



First Term at Compton College – Entry Design Team

June 3, 2021

The Tartar Focused and Directed Pathways committee initiated the Entry Design Team in fall 2020 to examine what was happening with new students who earned zero units (earned all Ds, Fs, or Ws in their first term). This new metric was introduced by the Achieving the Dream coaches and is an early indicator for later metrics such as fall to spring persistence, which is a “north star” metric for the committee.

The Entry Design team is made up of the Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Academic Affairs Deans (2), Instructional Faculty (1), Non-classroom Library Faculty (1), and Classified Professionals (2) from Admissions and Records and the Special Resource Center. The team met regularly during Fall 2020 and Spring 2021. The team reviewed course information and conducted interviews to capture student’s voices regarding what they experienced in their first term. Institutional Effectiveness provided a student data set with names and contact information of zero-unit earners from fall 2017, fall 2018, and fall 2019. The Dean of Student Success used Summer Bridge and College Promise rosters to identify qualifying students for fall 2020.

This report provides a summary of the qualitative study, including data reviewed by this team, the focus of the inquiry, recommendations for the college, and other considerations.

Data Reviewed

The team reviewed three sources of data: 1) the [First-time in College dashboard](#); 2) high frequency courses taken by the population; and 3) interviews with students who earn zero units in their first term.

Occurrence of Zero-Unit Earners

[First-time in College dashboard](#) provides the aggregate frequency of first-time students who earn zero-units across the college, and shows 27% of the first-time in college student cohort earned zero units in the first term.

Course taking by Zero-Unit Earners

Specific courses and subjects are identified among the course analysis of students who earn zero units in their first term. The Design Team underscored that the findings are not about blame, rather, we

would like to talk about how the college can support our faculty and students to increase success in these classes.

Table 1. Course Enrollments among all Zero Earners in their First Term Fall 2016-Fall 2019

	Fall 2016		Fall 2017		Fall 2018		Fall 2019		Count change fall 2019 from fall 2018	Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%		Count	%
ENGL-101S							45 (140)	32%	+45	45 (140)	32%
LIBR-101	0 (4)	0%	10 (43)	23%	10 (52)	19%	30 (71)	42%	+20	50 (170)	29%
CDEV-103	13 (53)	25%	7 (45)	16%	15 (43)	35%	18 (44)	41%	+3	53 (185)	29%
MATH-12	73 (288)	25%	35 (199)	18%	43 (146)	29%			-43	151 (633)	24%
ENGL-RWA	4 (41)	10%	13 (56)	23%	12 (69)	17%	22 (53)	42%	+10	51 (219)	23%
ENGL-B	24 (108)	22%	22 (104)	21%	15 (58)	26%			-15	61 (270)	23%
ENGL-82	54 (231)	23%	40 (188)	21%	22 (98)	22%			-22	116 (517)	22%
MATH-150	0 (7)	0%	2 (10)	20%	2 (22)	9%	23 (85)	27%	+21	27 (124)	22%
ART-101	5 (38)	13%	4 (31)	13%	10 (32)	31%	7 (19)	37%	+6	26 (120)	22%
MATH-73	9 (83)	11%	4 (42)	10%	6 (32)	19%	32 (79)	41%	+26	51 (236)	22%
COMS-100	11 (56)	20%	11 (51)	22%	9 (39)	23%	9 (40)	23%	0	40 (186)	22%
ENGL-101	13 (124)	10%	8 (90)	9%	21 (94)	22%	87 (295)	29%	+66	129 (603)	21%
POLI-101	5 (42)	12%	3 (46)	7%	13 (48)	27%	17 (55)	31%	+4	38 (191)	20%
HDEV-110	39 (266)	15%	33 (236)	14%	43 (218)	20%	62 (179)	35%	+19	177 (899)	20%
HIST-101	8 (65)	12%	11 (68)	16%	13 (57)	23%	12 (46)	26%	-1	44 (236)	19%
ENGL-A	38 (208)	18%	26 (143)	18%	18 (92)	20%			-18	82 (443)	19%
PSYC-101	15 (116)	13%	21 (97)	22%	13 (61)	21%	15 (76)	20%	+2	64 (350)	18%
HIST-102	7 (64)	11%	9 (37)	24%	8 (55)	15%	12 (57)	21%	+4	36 (213)	17%
MATH-23	11 (111)	10%	19 (93)	20%	10 (57)	18%			-10	40 (261)	15%
ENGL-84	12 (98)	12%	8 (55)	15%	11 (68)	16%			-11	31 (221)	14%
MATH-80	4 (76)	5%	6 (71)	8%	9 (51)	18%	14 (56)	25%	+6	33 (254)	13%

