



# *ESL RETENTION*

PROCESS  
MANAGEMENT TEAM

Northern Essex  
Community College

December 2004

TASK FORCE ON ESL PERSISTENCE  
TEAM MEMBERS

***Team Sponsor/Active Member***

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***Team Leader***

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## ***ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS***

The team wishes to thank the following individuals for their cooperation and support of our efforts:

Nancy Sabin for providing expert assistance in developing programs to help generate critical data from our Banner Database.

Eugene Wintner and Joanna Fortna for helping us to understand the process for evaluation and review of the work performed by developmental students in Basic Writing, Basic Reading, and College Reading.

Priscilla Acensio, NECC Work Study student, for producing the complex ESL Process Flowchart.

Tom Fallon, Team Sponsor, for providing valuable insight and recommendations to the team, for supplying much of the data necessary to pursue our objectives and for creating the PowerPoint Presentation.

# NECC QUALITY IMPROVEMENT TEAM TASK FORCE ON ESL PERSISTENCE

## PROJECT STATEMENT

***To assess the current persistence of ESL students for the purpose of generating recommendations that may increase and ensure the successful transition of these students to college level classes and eventual program completion.***

## Project Abstract

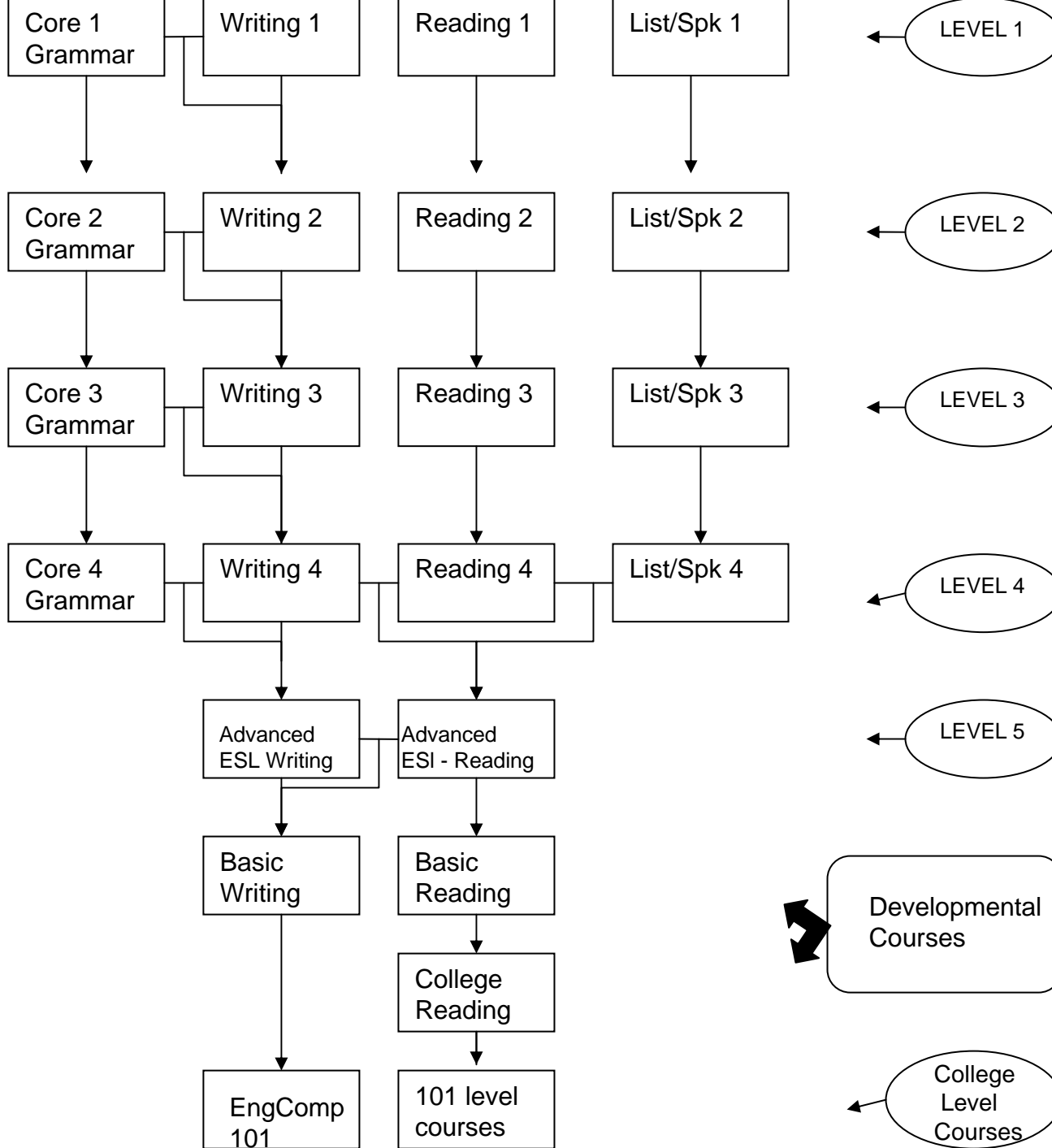
Northern Essex Community College has adopted an enrollment strategy, part of which calls for “growing our own” students. This means introducing potential pre-college & college level students to the college by providing positive experiences. It has always been the goal of the ESL program to funnel students directly into college level work as rapidly as possible and ultimately have them attain a degree or certificate. The problem is that ESL students are not graduating from NECC at the rate the college would like. The project statement for this project is “To assess the current persistence of ESL students for the purpose of generating recommendations that may increase and ensure the successful transition of these students to college level classes and eventual program completion.

The team began looking at how well the ESL student transitioned into developmental coursework. We found that they did very well, actually better than non-ESL students. We then looked at their overall retention pattern and found that we lost many of them by the end of the second term. The charts that follow will display a surprising degree of attrition. When we focused, finally, on the number that actually progressed into college level courses, we were not surprised to find that number extremely low.

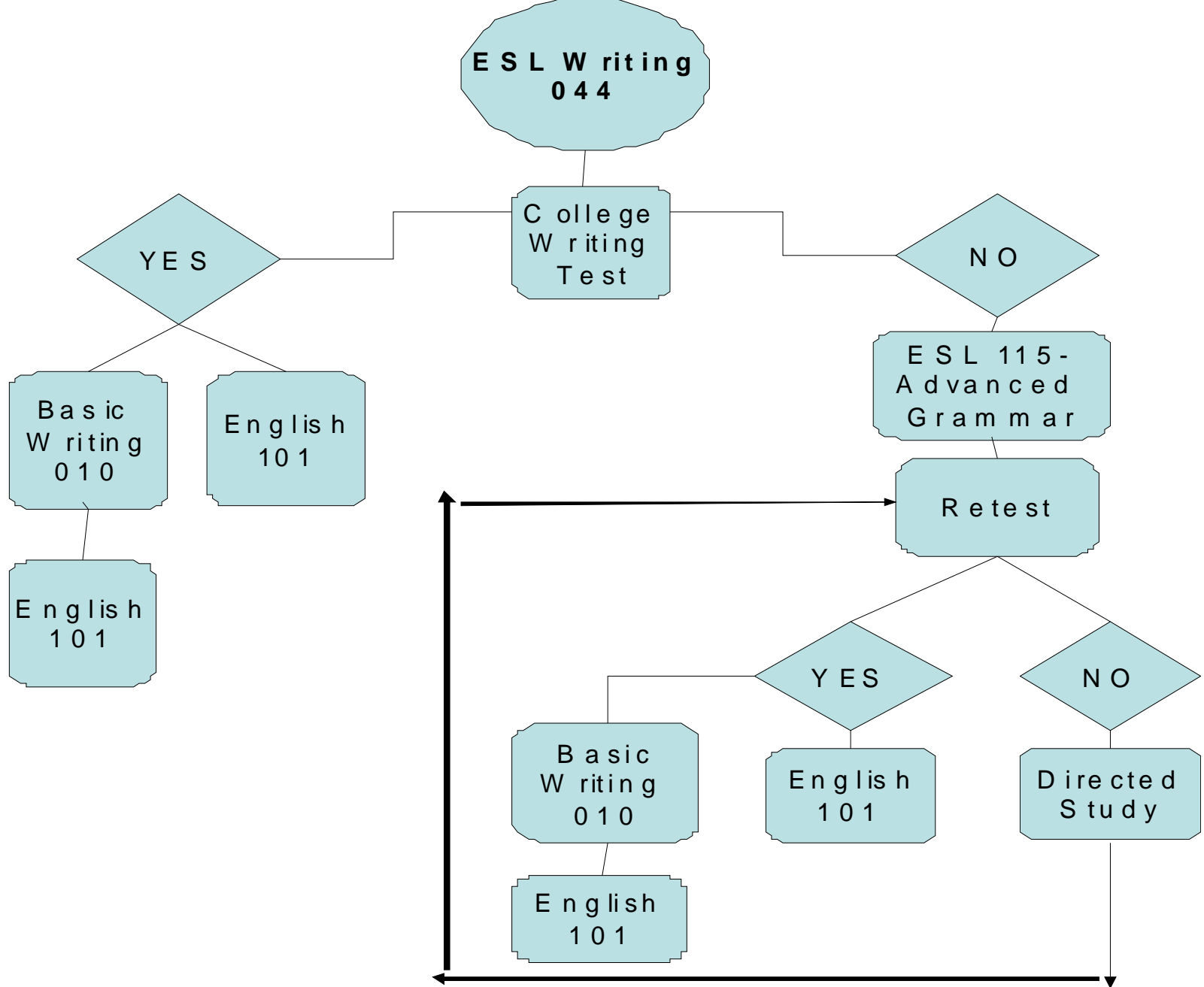
Our recommendations focus on a regimen of surveys and focus groups to identify the reasons why these students leave NECC. We will attempt to determine the major obstacles to their student success. Once these are defined, the task will become to reduce, if not remove, these obstacles to success.

