

**IMPROVING STUDENT RETENTION AND SUCCESS OF ENGLISH AS
SECOND LANGUAGE STUDENTS AT DELAWARE TECHNICAL
COMMUNITY COLLEGE-WILMINGTON CAMPUS**

by

Erin Zoranski

An executive position paper submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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ABSTRACT

The English as Second Language (ESL) program at Delaware Technical Community College (DTCC) began in 1984. The program offers students, whose first language is something other than English, the chance to improve their proficiency in English. By doing so, they are awarded the English as a Second Language certificate. Incoming ESL students are given individual attention as they go through the admission and application process.

This Executive Position Paper (EPP) focuses on problems with persistence and academic success of the ESL student population at the Wilmington campus of DTCC. *Persistence* refers to remaining in school each semester with passing grades in courses. *Academic success* is about achievement and proficiency. Academic success refers to the goal of mastering course content, developing college level language and mathematical skills, and attaining the level of knowledge and skills to qualify for skilled trades and professional jobs.

The goal of this investigation is to improve student persistence and academic success in the ESL program's courses. A number of questions were explored to help develop recommendations to improve persistence and academic success in the ESL program:

1. What factors predict students' persistence in the program?
2. What factors affect students' persistence in the program?
3. What were the course outcomes and completion rates?

The data enabled analyses of factors associated with student success measured as follows:

- Percentage of students completing the ESL program over the last five years
- Time of degree completion

Factors affecting student success are measured by:

- Gender, Age, Educational Background and Ethnicity data
- Full-time, Part time, and Employment status

I also utilized data from a departmental survey and in addition I met with students in small groups to get feedback on their perceptions of the program – to learn about qualities they perceived as helping their success and enhancing their educational experience as well as, on the other hand, features that were difficult or posed obstacles to success.

Lastly, I reviewed other model ESL programs for insights into how I might improve our program. These programs are nationally recognized for their success in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL).

- Context-Based Learning Approach at Kingsborough Community College
- Theme-Based Approach at Bunker Hill Community College
- Accelerated Programs for Academic Purposes at Miami Dade College
- PUENTES Mentoring Approach At California Community Colleges
- Generation 1.5 Student Assistance

Findings from the analyses in Chapter 2 and 3, along with the models presented in Chapter 4, indicate that student success along with retention may

increase if we do five things: (a) improve course level placement, (b) separate the program into two pathways, (c) review curriculum and reduce segmentation, (d) develop more consistency in standards and assessments across courses and sections, and (e) provide more mentor and career counseling. These recommendations are presented in Chapter 5 along with guidance on implementation strategies.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The English as a Second Language (ESL) program at Delaware Technical Community College (DTCC) began in 1984. Prior to that, a few ESL classes were offered through the English department. The program offers students, whose first language is something other than English, the chance to improve their proficiency in English. If they complete the full sequence of ESL courses with passing grades, they are awarded the English as a Second Language certificate. If an ESL student wishes to continue into one of the 115 majors at DTCC (called “programs of study”), s/he must successfully complete a college prep course called “English for Academic Purposes.” A student successfully completing one of the DTCC majors is awarded an “Associate Degree” (AD).

The Problem

At DTCC, only 7 percent of ESL students, who start, ever finish with an Associate Degree (AD). Some of the students take one or two levels of the ESL program but, for whatever reason, do not take anymore. Many others complete the ESL sequence (45-65%), but cannot get through the college preparatory class that culminates the ESL sequence and allows a student to enter into a major.

Table 1.1 Pass Rates of ESL Students at DTCC 2012

Year/Semester	No. of Student in Class	No. of Students Passing	Pass Rate as %
10/Spring	31	18	58.06
10/Fall	45	23	51.11
11/Spring	29	19	65.52
11/Fall	52	24	46.15
12/Spring	47	29	61.70

SOURCE: DTCC Data Management Office

Table 1.1 shows recent completion rates for the College Prep course based on year/semester. An example of data from the ESL 100 course shows a substantial decline in pass rates since 2009, as seen in Table 1.2, below. In 2010, the curriculum for this course was revised to bring it up to date with current expectations and this contributed to a significant decline in pass rates. The ESL program has seen low pass rates like this in other ESL courses as well.

Table 1.2 ESL 100 Pass Rates

Year	Pass Rate as %
2008	76
2009	81
2010	57
2011	45
2012	51

SOURCE: DTCC Data Management Office

EPP Goals

This Executive Position Paper (EPP) focuses on the problems with persistence and academic success of the ESL student population at the Wilmington Campus of DTCC. *Persistence* refers to remaining in school each semester with passing grades in courses. *Academic success* is about achievement and proficiency. Academic success refers to the goal of mastering course content, developing college level

language and mathematical skills, and attaining the level of knowledge and skills to qualify for skilled trades and professional jobs.

The goal of this project is to explore ways to improve student persistence and academic success in the ESL program's courses. Part of the effort to do this involves reviewing literature on other ESL programs that have been identified in the literature because of noteworthy program features and successes. In addition, I will review available program information and data to help identify factors affecting students' persistence and success in the ESL program. Based on this information, my own experience, and discussions with colleagues, this EPP will culminate in a set of recommendations for program improvement.

About the ESL Program

Unfortunately, some students who do pass the College Prep course and manage to start their AD, do not complete the degree. As noted above, only 7% of ESL students ever complete the AD.

When students enter the college, they are given the Levels of English Proficiency test (LOEP) – a placement exam (Accuplacer) designed for ESL students.¹ It has sections covering language use, listening, reading, and sentence skills. Based on a student's score, s/he is placed in one of the three ESL levels offered: beginning, intermediate, or advanced (Figure 1). The first two levels of ESL courses focus mainly on the skills needed for everyday communication. The advanced

¹ This is part of the "Accuplacer" system of college admissions/placement tests offered by the College Board. For more information, see <https://accuplacer.collegeboard.org/student/inside-the-test>

level courses build a foundation for future coursework at the college level. Classes at all three levels include reading (4 credits), writing (4 credits), grammar/communication (9 credits), and listening/speaking (4 credits); they total twenty-one credits of instruction at each level.

If a student is not satisfied with their results from initial admissions testing or if they have split level scores, they are given the chance to take a second set of departmentally developed tests. These tests cover four different skill areas: writing, reading, listening, and grammar. After testing, the instructors evaluate a student's test results and then make course level recommendations. These recommendations may or may not agree with the initial placement classifications based on the Accuplacer tests. However, these departmental recommendations are final placement decisions. No further testing can challenge this placement.

Classes may be taken separately, but it is recommended that they be taken concurrently to allow for maximum success in order to gain proficiency in English. It is optimal if a student takes several ESL classes "in parallel" – i.e., during the same semester because they are mutually reinforcing (e.g., taking grammar, reading, writing in a given level all in one semester, and then moving on to the next level in a subsequent semester), as opposed to taking classes in different semesters. However, many students do not do this.

Upon completion of all four courses at the advanced level, students can apply to receive their ESL certificate. The college prep course shown in Figure 1.1 provides academic credit and is designed for those who wish to further their education by

enrolling in a major at DTCC. The full set of courses and sequence is shown in Figure 1.1.

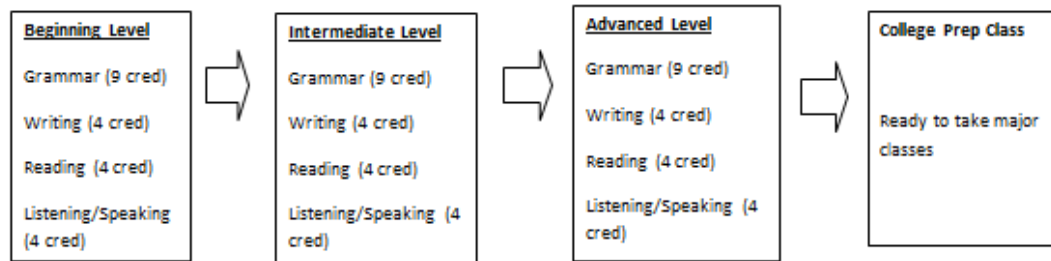


Figure 1.1 The Path that ESL Students Take to Start a Major

If a student wishes to pursue a college degree, they must enroll in a college preparatory course as a prerequisite before beginning any Associate Degree (AD) program. This course, called, “English for Academic Purposes” engages students in reading and writing and assignments that are more academic as compared with the more “functional” English language instruction of the ESL courses. The academic English course improve proficiency with English for purposes of reading subject matter texts, understanding technical language, understanding concepts, summarizing academic content, developing written and oral arguments, and other kinds of reading and assignments found in the curriculum of the majors.

The students use ESL texts developed for college prep courses for ESL students. Much of the textbook consists of readings in different subject areas. They read these selections, do assignments, and are assessed on comprehension using tests and writing assignments. They write a short research paper and present an argumentative speech on that topic in class. They learn basic APA citations. The topics in the readings and writings are topics that pertain to different areas of study.

They could read an article about the history of vaccines in one chapter and then read about the jail system in America.

After successfully completing the college prep course, students may begin coursework toward an AD. The credits required for an AD vary depending on the major, but the range is between 56-61 credits.

Currently, the ESL program at DTCC is not nationally accredited. Over recent years, the students entering the program have become younger and enter with greater conversational fluency in English. Current students come from high school and most are moderately proficient in conversational English, but most have poor writing, reading, and comprehension skills, especially as these skills are applied to academic work.