Interviews by Zero-Unit Earners

This study included 15 interview participants from three starting cohorts: fall 2018 (1), fall 2019 (7), and fall 2020 (7). The gender breakdown of the survey participants was 7 males and 8 females.

Table 2: Interview Participants by Starting Term

Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Total
1	7	7	15

The team called and texted students asking for a few minutes of their time to discuss their experience with Compton College. Those who agreed to be interviewed were called on the telephone and were

asked the term year they started at Compton College and asked about their enrollment status for Spring 2021 (part-time or full-time). If not enrolled, students were asked to indicate if they want to enroll or if they have no plans to return. The breakdown of the initial questions are as follows:

- 6 students expressed that they are not enrolled for Spring 2021 but would like to come back to school.
- 2 students expressed that they do not have plans to return to Compton College. One student is attending another trade school that was encouraged by his employer. The other student with no plans to return has moved out of state.
- 7 of the zero-unit first-semester earners are currently enrolled for spring 2021 (4 full-time, 3 reduce to part-time students)

After establishing the entry fall cohort and their spring 2021 status student interviewees were asked four open-ended questions:

1. *Can you tell us in your words what it was like in your first semester at Compton College? What went well? What did you struggle with?*
2. *During your first term, what did you need help with? Were you able to get help from someone at Compton College?*
3. *How can Compton College better serve students in their first term? What did you need that you didn't get?*
4. *Do you have any additional comments about your experience at Compton College?*

Findings

The team's findings include concerns with high-frequency "gatekeeper" courses, students are struggling with the online environment and with personal competing priorities, students are demonstrating help-seeking behavior but identify roadblocks and cannot overcome challenges and express a resilient desire to return. This section provides a rich description of these findings. Findings are drawn from the student interviews and discussion with the Design Team members and other Compton College faculty and staff.

Students are Struggling with Gatekeeper Courses

Human Development 110 and Library 101 have increased enrollments among students who earn zero units in the first term from fall 2016 to fall 2019. These classes are designed to ready students for college classes (e.g., study skills) or are counseling-focused classes. Library 101 is a one-unit course; one faculty member who is familiar with this class said students do not understand the level of work required for the class. Considering the high-level of failure, the team wonders if faculty have considered the level of effort compared to the unit requirement.

Math and English course-taking among this student population looks similar and has observable changes due to AB 705 that went into effect in fall 2019. The college has eliminated lower-level courses that were barriers to students who earn zero units in the first term (e.g., Math 12). The count of successful and unsuccessful enrollments in higher level math and English courses increased in fall

2019. The students shuffled from lower-level to higher-level courses. The data show that math and English continue to be barriers for the students who are earning zero units in their first term.

Other high frequency or percentage courses include Child Development 103, Art 101, Communication Studies 100, Political Science 101, Psychology 101.

Students are Struggling in the Online Environment, with Competing Personal Priorities/Challenges

Students highlighted challenges related to the online learning, the support of and demanding expectations of the First-Year Experience (FYE), and their own failure or personal challenges that impacted their experience. This section provides a summary and some illustrative quotes about these themes.

