NOVA | Northern Virginia Community College

# Mandatory Placement Testing and Enrollment in Developmental Courses Policy Implementation: Fall 2014

**Research Report No. 72-14**

**Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment**
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**NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH, PLANNING, AND ASSESSMENT**

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## Introduction

Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) enacted six policy changes in Fall 2014, including a mandate on placement testing and enrollment in developmental courses in the first semester at NOVA, if placed (see Table 1). Under the mandatory placement testing policy, first-time in college (FTIC) students are required to complete two placement tests[1]: one for English and one for mathematics. Students are to complete the placement exams before they begin classes. If students are placed into a developmental education course or courses, they are required to enroll in the course(s) during their first semester at NOVA. Developmental courses are for students who test below college-level, and are designed to provide the basic skills and knowledge necessary for success in college-level courses. Courses are offered in English and mathematics.

**Table 1. Six Policies Implemented at NOVA in Fall 2014**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Policy 1** | **Mandate placement testing for first-time in college students** |
| **Policy 2** | Mandate Student Orientation for first-time in college students |
| **Policy 3** | Mandate early advising for first-time in college students |
| **Policy 4** | **Mandate enrollment in developmental courses for first-time in college students during the first semester (if placed)** |
| **Policy 5** | Enforce current policy on Student Development (SDV) completion within the first year for first-time in college students |
| **Policy 6** | Mandate on-time registration for all students, requiring students register by 11:59 p.m. the day before the session begins |

This report seeks to assess the successfulness of the implementation of the mandatory placement testing policy and the mandatory enrollment in developmental education policy. In Fall 2014, NOVA focused its policy implementation and enforcement efforts on a subgroup of the FTIC population: GPS for Success Students. GPS students are defined as FTIC students, ages 17-24, including high school, homeschool, and GED graduates. This report outlines and compares data from Fall 2013 (the fall semester before the implementation of the policies) to data from Fall 2014 (the first semester in which the policies were implemented). However, such comparisons should be made cautiously and are of limited scope. For one, it cannot be assumed that the Fall 2013 cohort and the Fall 2014 cohort are statistically similar. Furthermore, the simultaneous implementation of the six policies makes it difficult to isolate and ascribe observed changes to any particular policy. For example, the concurrent implementation of the policy mandating students enroll in a Student Development course in their first year at NOVA may have placed constraints on students' ability, particularly part-time students with other commitments, to enroll in all required courses. Additionally, the on-time registration policy likely affected the ability of some students (who were late to register) to enroll in the appropriate developmental courses.

[1] Exemptions may apply—see the Testing section of NOVA's College Catalog 2014-2015.

## Findings and Recommendations

### *Developmental Math*

Between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014, there was a seven percent increase in the GPS population at NOVA and a 13 percent increase in the number of GPS students who took the math placement test. The percentage of GPS students taking the VPT-math increased at all campuses except for Loudoun at which the rate went from 62 percent in Fall 2013 to 52 percent in Fall 2014.

Between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014, the number of students in the GPS population who placed into developmental math increased by 21 percent (528 students). The proportion of GPS students placed into developmental math increased from 43 percent (2,459 students) in Fall 2013 to 46 percent (2,987 students) in Fall 2014

There is significant variation across NOVA campuses in the percentage of students being placed into developmental math. Of the students who took the VPT-math in Fall 2014, 41 percent of GPS students (497 students) at the Loudoun Campus were placed into a developmental math course while 59 percent (639 students) at the Woodbridge Campus were placed into a developmental math course.

The rate at which placed GPS students enrolled in developmental math increased from 62 percent (1,527 students) in Fall 2013 to 67 percent (2,001 students) in Fall 2014 and variation across campuses increased between 2013 and 2014.

On average there was little change between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014 in the composition of developmental math (MTT) and basic skills (BSK) courses taken by FTIC students who were placed in developmental math. The majority of students (59 percent, 1,290 students) enrolled in MTT 4 in 2014. Three percent (63 students) started their developmental math track at the lowest level, in BSK 1.

### *Developmental English*

Between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014, there was a nine percent increase in the number of GPS students (534 students) who took the Virginia Placement Test for English (VPT-English). Excluding MEC, each campus experienced an increase in the number of GPS students who took the VPT-English. Every campus except for Loudoun experienced an increase in the proportion of their GPS population who took the VPT-English.

Between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014, the number of students in the GPS population who placed into developmental English decreased by 15 percent (232 students). The percentage of GPS students placed into developmental English decreased from 26 percent (1,596 students) in Fall 2013 to 20 percent (1,364 students) in Fall 2014. The number and percentage of students placed in developmental English decreased at all campuses except for the Medical Education Campus (MEC) and Woodbridge (where the number increased but the proportion of test takers decreased).

The proportion of placed-students who enrolled in developmental English decreased by 4 percentage points from 80 percent (1,282) in Fall 2013 to 76 percent (1,034 students) in Fall 2014. The enrollment rate decreased at all campuses.

In Fall 2014, 69 percent of FTIC students (766 students) enrolling in a developmental English course enrolled in ENF 3, the highest level of developmental English. Another 23 percent (252 students) enrolled in ENF 2 and 8 percent (86 students) enrolled in ENF 1, the lowest level.

***Developmental Math and Developmental English Comparisons***

The increases in the number and percentage of the GPS population who took the VPT-math are greater than the increases in the number and percentage of the GPS population who took the VPT-English. In fact, the increase in the number of GPS students who took the VPT-math was 43 percent greater than the increase in the number of GPS students who took the VPT-English.

However, there was less room for the VPT-English numbers to increase than there was for the VPT-math numbers. Seventy-three percent of the GPS population took the VPT-English in Fall 2013, as compared to the 68 percent that took the VPT-math. Accordingly, NOVA administrators projected a larger increase in the number of GPS students who would take the VPT-math than in the number of GPS students who would take the VPT-English in Fall 2014.

Additionally, it could be the case that a greater percentage of the GPS population is exempt from taking the VPT-English than is exempt from taking the VPT-math, although one would expect those percentages to be similar. Another possible scenario is that in the past, students knew the policy mandating placement testing would not be enforced, and a significantly higher percentage of the GPS population chose to take the VPT-English than chose to take the VPT-math. However, now that policy is being enforced, GPS students that wanted to take college-level math courses are forced to take the VPT-math, resulting in a spike. Also, it could just be that in the past, more GPS students wanted to take college-level English than college-level math, and now that gap is narrowing. At this point, there is not enough evidence to conclude that the VPT-math mandate was implemented more successfully than the VPT-English mandate.

**Table 2. GPS Students who took Math and English Placement Tests: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**

| Placement Test | Fall 2013 | Fall 2014 | Difference from Fall 2013 to Fall 2014 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | # | % |
| # of GPS Students who took VPT-math | 5,701 | 6,464 | 763 | 13.4% |
| # of GPS Students who took VPT-English | 6,140 | 6,674 | 534 | 8.7% |

## Section 1. Developmental Math

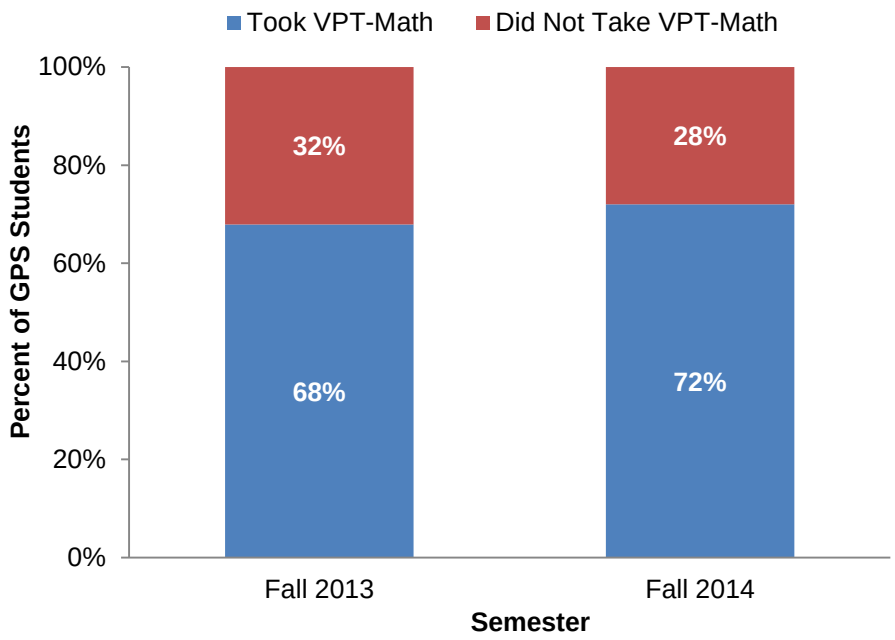
### *GPS Students Math Placement Testing*

Between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014, there was a seven percent increase in the GPS population at NOVA and a 13 percent increase in the number of GPS students who took the math placement test. The proportion of GPS students taking the test increased as well – whereas 68 percent of Fall 2013 GPS students (5,701 students) took the VPT-math, about 72 percent of Fall 2014 GPS students took the test (6,464 students). An increase in the number and percentage of GPS students who took the math placement test was expected given the implementation of the policy mandating placement testing; however, it is the magnitude of these increases and the rate at which students were reached that in part determines how successfully the policy was implemented.

