During the spring 2011 semester, the CRC Research Office partnered with USC’s Center for Urban Education to investigate the goal achievement of all first-time students (students who had not previously earned any college units) who enrolled at CRC during the fall 2006 semester. The graph to the right shows that fewer than 28% of the 2006 first-time students earned a certificate, degree or transferred by fall 2010.

The graph below shows students’ progression toward their long-term goals in terms of units earned per year. The graph shows that only 34% of the fall 2006 first-time students successfully earned 15 units during their first academic year. However, this loss of momentum decreases after this milestone, and once students reach milestone #3 there is increased momentum to accomplish a long term goal.

When this achievement data is disaggregated by assessment placement and ethnicity, the challenge of meeting milestone 1 is similar for all groups. However, progression through the milestones varied slightly by ethnicity and goal achievement varied depending on assessment results. In particular,

- Slightly more than 13% of the fall 2006 first-time students who were placed into basic skills achieved a long term goal by fall 2010.
- Slightly more than 40% of the fall 2006 first-time students who were placed into college-level Math and English achieved a long term goal by fall 2010.
- Slightly more than 24% of the fall 2006 first-time students who did not take a placement test prior to their enrollment achieved a long-term goal by fall.
Reading and Writing Center Impacts Course Success

During the spring 2011 semester the CRC Research Office investigated whether attendance in the Reading and Writing Center affected average course success rates in the other Reading or Writing Course(s) in which the student was enrolled. Students who had dropped their English courses before the drop deadline were excluded from the analysis.

Approximately 12.3% (2404 students out of 19513 total students enrolled in one or more English classes during the three academic year period) utilized the Reading and Writing Center. On average, students used the Reading and Writing Center 28 times during the academic year.

Although in the aggregate, students who took advantage of the Reading and Writing Center had higher average course success rates than those who did not avail themselves of the service (70.3% compared with 65.9%), the variation among the individual courses within each department and variations within demographic groups over time was surprising.

In general, the impact of the Reading and Writing Center appears to be greater for students enrolled in basic skills courses, African American students, female students and students between the ages of 24 and 29.

Collaboration Bears Fruit

One of the major institutional goals at CRC is to improve teaching and learning effectiveness, which includes support in the assessment of teaching and learning. An initiative area for this goal is to encourage collaboration among employee groups and disciplines.

Recently Brad Brazil, Jeanne Edman and Eddie Fagin collaborated to investigate students’ ability to be self-reliant learners (a college-wide SLO). A large sample of students (1700) enrolled in economics and psychology courses completed a survey that assessed their self-reliance. More than 1500 students provided their student ID, so demographic and outcomes data could be incorporated into the study. Course enrollment was also collected so faculty could examine the results at a course or program level.

The study found that:
- Students on academic probation are less confident in their ability to take notes in class and complete their homework assignments on time compared to students in good standing.
- There is little difference in the help-seeking behavior of both groups of students.
- Asian-Pacific Islanders had the lowest sense of self-efficacy compared to other ethnic groups.

Nutrition 300 Study

During the fall 2010 semester, the Research Office, in collaboration with the Foundations for Academic Success Committee, investigated the average course success rates of students enrolling in a Nutrition 300 course during the 2009-10 academic year based on incoming reading and writing skills as determined by placement and/or course completion. Students who had no enrollment or assessment information were removed from the study. The study of 315 students revealed that Average Course Success rates in NUTRI 300:
- increased in relationship to the recommended English Writing and Reading level placement.

ESL enrollment was too small to make any meaningful determination. This type of research is relevant to faculty who are investigating whether cross-disciplinary pre-requisites might enhance course success rates.
Breaking Down an Average

As we know, an average often masks significant differences. For example, a student with scores of 70%, 68%, and 72% and a student with scores of 80%, 84% and 46% both have a 70% average. The research office recently decided to use this fact to further investigate the differences that exist in average course success rates by ethnicity. The Research Office staff was surprised at what they found. College-wide, approximately 25% of the grades assigned between 2006 and 2010 were either F’s or W’s. If these grades were excluded, then approximately 7% of the “passing” grades awarded at the College during this time frame were D’s, 20% were C’s, 25% were B’s, and 48% were A’s.

