

Promising Practices: First-Year Experience

2010 Leader Colleges



Achieving
the Dream™

Community Colleges Count

December, 2010

Overview

- **Every Achieving the Dream institution develops and implements research-based policies and practices based on an analysis of its institutional strengths, problem areas, and achievement gaps.**
- **The colleges are committed to assessing the effectiveness of their policies and practices, institutionalizing approaches that prove successful, and sharing their findings widely.**
- **This deck is a working document, providing an overview of some promising practices in “First-Year Experience” for improving student outcomes as reported by the 2010 Leader Colleges.**

Please, Keep in Mind...

- **These promising practices are implemented as part of Achieving the Dream's larger student-centered model of institutional improvement.**
- **These institutions have committed to Achieving the Dream's four guiding principles and five-step process of institutional improvement, and are creating a culture of evidence in which data and inquiry drive broad-based institutional efforts to improve student outcomes.**
- **Attempts to replicate any promising practice described in this deck should be done in the context of Achieving the Dream's integrated institutional improvement framework.**

First-Year Experience efforts are comprehensive approaches designed to improve success rates and increase retention of first-year students. FYE programs may include interventions focused on the streamlining admissions processes, increasing financial aid uptake, community outreach, student success courses, and targeted orientation and advisement.

First-Year Experience

First-Year Experience

- **El Paso Community College**
College Readiness Initiative and PREP
- **Northern Virginia Community College**
FYE program
- **Yakima Valley**
Mandatory New Student Orientation

El Paso
Community College



The Best Place to Start

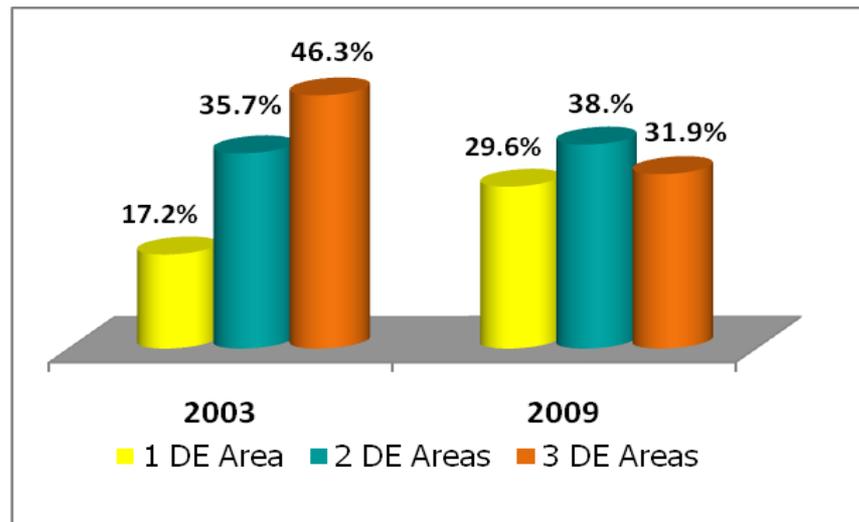
El Paso Community College: *College Readiness Initiative & PREP*

El Paso Community College's Pretesting, Retesting Educational Preparation (PREP) program specifically targets improving success rates for first-time-in-college students by offering vital assessment preparation so that students can perform their best. This program is one part of El Paso's College Readiness Initiative that is geared toward improving success rates for first-time-in-college students. The college has seen a drop in the number of students testing into the lowest level of developmental courses and a subsequent increase in the students that test at college-level or require fewer developmental courses.



El Paso Community College: *College Readiness Initiative & PREP*

The following graph shows the positive effects College Readiness Initiative programs like PREP has had on reducing the number of developmental education areas into which students place.





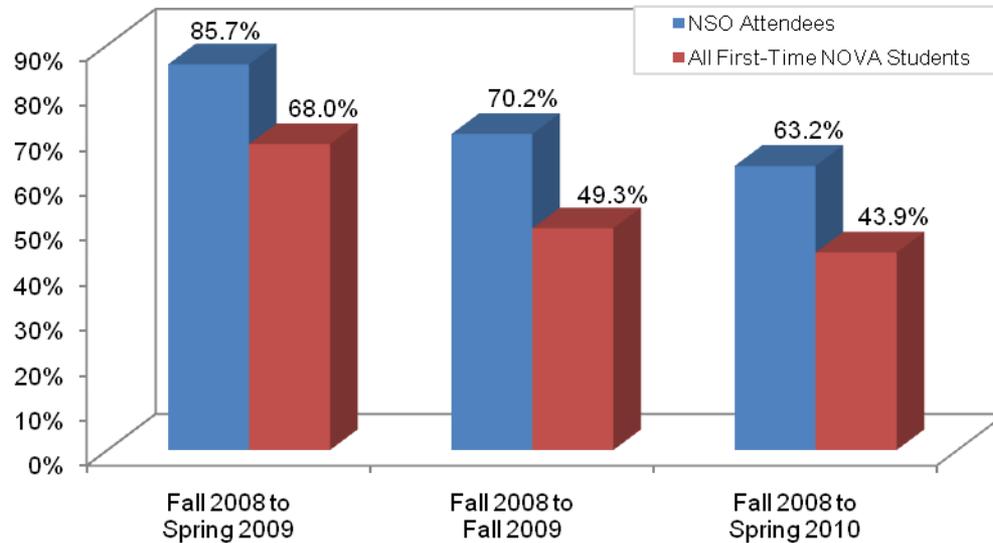
Northern Virginia Community College: *First Year Experience Program*