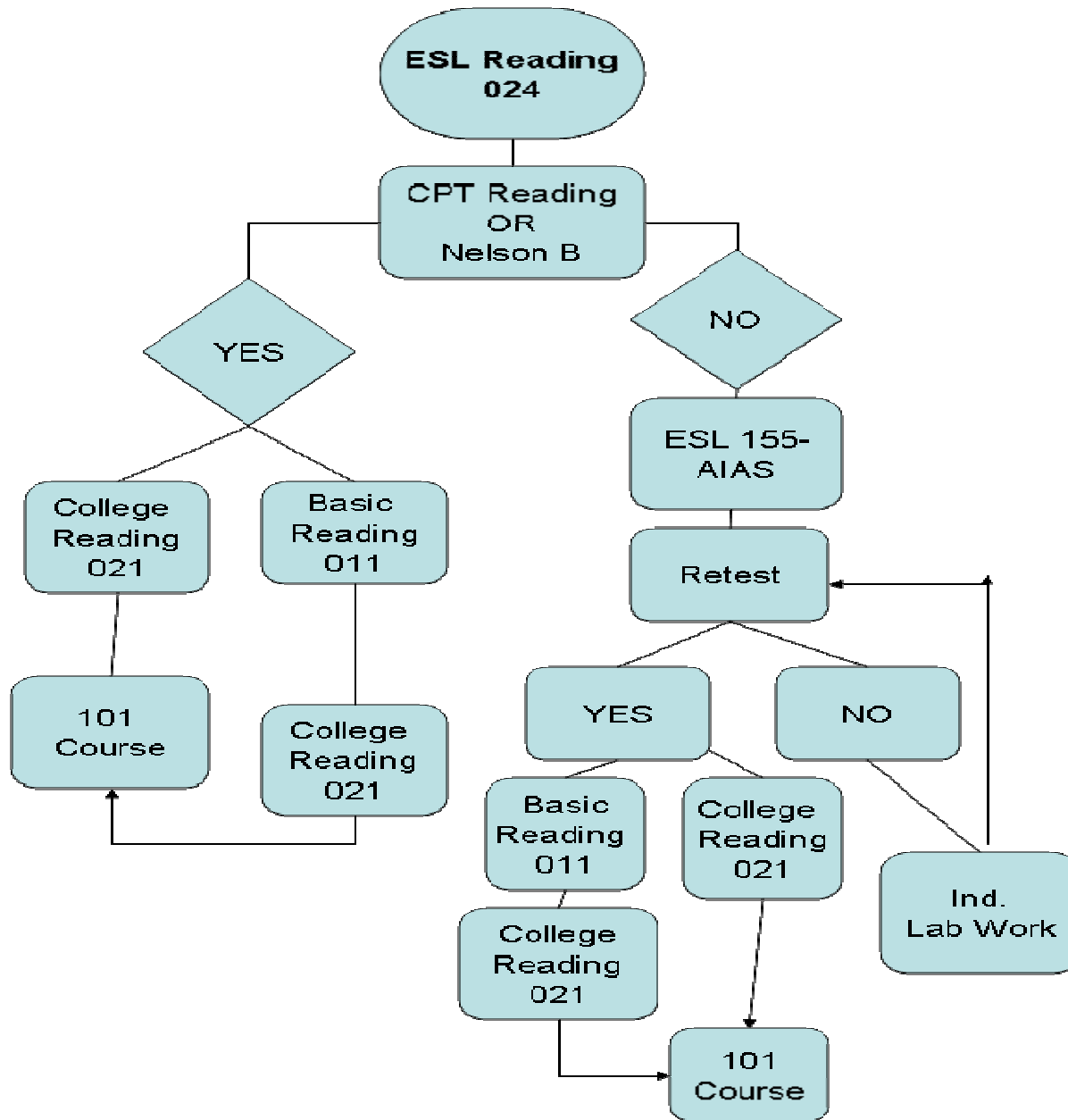
# ACADEMIC ESL AT NECC

- The academic English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum at NECC is designed to prepare students to use English at a college level. A complete complement of ESL courses is offered for students who have been admitted to degree programs at NECC and whose native language is not English. The curriculum includes courses in grammar, writing, reading, and listening/speaking skills at four levels. There are two courses in academic reading and writing at the fifth level.
- Students in the fourth level of ESL take exit tests in reading and writing, which determine their readiness for college courses. Additional ESL or developmental coursework is recommended for students who need additional skill development.



- **Note 1:** Students normally follow the course sequence as above from level 1 through 4 in each subject. Teachers may recommend that a student take a Challenge test to possibly skip a level in that subject. Students may advance directly to Basic Reading and Basic Writing from level 4 or 5 reading and writing courses by passing the College Reading test and the College Writing Sample.
- **Note 2:** Students are advised to take courses within one level of each other, with these exceptions:
  - The writing level must be equal to or lower than the Core grammar level.
  - The Listening/Speaking sequence is independent of the other subjects.