Among the fall of 2020 first-time zero-unit earners the pandemic and online learning proved to be very difficult for students to navigate. Six of the seven students expressed that they experienced issues with taking classes on-line, noting specific struggles such as: not having a home environment conducive to on-line learning, failed communications with instructors, difficulty not having interactions with classmates, and trying to use a phone to attend zoom classes and to complete/submit assignments. Below are quotes from three students who highlighted their on-line learning struggles:

“I struggled with uploading documents. There was failed communication with my instructor. Working on your phone for zoom and trying to upload documents on your phone is very difficult. Assignments would be there, but it would be in the wrong place, and you forget to go back and upload. There was lots of confusion where on the syllabus it would say we were being tested on Chapter 8 for example and the test would end up being on 15 for example. The syllabus would say something different. It was really hard to keep track. The topics would change, and it was very confusing. I really enjoyed the class and I want to retake my Cosmetology class in the spring. The instructor called me on the last day and unlocked the assignments, but I was at work, and I could not upload the documents in time before he submitted grades. I had uploaded them before. I signed up for a laptop for school, but I never heard a date for when I could get one. I was using one I had and then it broke and so I had to use my phone.”

“I had a lot going on in my home/family life. I would get really distracted at home from all the noise. It isn't a place where I could take my classes on-line and focus or study. I feel like I would have done better if I would have been able to come to campus.”

“My fall classes were all on zoom because of the pandemic and that was really hard for me. I am a slow learner and have always had a really hard time learning. I am not trying to call out my teachers, but they really never did the zoom calls like they were supposed to. My math teacher was a nice lady but she would just post videos and not hold the zoom classes. I would do my homework at night and I couldn't ask her questions or get explanations in real time because she wasn't holding our zoom meetings. I would ask her questions over email, but sometimes it would take a couple days for her to get back. That kind of learning didn't work for me especially for math, which I always struggled with. My human development teacher did the same thing. We were supposed to be in class for at least an hour, but she would come on the

zoom for 10 or 15 minutes and then just cut the class short because only 5-8 students would show up. She would assign a gang of homework and I didn't understand how to do it because she didn't meet with us for long to explain it or really lecture on the material. It was weird that no one would ever talk in the classes when we were on zoom or turn their cameras on, but I get that some people don't want to show their home situation. For me I thought college would be a chance to get to know new people and talk to my classmates but none of that was happening and it was very strange.”

Several students took personal responsibility for not putting enough time or effort into school to do well in their classes. Other students expressed several outside factors that contributed to their first term struggles such as: lack of transportation, needing to work to financially support their family, family problems, a tragic accident resulting in injury, and death of family members.

“I struggled with rides because I didn't have a car. I was in a program called FYE and it was good, but I couldn't keep up because I didn't have a ride to go to school on time. I withdrew from my classes because I had some medical issues and I had a family member die, so it all became too much.”

Students Connect with Faculty, Staff, and Counselors but Demonstrate Inconsistent Help-Seeking Behavior

Students reported that they need help navigating their first term and sought help from instructional faculty, counseling, enrollment staff, and tutors. Several students mentioned instructional faculty helped them access resources on campus. Some students admitted that they did know how to access counseling and tutoring but failed to reach out for assistance while other students expressed a lack of knowledge on how to access resources to get help when they needed it.

“I just needed help with getting enrolled. I also asked teachers to help me and point me in the right direction for resources when I needed help. I went to get help with math from a tutor and he helped me with my homework”.

Three students talked about the First-Year Experience (FYE) program when asked to describe their first semester at Compton College. Two of the students expressed positive remarks about their experiences with FYE, and one student joined FYE due to showing up late to register and finding this as a means to get quickly on-boarded.

“I had a really good experience because of the FYE program. This made my transition much easier. It helped me to know what college was all about and was great for a first gen student.”

Several students also identified tutoring services for English and math as the resource that helped them during their first semester. One student shared needing help to complete their math homework and appreciating the math tutoring assistance they received. Students also mentioned how instructional faculty provided referrals on accessing tutoring services. Some students also mentioned knowing that there were tutoring services available, but they did not have the time or desire to seek those services.