The major goal of NOVA's First Year Experience Program (FYE) is to increase first-time entering students' preparation for college and engagement in the college community. The program is composed of a New Student Orientation (NSO) and a recently revised student success course. The NSO includes parents and offers a large number of scheduling options for the convenience of participants. The student success course addresses a lack of understanding of college expectations, poor study skills and time-management struggles of young students, based on data from student and faculty focus groups. Additional components of the FYE program are being discussed now. The FYE program will be expanded to include early advising, a peer mentoring program for new students entering from high school, and a student development course targeted to recent high school graduates. Students who attend the NSO were retained at a higher rate than those students who did not participate.



Northern Virginia Community College: *First Year Experience Program*

The following graphs compares the retention rates of new student orientation attendees and all first-time to NOVA students: fall 2008 cohort



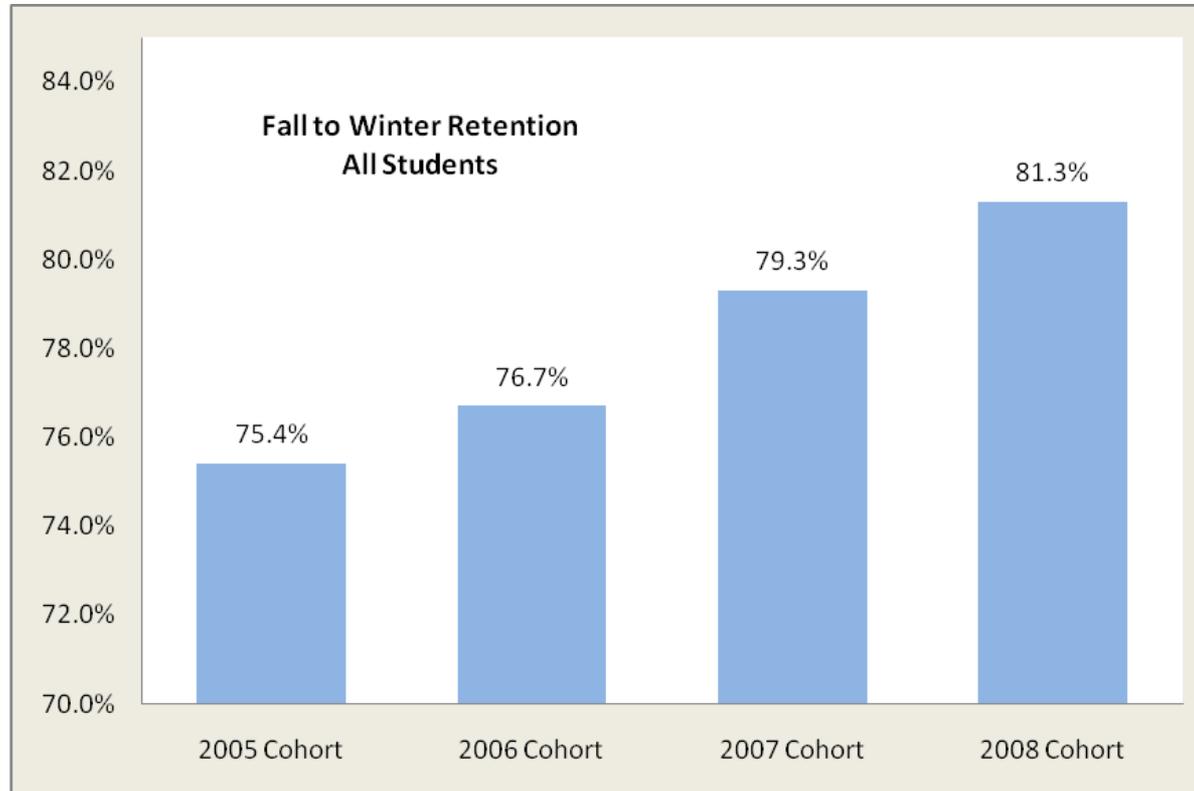


Yakima Valley Community College: *Mandatory New Student Orientation*

YVCC has reinvigorated their advising program with the implementation of a mandatory New Student Orientation and registration process. Teams work with groups of incoming students to share information about the college, the programs of study, the meaning of placement data, registration options, tours of facilities, and recommendations for advisors. Students leave the orientation sessions with at least their first quarter of classes scheduled and prompts for meeting with advisors before registration for the next quarter. Since the implementation of a mandatory New Student Orientation, YVCC has seen first-quarter retention increase from 75.4% (fall 2004 into winter 2005) to 81.6% (fall 2009-winter 2010), with students of color making the greatest retention gains.



Yakima Valley Community College: *Mandatory New Student Orientation*



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