**Table 3. Math Placement Testing of GPS Students: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**

| Status | Fall 2013 | | Fall 2014 | | Difference from Fall 2013 to Fall 2014 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Took VPT-Math | 5,701 | 67.9% | 6,464 | 71.6% | 763 | 13.4% |
| Did Not Take VPT-Math | 2,696 | 32.1% | 2,558 | 28.4% | -138 | -5.1% |
| **Total GPS Population** | **8,397** | **100.0%** | **9,022*** | **100.0%** | **625** | **7.4%** |

**Figure 1. Math Placement Testing of GPS Students: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**



NOVA administrators projected a 54 percent increase in the number of GPS students who would take the math placement test. Figure 2 shows that the actual increase was 13 percent which fell well short of the projection. Considering that there were 9,022 total GPS students at NOVA in Fall 2014, a 54 percent increase in the number of GPS students taking the VPT-math would mean that about 97 percent of the GPS population would have taken VPT-math for Fall 2014. Even with complete implementation and enforcement of the policy, a 97 percent placement testing rate of the entire GPS population was unlikely.

According to the 2014-15 NOVA Catalog, a student who provides official evidence of a minimum mathematics score of 520 on the SAT or 22 on the ACT taken within the previous two years may register for college-level math courses without taking the math placement test[i]. These scores, 520 on the SAT and 22 on the ACT, fall in roughly the 50$^{th}$ percentile for their respective tests. At the time of this report, data had not been disaggregated to show what percentage of the GPS population would be exempt from taking the VPT-math, so it follows that the above stated placement testing rate of 72 percent could misrepresent the actual proportion of GPS students who were reached by the policy in Fall 2014.

In assessing these numbers it is also important to consider that Fall 2014 was the first year that the policy was enforced. It is unknown exactly what challenges staff faced enforcing the policy, but it is likely that compliance will increase as the policy becomes further integrated into College operating procedure.

**Figure 2. Increase in Number of GPS Students Taking Math Placement Test: Fall 2013 to Fall 2014**

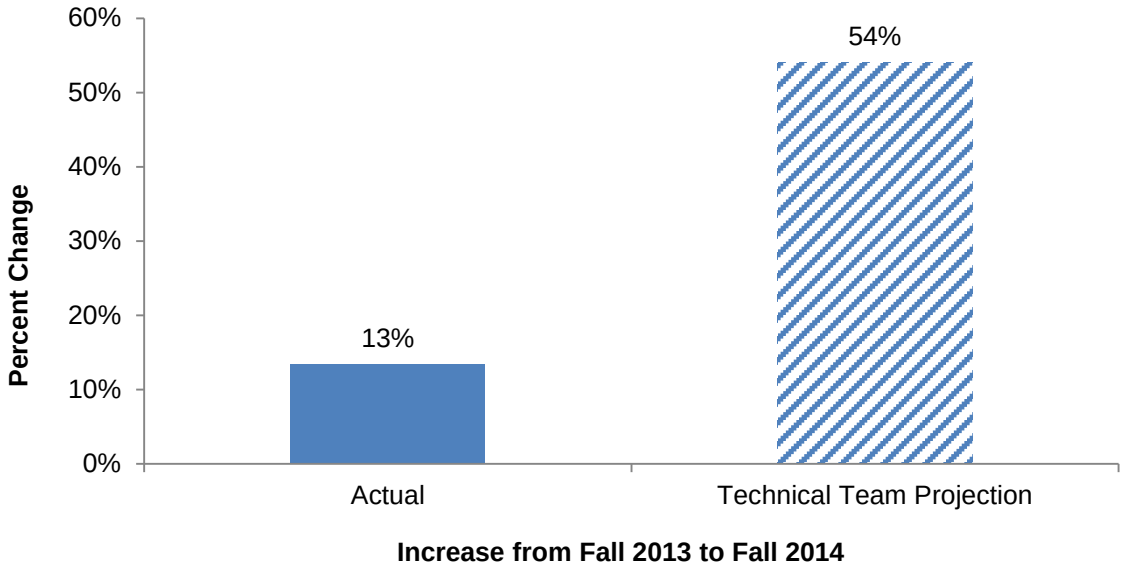
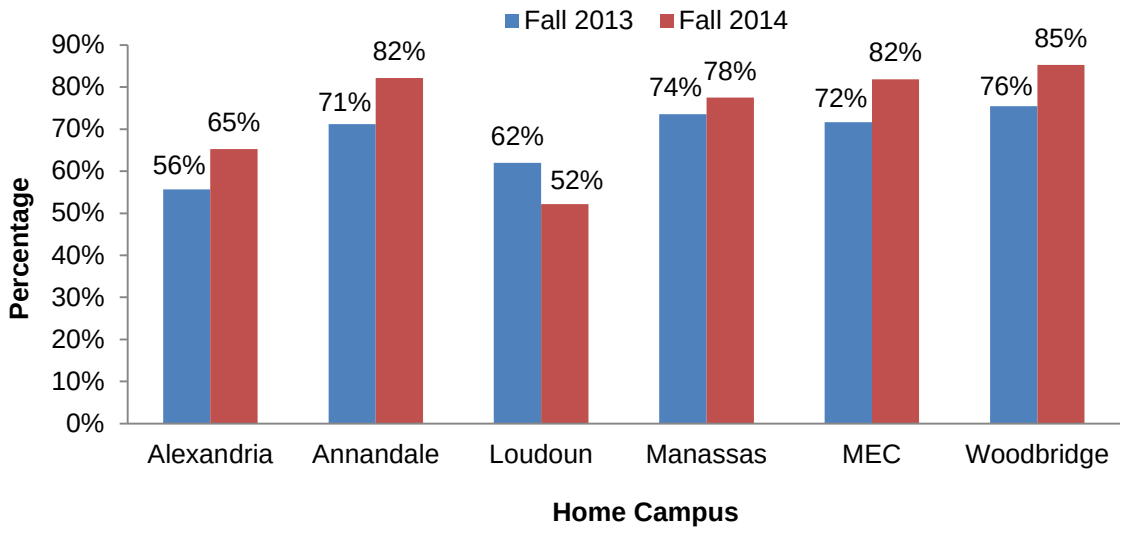


Table 4 presents data on the number and percentage of GPS students who took the VPT-math, disaggregated by students' home campus. The percentage of GPS students taking the VPT-math increased at all campuses except for Loudoun at which the rate went from 62 percent in Fall 2013 to 52 percent in Fall 2014. While Manassas experienced a 4 percentage point increase between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014, Alexandria, Annandale, MEC and Woodbridge all experienced a 10-11 percentage point increase over the same time period. However, at this time, reliable cross-campus comparisons cannot be made as it is possible that the characteristics of the student body vary by campus. For example, while Alexandria experienced one of the lowest placement testing rates in Fall 2014, it is also possible that the Alexandria campus has a high percentage of students exempt from taking placement tests.

**Table 4. GPS Students Who Took the Math Placement Test by Home Campus: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**

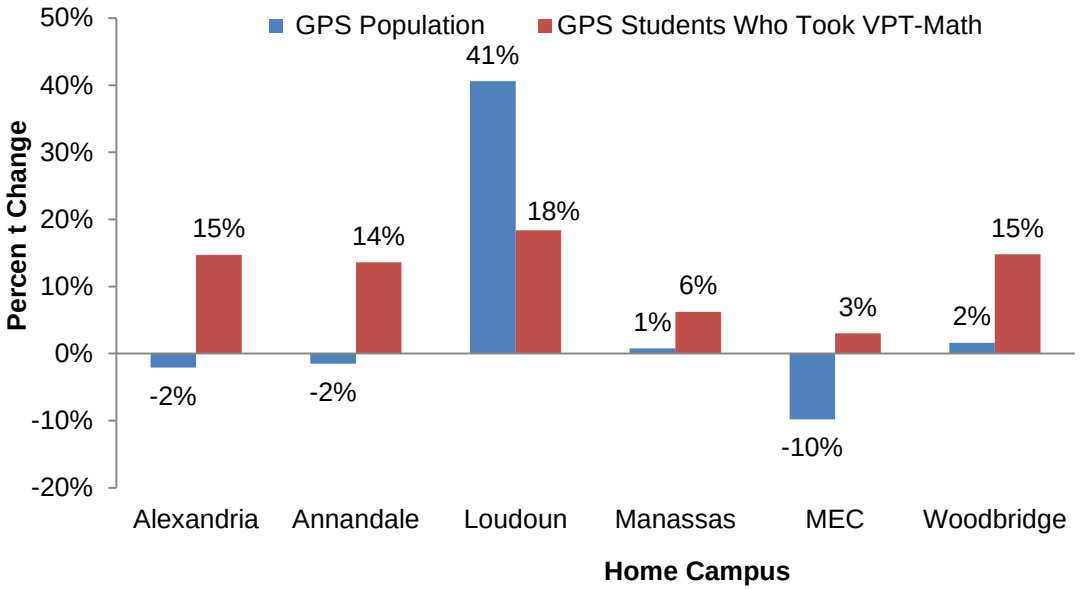
| Home Campus | Fall 2013 | | | Fall 2014 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total GPS Students | Took VPT-Math | | Total GPS Students | Took VPT-Math | |
| | | # | % | | # | % |
| Alexandria | 1,380 | 769 | 55.7% | 1,351 | 882 | 65.3% |
| Annandale | 2,628 | 1,872 | 71.2% | 2,588 | 2,127 | 82.2% |
| Loudoun | 1,654 | 1,025 | 62.0% | 2,326 | 1,214 | 52.2% |
| Manassas | 1,383 | 1,018 | 73.6% | 1,394 | 1,081 | 77.5% |
| MEC | 92 | 66 | 71.7% | 83 | 68 | 81.9% |
| Woodbridge | 1,260 | 951 | 75.5% | 1,280 | 1,092 | 85.3% |
| **Total** | **8,397** | **5,701** | **67.9%** | **9,022** | **6,464** | **71.6%** |