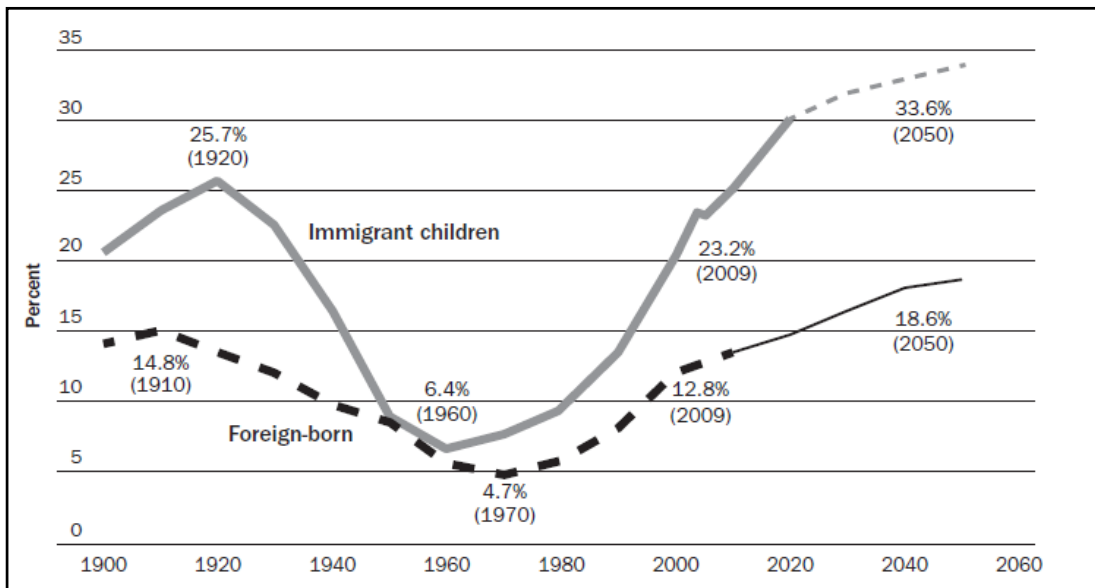
While the incoming population of students has changed and new models for the ESL curriculum and instruction have emerged nationally, there has been little change in or systematic review of the DTCC ESL program in many years. DTCC has not established new goals or approaches to better promote student success.

The recommendations in this EPP will be based on ESL literature, organizational data, and student feedback (survey, conversations). The recommendations are intended to help improve ESL students' persistence and success not just in the ESL program but also in later academic pursuits.

Growing ESL Enrollments in US Schools, Colleges, and Universities

Immigrant youth make up a large and increasing share of the nation's population. Passel (2011, p. 19) writes, "...immigrant youth – defined as those children under age eighteen who are either foreign-born or U.S.-born to immigrant

parents – now account for one-fourth of the nation’s 75 million children. By 2050 they are projected to make up one-third of more than 100 million U.S. children.” Between now and 2050, immigrants are expected to make up 82 percent of the total growth in the U.S. population. By 2050, nearly one in three U.S. residents will be foreign-born or the children of immigrant parents with young people making up large and growing portions of both groups. This increase is seen in Figure 1.2 which identifies the increase in the foreign born versus the immigrant children in the general population.



Source: Passel (2011, p. 23)

Figure 1.2 Total Foreign-Born as Share of Total Population and Immigrant Children as Share of All Children, 1900–2050.

These trends have major implications for our society, the U.S. economy, and for community colleges as noted in Teranishi, Suárez-Orozco, and Suárez-Orozco (2011) argues that for the benefit of our society and economy, increasing the

educational attainment, economic productivity, and civic engagement of immigrant students should be a national priority:

In the context of America's vast system of postsecondary education, community colleges are of particular importance for immigrant students. Today more than 1,200 community colleges offer an accessible and affordable postsecondary education that accommodates many of the needs of immigrant students. Community colleges – offering certificates, associate's degrees, and a range of courses on topics ranging from the philosophical to the practical – give immigrants access to affordable and accessible postsecondary education, opportunities to learn English, and training for the labor force. These institutions are also a source for civil and cultural engagement in the local community, catering to working adults with evening courses and offering postsecondary education in proximity to homes and jobs. (p. 154)

ESL students are the fastest growing population of students in the country. In schools in cities, ESL students make up an average of about 14 percent of total public school enrollment, ranging from 9.4 percent in small cities to 16.7 percent in large cities. In suburban areas, they make up an average of 8.5 percent of public school enrollment, ranging from 5.9 percent in midsize suburban areas to 8.9 percent in large suburban areas as reported by the Institute of Education Sciences (2015).

Community colleges enroll almost half of all U.S. graduates, or 6.5 million students, and one-quarter (24%) of these students come from an immigrant background. Community college ESL programs are the largest and fastest growing component of America's education system with more than 1.2 million students per year – and the fastest growing program of any kind at many community colleges (Chisman, 2008).

According to the Institute of Education Sciences (2015) data, the states with the highest percentages of ESL students are in the west, reflecting the relative large Hispanic populations in states like California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and

Texas. Delaware's numbers have grown, and Delaware is currently among 18 states in the range of 6% to 10% of its public school population being ESL. The 18 states are Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Virginia, and Washington.

As Korobkin (2012) states in his report of the condition of education in Delaware, from 2005-2006 the population of ESL students increased from 2,081 students to 5,900 students. This number climbed to 7,615 students in 2010 and continues to grow steadily. A large majority of these students, 77%, speak Spanish as their first language and have immigrated to the United States during their teenage years.

Challenges Faced by Hispanic ESL Students

With such a large majority of Hispanic ESL students entering college, it is imperative to understand the challenges that they face when coming to college. First, as discussed next, compared with other ESL students, Hispanic ESL students have higher drop-out rates and lower program completion and graduation rates. Family support, educational background, and preparation are contributing factors to poor college success.

Dropout Rates, Course Completion/Attrition, and Graduation Rates

According to Snyder & Dillow (2011), "nationally, community colleges have a 22 percent completion rate in three years and 45 percent completion rate in five years" (p. 35). ESL students' completion rate within three years is lower, only 12%.

Even more troubling, however, the persistence to graduate after three years drops to 10% for ESL students.

Compounding the ESL students' language difficulties, the students are more likely to come from low-income backgrounds and have cultural differences. Many were not academically successful in high school and attained lower grades. Some came from migrant working families. Below are some statistics describing obstacles that ESL students, especially Latinos, face when they attempt to complete a college degree.

- **Age:** In the 13-44 age group, those who arrive between the ages of 13 and 19 have the lowest rates of educational attainment, suggesting that immigrating during the late teenage years places young people at a particular educational disadvantage (Erisman & Looney, 2007).
- **Region of Origin:** When comparing immigrants by region of origin, immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean have the least education, with three-quarters (74%) never attending college, and almost half (44%) not graduating from high school. Immigrants from Africa and Asia are the best-educated immigrant groups, with 44% and 48% respectively holding a bachelor's degrees or higher (Erisman & Looney, 2007).
- **Family:** Nearly three-quarters (74%) of Latino young adults ages 16 to 25 who cut their education short during or right after high school say they did so because they had to support their family (Fry, 2007).

Hispanic ESL Students' Perceptions and Challenges

Many ESL students start college with very different educational backgrounds as compared with *typical* non-ESL freshmen. ESL students may have only attended a U.S. public school for a few years or more. Some, while during their K-12, may have spent most of their time isolated from the non-ESL student body and the regular school curriculum. They may be a product of a school located in a *barrio* type of community that is segregated from the larger mainstream community, culture, and school system. For these reasons and more ESL students are far more likely to arrive at college ill-equipped for academic success.

As an example, a study by Teemant (2010) showed ESL students coming from first-generation or lower-income backgrounds do not have the same level of test-taking experience and ability. Despite that, they may actually know more than the tests indicate. Teemant's study was based interviews with ESL students at a California college and explored their experience and concerns concerning testing. The study found that compared with non-ESL students there were more obstacles related to language proficiency and test anxiety and less familiarity with test-taking strategies associated with different assessment formats such as multiple-choice versus essay questions. These obstacles affected their ability to demonstrate content knowledge.

As seen in Horwedel, (2008), Dr. Margaret Blue, dean of undergraduate studies and chair of the Academic Policy Council at California State University, Dominguez Hills, "There's a difference in the academic preparedness of today's first-generation students compared to that of students 10 years ago. These students don't know what their learning style is, and many don't have study skills. Many are

intelligent, yet unprepared for college because of their backgrounds" (p. 10) Dr. Blue cites difficulties these students face starting in public schools, including overcrowded classrooms at underfunded urban high schools, and "as a result, we are seeing a difference in our student body." (ibid, p. 10) In the same study, Dr. Charles Alexander, associate vice provost for student diversity and director of the Academic Advancement Program at UCLA, like many college officials interviewed for this article, states that "many first-generation students lack a basic awareness about what it takes to succeed in college." (ibid, p. 12)

Challenges Faced by ESL Departments In Colleges

Not only do students face challenges *within* an ESL program, but evidence indicates ESL programs themselves often face challenges inside their home institution, challenges which in turn can have an adverse effect on student success. First, inaccurate placement tests cause students to be placed in a class that is too high or too low for their skill set. This in turn causes failure and frustration. Furthermore, the lack of integration between ESL and major classes act as an impediment to student success as students feel disconnected and often leave before they even start their major. Finally, ESL needs to have more recognition on college campuses and partake in shared governance with the rest of the faculty. These issues are discussed next.

Inaccurate Placement Tests

Remediation is one of the largest single interventions intended to improve outcomes for underprepared college students, yet little attention is paid to how college readiness is actually determined (Belfield, 2015). At Delaware Tech, the

College Board's ACCUPLACER Computerized Placement Test is used as a first means of assessment to determine a student's level. For students for whom English is a second language, there is also a component called the LOEP (Level of English Proficiency) which students take only if they self-disclose that they are an ESL student. This score is an integrated reading/ writing English score and determines class level placement (beginning, intermediate, or advanced). The ESL student has further testing in the department if they would like to challenge their placement. Based on analyses using internal data, DTCC has found that mis-assignments are common using current test-score-cutoff-based policies, with *under-placement* in remediation much more common than *over-placement* college courses. In the past five years, we have seen an increase in challenge testing and have seen a 54% mis-assignment after the ACCUPLACER testing. The student was placed higher.

Incorporating high school transcripts into the process could significantly reduce placement errors. In a study from Columbia University's Teacher's College, they found that using high school information would lower placement score errors and increase college-level success rates in math and English for racial/ethnic and gender subgroups (Belfield, 2015). Therefore, the choice of screening policy has significant implications for the racial and gender composition of college-level courses. Furthermore, these tests do not take into account the background of the student. Some students come with a strong educational foundation in their first language and others do not. Some have gone to high school here and some have not.