When the grade distributions of different ethnicities were explored, all major ethnic groups had similar distributions (with minor variations) with the exception of African American students. Key differences between the two distributions (which are illustrated to the right) include the following:

- a greater percentage of F’s or W’s are assigned to African American students (42% compared to 25%)
- a greater percentage of C’s are assigned to African American students (32% compared to 20%)
- a lower percentage of A’s are assigned to African American students (29% compared to 48%)

This information suggests the need for further research and indicates that different approaches need to be taken to respond to the complex issue of African American course success rates.

Using Student Peer Interviews in Assessing Campus

Since one of CRC’s College student learning outcomes is to encourage campus engagement, we decided to further investigate why students fail to participate in campus activities the perceived benefits of campus engagement by interviewing students.

Professors Jeanne Edman, BJ Snowden, and student research assistants, David Patron, Ida Lozano, and Jacinta Chan developed a research questionnaire about campus engagement.

The three student assistants and students enrolled in Psychology 368 conducted 172 student interviews.

The results suggest that most students fail to participate due to lack of motivation and lack of time. Students indicated they would be more likely to participate if they received course credit.

Increased knowledge and academic enrichment were the most commonly identified impacts of campus participation.

The College will need to more effectively communicate and integrate the value of campus engagement into instruction in order to achieve this SLO.

Update on the Writing Sample Study

Students assess into CRC English classes via a multiple-choice test; unfortunately, many of these students are under-prepared. Because of this, Lisa Abraham is exploring whether it is desirable to add a writing sample component to our English assessment process. This semester, before receiving any instruction, 87% of CRC composition students took the same writing sample assessment test that is used at SCC. Thanks to a grant from CASSL, those tests were then scored during an eight-hour session by CRC composition course-level coordinators. These scores, along with midterm grades and teachers’ perceptions of each student’s progress will help us determine whether the writing sample is as accurate as the multiple-choice test in terms of predicting student success in composition classes. In August we’ll add final grades to our data-set. Lisa’s project has benefitted tremendously from the expert counsel and hard work of Brad Brazil and Jeanne Edman, and also from the invaluable technical support of Brenda Limón. The entire English faculty has participated in this project, and everyone in CASSL has been both patient and enthusiastic.
First-time Freshmen Students’ Transfer Behavior

During the fall semester, the research office used data from the National Student Loan Clearinghouse (NSLC) to analyze the subsequent enrollment in a 4-year University of the 2048 fall 2006 first-time freshmen (students 18 or younger who had completed no college units prior to enrolling).

Student transcripts were used to identify the number of students who were transfer-ready (n=167) and the number who were transfer-directed (n=446) by fall 2010 (see definitions to the right).

The study matched 266 of the 466 (59.6%) “Transfer Directed” CRC students with students who were in the NSLC University Data file. This rate indicates that nearly 60% of first-time Freshmen students who enrolled in a “transfer-level” class within 4 years of starting at CRC actively enrolled at a University subsequent to their enrollment at CRC.

The study matched 130 of the 167 (77.8%) “Transfer Ready” first-time freshmen. This rate indicates that nearly 80% of first-time Freshmen students who successfully complete 60 or more transfer units and successfully complete a “transfer-level” Math and “transfer-level” English class within 4 years of starting at CRC actively enrolled at a University subsequent to their enrollment at CRC.

Note: The actual transfer rates of these cohorts may be greater than those reported in this study due to the following:

- Not all institutions report their data to the NSLC
- Some student records may not appear in the NSLC data due to FERPA

In addition, this study does not include all students who transfer from CRC due to the following:

- Many students transfer without becoming transfer-ready or transfer-directed, and
- Some CRC students complete some lower division units at other colleges prior to enrolling at CRC.

This study suggests that increasing the number of students who are able to enroll in transfer-level math and English will significantly increase CRC’s transfer rates.