**Figure 3. GPS Students Who Took the Math Placement Test by Home Campus: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**



As shown in Figure 4, the percent increase in the number of GPS students who took VPT-math exceeded the percent increase in the total GPS population at every campus except Loudoun. The Loudoun GPS population grew much more than any other campus' between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014 (41 percent). VPT-math testing at the Alexandria and Annandale Campuses increased by 15 percent and 14 percent, respectively, despite both campuses experiencing two percent decreases in the size of their GPS populations. Loudoun experienced an 18 percent growth in its number of GPS students taking the math placement test, the highest of any campus, but considering the campus' 41 percent growth in the GPS population, it seems as though there was an opportunity to capture even more students.

**Figure 4. Percent Change in GPS Population and Number of GPS Students Who Took Math Placement Test by Home Campus: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**




### *GPS Students Placement Status in Developmental Math*

Between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014, the number of students in the GPS population who placed into developmental math increased by 21 percent (528 students). The proportion of GPS students placed into developmental math increased from 43 percent (2,459 students) in Fall 2013 to 46 percent (2,987 students) in Fall 2014.

The characteristics of students being placed into developmental math require further examination. The slight rise in the percentage of students being placed could suggest that either the Fall 2014 cohort was less academically-prepared for college than the Fall 2013 cohort on average, or that the new policy is successfully reaching students who otherwise would not take the VPT-math but should be placed into developmental math.

There is significant variation across NOVA campuses in the percentage of students being placed into developmental math. Of the students who took the VPT-math in Fall 2014, 40 percent of GPS students (850 students) at the Annandale Campus and 41 percent of GPS students (497 students) at the Loudoun Campus were placed into a developmental math course (see Table 5 and Figure 6). These are below the college average of 46 percent. In the same year, the Woodbridge Campus (59 percent, 639 students) and the Alexandria Campus (53 percent, 463 students) had the largest percentages of GPS students placed into a developmental math course. The percentage of students being placed into developmental math increased at all campuses except for Manassas. The data suggest that the characteristics of the student body vary across the College, with certain campuses possibly needing more assistance and resources to successfully execute the policies relating to developmental education.

**Table 5. GPS Students Placed in Developmental Math by Home Campus: Fall 2013 to Fall 2014 Comparison**

| Home Campus | Fall 2013 | | | Fall 2014 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | GPS Students who took VPT Math | Placed in Dev. Math | | GPS Students who took VPT Math | Placed in Dev. Math | |
| | | # | % | | # | % |
| Alexandria | 769 | 374 | 48.6% | 882 | 463 | 52.5% |
| Annandale | 1,872 | 673 | 36.0% | 2,127 | 850 | 40.0% |
| Loudoun | 1,025 | 397 | 38.7% | 1,214 | 497 | 40.9% |
| Manassas | 1,018 | 488 | 47.9% | 1,081 | 504 | 46.6% |
| MEC | 66 | 30 | 45.5% | 68 | 34 | 50.0% |
| Woodbridge | 951 | 497 | 52.3% | 1,092 | 639 | 58.5% |
| **Total Students** | **5,701** | **2,459** | **43.1%** | **6,464** | **2,987** | **46.2%** |

**Figure 5. GPS Students Placed in Developmental Math: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**

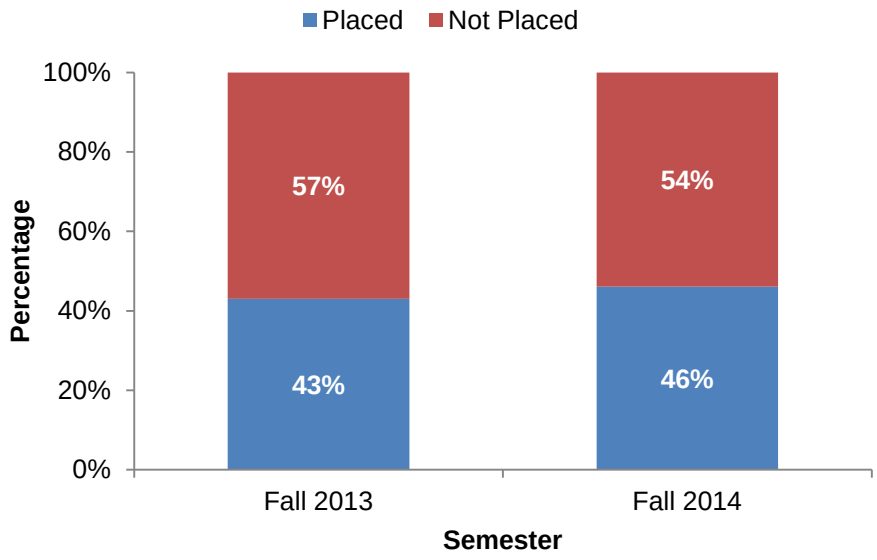
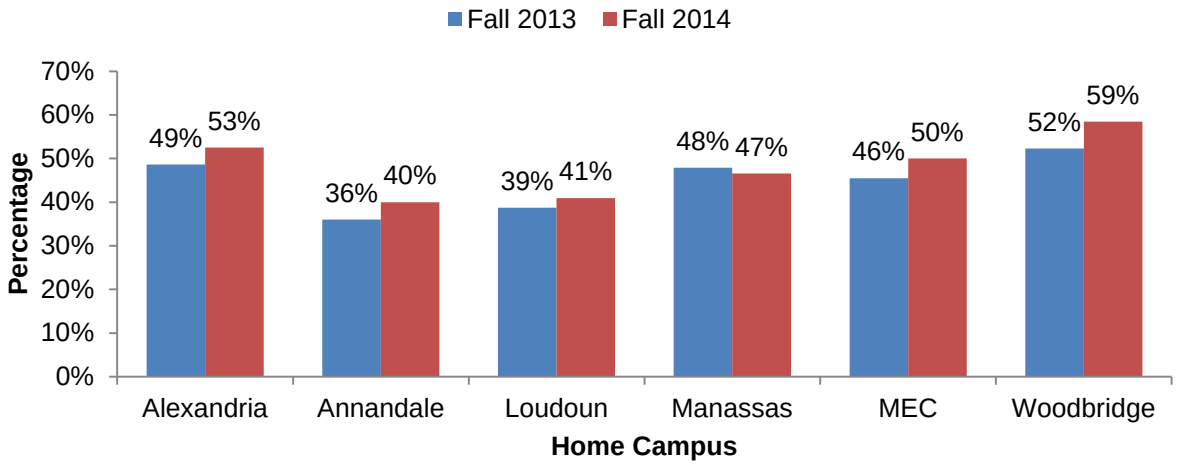


**Figure 6. GPS Students Placed in Developmental Math by Home Campus: Fall 2013 to Fall 2014 Comparison**




***GPS Students Enrollment Status in Developmental Math after Placement***

As can be seen in Table 6 and Figure 7 (both next page), NOVA experienced a 31 percent increase (474 students) in the number of GPS students who enrolled in developmental math between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014. The rate at which placed-GPS students enrolled in developmental math increased from 62 percent (1,527 students) in Fall 2013 to 67 percent (2,001 students) in Fall 2014. However, despite the Fall 2014 mandate that all GPS students placed in a developmental math course enroll in that course in their first semester, 33 percent of these students did not do so. Compared to results from a study by Bailey et al. (2010), 27 percent of students referred to a developmental math course did not enroll in that course (though not all colleges studied had a mandate on enrolling in developmental education). This comparison suggests that NOVA had a low enforcement rate in Fall 2014, despite the mandate and the increase in placement between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014. More information is required to understand how and why students evaded the policy. At a later date it may also be beneficial to compare the outcomes of students who complied with the policy with those students who were non-compliant.

