor. Shown in table 1 are the success rates by campus of the fall 2007 cohort for those students placing in the lowest level of prep reading.

**Table 1. Percentage of FTIC Students Completing Prep Reading Requirements within Two Years Among those Placing in the Lowest Level, Fall 2007 Cohort**

<b>Campus</b>	<b># Placed &amp; Enrolled in Reading, Level One</b>	<b># Passed all Levels of Reading in Two Years *</b>	<b>Success Rate (# passed/# enrolled)</b>
Brandon	120	82	68.3
Dale Mabry	325	203	62.5
Plant City	40	26	65.0
SouthShore	15	10	66.7
Ybor City	86	45	52.3
<b>College</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>62.6</b>

\*Students passing represent those that either 1) complete prep reading levels one and two, or 2) complete level one, pass the state exit exam and bypass level two.

Next an examination is made of the GPA in English Composition I (ENC 1101) among those in the fall 2007 cohort that placed in the lowest level of prep reading. Specifically, a comparison is made of those completing the entire prep reading sequence (levels one and two) and those that complete prep reading requirements via the test following completion of level one. Important to note - students must read and write at the college level to enroll in the first college level English course (ENC 1101). Proficiency in writing is not controlled for in this examination. See table 2.

**Table 2. Comparison of ENC 1101 GPA Among Prep Reading Students Completing Reading Levels One and Two and Those Completing Level One and Passing the State Exam, Fall 2007 Cohort**

<b>Campus</b>	<b>Completed Levels 1 and 2</b>		<b>Completed Level 1 and Pass Test</b>	
	<b># Enrolled in ENC 1101</b>	<b>ENC 1101 GPA</b>	<b># Enrolled in ENC 1101</b>	<b>ENC 1101 GPA</b>
Brandon	59	1.95	18	2.79
Dale Mabry	135	2.31	49	2.30
Plant City	11	2.83	11	2.00
SouthShore	8	2.83	3	3.50
Ybor City	43	2.04	0	NA
<b>College</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>2.21</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>2.42</b>

For the college as a whole those that were permitted to take the state exam had a higher GPA (2.42) in ENC 1101 than those completing both reading levels (2.21). This is not entirely surprising given the screening required by the faculty. Nonetheless this does provide partial evidence that students are not disadvantaged by the accelerated exit and they receive the benefit of qualifying to enroll in college-level course at an earlier point in their academic careers. The continued expansion of this application holds promise for students and, in turn, achievement of an important strategic initiative.

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