



RESEARCH BRIEF

OIR

Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success Initiatives

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Six Policy Changes – Mandatory Placement Testing: Fall 2014 Outcomes

As part of NOVA's efforts to increase student success outcomes, NOVA enacted six policy changes in Fall 2014:

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

While the sixth policy change mandates on-time registration for all NOVA students, the first five policy changes target NOVA's GPS population: first-time in college students ages 17-24.¹ GPS for Success: Teaching and Learning through Advising is the name of NOVA's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), which is an action plan to improve student learning. GPS refers to the Goals, Plans, and Strategies that students must develop to attain their academic objectives and involves a case management approach to holistic, intrusive academic advising with a focus on student development. GPS for Success promotes early engagement, class readiness, student preparedness, and goal attainment.

This Research Brief summarizes the impact of the first policy listed above, which mandates that all GPS students must take the Virginia Placement Test (VPT) in math and English.² Table 1 presents the cohorts of the GPS population for whom this policy applied. From Fall 2013 to Fall 2014, the number of students who were exempt from taking the VPT-Math increased from 31 to

¹ More specifically, the GPS population includes recent high school graduates or GED recipients between the ages of 17 and 24 who have never previously attended college (unless it was dual enrollment during high school) who are not members of the College Pathway Initiative program.

² Placement testing is mandatory for all GPS students unless they are exempt for reasons such as sufficient corresponding SAT scores (math and English scores are viewed separately for exemption purposes).

124 students. For English, the number of students exempt from taking the VPT-English increased from 190 students in Fall 2013 to 264 students in Fall 2014.

Table 1. Math Placement Test Cohort of the GPS Population: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014

Cohort	Fall 2013	Fall 2014
Math Placement Test Cohort	4,864	5,018
<i>Exempt from VPT-Math</i>	31	124
English Placement Test Cohort	4,705	4,878
<i>Exempt from English Placement Test</i>	190	264
Total GPS Population	4,895	5,142

As seen in Table 2 and Figure 1, GPS students' compliance with the placement testing mandate increased from Fall 2013 to Fall 2014 for both math and English. The percentage of GPS students taking the math placement test increased from 76 percent in Fall 2013 to 88 percent in Fall 2014. The percentage taking the English placement test increased from 73 percent in Fall 2013 to 80 percent in Fall 2014.

Table 2. Placement Test Cohorts by Compliance with Placement Testing: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014

Semester	Math Placement Test Cohort	Took Math Placement Test		English Placement Test Cohort	Took English Placement Test	
	#	#	%	#	#	%
Fall 2013	4,864	3,717	76.4	4,705	3,439	73.1
Fall 2014	5,018	4,398	87.6	4,878	3,898	79.9

Figure 1. Placement Test Cohort by Compliance with Placement Testing: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014

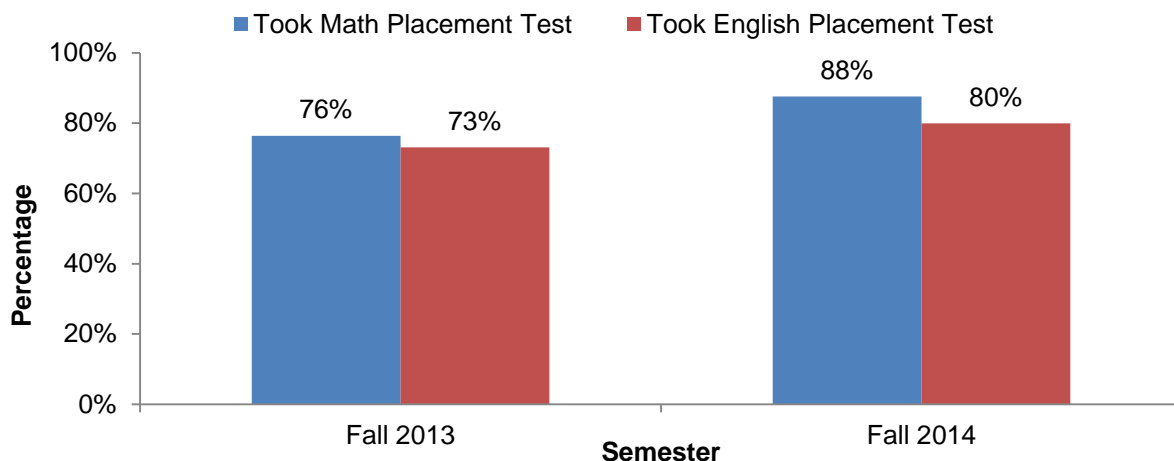


Table 3 and Figure 2 present the overall success rates of the Placement Test Cohorts for Fall 2013 and Fall 2014. All GPS students who were not exempt from taking the placement tests are included in these cohorts. Success in a credit course is counted by earning a grade of 'C' or higher.

Students who complied with the math placement testing policy had an overall success rate of 63 percent, which was slightly lower than the Fall 2013 and Fall 2014 math placement testing cohorts overall (both 64 percent). Students who complied with the English placement testing policy had an overall success rate of 61 percent, which is slightly lower than the Fall 2013 and Fall 2014 English placement testing cohorts overall (both 63 percent).