In Fall 2013, there was little variation across campuses in the percentage of GPS students who enrolled in developmental math after placement (see Table 6). Alexandria (61 percent, 227 students) experienced the lowest percentage while Manassas experienced the highest percentage (64 percent, 314 students). In Fall 2014, all campuses (except MEC) increased their developmental math enrollment rate; however the increase in rate varied significantly across campuses. Annandale increased the most, by 9 percentage points, from 62 percent (419 students) to 72 percent (609 students). The rate of enrollment at Alexandria was unchanged at 61 percent (227 students in Fall 2013 and 282 students in Fall 2014).

In order to assess how best to increase enrollment, NOVA administrators may be served by focusing attention and resources on the campuses where developmental math enrollment did not significantly increase. A recent report on scaling up initiatives in developmental education found that resource adequacy, communication, and engagement were among the most important factors in promoting large-scale implementation of strategies.[ii] Factors working against the full scale-up of initiatives included resource limitations as well as "institutional reluctance to impose mandates about how students should learn and instructors teach, students' own wishes and priorities, a perceived need to scale back when strategies appeared to be ineffective, and a desire to evaluate the strategies' apparent effectiveness before moving forward."[iii]

**Table 6. GPS Students Enrolled in Developmental Math after Placement by Home Campus: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**

| Campus | Fall 2013 | | | Fall 2014 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | GPS Students Placed in Dev. Math | Enrolled in Dev. Math | | GPS Students Placed in Dev. Math | Enrolled in Dev. Math | |
| | | # | % | | # | % |
| Alexandria | 374 | 227 | 60.7% | 463 | 282 | 60.9% |
| Annandale | 673 | 419 | 62.3% | 850 | 609 | 71.6% |
| Loudoun | 397 | 244 | 61.5% | 497 | 329 | 66.2% |
| Manassas | 488 | 314 | 64.3% | 504 | 334 | 66.3% |
| MEC | 30 | 19 | 63.3% | 34 | 18 | 52.9% |
| Woodbridge | 497 | 304 | 61.2% | 639 | 429 | 67.1% |
| **Total Students** | **2,459** | **1,527** | **62.1%** | **2,987** | **2,001** | **67.0%** |

**Figure 7. GPS Students Enrolled in Developmental Math after Placement: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**

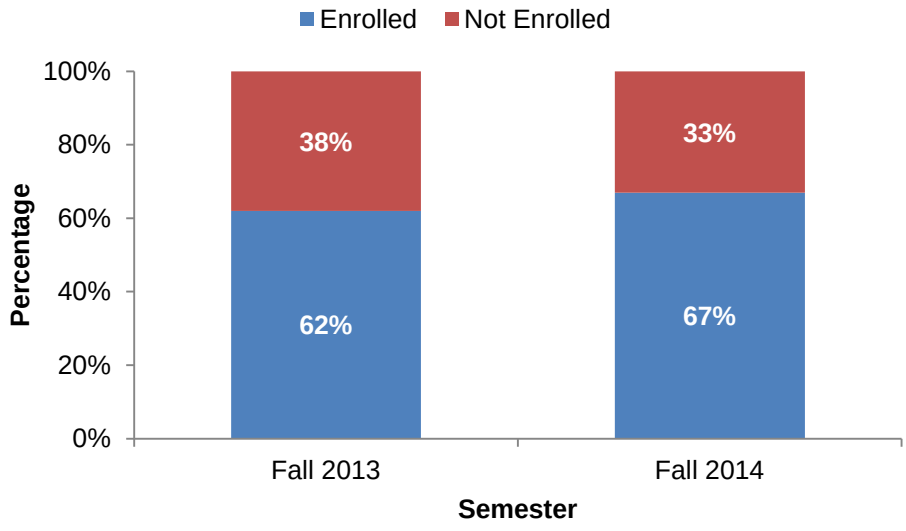
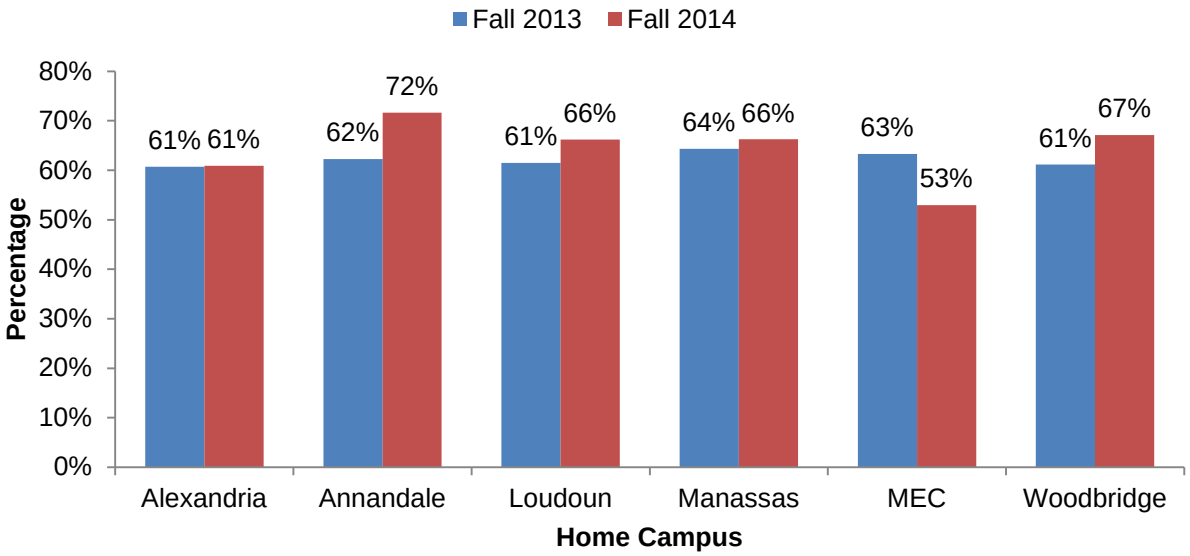


**Figure 8. GPS Students Enrolled in Developmental Math after Placement by Home Campus: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**




**MTT Courses Taken by FTIC Students Who Were Placed in Developmental Math**

Tables 7 to 9 (next page) present data on MTT courses taken by FTIC students at NOVA in Fall 2013 and Fall 2014. On average there was little change between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014 in the composition of developmental math (MTT) and basic skills (BSK) courses taken by FTIC students who were placed in developmental math. The majority of students (59 percent, 1,290 students) enrolled in MTT 4 in 2014. Three percent (63 students) started their developmental math track on the lowest level, in BSK 1.

At the campus level the changes between years were more marked. For example, at Alexandria, the percentage of students in MTT 1 increased from 3 percent (7 students) in Fall 2013 to 11 percent (30 students) in Fall 2014. Also at Alexandria, the percentage of students enrolled in MTT 4 decreased from 71 percent (169 students) in Fall 2013 to 57 percent (164 students) in Fall 2014. Manassas also experienced shifts in composition with the percentage of students enrolled in MTT 4 declining from 61 percent (221 students) in Fall 2013 to 54 percent (203 students) in Fall 2014. The percentage of students in MTT 1 at Manassas increased from 7 percent (25 students) to 12 percent (44 students).

**Table 7. MTT Courses Taken by FTIC Students Who Were Placed in Developmental Math: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**

| Course | Fall 2013 | | Fall 2014 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | # | % | # | % |
| BSK 1 | 37 | 2.2% | 63 | 2.9% |
| MTT 1 | 133 | 8.0% | 197 | 9.1% |
| MTT 2 | 210 | 12.7% | 303 | 14.0% |
| MTT 3 | 247 | 14.9% | 318 | 14.6% |
| MTT 4 | 1,032 | 62.2% | 1,290 | 59.4% |
| **Total Enrolled** | **1,659** | **100.0%** | **2,171** | **100.0%** |

**Table 8. MTT Courses Taken by FTIC Students Who Were Placed in Developmental Math by Campus: Fall 2013**

| Course | AL | | AN | | LO | | MA | | WO | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| BSK 1 | 2 | 0.8% | 9 | 2.0% | 5 | 1.8% | 11 | 3.0% | 10 | 3.0% |
| MTT 1 | 7 | 2.9% | 53 | 11.8% | 32 | 11.5% | 25 | 6.9% | 16 | 4.8% |
| MTT 2 | 30 | 12.6% | 59 | 13.1% | 41 | 14.7% | 47 | 13.0% | 33 | 10.0% |
| MTT 3 | 31 | 13.0% | 62 | 13.8% | 43 | 15.4% | 57 | 15.8% | 54 | 16.3% |
| MTT 4 | 169 | 70.7% | 266 | 59.2% | 158 | 56.6% | 221 | 61.2% | 218 | 65.9% |
| **Total** | **239** | **100.0%** | **449** | **100.0%** | **279** | **100.0%** | **361** | **100.0%** | **331** | **100.0%** |