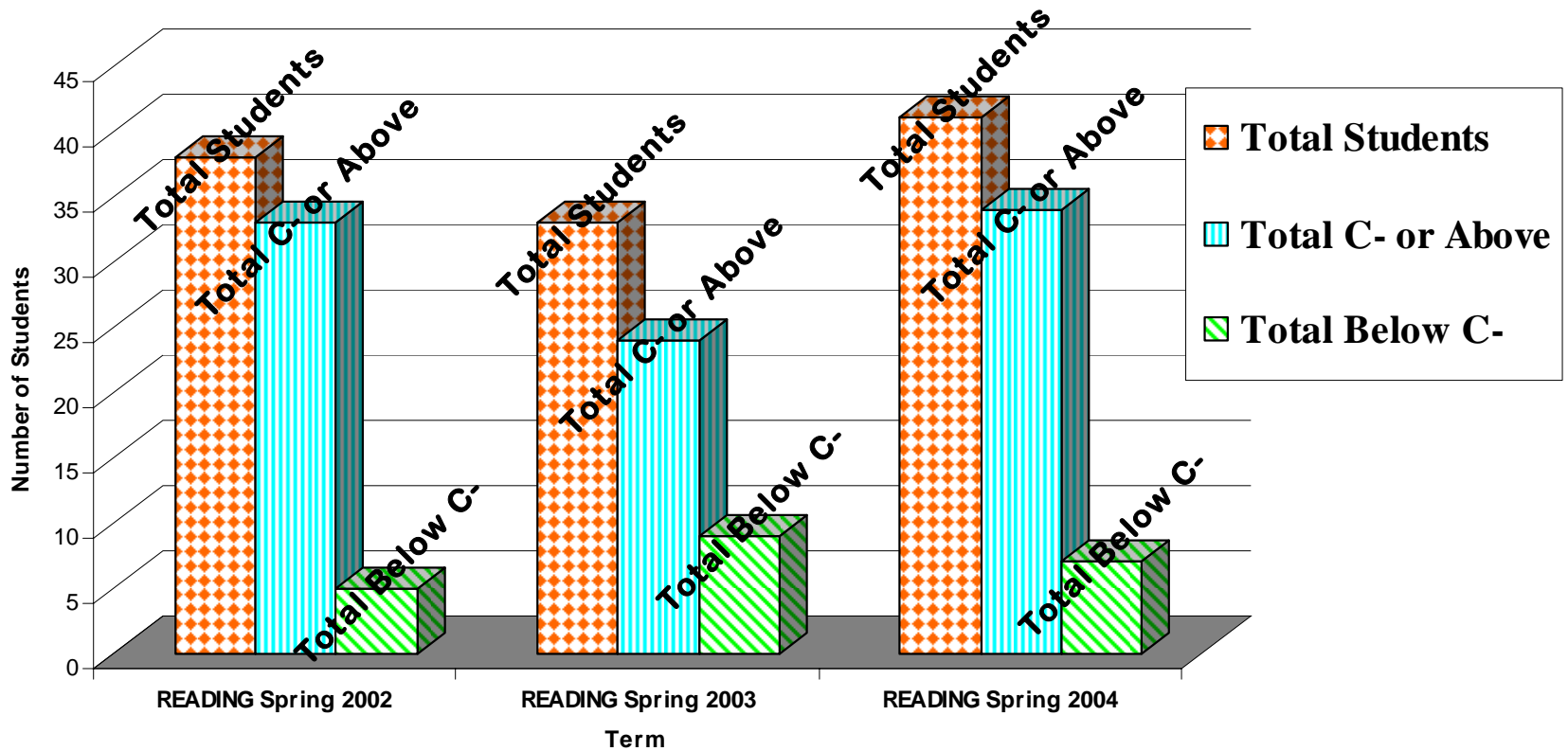


## Summary of READING Grades of ESL Students

### Three Consecutive Spring Terms

Grade	READING Spring 2002	READING Spring 2003	READING Spring 2004
A	12	6	4
A-	7	5	3
B+	1	4	6
B	2	4	9
B-	6	1	4
C+	1		3
C	2	4	4
C-	2		1
D	1	1	2
F		2	2
FW	1	1	
NW	1	2	2
W	2	3	1
<b>Total Students</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Total C- or Above</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Total Below C-</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>% C- or Above</b>	<b>86.84%</b>	<b>72.73%</b>	<b>82.93%</b>
<b>% Below C-</b>	<b>13.16%</b>	<b>27.27%</b>	<b>17.07%</b>