Clearly, the use of more accurate screening tools would enable institutions to remediate substantially fewer students without compromising college success. This is

an important goal, but it is a major challenge for community colleges because ESL students struggle to accurately represent what they know on tests (Teemant, 2010). Understanding what constitutes equitable testing practices in college and university settings for ESL students poses a significant challenge to educators. Based on my many years of instructing in ESL, on much anecdotal evidence, and on the literature there is evidence that many ESL students struggle to represent their actual content knowledge and academic language proficiency on tests due to factors like test anxiety and unfamiliarity with certain test formats (e.g., multiple-choice versus essay). In the article “Do high stakes placement exams predict college success?” students describe context, culture, and numerous language-related problems in testing, though some show developing awareness of various test-taking strategies. There is a need for more accurate and more equitable placement testing for ESL students.

Lack of Integration of ESL in the Curriculum

Colleges and educators must acknowledge that the ultimate goal of ESL students is not only to learn English but also to achieve success in their major and eventually to graduate with a degree. Many students feel that the ESL program obstructs their integration into their major, since the ESL programs separates them from their American peers.

The discrepancy between theory and practice may be largely due to an inadequate assessment of current ESL students' needs (Kanno & Applebaum, 1995). Providing ESL students with access to their peers and other curriculum requires effective monitoring of ESL students' progress. Assessment of student progress should be continuous as students move the courses and use procedures that promise to

provide the most useful information regarding the nature and quality of classroom instruction. ESL instruction should not separate learners from mainstream students and should not have to be debasing to the students' cognitive abilities. Furthermore, the subjects must be interconnected with the learning material of the mainstream classroom. Early, Mohan, & Hooper, (1989), argue that the teaching of language and the subject area need to support student the gaps between beginning social acquisition and full social and academic linguistic competency in the mainstream classroom (p. 108).

The community college must move beyond the traditional approach that English learning must precede proper content learning and must figure out ways to combine both in an integrated curriculum. Then, students can not only achieve their learning goals and make a smooth transition to the mainstream, but it will help reduce their isolation from native-speaking peers (Kanno & Applebaum, 1995).

ESL Programs and Students: Status Issues

Student diversity and "inclusion" are central in the mission statements and professed ideals of many colleges and universities, yet, despite this, ESL students are not fully included in campus life and sometimes they, and even ESL faculty, can feel marginalized (Stromquist, 2012;). In a survey done at Eastern Michigan University, the most common problems facing ESL programs in a college or university were lack of understanding of ESL and lack of teachers' ability to connect with ESL students. More specifically, Porter-Szucs (2017) states that ESL program administration is sometimes overlooked in important decision making on a college-wide level and ESL programs are not visible on campus. This exclusion also affects students' integration

into the campus and may diminish the status of the ESL program among campus by administration, other faculty, or mainstream students. ESL students are further isolated from native speakers and faculty members from other areas of study view the ESL students differently than mainstream students. The morale of faculty and students both suffer from the lack of understanding of ESL on campus. The inability of counselors and administration to see the importance of ESL and the diversity that these students bring is an indignity to the institution, profession, and ultimately the students (Porter-Szucs, 2017).

As America's immigrant population continues to rise, and with new generations not attaining college readiness, community colleges play a vital role in helping immigrants achieve levels of education that will boost their integration into American society and the workforce. This population is diverse in many ways which presents a complex set of challenges to which higher education must respond.

Unfortunately, the challenges and barriers that these students face often thwart their aspirations. This unrealized potential has unfortunate consequences for society and the economy as we move towards a more globalized society. With greater responsiveness to immigrants in community colleges in particular, they will have heightened aspirations, be more productive as workers and citizens, and contribute more to the betterment of society.

Chapter 2

ANALYZING COURSE COMPLETION

This chapter analyzes quantitative data on attrition and persistence of students in the ESL program and explores factors that affect student success. This chapter shows that many students take just a few courses and never finish; and too many struggle with low grades or incompletes in the courses they take. These are challenges that the program needs to address so that more students can successfully attain the certificates and degrees they seek.

This chapter reports results on three measures of student success:

- Percentage of students completing the ESL program over the last five years
- Time to degree completion
- ESL course pass rates

Also examined, are whether there are differences in outcomes for student by the following background variables:

- Gender, age, educational background and ethnicity
- Full-time enrollment, part-time enrollment, and employment status

Percentage of Students Completing the ESL Program

From 2010-2015, 261 students were in ESL classes. Out of 261 students who sought an ESL certificate any time between the years of 2010 and 2015, 97 students (37%) got the certificate.

Table 2.1 English as a Second Language Certificate Earners

Start Term	Not Awarded	Awarded	Grand Total	% of students awarded
2010	28	11	39	28
2011	27	11	38	29
2012	17	11	28	39
2013	20	14	34	41
2014	15	10	25	40
2015	57	40	97	41

Table 2.1 shows the number of certificates granted to ESL students for each of the years from 2010 to 2015. For instance, in 2010, there were 39 students who should have gotten the certificate. Of those 39, only 11 were awarded and 28 were not. In 2011, there were 38 people eligible of which only 11 received the certificate. In 2012, there were 28 students eligible and only 11 received the certificate. In 2013, the number of eligible students was 34 and 14 received the certificate. In 2014, 25 students should have gotten the certificate, but only 10 did. Finally, in 2015, 97 students were eligible and 40 got the certificate. The percentage of students receiving the certificate for each of the years between 2010 and 2015 was below 50%.

The unusually large number of students in the 2015 row is the result of a change in how students were coded to their major. Prior to 2015, some students in ESL courses were not coded as “ESL” in the college registration system and thus it was not possible to include them in the data. Still, even in 2015, the “certificate attainment” percentage remains consistent with the prior pattern: more than half of the students do not get their certificates.

Time to Degree Completion

As described in the previous chapter, when a student enters the ESL program, they are placed into an appropriate level (beginning, intermediate, or advanced) based

on their placement test score. In an ideal situation, it should take a beginning student three semesters to complete the program, an intermediate student two semesters, and an advanced student one semester.

Table 2.2. Certificate Awarded by Term

Completion		Start Year				
		2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Semester and Year						
Spring	2010	50	0	0	0	0
Fall	2011	33	17	0	0	0
Spring	2011	0	50	0	0	0
Fall	2012	0	17	57	0	0
Spring	2012	17	17	14	0	0
Fall	2013	0	0	0	50	0
Spring	2013	0	0	29	30	0
Fall	2014	0	0	0	20	30
Spring	2014	0	0	0	0	30
Fall	2015	0	0	0	0	20
Spring	2015	0	0	0	0	0
Fall	2016	0	0	0	0	16
Spring	2016	0	0	0	0	16

Table 2.2 shows the percentage of students that complete the certificate program and how long it takes them to do so. This data was compiled from 2010 to 2016 and takes into account all students no matter the level at which they began. I examined data for more recent years, and the certificate award percentage has remained around 40%

Table 2.2 also shows the start date and percentage of completers in subsequent semesters. For example, the 2010 column shows that fifty percent of students finished the certificate within one semester. 33 percent of the students finished within two semesters having started in Fall 2010 and finishing in Fall 2011. The other 17 percent finished five semesters later. Students starting in 2011, had 17 percent of students finish within one semester, 50 percent in two semesters, 17 percent in three semesters,

and 17 percent in four semesters. In 2012, 57 percent finished in one semester, 14 percent in two semesters, and 29 percent in four semesters. In 2013, 50 percent of students complete in one semester, 30 percent finish in two semesters and the rest finish in three semesters. The cohort of students that began in 2014 had 30 percent of students completing the certificate in one semester, 30 percent in two semesters, 20 percent in three semesters and 16 percent in five and six semesters. These percentages are only for the 40 percent of students that actually complete the certificate. The more than sixty percent of students that do not receive a certificate do not come back to finish.

Table 2.3. Percentage of Students Completing ESL Certificate Program

	Beginning level start	Intermediate level start	Advanced level start
One Semester	0	0	46
Two Semesters	0	25	10
Three Semesters	27	40	1
More than 3 Semesters	30	5	1
Non Completers	67	30	42

Table 2.3 shows the percentage of students that complete the certificate program in each level and how long it takes them to do so. This data was compiled from the years 2010 to 2016. The data shows that only one quarter of the students that start in the beginning or intermediate level complete the program in the ideal time frame of three semesters (for beginning level students) or two semesters (for intermediate level students). The majority of these students require more time to complete the program. This is either because they are failing one or more classes or are not continuously registered for long stretches of time. Nearly fifty percent of those starting in the advanced level finish on time (in one semester). The majority of

beginners never achieve the certificate while the majority of advanced level starters do get the certificate.

First, it is evident from Table 2.3 that the majority of students that do not receive their certificates within three semesters do not return to the program to finish. There is no single explanation. Some simply drop-out: maybe they have moved or run out of money or lost interest or have achieved a level of English that sufficiently meets their needs. Some may have continued in some other DTCC program or possibly even entered the regular English track by taking the English placement test in the admissions office. Students entering the regular English track are coded in a major, and therefore no longer classified as "ESL," so they do not appear on any ESL class roster or other departmental lists showing "current ESL students."

The figures in Table 2.3 show that at the intermediate level the percentage of students completing is highest. The beginning level indicates the lowest percentage. The advanced level students completing in the "ideal time frame" is highest. Most new students enter the beginning or advanced levels and recently many of the new advanced level students are of the 1.5 generation students meaning that they have high skills with speaking and listening but lack skills in reading and writing. Perhaps it is best to have two certificates awarded, one that would focus on general English for those who start in the beginning level and have no desire to achieve a college degree and a different certificate that would be for more academic study for those who truly desire to go on for the AD. Furthermore, the beginning level certificate could focus more on "receptive" (aka passive) skills of language such as vocabulary, listening, and grammar skills. With this heightened support on receptive skills aiding

students in comprehension, students would be better positioned to produce language more easily, sometimes referred to as “expressive” language abilities. As students progress or elect into the academic track, they could focus more on expressive skills such as writing and speaking and textual analysis. I will return to these program revision ideas in Chapter 5.

ESL Course Pass Rates 2012 – 2014

The focus of this section is on “pass rates” among ESL courses. I looked at data over a three year duration to expand the size of the total sample and insure more confidence in the results. Having three years of data minimizes the chances of an anomalous course or section in one year skewing the averages. The first part of this section discusses results for the program as a whole – all courses, but not individual sections. The next part of this section is a closer examination of three particularly important courses.

Table 2.4 shows the grade distribution and the percentage of students passing ESL courses based on data from 2012 to 2014 (4,800 grades submitted in all the sections of 13 different ESL courses). Each row is a course, but (not shown), each course has multiple sections. So, for instance, in in course 022, *Beginning Reading*, 6 sections were offered from 2012 - 2014 with a total of 210 students. Overall, the pass rate for these 210 students in these 6 sections was 76%.