**Table 9. MTT Courses Taken by FTIC Students Who Were Placed in Developmental Math by Campus: Fall 2014**

| Course | AL | | AN | | LO | | MA | | WO | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| BSK 1 | 14 | 4.9% | 19 | 3.0% | 16 | 4.0% | 6 | 1.6% | 8 | 1.7% |
| MTT 1 | 30 | 10.5% | 62 | 9.7% | 33 | 8.2% | 44 | 11.8% | 28 | 6.0% |
| MTT 2 | 37 | 12.9% | 88 | 13.7% | 54 | 13.5% | 60 | 16.0% | 64 | 13.7% |
| MTT 3 | 42 | 14.6% | 75 | 11.7% | 64 | 16.0% | 61 | 16.3% | 76 | 16.2% |
| MTT 4 | 164 | 57.1% | 397 | 61.9% | 234 | 58.4% | 203 | 54.3% | 292 | 62.4% |
| **Total** | **287** | **100.0%** | **641** | **100.0%** | **401** | **100.0%** | **374** | **100.0%** | **468** | **100.0%** |

The level at which students start their developmental education sequence has been shown to be correlated with the likelihood of completing developmental education as well as the likelihood of the student enrolling in developmental courses to begin with (Bailey et al., 2010).[iv] Students placed into a math course one level below college-level are less likely to enroll in developmental courses than students placed two or more levels below college-level. The lower the level of the assigned developmental course, the more likely the student is to enter the developmental education sequence but the less likely that student is to complete the sequence.

Table 10 (next page) presents findings from a Community College Research Centre Brief using a dataset of records from 256,672 first-time, credential-seeking students who began their enrollment in Fall 2003 or Fall 2004 at community colleges participating in the Achieving the Dream Initiative. As shown, 37 percent of students placed into developmental math at one level

below college-level math never enrolled in a developmental math course. However, 24 percent of students placed two levels below college-level never enrolled, while 17 percent of students placed three or more levels below college-level never enrolled in developmental education. The opposite relationship manifests in completion rates. Forty-five percent of students placed into developmental math at one level below college level completed the sequence while only 17 percent of students placed 3 levels below college level completed their developmental education sequence.

These findings suggest that at NOVA, campuses with a higher percentage of students in lower level developmental math courses may face larger challenges retaining their students through the developmental sequence and on to college-level coursework. These campuses may require more support services such as counseling, tutoring, and math camps for their students.

On the other hand, as students are eager to embark on their college-level academic careers, students placed into higher-level developmental math courses, such as MTT 4, may be more motivated to evade the policy and enroll directly in college-level courses. NOVA administrators may need to pay particular attention to these students and assess the heterogeneous impact the policy may have across the different levels of developmental math courses.

**Table 10. Student Progression through Developmental Sequences at Achieving the Dream Community Colleges**

| Placed Developmental Math Course Level | Student Progression | | | | Total (N) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Never Enrolled | Did Not Complete (Never Failed/ Withdrew) | Did Not Complete (Failed/ Withdrew) | Completed Sequence | |
| 1 level below | 37% | 2% | 17% | 45% | 59,551 |
| 2 levels below | 24% | 13% | 32% | 32% | 38,153 |
| 3 or more levels below | 17% | 23% | 44% | 17% | 43,886 |
| **Total** | **27%** | **11%** | **29%** | **33%** | **141,590** |

[1]The small percentage of those who were referred to one level below college-level and who never failed a course yet did not complete their sequence are likely to have enrolled in a lower level of remediation, passed that course, and left the system.
Source: Bailey et al., 2010

## Section 2. Developmental English

### GPS Students English Placement Testing

From Fall 2013 to Fall 2014, there was a seven percent increase in the GPS population at NOVA and a nine percent increase in the number of GPS students (534 students) who took the Virginia Placement Test for English (VPT-English). The percentage of GPS students who took the VPT-English increased as well, rising from 73 percent (6,140 students) to 74 percent (6,674 students). An increase in the number and percentage of GPS students who took the VPT-English was expected given the implementation of the policy mandating placement testing. However, it is the magnitude of these increases that determines how successfully the policy was implemented. While the magnitude of these increases for the English placement test fell well short of the projections of NOVA administrators, there is still sufficient evidence that the policy has been relatively successful at capturing non-exempt students who would not otherwise have taken the English placement test.

**Table 11. English Placement Testing of GPS Students: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**

| Status | Fall 2013 | | Fall 2014* | | Difference from Fall 2013 to Fall 2014 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Took VPT-English | 6,140 | 73.1% | 6,674 | 74.0% | 534 | 8.7% |
| Did Not Take VPT-English | 2,257 | 26.9% | 2,349 | 26.0% | 92 | 4.1% |
| **Total GPS Population** | **8,397** | **100.0%** | **9,022** | **100.0%** | **625** | **7.4%** |

**Figure 9. English Placement Testing of GPS Students: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**

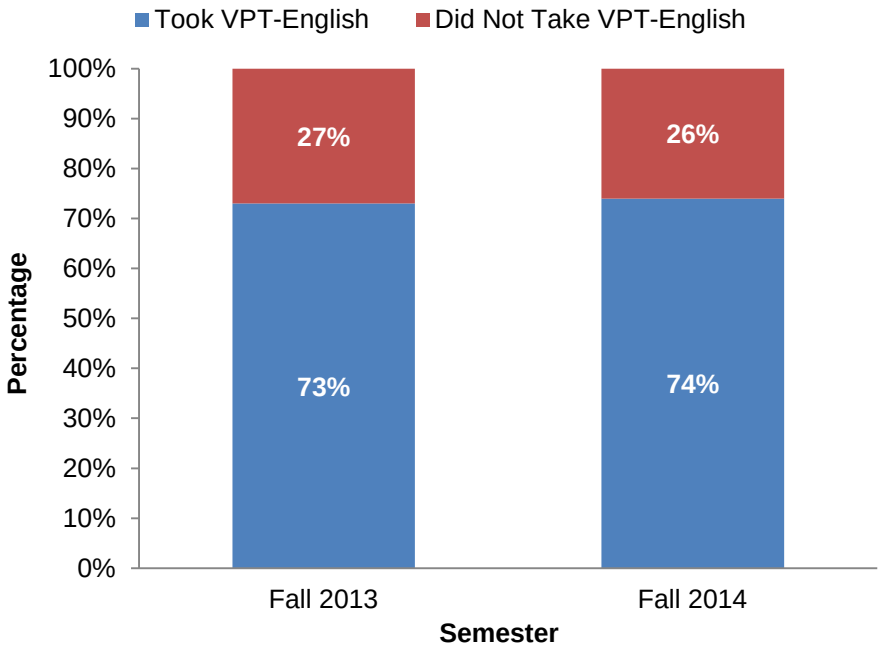


**Figure 10. Increase in Number of GPS Students Taking English Placement Test as Compared to Technical Team Projections: Fall 2013 to Fall 2014**

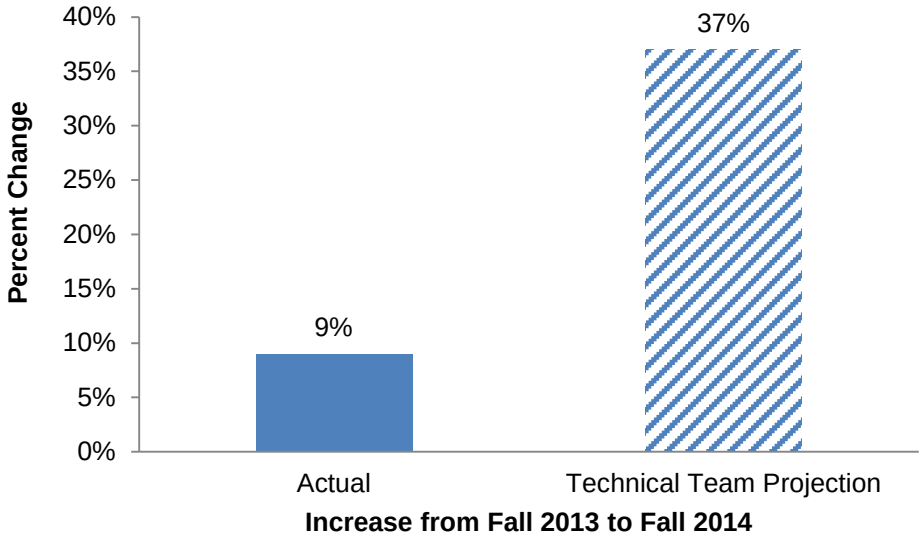



Figure 10 shows that the nine percent increase in the number of GPS students who took the English placement test was considerably lower than the projection made by NOVA administrators of a 37 percent increase. A 37 percent increase from Fall 2013 to Fall 2014 would have put the number of GPS students who took the English placement test at 8,412. Considering that there were only 9,022 total GPS students at NOVA in Fall 2014, a 37 percent increase in the number of GPS students who took the VPT-English would mean that about 93 percent of the GPS population would have taken the VPT-English for Fall 2014.