### READING Grades of ESL Students: Three Consecutive Spring Terms

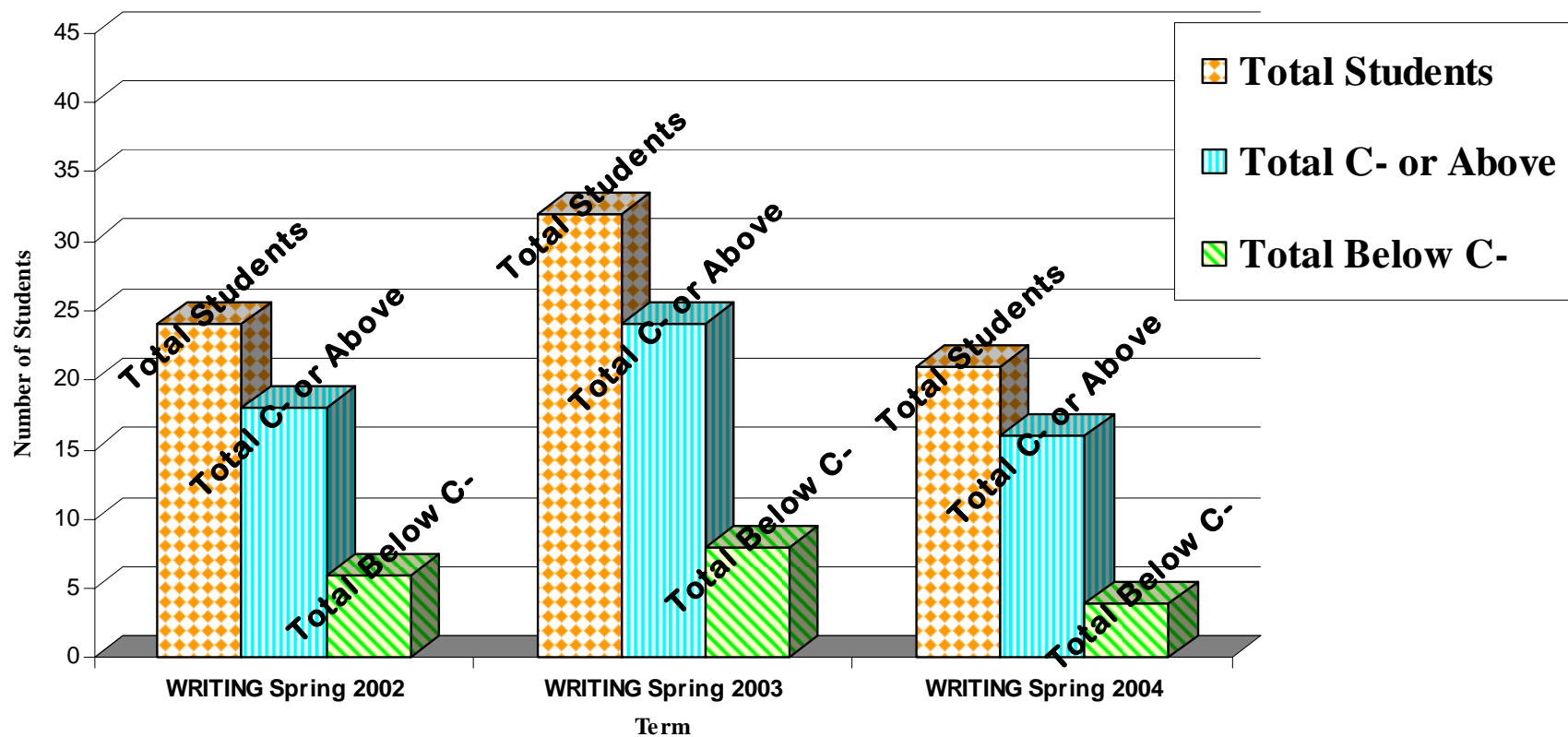


## Summary of WRITING Grades of ESL Students

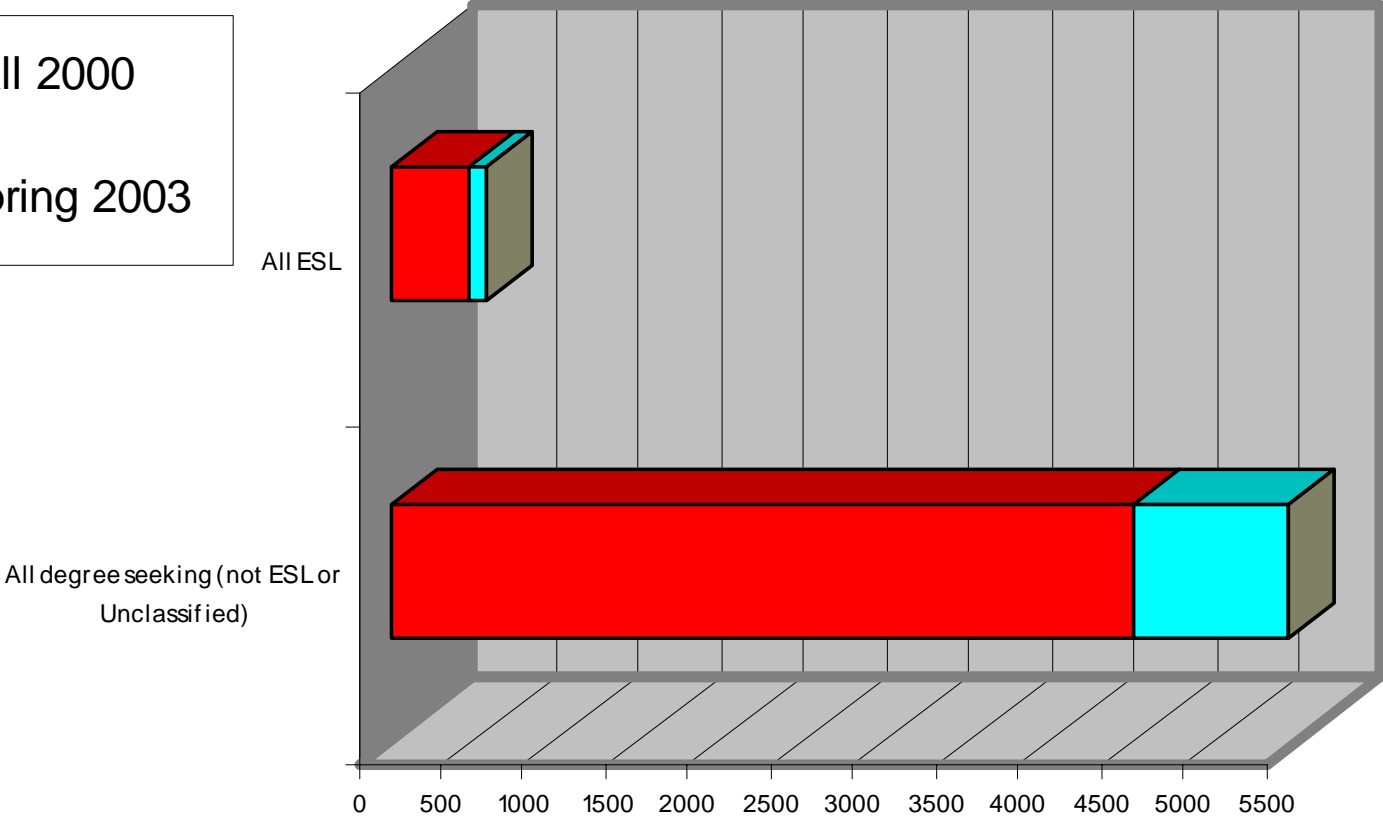
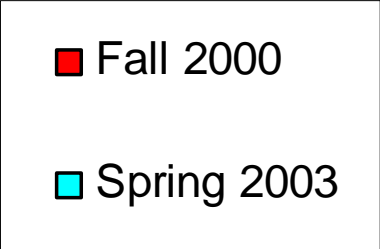
### Three Consecutive Spring Terms

Grade	WRITING Spring 2002	WRITING Spring 2003	WRITING Spring 2004
A	4	8	3
A-	5	4	6
B+	4	5	1
B	4	3	3
B-			2
C+	1		1
C		2	
C-		2	
D+			1
D	1		
F	2	2	
FN	1		
FW		1	
NW		3	1
W	2	2	3
<b>Total Students</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Total C- or Above</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Total Below C-</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>% C- or Above</b>	<b>75.00%</b>	<b>75.00%</b>	<b>76.19%</b>
<b>% Below C-</b>	<b>25.00%</b>	<b>25.00%</b>	<b>19.05%</b>

### WRITING Grades of ESL Students: Three Consecutive Spring Terms



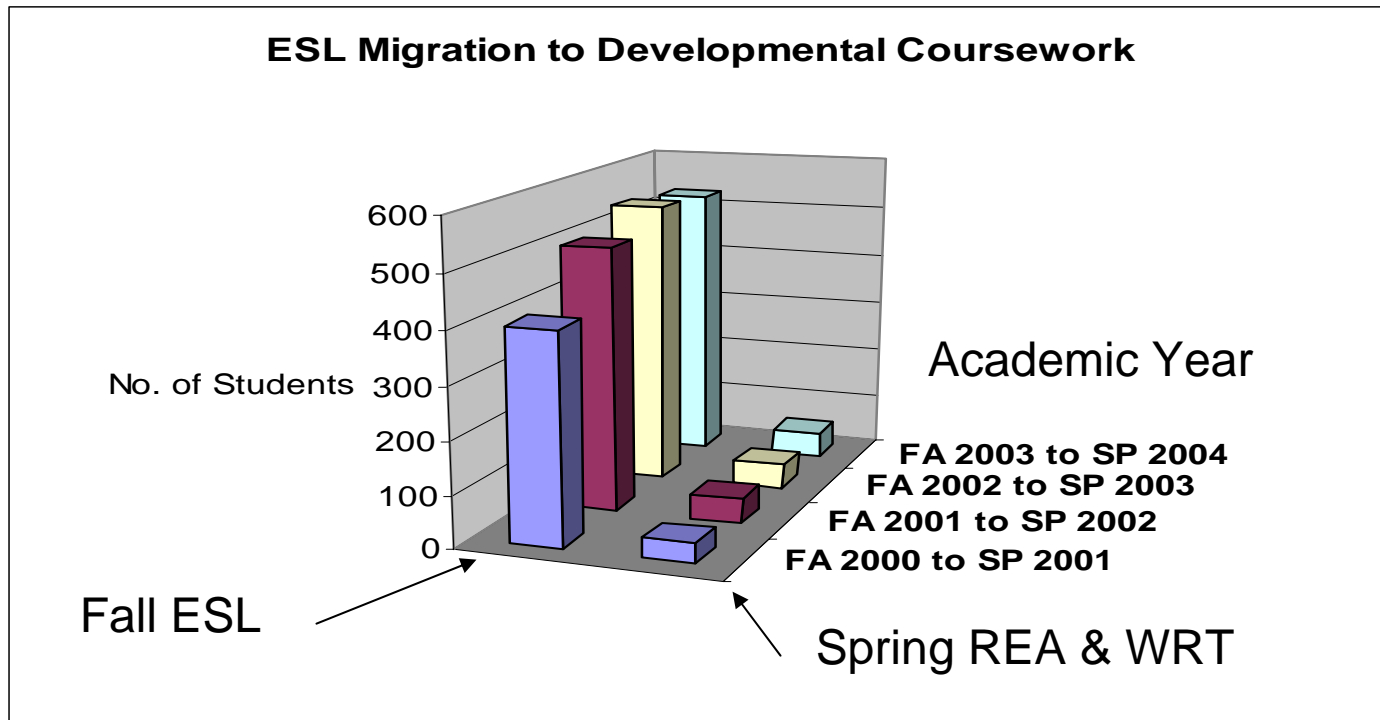
### 3-year Persistence: ESL vs All Other Programs



	All degree seeking (not ESL or Unclassified)	All ESL
<span style="color: gray;">■</span> %Still Enrolled	21%	25%
<span style="color: cyan;">■</span> Spring 2003	942	111
<span style="color: red;">■</span> Fall 2000	4480	451

# ESL Population Persistence Data - AY 2000 through AY 2003

Academic Year	Unduplicated ESL Count in Fall term	Unduplicated ESL in REA&WRT Count in Spring Term	% ESL Continuing
FA 2000 to SP 2001	399	36	9.02%
FA 2001 to SP 2002	502	47	9.36%
FA 2002 to SP 2003	542	48	8.86%
FA 2003 to SP 2004	531	49	9.23%