“Tutoring services from the SSC. I went to get help for my English class tutoring was very helpful. I didn't pass my first time taking it because I was missing too much school”.

Students expressed knowing how to access counseling but not taking advantage of that service even though they needed it. For those that did meet with a counselor, they indicated the reason was for assistance with which classes to take and only met with a counselor once.

Students Struggle with Institutional Barriers and Need More Help

Student discussed challenges with institutional barriers, including the level of effort for FYE, accessing counseling, enrolling in courses, and a lack of understanding about withdrawing from classes.

As one student reported:

“I struggled enrolling myself in at first. I kept getting moved around from place to place. The first day that classes started my enrollment wasn't ready. They were asking for a copy of my diploma from high school and didn't have that on me so it was delayed and I didn't get everything settled until the second day so I felt like I started already behind. My friend told me about FYE, which was how I ended up getting classes but they really weren't the classes that I was interested in taking. I was stressed about the amount of work they gave us. The amount of work that they stacked on us in FYE was a lot.”

Of the students who mentioned Counseling services as something they needed help with, only one student had issues navigating on-line counseling through Cranium Café:

“The knock on the door never worked to talk to a counselor. It would keep saying that it was loading and then say they were away. I was able to make a counseling appointment after a counselor came to our class and gave their information. That was really helpful because the knocking on door to set up an on-line appointment wasn't working for me.”

Several students interviewed mentioned difficulty with enrolling in classes, and with not knowing the process of dropping classes to receive a “W”. One student described this type of challenge with understanding the process to withdraw from their courses:

“I did go to a counselor once. I think for me taking four classes was just way too overwhelming. I had no idea about the process to withdraw from classes. I just stopped going at some point after attending a little more than half of the semester. My mom wants to buy a house so she had me working to help her out with financial stuff so it was hard to balance work and school too.”

Students also report that they need more help with financial aid assistance, enrollment help, counselors giving more information on classes and instructors during sessions, and help with balancing work, school, and family life. Several students blamed themselves for their academic failure and stated that they knew about tutoring and counseling services but did not reach out to anyone for help.

“Better understanding of what classes to take. I did not know what I was getting myself in to. The counselor could have given more information on what the class is and what the teacher is about... any steps to prepare for the class”.

“You could do better with the enrollment process. I struggled with that a lot but I am not sure about other students. I did enroll late so that was my fault but the process of getting enrolled was hard”.

A Resilient Desire to Return

Several students expressed only positive comments about Compton College and their desire to return in future.

No bad reviews. It was a great semester going there. Compton is where I grew up and my home. I stopped going to school in my first semester and I regret that. I honestly was scared to ask how to come back since I just left and stopped coming to my FYE classes. I do want to come back to school again but I am moving out of state in April. Compton was my first school and if I do come back home to Compton I would want to come back.

I am definitely willing to come back to school and have thought about it often. I am still young. I am even willing to find another job if my work schedule doesn't fit with a school schedule. I recently was shot and I had been formally incarcerated, so I have been trying really hard to stay away from the wrong crowd. I know that I got financial aid that semester that I came to school and stopped. If I have to pay back that \$1,500 to get back into school I am willing to do that.

Recommendations

The recommendations focus on a reflection on practices (e.g., faculty in high-frequency courses and student services) which may result in increased student connection to services and knowledge about processes.

Findings	Recommendations
<p>Finding 1: There are common courses that zero-unit earners take and do not pass. These gatekeeper courses include English, math, Child Development 103, Library 101, Human Development 110, Art 101, Communication Studies 100, Political Science 101, and Psychology 101.</p>	<p>Recommendation 1: Establish a “Gatekeeper to Connector” Faculty-led Community of Practice (CoP). Participation should include faculty from English, math, Human Development, Library, Child Development, Art, Communication Studies, Political Science, and Psychology. Focus may include increasing use of CRM Advise to identify students who need support earlier, reviewing course syllabi for first-time student needs/equity needs, recommendations for additional supports for students, and other faculty-identified concerns. Further, the Design Team suggests a faculty dialogue to learn</p>