Although the policy ostensibly makes taking the English placement test mandatory for all GPS students, the exemptions that exists makes capturing 93 percent of the total GPS population unlikely and unnecessary. According to the 2014-15 NOVA Catalog, a student who provides official evidence of any one of the following can enroll into ENG 111 without taking the English placement test:

- A minimum score of 500 on both the critical reading and writing portions of the SAT exam
- A minimum combined score of 21 on both the English and writing tests of the ACT
- A 95 or higher on the Test of English as a Foreign Language Internet-Based Test (TOEFL iBT)

Test scores are valid for two years after the date of the test. A 500 on the critical reading portion of the SAT ranks in the 48$^{th}$ percentile nationally, while a 500 on the writing portion of that exam ranks in the 51$^{st}$ percentile nationally. A combined score of 21 on the English and writing subject area of the ACT ranks in the 58$^{th}$ percentile nationally, and a 95 on the TOEFL iBT ranks somewhere in between the 67$^{th}$ and 74$^{th}$ percentile nationally.

While the increases in the number and percentage of the GPS population who took the VPT-English both fell short of projections, it is important to consider that Fall 2014 was the first semester in which the policy mandating placement testing was enforced. It is likely that compliance with the policy will increase as the policy becomes further integrated into College operating procedure.

The increases in VPT-English placement testing were more pronounced at certain campuses compared to others. Excluding MEC, which had less than 100 GPS students in both Fall 2013 and Fall 2014, each campus experienced an increase in the number of GPS students who took the VPT-English. Every campus except for Loudoun experienced an increase in the proportion of their GPS population who took the VPT-English. However, Loudoun is a unique case because its GPS population grew significantly more than any other campus' between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014. Excluding Loudoun, each campus experienced, on average, an increase of 4 percentage points in the proportion of their GPS population who took the VPT-English. In Fall 2014, Woodbridge had the highest placement testing rate (85 percent, 1,083 students) while Loudoun experienced the lowest rate (66 percent, 1,524 students).

**Table 12. GPS Students who took English Placement Test by Home Campus: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**

| Home Campus | Fall 2013 | | | Fall 2014 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total GPS Students | Took VPT-English | | Total GPS Students | Took VPT-English | |
| | | # | % | | # | % |
| Alexandria | 1,380 | 905 | 65.6% | 1,351 | 943 | 69.8% |
| Annandale | 2,628 | 1,908 | 72.6% | 2,588 | 1,956 | 75.6% |
| Loudoun | 1,654 | 1,237 | 74.8% | 2,326 | 1,524 | 65.5% |
| Manassas | 1,383 | 1,011 | 73.1% | 1,394 | 1,099 | 78.8% |
| MEC | 92 | 72 | 78.3% | 83 | 68 | 81.9% |
| Woodbridge | 1,260 | 1,007 | 79.9% | 1,280 | 1,083 | 84.6% |
| **Total** | **8,397** | **6,140** | **73.1%** | **9,022** | **6,673** | **74.0%** |

**Figure 11. GPS Students Who Took the English Placement Test by Home Campus: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**

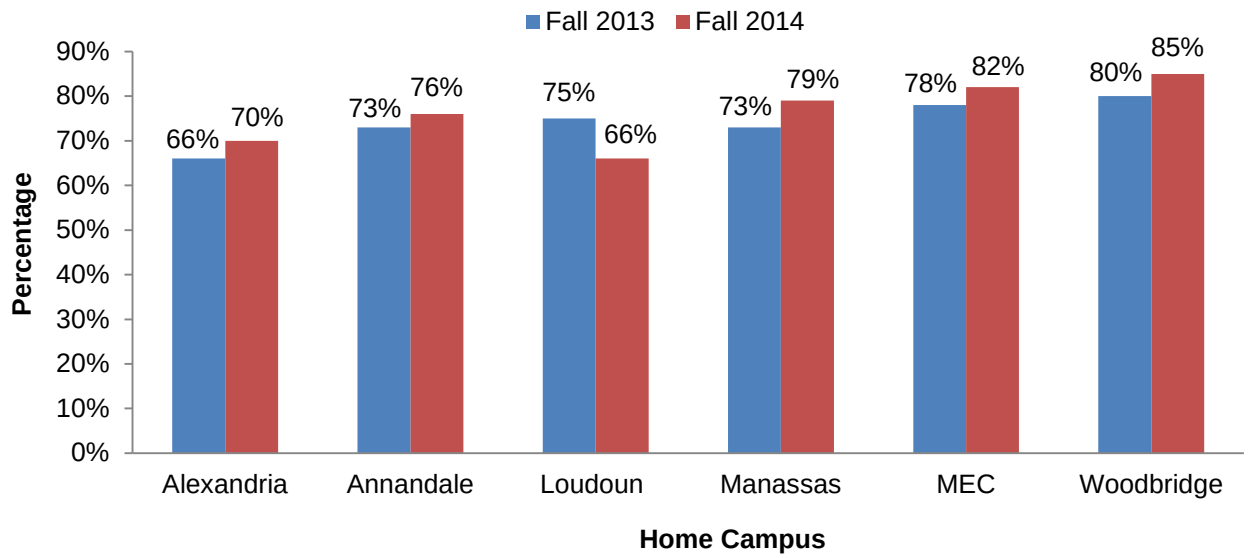
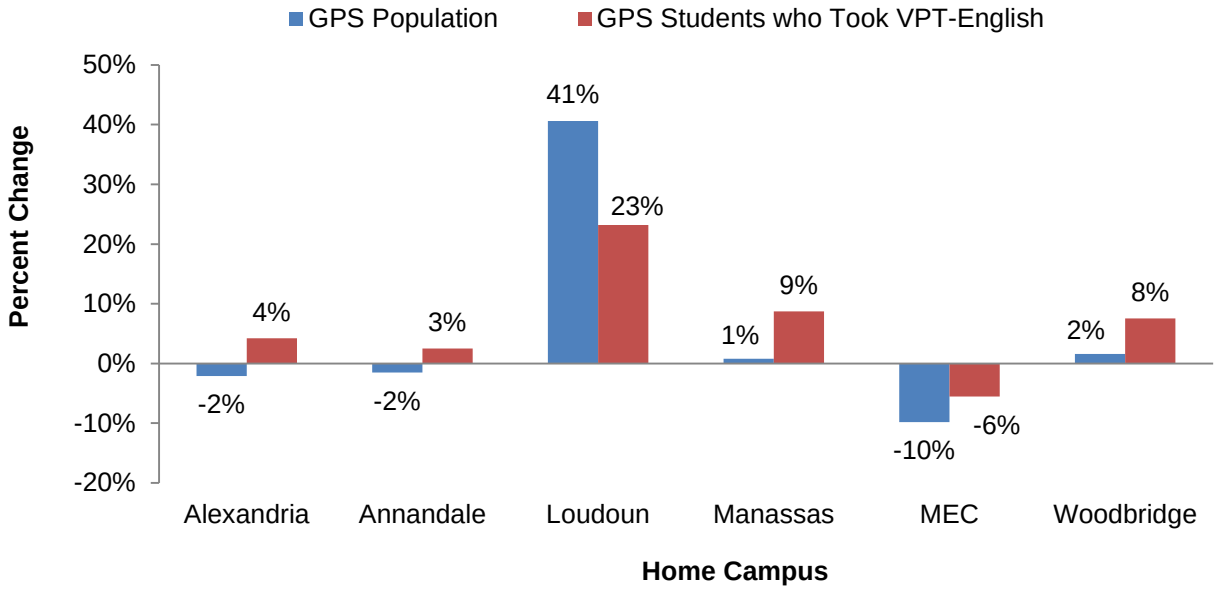



**Figure 12. Percent Change in GPS Population and Number of GPS Students Who Took English Placement Test by Home Campus: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**




As shown in Figure 12, growth in the number of GPS students who took the VPT-English exceeded growth in the total GPS population at every campus except Loudoun. Loudon experienced 23 percent growth in its number of GPS students taking the English placement test for Fall 2014, the highest rate of any campus, but considering the campus' 41 percent growth in the GPS population, it seems like there was an opportunity to capture even more students. Manassas had the second highest percentage increase in the number of its GPS students who took the VPT-English, nine percent, while Woodbridge also did well, increasing its number of GPS students who took the VPT-English by eight percent.

Overall, the Fall 2014 implementation of the policy mandating placement testing was successful in regards to increasing the number and percentage of GPS students who took the English placement test. College-wide and campus numbers seem to show that progress is being made in communicating the policy to students and enforcing it.