# Graduation and Persistence Data

## Two Cohorts of ESL vs Non-ESL over Two Three-Year Periods

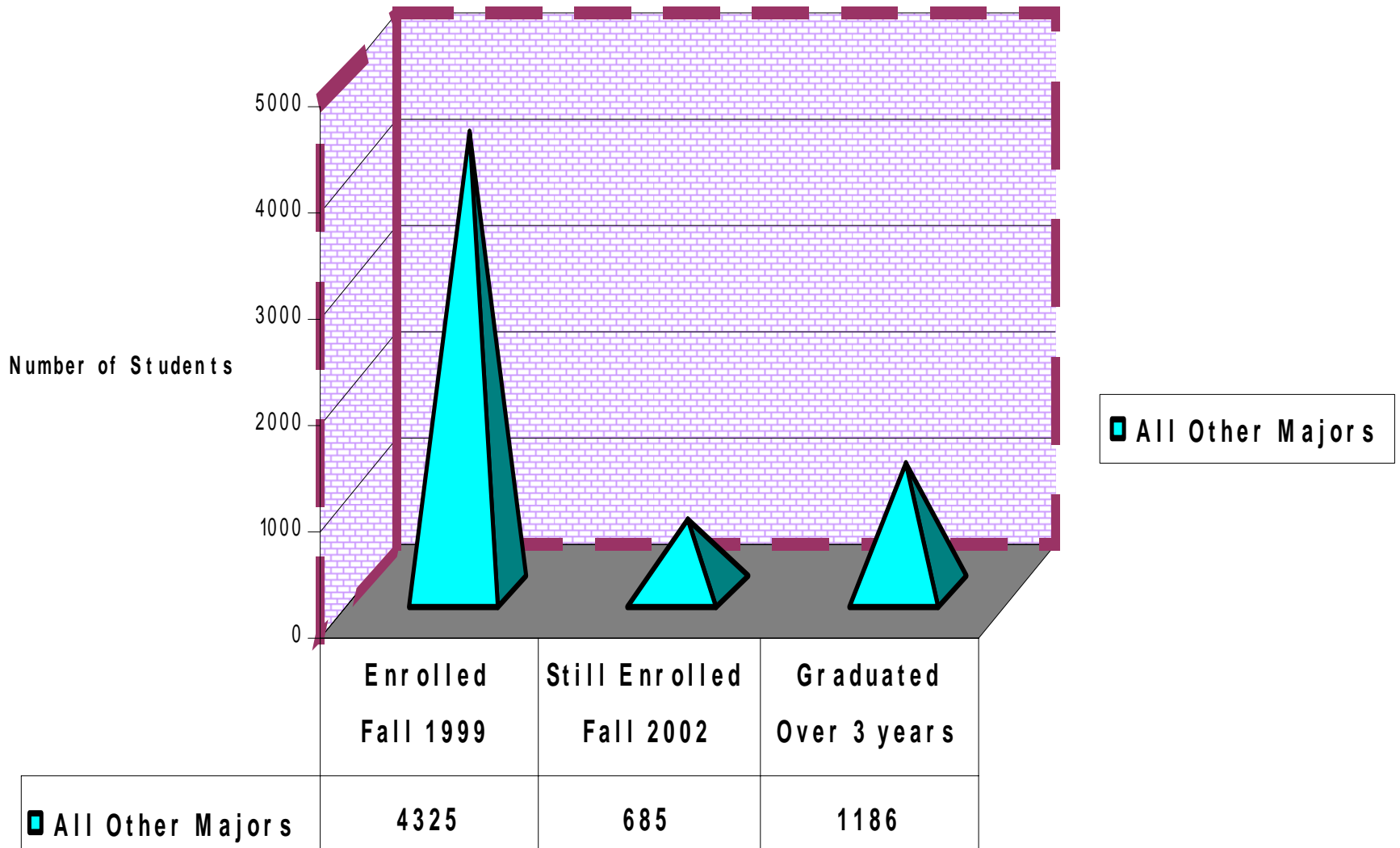
<b>COHORT #1</b> Fall 1999 to Fall 2002	<b>Enrolled</b> Fall 1999	<b>Still Enrolled</b> Fall 2002	<b>Graduated</b> Over 3 years	<b>Persistence</b> %	<b>Graduation</b> %
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ESL Majors	469	82	18	17.5%	3.8%
All Other Majors, Except Unclassified	4325	685	1186	15.8%	27.4%

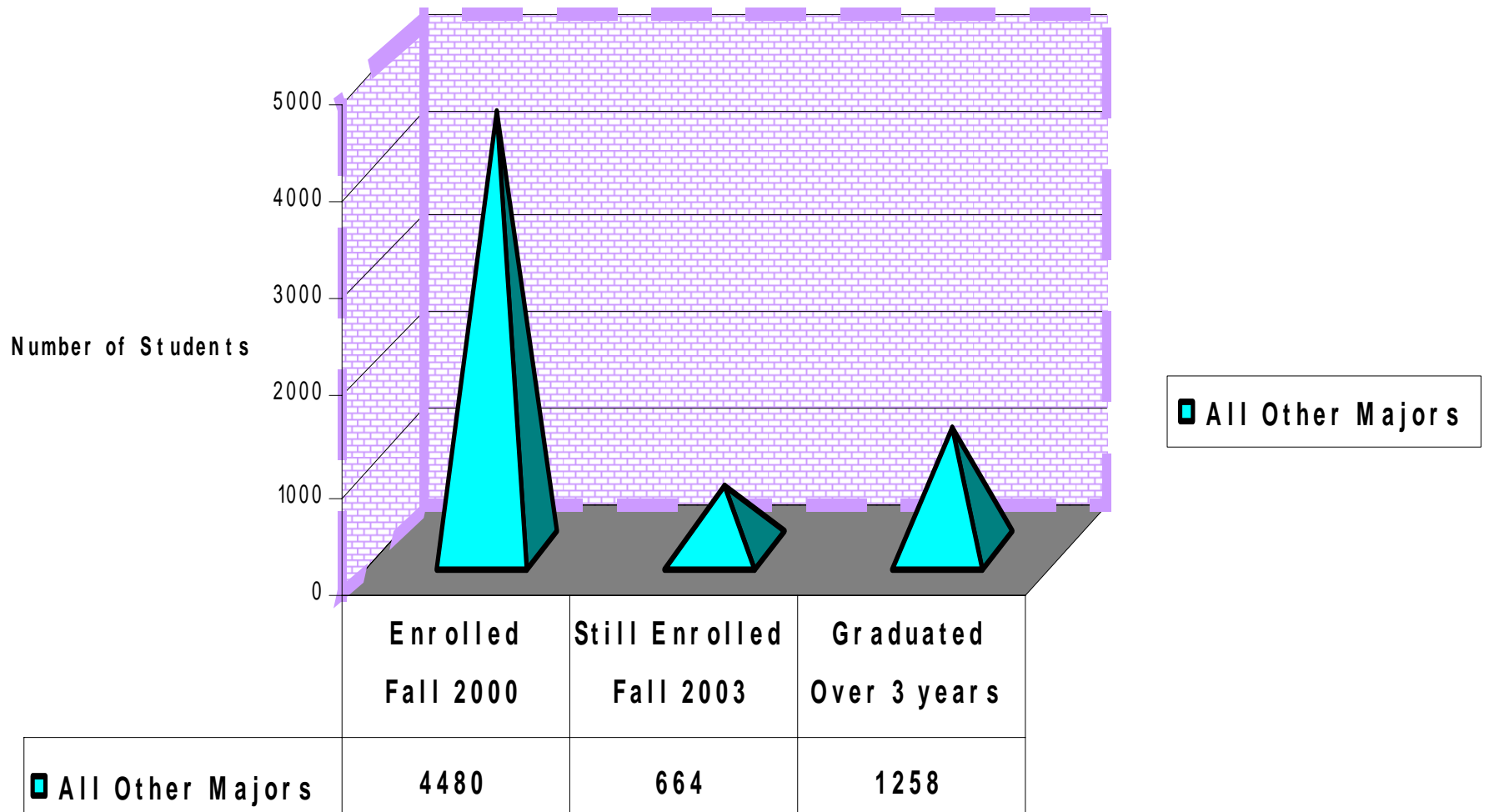
<b>COHORT #2</b> Fall 2000 to Fall 2003	<b>Enrolled</b> Fall 2000	<b>Still Enrolled</b> Fall 2003	<b>Graduated</b> Over 3 years	<b>Persistence</b> %	<b>Graduation</b> %
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ESL Majors	451	85	6	18.8%	1.3%
All Other Majors, Except Unclassified	4480	664	1258	14.8%	28.1%