The range of pass rates among the ESL courses is from 62.9% (ESL100) to 79.5% (ESL048). If the pass rate data were to be broken down by course *section*, there would be a greater range of variation in pass rates since there was a total of 135

class sections offered during this time. The average pass rate for the ESL program was 71.5%.

Table 2.4 Grades and Pass Rates in ESL Courses (2012 – 2014)

Crs#	Course Name	Total Count*	% W	% F	% D	% C	% B	% A	% PASS
ESL022	Beg Rdg	210	2.4	11.4	10.0	23.3	32.9	20.0	76.2
ESL024	Beg Wrtg	217	4.1	10.1	10.1	22.1	29.0	24.4	75.6
ESL026	Beg Grmr	240	1.7	18.3	12.1	17.1	27.5	23.3	67.9
ESL028	Beg Lstn	212	1.9	12.7	15.1	22.2	32.5	15.6	70.3
ESL032	Int Rdg	379	3.2	14.5	12.7	20.8	33.2	15.6	69.7
ESL034	Int Wrtg	385	3.6	15.6	12.5	21.6	35.6	11.2	68.3
ESL036	Int Grmr	417	1.7	12.7	17.5	25.7	28.1	14.4	68.1
ESL038	Int Lstn	312	3.2	9.3	11.5	17.9	36.2	21.8	76.0
ESL042	Adv Rdg	576	2.8	16.7	12.0	28.8	29.7	10.1	68.6
ESL044	Adv Wrtg	521	1.2	10.9	8.4	26.3	35.3	17.9	79.4
ESL046	Adv Grmr	548	1.8	14.4	16.1	29.7	27.0	10.9	67.7
ESL048	Adv Lstn	354	1.4	8.8	10.5	17.2	31.6	30.5	79.5
ESL100	Colge Prep	421	3.8	33.3	0.0	28.3	27.1	7.6	62.9
Column Averages			2.5	14.5	11.4	23.2	31.2	17.2	71.5

**Total count is the number of students who took the course in any semester between 2012 and 2014*

Next, I examine in more detail pass rates and variation in pass rates in three courses: ESL 042 Advanced Reading, ESL 044 Advanced Writing, and ESL 100 College Prep Class. I have focused on these three courses for two main reasons. First, these courses are at the advanced level and focus heavily on reading and writing and thus are key to students' success in earning a certificate and, should they continue, success in a DTCC major. Also, as discussed more in the next chapter, students have indicated that these courses are difficult and they have provided feedback questioning the relevance of many of the reading and writing assignments in these courses and whether these are really helpful in their major and/or real life. Thus, this analysis looks at 49 class sections over three years (2012 to 2014) in these three courses.

Table 2.5 shows the pass rate figures for 49 sections of three courses: ESL 042 (Adv Rdg), 044 (Adv Writing), and 100 (College Prep). The table organizes the results to show pass rates sorted from highest to lowest for each of the three courses.

Table 2.5 Pass Rates for Course 042 (Adv Rdg), 044 (Adv Writing), and 100 (College Prep)

Course	%Pass	Course	%Pass	Course	%Pass
ESL 042	88	ESL 042	47	ESL 100	78
ESL 042	85	ESL 042	47	ESL 100	71
ESL 042	85	ESL 042	0	ESL 100	67
ESL 042	83	ESL 044	89	ESL 100	62
ESL 042	83	ESL 044	87	ESL 100	62
ESL 042	81	ESL 044	87	ESL 100	57
ESL 042	75	ESL 044	80	ESL 100	57
ESL 042	75	ESL 044	80	ESL 100	50
ESL 042	74	ESL 044	67	ESL 100	45
ESL 042	74	ESL 044	57	ESL 100	45
ESL 042	73	ESL 044	57	ESL 100	43
ESL 042	67	ESL 044	55	ESL 100	38
ESL 042	67	ESL 044	54	ESL 100	38
ESL 042	61	ESL 044	50	ESL 100	31
ESL 042	53	ESL 044	38	ESL 100	31
ESL 042	53	ESL 044	38		
ESL 042	50	ESL 100	92		

Based on the results shown in Table 2.5, two conclusions are clear: First, there is a great deal of variability in pass rates among the class sections in each of the courses. For instance, for ESL 042 the pass rates range from a section where no one passed to a section where 88% passed. ESL 100 also shows an enormous degree variation in pass rates, ranging from 92% down to 31%. Why this great variation exists is not clear. Certainly one factor is that the courses do not all use the same instructor, and so grading and passing standards will vary somewhat across

instructors. Also, there is quite a lot of natural variation among students – some classes will have stronger abilities than others.

The second important finding is that there are too many sections with very low pass rates. In ESL 100, all the sections, but one, have fewer than 80% of students passing. Fourteen of the 20 sections of ELS 042 have fewer than 80% of students passing. For ESL 044, 8 out of 13 sections have fewer than 80% of students passing. Forty-seven percent of course sections have pass rates in the 60s or lower.

These courses, especially the sections with low pass rates, contribute the most to students' lack of success. These courses are challenging and full of material that is academic in nature. However, for those students not on an academic track to study at college, they do little more than frustrate the students' attempt to learn English.

However, as stated earlier in Chapter 1, the ESL program, since its inception offers little variation or flexibility in terms of schedule and course offerings. As I discuss in Chapter 5, a possible remedy may include offering different tracks of study to students with different goals (e.g., simply wanting to improve their functional language skills versus wanting to pursue a college degree). Also, more proactive tutoring could also help students.

As was noted during an annual evaluation of the lab, students who visited the lab more than five times in the semester, were more likely to pass the course (89% success rate). The students who only visited two times or less had a 50% pass rate. Those instructors that proactively referred students were also more likely to succeed. Since this is one of the strengths of the program, it would be in the program's best interest to promote this. I discuss this more in Chapter 5's recommendations.

Gender, Age, Educational Background, And Ethnicity Data

This section shows completion rates broken down by age categories. It is useful to examine this because we know that younger students (those without children) generally have more time to study but may be less focused on degree completion. Older students, who are more likely to have jobs and family, are generally more focused on degree completion, but at the same time, have more competing commitments and responsibilities that may pose obstacles to degree completion. Also, there is research showing that for older adults, second language is more difficult due to changes in the brain.

By Age

Age appears to play affect the ease of language acquisition. According to the “critical period theory,”² as a person ages, the plasticity of the brain decreases and this can make it more difficult to master a second language. Evidence indicates the teens and 20s are ideal for easier language learning and that older adults have more difficulty learning a second language (Major, 2014; Mora, Quito, & Sarmiento, (2017). The data allows us to examine the relationship between age and completion rates.

² According to the “critical period theory,” as a person ages, the plasticity of the brain decreases and this can make it more difficult to master a second language. Evidence indicates that the teens and 20s are ideal for easier language learning and that older adults have more difficulty learning a second language (Major, 2014; Mora, Quito, & Sarmiento, 2017).

Table 2.6 Completion Results by Age

Completed year	% 18-24	% 25-45	% 46-65	% 65+
2010	70	43	7	0
2011	64	17	9	9
2012	34	52	14	0
2013	56	45	11	20
2014	63	30	6	100
Column averages	57	37	9	26

Table 2.6 shows the year that the certificate was completed and the percentage of recipients from each age group. In 2010, 70% of those who were between the ages of 18-24 completed the certificate, 30% did not finish. In the same row, 43% of 25-45 year olds finished the certificate. Only 7% of 46-65 years olds finished, and 0% of those over 65 finished. Notably, the younger age groups have a better completion rate than older age groups. Note that the over age 65 age group does not have a large number of students which may skew the numbers. For instance, in 2014 there was one student over 65 who completed the program. Nevertheless, this age group is not of great concern because many people in this age group come to DTCC to learn English because of the free tuition that seniors get at the institution and for the most part, their goal is not to continue on to a college degree.

The above table shows positive results for the younger age groups' completion rate. Clearly, there is no single explanation for this. Multiple factors play a role. It is significant to note that they are motivated to finish and have the time to complete the certificate. Furthermore, their young age gives them an advantage to learning a language and many have been in high school and have the ability to communicate effectively. However, the older, non-traditional students are a source of concern as their completion rates fluctuate and are not as strong as the traditional

students. These students may not complete the program due to the intense advanced levels. If these students are moving on to attain a college degree, more must be done to make sure they are successful. If their goal is not to attain a college degree, but rather become more fluent in English, then different tracks might need to be considered to make these students successful.

By Ethnicity

College completion rates vary widely along racial and ethnic lines, with black and Hispanic students earning credentials at a much lower rate than white and Asian students do (Table 2.7). Students in the “black/African” category have very low completion rates, averaging only 14% over the years reported in Table 2.7.

Table 2.7 Completion Results by Ethnicity, 2010-2014

Completed year	% Hispanic/ Latino	% Asian	% Black/ African	% White
2010	17	63	23	37
2011	14	57	9	49
2012	34	52	14	72
2013	43	76	11	54
2014	23	81	12	44
Column Averages:	26	66	14	51

Asian students, at 66% on average, far outperform the other categories in completion results rates (receiving a certificate). Students in the Hispanic/Latino and the Black/African categories have the lowest completion rates, while white students are in between (51%). Most Asian students that come to DTCC have financial support and seem to have a lot of family support. While English is an official language in many African countries, it is not spoken as a first language and ESL development is

needed; however, some African students feel that ESL coursework is not needed, and opt instead for regular English courses, but then do not finish.

White students show a completion rate of 51%. The category “white” is actually somewhat diverse because these students could be Middle Eastern, European, or even Asian. Many students who self-identify are not sure of what group to pick. Therefore, more data would be needed to discern exactly who makes up this group.

Clearly more needs to be done to address the deficits that face Hispanic and African students. This could be to counsel students on the importance of ESL. It could also consist of tutoring and study groups. Furthermore, these students need to feel part of a community and allowing them opportunities to integrate into the culture of college could be beneficial.

By Gender

This section shows the percentage of completion in comparison to gender. Gender can sometimes be an important factor in completion rates.

Table 2.8 Completion Results by Gender

Completed year	% Male	% Female
2010	47	48
2011	32	37
2012	51	52
2013	43	45
2014	47	51
Column Averages:	44	47

As the results show in Table 2.8, males and female completion rates are similar, although women have a slightly higher rate of completion.