### GPS Students Placement Status in Developmental English

As shown in Table 13 and Figures 13 and 14 (next page), between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014, the number of students in the GPS population who placed into developmental English decreased by 15 percent (232 students). The percentage of GPS students placed into developmental English decreased from 26 percent (1,596 students) in Fall 2013 to 20 percent (1,364 students) in Fall 2014. Although the number and percentage of GPS students taking the VPT-English increased, the number and percentage of students placed into a developmental English course decreased. In the Spring of 2013 NOVA implemented the VCCS Developmental English Redesign, however at this time, it is not possible to comment on the impact the redesign may have had on placement into and enrollment in developmental English courses.

The number and percentage of students placed in developmental English decreased at all campuses except for the Medical Education Campus (MEC) and Woodbridge (where the number increased but the proportion of test takers decreased). The Alexandria, Loudon, and Manassas Campuses each experienced a 7 percentage point decrease while Annandale experienced a 6 percentage point decrease in the rate at which students were placed into developmental English.

**Table 13. GPS Students Placed in Developmental English by Home Campus: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**

| Home Campus | Fall 2013 | | | Fall 2014 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | GPS Students who took VPT English | Placed in Dev. English | | GPS Students who took VPT English | Placed in Dev. English | |
| | | # | % | | # | % |
| Alexandria | 905 | 267 | 29.5% | 943 | 214 | 22.7% |
| Annandale | 1,908 | 494 | 25.9% | 1,956 | 392 | 20.0% |
| Loudoun | 1,237 | 283 | 22.9% | 1,524 | 247 | 16.2% |
| Manassas | 1,011 | 275 | 27.2% | 1,099 | 222 | 20.2% |
| MEC | 72 | 14 | 19.4% | 68 | 19 | 27.9% |
| Woodbridge | 1,007 | 263 | 26.1% | 1,083 | 270 | 24.9% |
| **Total Students** | **6,140** | **1,596** | **26.0%** | **6,673** | **1,364** | **20.4%** |

**Figure 13. GPS Students Placed in Developmental English: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**

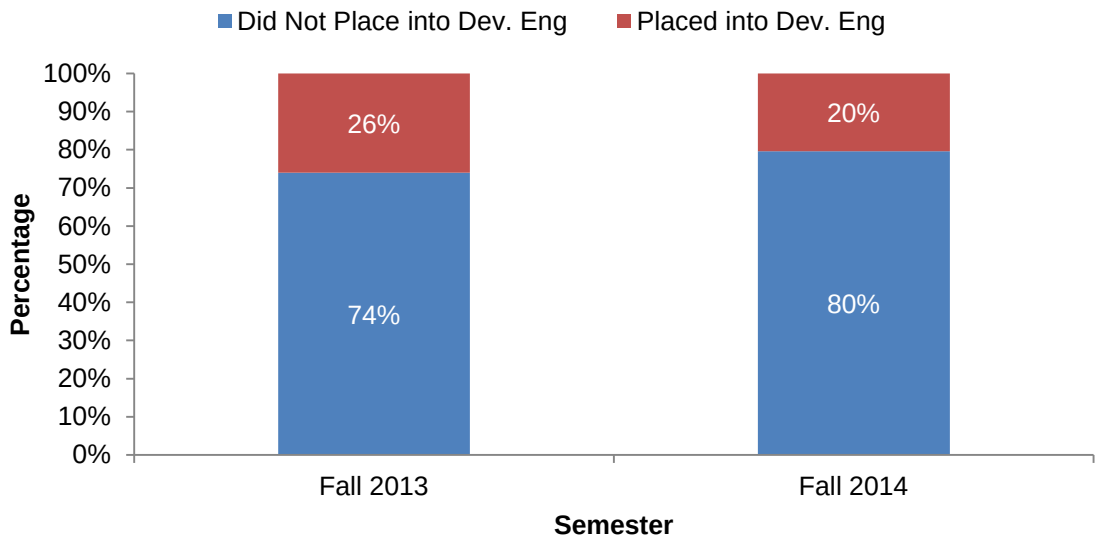
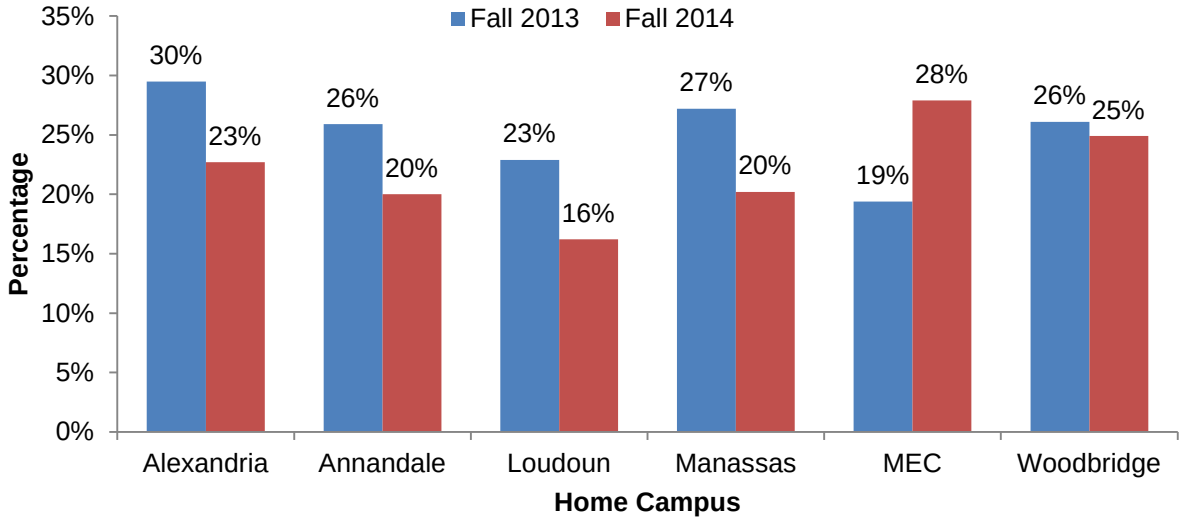



**Figure 14. GPS Students Placed in Developmental English by Home Campus: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**




### GPS Students Enrollment Status in Developmental English after Placement

As can be seen in Table 14 and Figures 15 and 16, the proportion of placed students who enrolled in developmental English decreased by 4 percentage points from 80 percent (1,282) in Fall 2013 to 76 percent (1,034 students) in Fall 2014. In Fall 2013, the percentage of enrolled students was already relatively high, but it is unclear what caused the rate to decrease after enactment of the mandate. However, it should be noted that the policy did not apply to ENF 3 in

Fall 2014, meaning students who were placed into ENF 3 (69 percent of students—see Table 15) would have been allowed to delay taking an ENF 3 class or may have chosen to bypass developmental English all together. Additionally, the concurrent mandate on SDV may have also constrained students' ability to enroll in all their developmental courses in their first semester.

The enrollment rate decreased at all campuses. Excluding MEC where there were fewer than 20 students placed in developmental English, the Manassas Campus experienced the largest percentage point decrease, going from 81 percent (222 students) in Fall 2013 to 71 percent (157 students) in Fall 2014. In Fall 2014, the Woodbridge Campus experienced the highest percentage of placed-students who enrolled in developmental English (81 percent, 218 students), followed by Annandale (80 percent, 314 students), Loudoun (77 percent, 189 students), Manassas (71 percent, 157 students) and Alexandria (68 percent, 146 students).

**Table 14. GPS Students Enrolled in Developmental English after Placement by Home Campus: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**

| Home Campus | Fall 2013 | | | Fall 2014 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FTIC Students Placed in Dev. English | Enrolled in Dev. English | | FTIC Students Placed in Dev. English | Enrolled in Dev. English | |
| | | # | % | | # | % |
| Alexandria | 267 | 194 | 72.7% | 214 | 146 | 68.2% |
| Annandale | 494 | 407 | 82.4% | 392 | 314 | 80.1% |
| Loudoun | 283 | 223 | 78.8% | 247 | 189 | 76.5% |
| Manassas | 275 | 222 | 80.7% | 222 | 157 | 70.7% |
| MEC | 14 | 12 | 85.7% | 19 | 10 | 52.6% |
| Woodbridge | 263 | 224 | 85.2% | 270 | 218 | 80.7% |
| **Total Students** | **1,596** | **1,282** | **80.3%** | **1,364** | **1,034** | **75.8%** |

**Figure 15. FTIC Students Enrolled in Developmental English after Placement: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**