# Persistence and Graduation, All Other Majors: Fall 1999 to Fall 2002



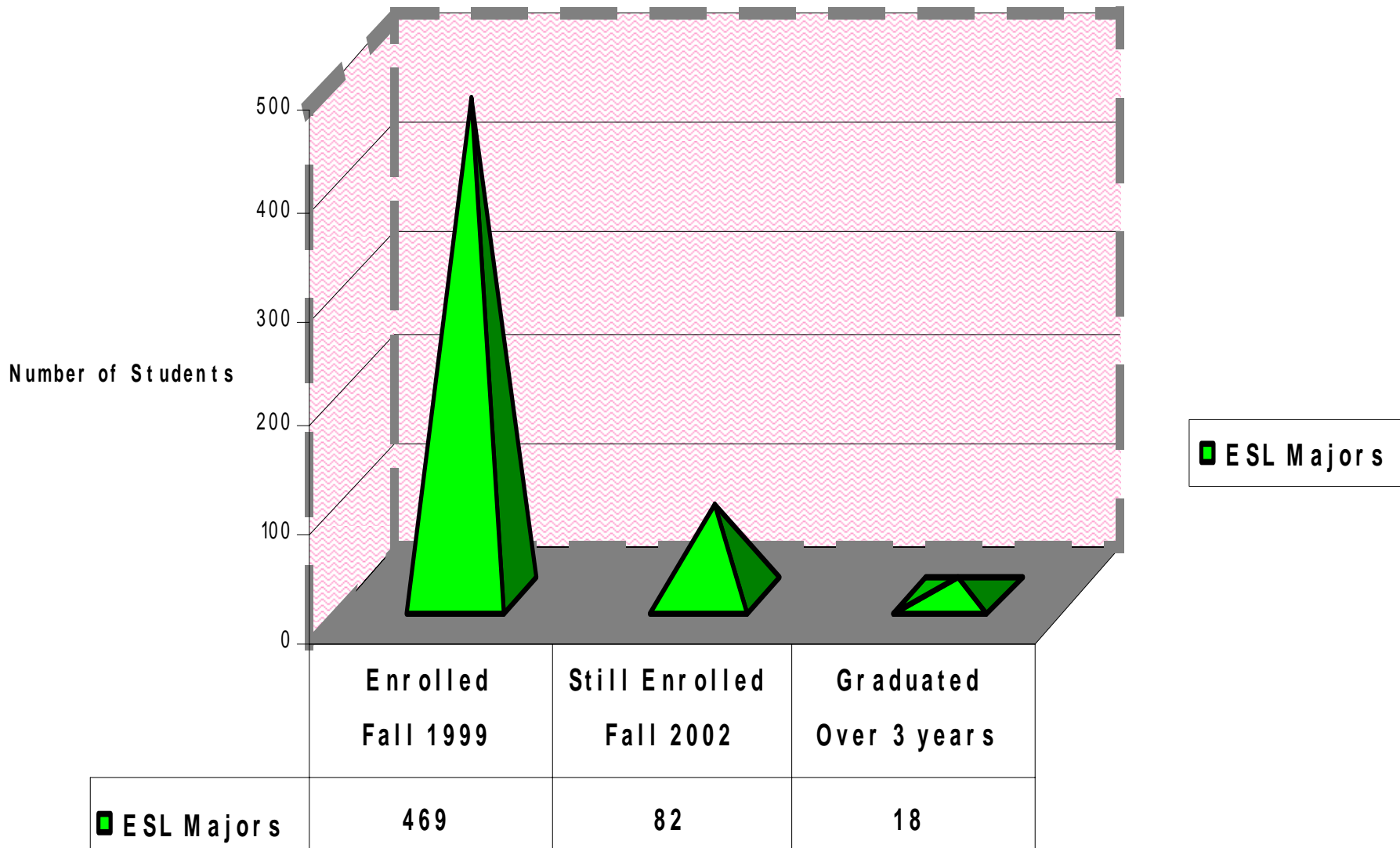
# Persistence and Graduation of All Other Majors: Fall 2000 to Fall 2003



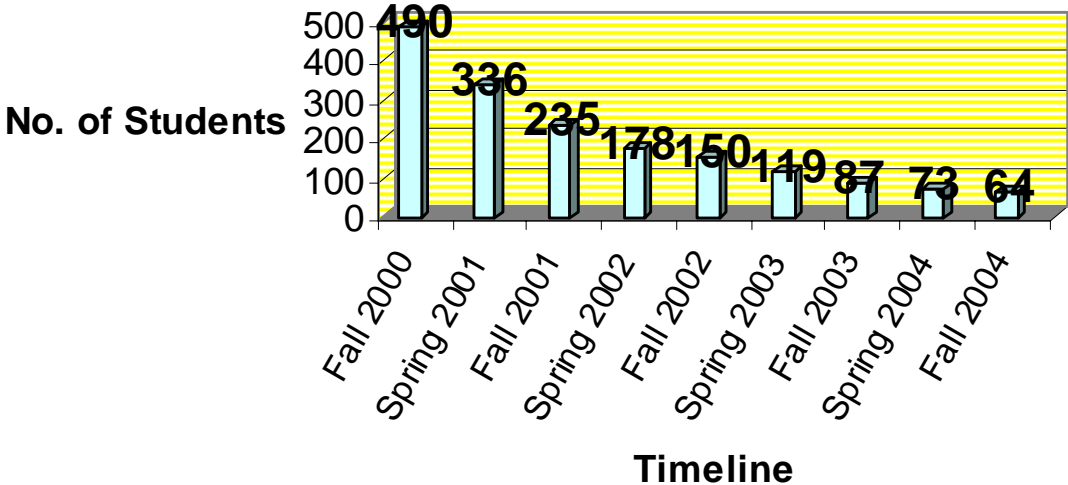
# Persistence and Graduation of ESL Students: Fall 2000 to Fall 2003