By Employment Status

This section shows the completion rates of full-time and part-time students further broken down by whether they have jobs or not. It is informative to analyze this to assess whether these conditions affect their program completion.

Table 2.9 Completion by Work Status

Completion year	Full-Time Student		Part-Time Student	
	Not working	Working	Not working	Working
2010	67	43	33	59
2011	73	57	21	63
2012	60	52	34	42
2013	81	62	17	47
2014	72	53	32	61
Column Averages:	71	53	27	54

Table 2.9 shows that full-time students, who are not working, are most likely to complete the certificate. Remarkably, those who are working and going to school, either full-time or part-time, have average completion rates of 53 and 54%. Although these students are working, they still have the drive to complete their degrees and may need to improve their job situation as English would be a vital skill. However, those that are not working and coming only part time show a significant decrease in certificate completion rates. This may be because they are in courses for Basic English skills; they are less focused on completing the program. Again, more paths could help alleviate some of these problems of non-completion.

Those students who work and can only come to school part-time have a hard time completing sometimes because of the schedule which also takes them a longer time to complete. This completion rate could be bolstered with a change in format of class offerings such as hybrid and online. This would help keep students engaged and

complete at a faster rate. Furthermore, those students taking class part-time and not working could also benefit from other formats.

Completion By Prior Educational Background

Table 2.10 shows completion rates according to the educational background of a student. This factor is important because more education in the student’s first language could help a student achieve higher success in a second language learning environment due to the fact that they would understand the college culture and have background knowledge of subjects.

Table 2.10 Completion by Educational Background

Completion year	Did not finish high school in USA %	High school diploma from country of origin %	High school diploma from USA %	College Degree from home country %
2010	37	53	43	69
2011	43	72	61	73
2012	40	53	44	32
2013	31	72	77	97
2014	22	63	42	51
Column averages:	35	63	53	64

The data shows that those who did not finish high school have a challenging time completing a certificate – their completion rates are 20% below their counterparts with a U.S. high school diploma and nearly 30% below their counterparts with a high school diploma or college degree from their home country. It seems clear that those with fewer years of high school are not as prepared and are more likely to drop out. Furthermore, those who have high school degrees vary widely. This could be because they might not need to finish the certificate as they have found employment and have enough credentials to achieve their goals.

Offering different tracks such as career English or English for business professionals could allow for more success rates for those already having a degree. As for the high school graduates, bridge programs between sessions and in the summer could help fill the gaps that these students are missing in their academic English while displaying the fluency that they do exhibit.

Chapter 3

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

As indicated in Chapter 2, completion rates are alarmingly low in many ESL courses. Chapter 2 also presented data showing the pass rates for certain classes which allowed for further investigation into the specific skill areas that are an obstacle for students. Periodically, the ESL department surveys students to get feedback on the program (Appendix A). This chapter draws on the survey results as well as a small number of discussion group meetings with students invited to provide feedback. The survey asked students about the quality and helpfulness of instructors and advisors, about classes they found most and least useful, the helpfulness of tutoring and online materials, and about any concerns in general with the ESL program.

The survey, which was voluntary and anonymous, was distributed to 50 ESL students from the Wilmington campus with the link sent via email (86% responded). I selected students to provide as much as possible a representative cross-section, and did this by selecting students from the different levels of ESL courses. No names were collected and so all responses were anonymous.

In addition, I also met with students, in small focus groups, from each of the different levels of courses and asked for feedback about their classes, advisement, work and class schedules, and the usefulness of supports in the ESL program. The students were invited from the different levels of classes. I invited three students from

each of the four levels (twelve students in total). These conversations provided additional anecdotal information to use in addition to the survey information derived from Google Forms. The remainder of this chapter is organized based on the topics covered in the survey and focus group conversations.

Perceptions of Instructors

It goes without saying that how students feel about their instructors is very important in their education experience and their perceptions of the ESL program and of DTCC. As Pine and Boy (1997) note: "Pupils feel the personal emotional construction of the teacher long before they feel the impact of the intellectual content offered by that teacher." (p. 3) As shown in Table 3.1, ninety-five percent or more of respondents noted that their teachers cared about their work and were helpful. The ESL department has always tried to support positive student-instructor relationships and the data supports that the large majority of students have positive views of their instructors.

Table 3.1. Instructor Quality

Question	Agree		Neither		Disagree	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
My instructors care about the quality of my work	38	95.0	1	2.5	1	2.5
My instructors treat me well	38	95.0	2	5	0	0.0
It is easy to get help from my instructor	39	97.5	1	2.5	0	0.0

Perceptions of Instructors: Comments

In the focus groups, students were asked to describe how their instructors helped them and how that helps them towards their goals. The feedback overall was

very positive as depicted in the selected excerpts below, which reflect the gist of their comments.

I love my teacher because she help[s] me with everything. She is so patient and will listen to everything I say. A lot of American people make you [to] feel bad because they don't understand. They just say ummmm....and look stupid, but the teacher doesn't do that.

I want to go back to ESL because my other teachers are mean. He isn't patient with me and I feel and don't talk.

My teacher [ESL] brings me confidence. She is always smiles [smiling] and that helps me not feel shy.

Overall, student comments during the focus groups showed that teacher interest in students and the relationship formed allows for a positive environment in the classroom which allows for the students to feel comfortable and provides a supportive learning environment to support student success.

Item on Advisement

Another key element to student success is advisement. The counselor or advisor is the first person the student interacts with upon completion of their application to enter the school. Because the Wilmington and Stanton campuses are often thought of as one campus, students could enter at either location and thus advisement is not always consistent. Furthermore, when a student comes in for advisement and is clear on their major, they are more likely to persist because they have an end goal in mind. The advisor also has an easier time to set up classes with them.

Table 3.2. Advisement Question

Last fall and this spring so far, how many times have you met with your advisor?		
Response	Frequency	%
I don't know my advisor	3	7.7
Once	19	48.7
Twice	5	12.8
Three times	7	17.9
4-5 times	2	5.1
More than 5 times	4	10.3

Students are given the name of their advisor at a new student orientation which is held the third week of class. Students were asked how frequently they saw their assigned advisor (responses in Table 3.2). Also, during the semester one advisor leads a group advisement session for each level (beginning, intermediate, advanced). This could be confusing to students as to who their advisor is and also the difference between advisor and counselor could be confusing. Furthermore, it is not acceptable that some students do not know their advisor because of the advisor's important role in both providing information and in providing support. Follow up questions were asked in the focus group.

Advisement: Comments

Students were first asked who their advisor was. Most students answered correctly. However, some students gave the counselor's name. Most of these students were F-1 visa students (student visa holders)+ who met with the international student advisor multiple times due to their visa status, but majors and courses were not necessarily discussed. At DTCC, when students first enter, they meet with a counselor who sets up their schedule for the first time only, makes sure that their

financial aid is cleared, and answers any preliminary questions. After that, they are supposed to meet with their program advisor who should be in the ESL department.

When the students in the focus group were asked if they knew the difference between a counselor and advisor 11 out of the 12 students did not know. Also, some of the students (7 out of 12) noted that they went to their program advisor that was in their major not in the ESL department. This means that some of the students are already coded in their major and not the ESL program. This leads to problems as the students are not able to get the correct information about the ESL program and cannot take major classes yet. Most who met with this advisor said that it was not helpful because the advisor could not answer their questions about ESL. Those students who did not know their advisor were part time students who had missed the group advisement session as well as the new student orientation because they were held on Monday and the students were only in school on Tuesday and Thursdays.

Students also made the following comments.

“I met with my advisor and it seemed to help. She’s nice and helped me sign up for classes”

“I know my advisor but didn’t go because I just see my teacher to help me set up my classes”

“I know my teacher and he helped me”

“My advisor didn’t know about my major and I signed up for the wrong class”

I don’t know what a counselor is. I only saw an advisor for my visa”

It is noteworthy that students still seemed confused between counselor and advisor and do not quite understand the importance of an advisor. DTCC has taken initiative to give credit to instructors for advisement time and there has been a

computer program installed to keep track of advisement sessions. The problem is that sometimes students don't know who their advisor is and don't take the time to seek them out. Rather, many go to their teacher for advisement. This is successful as long as all instructors provide timely and knowledgeable advisement. But this is not really the instructor's responsibility and it is hard for program leaders to insure all instructors are always up-to-date to help with the kinds of problems, questions, and needs that students have.

Students' Perceptions of Classes

Students were asked to rate their ability in different skills before and after taking the four different ESL classes. The students were asked to rate themselves using a 5 point Likert type scale.

Table 3.3. Perceived Ability Level Before and After Classes

Perceived Ability Level	Before %	After %
Reading		
1	05.3	00.0
2	26.3	02.6
3	42.1	10.3
4	15.8	61.5
5	10.5	25.6
Writing		
1	22.5	02.6
2	35.0	50.1
3	22.5	30.8
4	10.0	46.2
5	10.0	15.4
Grammar		
1	20.5	00.0
2	23.1	02.6
3	23.1	25.6
4	17.9	48.7
5	15.4	23.1
Speaking/Listening		
1	15.4	00.0
2	20.5	00.0
3	41.0	15.4
4	20.5	59.0
5	02.6	25.6

Likert style scale: 1 = Perceive low ability to 5 = Perceived High Ability

As seen in Table 3.3, most student ratings indicated a higher ability after taking the ESL classes.

Interestingly, before coursework, of the four different skill areas, students considered themselves highest in their speaking ability (41% at the middle level, “3”; 23% at the level of 4 or 5). After the speaking/listening class, 100% rated themselves at the middle level or above (85% at the level of 4 or 5). Similarly, the grammar class proved to have the highest ratings in level ability after the class and reading also proved to have high ratings in level ability after. However, writing still had almost 40% of the students scoring themselves at the middle level or below in their ability

after taking the class. Students were also asked which class they found most helpful and overwhelmingly grammar was the highest, followed by listening and speaking, as seen in Table 3.4, below.

Table 3.4. Which Class Was Most Helpful?

Which class was most helpful to you?		
Response	Frequency	%
Grammar	24	61.5
Listening/Speaking	7	17.9
Writing	4	10.3
Reading	4	10.3

This data is similar to nationwide data which shows that ESL students especially 1.5 generation students mask their inability to read and write academically with their fluency in the English language. Students feel as though their ability to speak will translate onto paper when they write and most times this is not true.

