

**Title V**  
**Basic Skill's SEP Study 2007-08**  
**Project Summary**

**Description:**

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the Student Education Plan (SEP) as the primary counseling intervention utilized by basic skills students who are new to college. In order to exclude selection bias (students who choose to come in and actually see counselors differ in motivation, perseverance, knowledge of resources, etc. from those who don't) basic skills classes were 'blanketed' with SEPs. The goal for blanketed classes was for every first-time college student in the class to receive an SEP. The blanketed classes were then compared to an equivalent comparison group in success, retention and persistence.

**Procedure:**

Four classes were targeted for Fall 07 (3 ENG-60A, 1 MAT-63) and four in Spring 08 (2 ENG-60A, 1 MAT-63, 1 MAT-65) terms. Overall demographics of students and characteristics of class (time, # students, teacher if possible) were closely matched in selecting appropriate comparison classes. Also, classes that were offered as part of the Success Track (basic skills classes block scheduled so that students might co-enroll and experience a de facto learning community) were excluded from this study in order to best isolate the SEP as the primary intervention. Students who already had an SEP were told that they did not need to meet with a counselor to do a new SEP unless their educational goals had changed since their last SEP.

Each term, project counselors contacted faculty of the targeted classes to see if their class could be used for the purposes of the study. In all cases faculty agreed to participate and also gave permission for counselors to use class time to explain the purpose of the SEP and recruit students for half-hour appointments. Counselors did multiple presentations at different points of the term in order to encourage student participation. Flyers, emails, phone calls, assigned appointment cards, and sign-up lists were also used in varying degrees over the two terms.

**Results:                      SEP Study in Fall 07 & Spring 08 semesters**

**SEP Grp-160 students (first-time college students) – 60% received SEPs**

**Comparison Grp-184 students (first-time college students) – 32% had SEPs**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Success</b></li><li>○ <b>SEP-52%</b></li><li>○ <b>CG-60%</b></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Retention</b></li><li>○ <b>SEP-81%</b></li><li>○ <b>CG-84%</b></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Persistence (Fall 07-Spring 08)*</b></li><li>○ <b>SEP-65%</b></li><li>○ <b>CG-83%</b></li></ul> |
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**\*p<.005**

**Discussion:**

Implementation of Fall 07 intervention was later in semester, around mid-term and first-time college students (FTF) in the SEP classes were targeted. This subgroup was targeted since they tend to be most at-risk for dropping out and are more heterogeneous (continuing students have a selection bias and are more homogenous-they are persisters). Even with the late start, counselors were able to double the rate of SEPs in study group over comparison (63.4% compared to 31.5%) and thereby create a significant difference between groups in order to isolate effect of SEP. In addition, the same instructor was used for SEP & comparison groups for two out of the three ENG-60A pairs (i.e. one instructor was used for one SEP & comparison and another instructor was used for the other SEP & comparison). In this way we were further able to isolate the effect of SEP by mitigating the possible difference that may occur when outcomes are due to differences in teaching effectiveness (i.e. 'teacher effect'). The results for FTF in ENG-60A with same instructor for SEP & comparison groups indicated a surprising trend. The comparison groups were significantly higher in success, retention and persistence. This trend held consistent when looking at all FTF and even when looking at all classes in the study. However, as the groups became less specific (isolating the effect of SEP less), the difference between groups also lessened. This further supports the inverse relationship between SEP and success/retention/persistence.

Implementation of Spring 08 was earlier in semester than Fall 07, so the goal was set to blanket entire SEP class. However, as the semester progressed it became clear that all classes wouldn't be blanketed so FTF were again targeted. Similar to Fall 07, SEP rates for FTF between blanketed and comparison groups were about double (56.4% & 28.9%, respectively). Also, both ENG-60A SEP sections had the same instructor for the comparison groups. During Spring 08, there were no significant differences in success or retention between groups at any level (course, FTF, all classes). Since MIS data is not available yet for Fall 08, persistence rates for Spring 08 will be forthcoming.

When aggregating both Fall & Spring datasets, there continued to be no significant difference between groups in success and retention among FTF. Disaggregating the data by discipline found that the SEP coverage between groups in math over the two terms was not significantly different (SEP-49.3%, Comparison-43.0%). So, in order to better determine SEP impact, it became necessary to consider only FTF in ENG-60A over the two terms. The ENG-60A subgroup was probably most representative of the SEP intervention for two reasons. First, the difference in SEP coverage between groups was significant (67.7% & 22.9%, respectively). Secondly, 4 out of the 5 SEP/comparison group pairs were taught by the same instructor with three different instructors involved in the matched SEP/comparison pairs. This should address the 'teacher effects' issue quite summarily. When looking at ENG-60A over both semesters, a significant difference existed between groups. The comparison group was significantly higher in success and retention than the SEP group (see next page).

**ENG 60A SEP Grp-93 students (FTF)**

**ENG 60A Comparison Grp-104 students (FTF)**

- **Success**
  - **SEP-49%\*\***
  - **CG-71%**
- **Retention**
  - **SEP-78%\***
  - **CG-90%**
- **Persistence**
  - **SEP-67%**
  - **CG-74%**

**\*p<.05**

**\*\*p<.005**