# Persistence and Graduation of ESL Students: Fall 1999 to Fall 2002



# Persistence of ESL Fall 2000 Students to Fall 2004

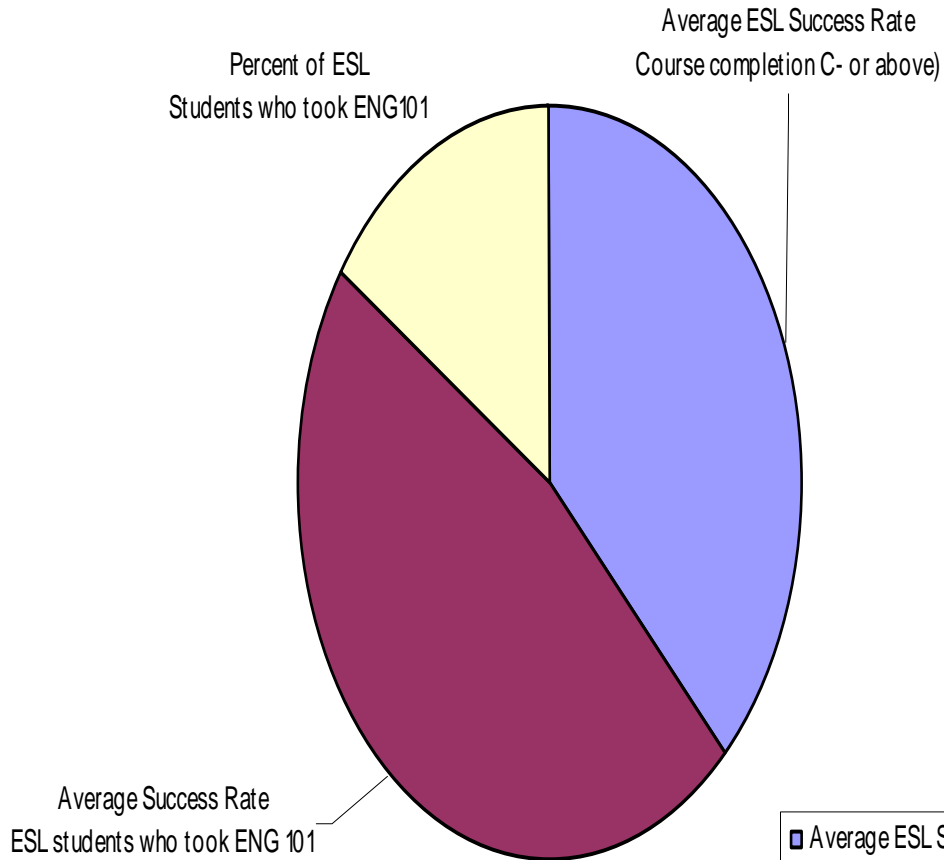




## Comparison of ESL Success Rates at Rio Hondo College with NECC

		NECC	Rio Hondo	Comparison
Average ESL Success Rate (Course completion C- or above)		80%	66%	NECC somewhat more successful.
Average Success Rate ESL students who took ENG 101		80%	82%	NECC comparable.
Percent of ESL Students who took ENG101		13%	27%	NECC less than one-half as successful.

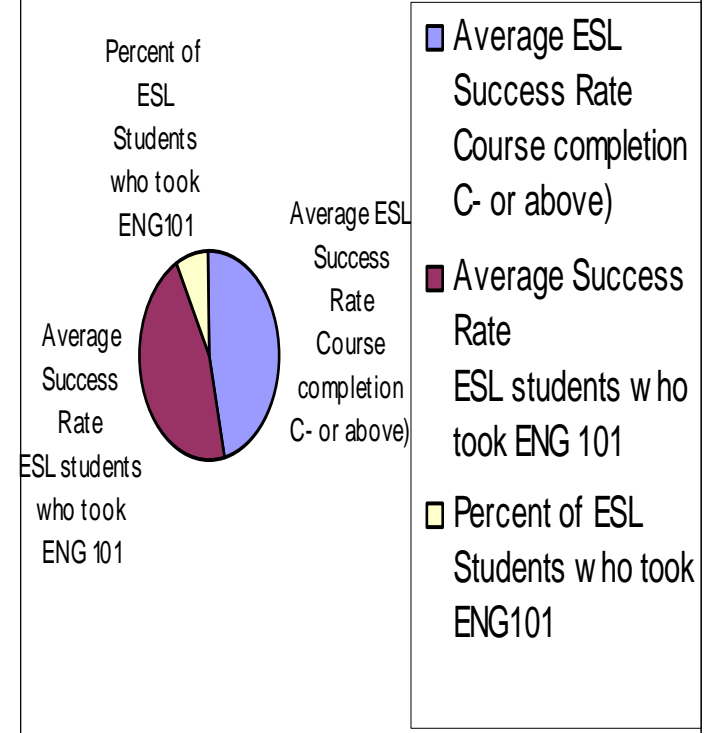
# Rio Hondo



Average Success Rate  
ESL students who took ENG 101

- Average ESL Success Rate (Course completion C- or above)
- Average Success Rate (ESL students who took ENG 101)
- Percent of ESL Students who took ENG 101

# NECC



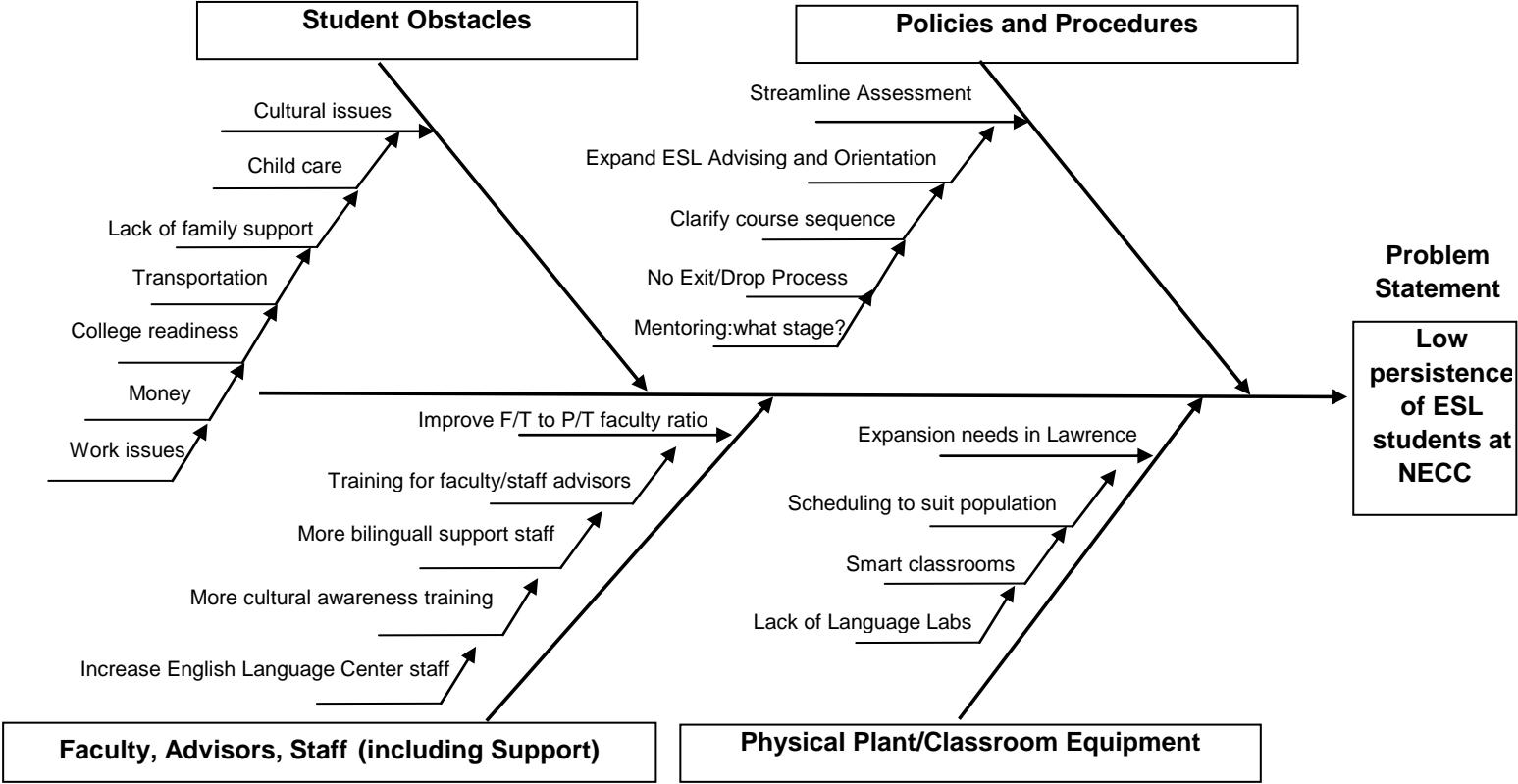
Percent of  
ESL  
Students  
who took  
ENG101

Average  
Success  
Rate  
ESL students  
who took  
ENG 101

Average ESL  
Success  
Rate  
Course  
completion  
C- or above)

- Average ESL Success Rate (Course completion C- or above)
- Average Success Rate (ESL students who took ENG 101)
- Percent of ESL Students who took ENG 101

**Presumed Obstacles to ESL Student Success**  
Diagram will be compared with survey results.



# ISHIKAWA ESL OBSTACLES CHART

## Obstances Further Defined

### Student Obstacles

**Cultural Issues:** There is probably a need to incorporate greater cultural awareness in each of our processes, as we service students from many cultures.