Students' Perceptions of Classes: Comments

My interviews explored why students find some classes helpful and others not. Students reported that the class “listening and speaking” did not need improvement because spoken English is so easily available to them, including in their home countries. Most students noted YouTube, Facebook, movies, and advertisements as their sources of aural English. Furthermore, students said that it “was easier” to hear something and remember than to read it. Students said it “takes too long to read if I can just find it on YouTube and listen”. Nationwide data shows a surge in ESL students who are fluent and appear to have a strong command of the language, when in fact this simply masks the deficit in writing and reading abilities.

Students reported grammar was the most helpful class: 9 out of 12 students answered that grammar was useful because it was like real life and incorporated speaking and listening and real word examples.

Least helpful classes were shown to be “reading and writing.” The reason given, according to the students, was that they did not need to write essays or read about the topics that were in the books for their majors. Since grammar was noted as being the most important class to students, class formats could be changed to include more writing or reading in the grammar class and eliminating some of the duplication that takes place in classes.

Perceptions on Additional Materials and Resources

Students were also asked to determine what resources they used in the department. Tutoring and online materials are available to all students free of cost. A lab technician is on staff from 8:30-4:30 from Monday to Friday. Furthermore, online materials are free to use in the lab and some are available through the course website that students can use at home as well. Usage of materials is shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.5. Meetings With the Tutor

From fall to spring, how many times have you met with a tutor?		
Response	Frequency	%
Never	18	45
Once	9	22.5
Twice	4	10
Three times	5	12.5
4-5 times	1	2.5
More than 5 times	5	12.5

More than half of the students surveyed used the tutor less than one time.

Considering that there are tutor referral forms available for instructors to fill out and

hours are made available, it is surprising that not more students use the lab for tutoring. This is a vital resource that is not being used to its capacity. However, when students were asked how many times they used the computer lab, the numbers were quite different.

More than 80% of the students are entering and using the lab (Table 3.6). The focus group conversations, discussed next, shed light on how students use the lab.

Table 3.6. Lab Use

From fall to spring, how many times have you used the computer lab?		
Response	Frequency	%
Never	0	0
Once	3	7.7
Twice	2	5.1
Three times	1	2.6
4-5 times	3	7.7
More than 5 times	32	82.1

Additional Materials and Resources: Comments

Students were first asked how they used the lab since almost all had noted they used the lab. All of the students in the focus group described regularly using email or social media; most also used the computer lab to type their assignments for class. However, most did not use tutoring, they explained, because it was not required and the lab tech was not available at the time they needed. When questioned about online resources, the students who used resources all of the time did so because it was required for class, as seen in Table 3.7. Those who did not use the resources noted difficulty of use or failure to relate material to class as reasons for not using the resources.

Table 3.7. Online Resource Use

From fall to spring, how many times have you used Del Tech’s online resources		
Response	Frequency	%
Almost every day	6	15
A few times	17	42.5
Once a week	6	15
Once every few weeks	4	10
About once a month	2	5
Once or twice a semester	2	5
Have never used	3	7.5

Student comments follow:

“The lab is a nice place to go between classes, to check email or print out my papers”

“I go to tutoring when I need help with my assignment or I need to practice speaking”

“Mr. Bob always helps us with our work and he tells me how to write my papers”

“Mr. Bob let’s me know what will be on the test and helps me study”

“I just go to the lab to hang out with friends and email”

The person who the students refer to is the lab specialist whose responsibilities include tutoring and computer help. It should be noted however that the lab specialist is not to help the students write their papers or do assignments for them. Several student comments in the interviews suggest the lab specialist may be helping a little too directly. A prescriptive approach to tutoring might be more helpful so that student problems are targeted. Also, teacher input and referral forms could help target student issues and provide documentation to verify that students are attaining the tutoring that is needed in the lab. Furthermore, the lab should not be thought of as a place for just writing email or printing.

Summary of Student Perceptions: Areas Where Improvements May Be Needed

From the above data, the following are the main findings with respect to weaknesses or issues noted by students.

- Students need to be made aware of the difference between a counselor and advisor and understand the importance of advisement.
- Students self-report gains in abilities in each of the four skill areas, but students' self-perceived gains are highest in reading and speaking/listening and lowest in grammar and writing.
- Students do not see strong connections between their coursework in grammar and writing and real-life language situations.
- Students need to be made aware of the resources in the lab and the priority of the lab should be for tutoring and school work.

Chapter 4

PRACTICES IN OTHER NOTABLE ESL PROGRAMS

Chapter 2 and 3 provided data on student outcomes and perceptions of the ESL program. This chapter uses literature suggesting “best practices” based on the features and accomplishments of other ESL programs recognized in the literature for their successful practices and outcomes. This is helpful to provide a framework to examine practices in DTCC’s ESL program and consider ways we might improve. The U. S. Department of Education (2014) does not stipulate how ESL classes should be taught to adult learners. While the Department of Education collects information on outcomes of ESL programs, institutions of higher education are free to develop their own curricula and teaching methods (Young & Smith, 2006). As Irias (2011) explained, some institutions employ highly trained instructors while other institutions would not. Also, some ESL programs allow instruction in the student’s native language whereas other ESL programs do not use the native language in the classroom. Although studies have attested to the success of some ESL programs (Gampert & Jones, 2013; Roessingh, 2004), there is no single best, “one size fits all” model because of the diversity of ESL programs and institutional contexts. Howard, there are programs that have achieved exemplary outcomes and achieved recognition in the literature and at conferences of ESL professional associations (TESOL, 2018; Excelencia in Education, n.d.; Achieving the Dream, n.d.). This chapter summarizes selected features of five notable programs and in so doing provides ideas for

consideration for our own ESL program to strengthen it and improve student outcomes. The five programs are:

- Context-Based Learning Approach at Kingsborough Community College (KCC)
- Theme-Based Approach at Bunker Hill Community College
- Accelerated Programs for Academic Purposes at Miami Dade College
- PUENTES Mentoring Approach At California Community Colleges
- Generation 1.5 Student Assistance

Context-Based Learning Communities

Learning communities are typically defined as the enrollment of a cohort of students in a set of classes normally organized around a central theme (Tinto, 1998;). In doing so, students are provided opportunities to come to know each other, the course material, and the university more quickly and meaningfully than if they were enrolled separately in disconnected classes (Tinto, 1998). Common learning community models include paired or clustered courses, cohorts of students enrolled together in large courses, team-taught programs, and residence-based programs (Price, 2005).

Context-Based Learning Approach at Kingsborough Community College (KCC)

Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, New York, is often held up as a national model for learning communities. Kingsborough first offered learning communities in 1995 with its Intensive English as a Second Language Program, which links five courses thematically, including ESL, speech, a “content” course such as history or biology, and two student development courses focused on helping

students transition to college and to conduct career and life planning. These classes are linked and taken together as a cohort. The instructors for all five courses meet together and plan the curriculum for the semester which has shared assignments, assessments, and projects. The instructors meet throughout the semester and are constantly providing new ideas and feedback to each other to modify the classes and assessments. A 2006 study compared the performance of 385 students who started their studies in the Intensive ESL Program between 1995 and 2000 with another 385 students who did not start in the program (Kingsborough Community College, 2006). That study found that students in the Program consistently outperformed their peers on a number of factors, including having higher passage rates for first semester ESL courses, grades in subsequent ESL or developmental English courses, overall GPA, and graduation rates (Kingsborough Community College, 2015). Currently, Kingsborough has nearly 80% of their ESL students enrolled in a learning community.

Possible Applications of Learning Communities at Del Tech

Currently, the ESL department at Delaware Tech does not offer linkages between individual ESL classes or ESL classes with other departments. Following a model such as the KCC would first allow students to feel as though they are learning material that is relevant to their career and meeting students' needs by facilitating their entry into their new academic world, while accelerating their progress in ESL and giving a sense of motivation by achieving their academic goals more quickly. When students spend 25 hours a week attending all the same courses with other entering students, they form very strong bonds and friendships that are based on their

academic work together. The contextualization is extremely important for second-language students because they are learning in a different way in the United States and they are learning so many new terms and structures that they do not have time to process this in a disconnected situation. By joining language and context, meaning takes hold and students are able to process and use the language more appropriately. They will gain confidence in their ability to manipulate English in the areas of listening, speaking, writing, reading comprehension, study skills, and develop expertise in an area.

Potential Risk

DTCC does not have the same number of students that Kingsborough enrolls in one year, and could not offer the variety of classes in learning communities; however, the concept of a contextualized setting at the advanced level of language learning could reinforce the push for a more academic language learning and move the students beyond general English language to allow them to persist in their majors and be successful.

Theme-Based Approaches

The theme-based approach is a way of teaching and learning which uses methods to connect different areas of curriculum with a particular theme.

Theme-Based Approach at Bunker Hill Community College

Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC) in Boston, Massachusetts has a philosophy that reads as “Content courses as soon as possible and language support as long as necessary” (Bunker Hill Community College, 2015). This philosophy is seen in the course schedule that they offer which includes three levels of basic English,

followed by three levels of academic English. By the time the students enter the English track of classes, they start theme-based classes. The classes have themes in business, history, sociology as well as others. This allows students to start learning content in their major classes before they are officially enrolled in the classes. The students learn the schemata associated with different fields of study while getting the support of language instruction from two qualified instructors. BHCC prides itself in that students have a higher retention rate and a higher pass rate when students decide to take theme-based classes. This success is due to the higher interest level in material and to the fact that the content scaffolds during the semester upon the same subject and is reinforced and leads to higher knowledge acquisition.

Theme-Based Approach At Community College of Philadelphia

Another example of these content-based ESL classes is seen at the Community College of Philadelphia, which has established *transitional* programs to motivate ESL students to continue with both their English and content area studies. At the advanced level, courses are offered in such areas as *ESL Psychology*; students who successfully complete the course receive the same credit as if they had taken a regular psychology course. *ESL Psychology* was carefully designed by both ESL and psychology instructors. The class size is smaller, and students are given extra assistance in the language skills they need to understand the course material and successfully complete the course requirements. While these courses demand greater resources from the college, officials at the Community College of Philadelphia point to their 20% increase in retention rate of ESL students as tangible proof of the program's success.