	<p>more about their perspectives on the challenges that students face in Human Development 110 and Library 101 classes.</p> <p>Recommendation 2: Engage the English and math Communities of Practice in questions related to the first-term zero earners experience, with questions such as how can we support students to be more successful in math and English in their first term?</p> <p>Recommendation 3: Tartar Success Teams review program maps for high-frequency courses. Send the Faculty CoP a report about which programs include these high-frequency courses.</p>
<p>Finding 2: Students face many challenges during their first term at Compton College, such as: adjusting to on-line instruction, not having a home environment conducive to on-line learning, failed communications with instructors, having a tough time adapting to no interactions with classmates, and trying to use a phone to attend zoom classes and complete/submit assignments. Other students expressed several outside factors that contributed to their first term struggles such as: lack of transportation, needing to work to financially support family, family problems, a tragic accident resulting in injury, and death of family members.</p>	<p>Recommendation 4: Provide in-person course offerings as soon as it is safe to do so.</p> <p>Recommendation 5: Continue to refine availability and access of basic need resources</p> <p>Recommendation 6: Create a campaign to increase use of CRM Advise platform to identify students who are struggling earlier and proactively connect them with basic need and academic support services. Tartar Success Teams create a CRM Advise report to identify first-time students who have negative CRM Advise alerts in more than 1 class. Tartar Success Teams create a process to case manage these students. Create a campaign to encourage all faculty in high frequency courses to participate in CRM Advise would help proactively identify struggling students.</p>
<p>Finding 3: Students often do connect with supports (e.g., counseling, tutoring, FYE, enrollment), however, they struggle to overcome challenges cited above or face challenges with the Compton College processes (e.g., accessing a counselor, completing the enrollment process).</p>	<p>Recommendation 7: Compton College could reflect on the counseling, tutoring, FYE, and enrollment processes to refine them and remove challenging components (e.g., “knocking” for an appointment).</p> <p>Recommendation 8: Expand counselor “visits” to high frequency classes to ensure students know how to access counseling resources.</p> <p>Recommendation 6 (repeat): Increase use of CRM Advise platform to identify students who are struggling earlier and proactively connect them with basic need and academic support services.</p>

<p>Finding 4: Student struggle with institutional barriers and need more help. Specifically, the drop/withdrawal policy/practice is confusing to faculty, and students do not know how to drop themselves. Students do not know they are enrolled, do not know how to drop courses. Faculty often are confused about when to drop. They hear mixed messages about when or why to drop students, and cite dual enrollment, financial aid eligibility, and sport eligibility as reasons why they would not drop a student.</p>	<p>Recommendation 9: Tartar Success Teams create a sub-committee to clarify the drop/withdrawal policy/practice, including when should students drop, how should they drop, and under what conditions.</p> <p>Recommendation 10: Tartar Success Teams and Student Services staff create a short “how to” video that can be used universally, embedded into Canvas to support increased student awareness about how to drop a course.</p> <p>Recommendation 11: Student Services staff reflect on existing orientation opportunities to support increased student understanding about how to drop a course.</p>
<p>Finding 5: Students want to come back to Compton College. Student Service could create an on-ramp for these students. Provide them with “hand holding” support to re-enroll at Compton College. Compton College would identify these students and use the new Call Center to initiate the re-enrollment process.</p>	<p>Recommendation 12: Create an on-ramp for students who have left after struggling during their first term. Create an Argos report or CRM Advise report that identifies these students for the new Call Center staff. Create a checklist for what these students need to do and how they may overcome the failing or withdrawal grades they have earned.</p>

Final Thoughts

This work is very time consuming, but extremely rewarding to connect with students and work with others across job descriptions. The cross-functional team was very helpful to talk through findings. We wanted to conduct surveys of faculty to triangulate what the students were saying, but we had difficulty with the “first-term” flag. This data quality issue has been addressed, but not in time for this effort.