**Child Care:** The lack of affordable and available child care is expected to have a major impact on student persistence.

**Lack of family support:** Cultural (more pervasive) or crisis driven: such as when a student has no support system to care for a dependent in an emergency.

**Transportation:** Some issues surrounding the inadequate scheduling of the present shuttle are expected to be brought to our attention.

**College Readiness:** ESL students probably suffer from the same lack of requisite academic study skills as the rest of the population.

**Money:** Financial obligations other than college costs probably play a significant role in persistence: can we assist students in their financial planning?

**Work Issues:** Additional counseling or even requirements in the area of advising a reasonable school workload could probably prevent some failures.

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### Faculty, Advisors, Staff (including Support)

**Improve F/T to P/T Faculty Ratio:** Now 5:1; this ratio probably impacts student persistence negatively as P/T not available to assist in advising, orientation, office hours availability and other important persistence factors.

**Training for Faculty and Staff Advisors:** No doubt ongoing training would affect student persistence positively.

**More Bilingual Support Staff:** More diversity in the languages now offered by our bilingual support staff.

**More Cultural Awareness Training:** It is expected that the NCBI initiative will address this need.

**Increase English Language Center Staff:** The surveys are expected to reveal that this is a need for additional staff for this important service area.

### Policies and Procedures

**Streamline Assessment:** The process probably needs to be re-evaluated to determine whether or not it is as efficient as it can be.

**Expand ESL Advising and Orientation:** The team expects that the surveys will reveal a need to institute a more formal orientation for ESL students which would combine a better understanding of the demands of the program with a presentation of time management and study skills.

**Clarify Course Sequence:** Is it possible that ESL students do not have an accurate sense of the various levels of the ESL program and its requirements?

**No Exit/Drop Process:** By instituting an Exit/Drop Interview process, the college could begin to understand why ESL students leave the program.

**Mentoring: what stage?:** ESL students would probably benefit from a mentoring program, as studies show this service to positively impact persistence.

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### Physical Plant/Classroom Equipment

**Expansion Needs in Lawrence:** Lack of sufficient space in Lawrence to accommodate the number of courses needed probably has a negative impact on persistence.

**Scheduling to Suit Population:** For example: single mothers have a difficult time attending 8:00 a.m. classes because of their children's school schedule.

**Smart Classrooms:** More of these would certainly enhance teaching.

**Lack of Language Labs:** A "true" Language Lab could be critical to the success of these students.

## **Selected Findings Noted from the Review of the Literature**

One community college reported higher retention rates for the following:

- ✓ Students planning to transfer vs. those studying for self-enrichment.
- ✓ Students with long term vs. short term academic goals and plans.
- ✓ Students enrolled in a program of study.
- ✓ Students under the age of 21 (66%) vs. age 45 or older (40%).
- ✓ Students studying full-time, regardless of age.

Latinos found to be less likely to return to school for these reasons:

- ✓ Less connection or cultural identification with the academic community.
- ✓ Less support for their studies, both financially and emotionally.

Increased rate of retention (89%) was experienced in a Culturally Grounded ESL College Entry Project for Latino students which used bilingualism to promote the learning of English using a team that taught ESL with 3 components:

- ✓ Latino cultural awareness taught mostly in Spanish,
- ✓ English writing with reinforcement in Spanish, and
- ✓ College survival skills taught only in English.
- ✓ Additionally, there was a monthly activity for the cohort, guest speakers on ethnic identity, college experience, special celebrations.

## **Selected Findings Noted from the Review of the Literature (continued 2 of 3)**

### Another successful program:

- ✓ hired specially trained English instructors, Hispanic counselors, and Hispanic professionals (to act as mentors);
- ✓ provided students with individualized nontraditional counseling, academic instruction, and personal contact with Hispanic professional in the community, and
- ✓ involved the Hispanic family, the community, and businesses in the education process.

### Impediments to ESL student success found in another study were:

- ✓ Part-time faculty, perceived as “second class” often predominate.
- ✓ ESL viewed by colleagues as less demanding and rigorous.
- ✓ Traditionally, ESL classes are not designed to meet need of Generation 1.5 students.
- ✓ Positioning of ESL program within an institution can affect student outcomes.

## **Selected Findings Noted from the Review of the Literature (continued 3 of 3)**

Student surveys at another community college resulted in these recommendations:

- ✓ Involve ESL students in more campus activities and clubs, enhance student awareness of their benefits.
- ✓ Faculty should encourage groups and encourage class schedules that allow more time for these.
- ✓ Faculty should encourage students to communicate academic issues before they become problems.
- ✓ Study skills classes or sessions should be offered, emphasizing the formation and maintenance of study groups.
- ✓ Lastly, since most students drop out during the first semester, these recommendations must be in place early.

Pairing an ESL course with a mainstream academic course (similar to the learning community concept in place at NECC)

- ✓ Significantly improves both content area learning and English language proficiency.
- ✓ Lessen students' anxiety, make them less overwhelmed by the academic content.
- ✓ Enable ESL students to review content material in the supportive environment of the ESL class.

# TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS AND PREDICTED COSTS

## RECOMMENDATION

## ASSOCIATED COST

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Design ESL Fall 2004 Drop-out Survey                                    | Staff time (May need to consider hiring consultant) |
| 2. Implement ESL Fall 2004 Drop-out Survey                                 | Staff time/printing costs                           |
| 3. Analyze data/review conclusions ESL Fall 04 Drop-out Survey             | Staff time  |
| 4. Design ESL Entrance Survey  | Staff time (May need to consider hiring consultant) |
| 5. Implement ESL Entrance Survey   | Staff time/printing costs                           |
| 6. Analyze data/draw conclusions from ESL Entrance Survey                  | Staff time/printing costs                           |
| 7. Design Current Term Student Drop-out Survey                             | Staff time (May need to consider hiring consultant) |
| 8. Implement Current Term Student Drop-out Survey                          | Staff time/printing costs                           |
| 9. Analyze data/draw conclusions from Current Term Student Drop-out Survey | Staff time  |
| 10. Conduct Focus Group with ESL Faculty                                   | Staff time/Food                                     |
| 11. Analyze /draw conclusions Faculty Focus Group results                  | Staff time  |
| 12. Conduct Focus Group ESL Students Level 3,4,5                           | Staff time/Food                                     |
| 13. Analyze/draw conclusions ESL Student Focus Group                       | Staff time  |
| 14. Integrate Results of all Surveys/Focus Groups                          | Staff time  |
| 15. Make Recommendations to Steering Committee                             | Staff time/printing costs                           |

# ESL Persistence Implementation Chart (GANTT)

Activity	Responsible Party										Date of Completion
		9/04	10/04	11/04	12/04	1/05	2/05	3/05	4/05	5/05	
Assemble team	Tom Fallon										9/04
Gather facts through research (ongoing)	Team										10/04
Determine project	Team										10/04
Draft report	Team										
Submit to Steering Committee	Team										
Design ESL Fall 2004 Drop-out Survey	TBA										
Implement ESL Fall 2004 Drop-out Survey	TBA										
Analyze data/draw conclusions ESL Fall 2004 Drop-out Survey	TBA										
Design ESL Entrance Survey	TBA										
Implement ESL Entrance Survey	TBA										
Analyze data/draw conclusions ESL entrance survey	TBA										
Design Current Term Student Drop-out Survey	TBA										
Implement Current Term Student Drop-out Survey	TBA										
Analyze data/draw conclusions Current Term Student Drop-out Survey	TBA										
Conduct Focus Groups with ESL Faculty	TBA										
Analyze/Draw Conclusions Faculty Focus Group Results	TBA										
Conduct Focus Groups with ESL Students Level 3,4,5	TBA										
Analyze/Draw Conclusions Student Focus Group Results	TBA										
Integrate Results of All Surveys and Focus Groups	TBA										
Make Recommendations to Steering Committee	TBA										

Thank you for your time and  
patience.

The end.