As pointed out above, a weakness of the DTCC program is the fact that the college level prep class does not offer students the opportunity to engage with material that suits their needs in academic English and specifically in their fields of study. By creating theme-based classes, the students would be able to build schemata in one subject area while reinforcing their language skills at the same time. Although Bunker Hill is twice the size of DTCC and can offer more flexible scheduling, it would still be worthwhile and feasible to build schemata in the major fields of study that students want to study. As seen from survey data at DTCC, the highest fields of study are those in business and health. Therefore, offering students a chance to decide between theme-based classes in business or health they would have the opportunity to persist in their major and increase success. Furthermore, students should be encouraged to reach out to the writing center, library, and counselors that mainstream students so that they get out of the isolation of the ESL program. Furthermore, the ESL literacy curriculum is not aligned with academic ESL curricula in purpose, content, and context. Using the context-based approach, students will experience more motivation, knowledge of how to transition to the challenges of academic demands, critical thinking skills, greater focus on language accuracy and use, skill integration, and develop a larger vocabulary (Rance-Roney, 1995).

Accelerated Programs of English for Academic Purposes

Accelerated programs refer to giving students the chance to complete a class or program in a shorter time by offering different formats such as hybrid and online classes to condense the same amount of material into a shorter period of time.

Accelerated Program for English for Academic Purposes at Miami Dade College

In 2008, the Miami Dade College received a grant to develop an accelerated, content-based, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program. The program consisted of four major components: (a) investigating the expectations of college instructors for their first-year college students, (b) building and analyzing a written and spoken general education curriculum, (c) aligning the new curriculum, and (d) securing faculty buy in (Miami Dade College). The rationale for creating this program was to allow students to progress at a faster rate and at a more advanced level in order to be more challenged and not isolated from their program of study. For many EAP students, the opportunity to take a college level class with mainstream students is a highly prized experience; it verifies that they can succeed in this academic environment. This is in line with the findings of other researchers that content-based instruction activates deeper learning, creates more active learners, facilitates transfer of skills, and instills confidence (Bailey, 2006; Stoller, 1996).

Allowing students to take major classes with English has allowed students to make connections between classes, and have a better understanding of not only the language but also the course material. In addition to the class, the materials provided to the class were carefully engineered using software called Wordsmith, which allowed instructors and linguists to build a corpus of materials from existing slide presentations, textbooks, articles, and handouts. The materials were analyzed with the software to find the number of vocabulary terms on average a student would need to know for the major class along with the typical grammar structures. The school identified some interesting findings such as science textbooks generally focus on the

present tense and use of noun phrases, whereas humanities texts rely more on past tense and descriptive phrases. This allowed instructors to modify curriculum to better fit the needs of the students and to allow for acquisition to take place. Some other findings from their research was that students need to know how to find help when needed, learn how to interact in large group discussions, learn organizational structure of textbooks, learn different writing styles, and learn how to give a proper presentation.

It is clear from the study and implementation of this grant that a typical ESL class is not sufficient for students to enter a program due to the ESL materials that are generally given to students which do not have the language demands that a major class requires. Furthermore, the *caretaker* language which ESL instructors employ generally is not the same as content course instructor. Therefore, the program that Miami Dade has started is successful and has empowered students to move forward in their future goals.

Potential Applications at Delaware Tech

Implementation of this strategy at DTCC could be feasible on a lower scale. While DTCC does not have the software to work with, they do have the materials and instructor as resources when creating materials that could be tailored to fit the needs of students in content classes. Therefore, DTCC could combine the knowledge of language learning along with a content instructor to create a curriculum that was rigorous and worthwhile for the student to succeed and persist in their chosen field of study.

English for Academic Purposes at Sidwell Community College

Like the other departmental innovations, Mastering English for Academic Goals (MEAG) developed over a long period of time at Sidwell Community College. The program began about a decade ago when the department looked at their current program and admitted their students were not succeeding. The faculty realized they needed a fourth level of ESL, but also realized that “more of the same [ineffective practice] would be inappropriate” (Grubb, 2012). After four years of failing to come to any resolution, one of the faculty members decided to experiment, in evening courses that would not affect most of the faculty. She also investigated other programs, and made contact with a faculty member from a college in Hawaii. A visit to that college seems to have convinced other faculty to move in the direction of a content-based and integrated curriculum; several faculty members began to write curriculum units based on the Hawaiian college program, but tweaked in various ways. The dean of the department helped by putting proponents of the content-based approach on to the hiring committee, and by providing a grant from Basic Skills Initiative funds.

The design of MEAG emphasizes that ESL must be for academic purposes, not the personal or social goals that are usually covered in adult ESL or non-credit ESL. A key feature is that skills (such as grammar, punctuation, pronunciation, vocabulary) are taught in context, not as stand-alone skills; as one member of the department said, “If students need to read something or listen to something, and they need to know a grammar point in order to comprehend that, they teach the grammar then.” (Grubb, 2012, pp. 74-75) They teach grammar when they need it to manipulate

the material. The faculty no longer uses conventional ESL textbooks; instead they use authentic texts — the texts students might encounter in college-level classes: “With activities and scaffolding, they could do it, said one instructor about reading parts of Jared Diamond’s *Collapse*; they could talk about academic topics in intelligent ways” (Grubb, 2012, p. 75). The faculty used newspapers not only for reading and writing exercises but to learn about topics such as plate tectonics, global warming, and other hot issues: “...students came. They used newspapers not only for reading and writing exercises but to learn about such topics as plate tectonics, global warming, and other hot issues: “...students came back reporting that for the first time they could read the news. This motivates students, who are not just confined to certain topics” (ibid) covered in textbooks.

Another component is a commitment to covering social justice issues, particularly those relevant to the lives of immigrant students. Each semester ESL courses adopt a theme which generates some of the readings used in all courses; the department also has common mid-term and final exams, to bring coherence to courses. Students complete a portfolio, a more independent form of learning than simply reading and writing from prompts and books. Not surprisingly, there has been some resistance, both from faculty wedded to traditional skills-oriented approaches and from students brought up in standard language courses. The MEAG approach does contain some explicit teaching of skills, partly in response to this resistance, but again academic content is presented first, with “grammar and rules” proceeding from reading.

Possible Adaptation to Delaware Tech

Elements of this approach could be adapted to fit the needs of students at DTCC. Just as the program above describes problems with a fourth level, there is also trouble with the college level class. The research above has shown how the students and instructors benefited from using a context-based approach so that students had material to use that would be beneficial to their future studies. Furthermore, students were scaffolding material and using the schemata in a circular pattern which allows for more retention of the material and more success in the classes. All of this leads to a better retention of students and persistence to graduation in a field of study. The MEAG model described above allows students to integrate all of the tools that they have acquired from individual classes and apply to real life situations.

Exemplary Mentoring Programs

The mentoring approach to student success is one in which the mentee will receive the expertise of the mentor to empower them to develop strategies and wisdom to gain self-reliance.

PUENTE Mentoring at California Community Colleges

California community colleges take another approach to ESL student retention issues by offering the PUENTES program. Students and professionals in the community are trained to work together as the student develops his or her goals and the mentor provides help and support that aligns with this vision. Mentors and mentees are matched with each other. During the academic year they will spend 15-18 hours together during year. Together they identify goals in the mentee's life and future aspirations that they would like to achieve. The mentor takes the mentee to his

or her job or to local universities and other places that would promote students to achieve their goals.

Mentoring at Coast Community College

Coast Community College offers a similar program which is called the Bridges to Success Cohort Program. This program provides support and mentoring to 15-25 ESL students, and helps them to transition to credit community college courses. The students from the ESL program apply and are selected to enroll in a minimum of 12 credits in the college. The mentor assists them with enrollment and provides support as they take their college classes. Furthermore, the program leaders thought it would be more beneficial for students if they could take classes together as a cohort with peers so that they could help each other along the way and be able to relate to someone else who was going through the same process. Since the program started at Coastline there has been a waiting list to get into the program and it has proved to be very successful. Of the fifteen students who participated in the program in the first year of inception in 2008, 11 (70%) enrolled in at least one credit course in the summer and twelve (80%) enrolled in the subsequent Fall semester. Since the inception of the program, Coast CCD has experienced a persistence level of 97.5%.

Mentoring at Invers Community College

Following along these lines is a program that was initiated at Invers Community College where they had a control group who took classes without mentoring and a second group who had mentoring. The students were paired up with a counselor, instructor, or administrator and had the opportunity to meet with them throughout the semester at least 5-6 times. During these meetings which could last

anywhere between 1-2 hours, the students were given advice, tutored, filled out forms to indicate goals, and were encouraged to persist in their fields. The first year of the program had thirty volunteer faculty and staff who mentored and fifty students who became mentees. The college found through a survey that 70% of mentors and mentees rated the experience as positive and productive. The following year, the number of mentors was twenty and the students who participated more than tripled to 150 students. The student persistence was 10% higher than the comparable group of non-participants and 80% of the mentors and mentees had a positive experience. The third year, there were 50 return volunteers and 24 new mentors. The number of new students increased to 175 and the survey confirmed that 85% of the mentor/mentee relationships were positive and beneficial to both sides. The most challenging part of the program was to all stakeholders to buy into the process. The problem for instructors and counselors was the extra time that would have to be put into the mentoring.

Possible Adaptations to Delaware Tech

DTCC could adapt these processes to the program. First, mentoring is an important element to allow students' persistence in college. Mentoring offers the students the ability to persist toward a goal and be held accountable for their behavior and actions in the classroom. Furthermore, they get the academic and social support that is difficult for some foreign students to achieve when coming into a new college and being isolated in an ESL program.

Summer Program at Pennsylvania State University

Pennsylvania State University developed a 30-hour pre-college summer program focusing on reading, math, and writing skills to help students transition to college. This program is designed and conducted by students under the guidance of university staff. It is intended to provide students with the skills necessary to succeed in their freshman courses. The program helps students to get ready for their math and English classes and introduces them to learning strategies that are useful in all their college classes. The Learning Center provided assistance to the students who developed the program. The success of this program lies on the fact that the students know that this is not an ESL program. The program is available for all students who need help with their academic skills. Peer tutors help the new students with their math and English courses. Tutors help students build study skills, and introduce them to learning strategies. Participants design their own schedule and are required to complete 30 hours. Tutors are trained and work closely with instructors from the math and English departments. The program's goal is to help students to organize time, follow directions, understand assignments, and master math, grammar, and writing skills. The program teaches students to accept responsibility for their own learning. Students are required to meet with professors, advisors, as well as tutors during the summer. They are encouraged to identify their weaknesses and to work on areas that need improvement. The program also emphasizes the importance of participating in the college experience (Goldschmidt, Notzold, & Miller, 2003).