Table 3. Success in Credit Courses by Placement Test Cohorts: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014

		Math Placement Test Cohort	Success in All Credit Courses		English Placement Test Cohort	Success in All Credit Courses	
		#	#	%	#	#	%
Fall 2013	All Cohort	18,956	12,068	63.7	18,248	11,541	63.2
Fall 2014	All Cohort	19,980	12,788	64.0	19,383	12,290	63.4
	Compliant Students Only	18,315	11,555	63.1	16,189	9,813	60.6

Note: In Fall 2013, there were 14 missing grades in the math test cohort and 14 missing grades in the English test cohort. In Fall 2014, there were 22 missing grades in the math test cohort including 18 of the 'Took VPT-Math' group, and there were 21 missing grades in the English test cohort including 16 of the 'Took VPT-English' group. The totals are duplicated headcounts.

Figure 2. Success in Credit Courses by Placement Test Cohorts: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014

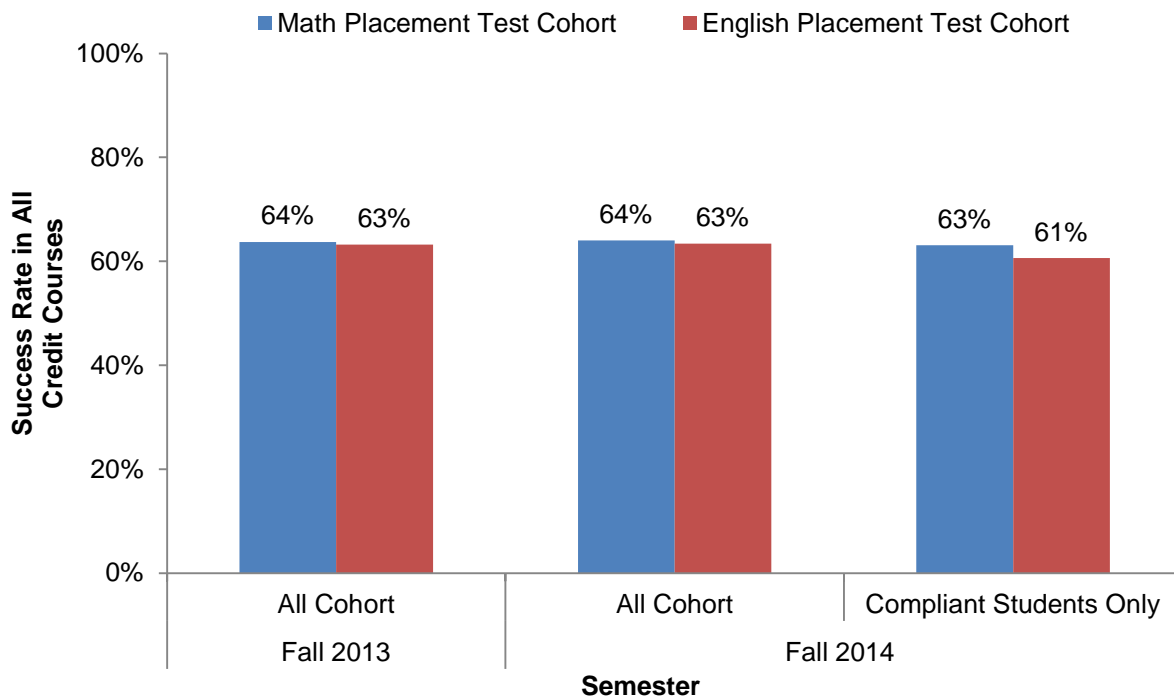


Table 4 and Figure 3 present the fall-to-spring retention rates of the Placement Test Cohorts for Fall 2013 and Fall 2014. All GPS students who were not exempt from taking the placement tests are included in these cohorts.

Students who complied with the math placement testing policy returned to NOVA in Spring 2015 at a greater rate (82 percent) than both the Fall 2013 cohort overall (81 percent) and the Fall 2014 cohort overall (80 percent). Students who complied with the English placement testing policy returned to NOVA in Spring 2015 at a rate equal to the Fall 2014 cohort overall (both 79 percent) and at a lower rate than the Fall 2013 cohort overall (81 percent).

Table 4. Fall to Spring Retention of Math and English Placement Test Cohorts: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014

		Math Placement Test Cohort		Fall-to-Spring Retention Rate		English Placement Test Cohort		Fall-to-Spring Retention Rate	
		#	#	%	#	#	%		
Fall 2013	All Cohort	4,735	3,848	81.3	4,576	3,709	81.1		
Fall 2014	All Cohort	4,912	3,924	79.9	4,772	3,776	79.1		
	Compliant Students Only	4,391	3,579	81.5	3,895	3,078	79.0		

Note: Spring 2015 retention data from PeopleSoft as of February 24th, 2015.

Figure 3. Fall to Spring Retention of Math and English Placement Test Cohorts: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014