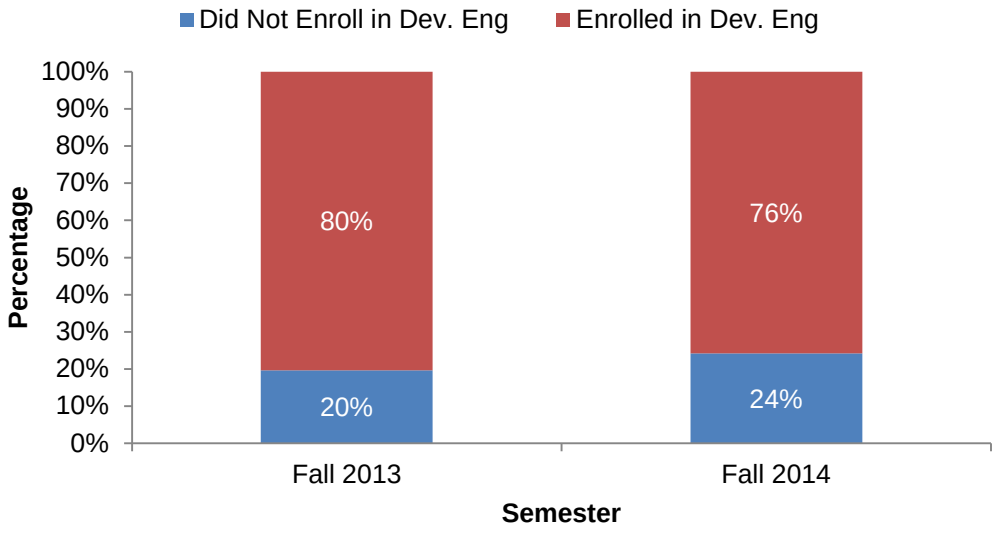
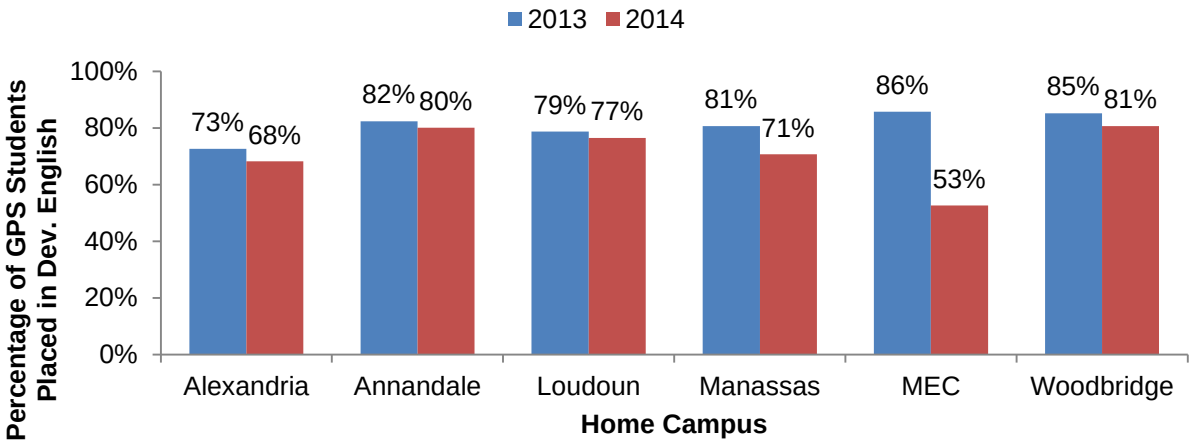


**Figure 16. GPS Students Enrolled in Developmental English after Placement by Home Campus: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**




### ENG Courses Taken by FTIC Students who were placed in Developmental English

Tables 15 through 17 present data on enrollment in developmental English by course for FTIC students. Between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014 there was little change in the composition of developmental English courses at the College. In Fall 2014, 69 percent of FTIC students (766 students) enrolling in a developmental English course enrolled in ENF 3, the highest level of developmental English. Another 23 percent (252 students) enrolled in ENF 2 and 8 percent (86 students) enrolled in ENF 1, the lowest level. As developmental English is designed, after students pass either the ENF 1 or the ENF 2 course, teachers 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. As such, students enrolled in ENF 3 may be co-enrolled in a college-level English class. For Fall 2014 NOVA administrators decided not to extend the mandatory enrollment policy to ENF 3. At the time of this report, placement testing and developmental placement data had not been disaggregated by ENF level, making it impossible to assess how successfully the policy was implemented and enforced for those students placed into ENF 1 or ENF 2.

As seen in Tables 16 and 17, at the campus level in Fall 2014, Alexandria and Manassas had the highest proportions of students enrolled in ENF 1, 12 percent (18 students) and 10 percent (17 students) respectively. Also in Fall 2014, Loudoun experienced the lowest proportion of students enrolled in ENF 1 (6 percent, 11 students).

**Table 15. ENF Courses Taken by FTIC Students who were placed in Developmental English: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014**

| Course | Fall 2013 | | Fall 2014 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | # | % | # | % |
| ENF 1 | 102 | 7.5% | 86 | 7.8% |
| ENF 2 | 345 | 25.5% | 252 | 22.8% |
| ENF 3 | 907 | 67.0% | 766 | 69.4% |
| **Total Enrolled** | **1,354** | **100.0%** | **1,104** | **100.0%** |

**Table 16. ENF Courses Taken by FTIC Students who were placed in Developmental English by Campus: Fall 2013**

| Course | AL | | AN | | LO | | MA | | WO | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| ENF 1 | 25 | 11.2% | 22 | 5.3% | 15 | 6.6% | 14 | 6.0% | 25 | 10.4% |
| ENF 2 | 60 | 26.9% | 107 | 25.8% | 48 | 21.0% | 66 | 28.2% | 62 | 25.8% |
| ENF 3 | 138 | 61.9% | 286 | 68.9% | 166 | 72.5% | 154 | 65.8% | 153 | 63.8% |
| **Total** | **223** | **100.0%** | **415** | **100.0%** | **229** | **100.0%** | **234** | **100.0%** | **240** | **100.0%** |

**Table 17. ENF Courses Taken by FTIC Students who were placed in Developmental English by Campus: Fall 2014**

| Course | AL | | AN | | LO | | MA | | WO | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| ENF 1 | 18 | 11.5% | 24 | 7.3% | 11 | 5.5% | 17 | 10.1% | 16 | 6.7% |
| ENF 2 | 36 | 22.9% | 82 | 24.9% | 40 | 20.1% | 35 | 20.7% | 53 | 22.3% |
| ENF 3 | 103 | 65.6% | 223 | 67.8% | 148 | 74.4% | 117 | 69.2% | 169 | 71.0% |
| **Total** | **157** | **100.0%** | **329** | **100.0%** | **199** | **100.0%** | **169** | **100.0%** | **238** | **100.0%** |

Table 18 (next page) presents findings from a Community College Research Centre Brief using a dataset of records from 256,672 first-time, credential-seeking students who began their enrollment in Fall 2003 or Fall 2004 at community colleges participating in the Achieving the Dream Initiative (Bailey et al., 2010). As shown, 33 percent of students who placed into a developmental English course one level below college-level never enrolled in a developmental education course. Twenty-one percent of students placed in a course two levels below college-level never enrolled, while 27 percent of students placed in a course three levels below college-level never enrolled in developmental English. Regarding completion rates, 50 percent of students placed into a developmental English course one level below college-level completed the sequence, while 29 percent of students placed 3 levels below college-level completed their developmental education sequence. While NOVA has eliminated many levels in developmental English, allowing students to progress through the sequence at an accelerated rate, there may be differences in completion and enrollment rates for students placed in ENF 1 versus students placed in ENF 2. Campuses with a relatively higher percentage of students placed in ENF 1

may face greater barriers retaining students through the developmental English sequence and on to college-level English. However, in Fall 2014 there were too few students placed in ENF 1 across the college to identify any single campus that may be facing such a challenge.

**Table 18. Student Progression through Developmental Sequences in Achieving the Dream Community Colleges**

| Placed Developmental Reading Course Level | Student Progression | | | | Total (N) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Never Enrolled | Did Not Complete (Never Failed/ Withdrew) | Did Not Complete (Failed/ Withdrew) | Completed Sequence | |
| 1 level below | 33% | 5% | 12% | 50% | 54,341 |
| 2 levels below | 21% | 13% | 24% | 42% | 16,983 |
| 3+ levels below | 27% | 19% | 25% | 29% | 6,825 |
| **Total** | **30%** | **8%** | **16%** | **46%** | **78,149** |

[1]The small percentage of those who were referred to one level below college-level and who never failed a course yet did not complete their sequence are likely to have enrolled in a lower level of remediation, passed that course, and left the system.
*Source: Bailey et al., 2010*

[i]Northern Virginia Community College website http://www.nvcc.edu/catalog/cat2014/testing/placement.html

[ii] Quint, J. C., Jaggars, S. S., Byndloss, D. C., Magazinnik, A, (2013) Bringing Developmental Education to Scale: Lessons from the Developmental Education Initiative. New York: MDRC

[iii] Quint, J. C., Jaggars, S. S., Byndloss, D. C., Magazinnik, A, (2013) Bringing Developmental Education to Scale: Lessons from the Developmental Education Initiative. New York: MDRC

[iv] Bailey, T., Jeong, D.W. and Cho, S. (2010). Student Progression Through Developmental Sequences in Community Colleges. Community College Research Center Brief. New York: CCRC

## *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.

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