Possible Adaptations to Delaware Tech

DTCC needs to address the concerns of the number of students who are coming to college underprepared and whose numbers have steadily grown since 2005 with the inception of the Students Excellence Equals Degrees (SEED) scholarship which allows high school students to come to DTCC free as long as they maintain a 2.5 Grade point average (GPA). This opportunity had not been available for students of low income backgrounds. By incorporating some of the practices above, such as a summer program to help prepare students before the program and to help create special tracks and classes for these students, the program could help students become more successful and persist without frustration in the program. Furthermore, the program could help the students have more self-confidence by not being labeled as ESL students, especially given the fact that they have completed two or more years in an American high school and sometimes even middle school.

Chapter 5

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

DTCC offers ESL students the opportunity to complete three levels of ESL instruction and receive a certificate after they successfully complete the requirements in this program. Students are then allowed to take a college prep class and upon successful completion can enroll in a major field of study at DTCC without any further testing. This chapter presents ideas for improving the ESL program.

While more detail is provided in Chapter 1, it will be helpful here to summarize briefly the main features of the current program so the reader has appropriate background and context for the following sections where improvement needs are described and proposed changes are recommended.

Entering students take a placement test, the Levels of English Proficiency test (LOEP), which determines which of three levels (beginning, intermediate, or advanced) of ESL courses they will take (Figure 5.1). The beginning level courses focus on simple, everyday communication. The advanced level courses aim to prepare for college academic coursework. The college prep class (Figure 5.1) provides academic credit and is required for those intending to enroll in a major at DTCC. The college prep course covers academic reading and writing with tests and exercises at a level of beginning level courses in DTCC majors. (The total credits for Associates Degree ranges from 56-61 credits.)

A student may take ESL courses separately, but taking them concurrently allows for more rapid language development, since this not only increases the amount of learning but the courses reinforce each other. An ESL certificate requires completing all four courses at the advanced level.

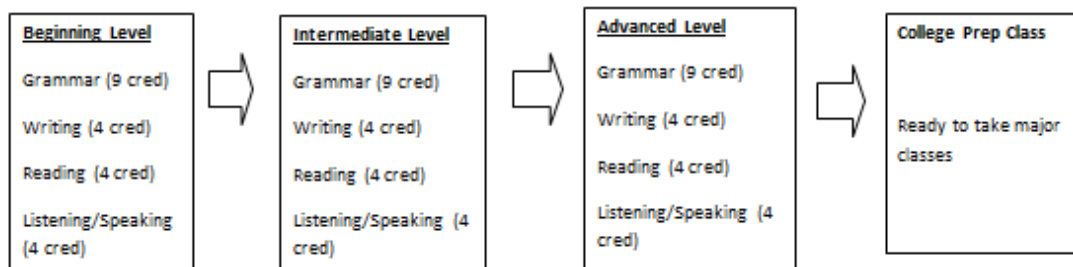


Figure 5.1 The Path that ESL Students Take to Start a Major

As presented in earlier chapters, too many ESL students are not having success in the program: 35% do not pass CP course; another 29% get C's; and many students do not complete more than a few courses. The following recommendations are based on information gathered and presented in the four prior chapters and my own long experience as a faculty member of the ESL program. These recommendations are, of course, tentative. They should be considered and discussed with final decisions made carefully and with more information gathering. Briefly, the recommendations are as follows:

- (1) Explore alternative approaches for placement testing.
- (2) Separate the program into two tracks.
- (3) Change the structure of the current ESL program classes.
- (4) Adopt measures to create more consistent standards in ESL 100.
- (5) Provide more mentoring and career planning.

Recommendation One: Improving The Quality of Assessments for Course Level Placement

As described in Chapter 1, students coming in to the ESL program have taken the Accuplacer-LOEP placement test. Because the ESL program offers classes at three different levels – beginning, intermediate, or advanced – it is important for students to get enrolled in a class appropriate for their ability level. A class that is below a student’s language ability level is not the most effective instruction and so the student will not learn as much as s/he could; a class that is too hard produces frustration, poor learning, and low grades, and can lead to a student’s decision to drop out.

Also described in Chapter 1, at DTCC and other colleges nationwide, “misplacement” based on the Accuplacer-LOEP test is a concern (Grant, 2016; James, 2006; Teemant, 2010). For too many students, it is not a reliable source of information as to what is an appropriate course placement within the ESL program’s different levels of courses. One indication of this is that after taking the Accuplacer-LOEP test most students (85%, 532 of 625 students) request “re-testing” within the ESL department, and thus these students take another set of department-created assessments to determine whether they should be in a different level of course. After testing, the instructors evaluate a student’s test results and then make final course level recommendations. Between 2010 and 2015, of the 532 students who opted for retesting with department assessments, 80% received a placement different from what was originally prescribed by the LOEP test.

There are several recommendations to help the department and our students with better information for initial course assignments (placements).

- Rather than one single computer-adaptive exam, multiple measures should be used to place a student. These could include high school ESL classes, college level classes or other English proficiency scores, teacher recommendations, a writing sample, and interviews.³
- Interview each student to gain information about his or her ESL experience prior to entering college.
- Explore whether cut-off scores that currently used for the LOEP test are appropriate. One way to do this is to correlate LOEP scores with students' subsequent grades in ESL courses. This could be done for all students (whether retested or not) in all courses as well as for those students challenged LOEP placements and opted for retesting.
- Conduct further research to determine the correlation between the department-created assessment with student grades or other student outcomes. If there is a strong correlation, department testing could replace the standardized computer test.

Recommendation Two: Separate The Program Into Two Pathways

About half of the students who start in ESL do not end up with any certificate because they do not finish all four advanced level courses. Many students do not pass

³ James and Templeman (2009) found that a multiple measures approach improved placement accuracy over ACCUPLACER ESL test scores alone from 66.5% to 84.1% in ESL reading, and from 46.2% to 81.3% in writing.

the higher-level ESL classes; for example, about 35% do not pass the advanced ESL courses and about 40% do not pass the ESL program’s college prep course. There are many reasons for this, but a main reason is that many students are not at the college to study a major, but rather to learn English for basic everyday needs.

Also, and relatedly, about 20 to 25 students every year who apply to take ESL courses are not admitted because they do not achieve the minimum cut score on the LOEP. We should create a basic course for students who come to the college, who have very rudimentary English and do poorly on the LOEP, but want to improve in English, but do not have the goal of getting a college degree.

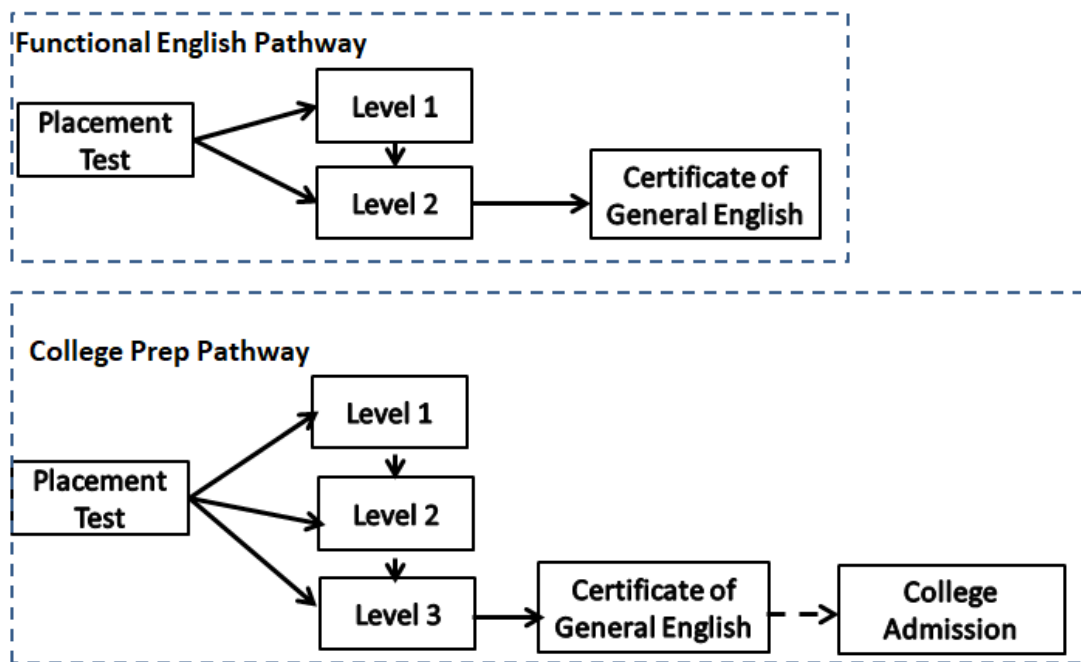


Figure 5.2 Learning Pathways

Therefore, it may be beneficial for the program and promote student success to offer two certificate programs, as seen in figure 5.2. One pathway would lead to a student earning a certificate indicating the acquisition of Basic English skills and the

ability to function in entry-level jobs and basic tasks of life (Functional English Pathway). This certificate would incentivize successful completion of courses and recognize the course-taking achievement and language improvement of the large number of students who take classes for one or two years and improve their English proficiency greatly, but do not complete the full ESL program. As noted in Chapter 2, the highest completion rate occurs in the intermediate level. After that, failure rates increase. Furthermore, students indicated that half are studying to better their English not attain a college degree. These two factors would indicate that a pathway that would award a certificate for Basic English skills is needed. These students do not need the additional academic instruction that is included with the current program.

The second certificate would be the academic English track (College Prep Pathway) for those who want to study a major at the college. This track is currently in place.

Here are key steps to create a two-pathway ESL program:

1. Based on placement assessments, students would be placed into their appropriate course level.
2. Students would determine which certificate they would like to get.
3. Students in the Basic English program would complete two levels of ESL and receive a certificate after this (successfully completing all courses at the Intermediate level).
4. Students who would like a college degree would have to show competence in the basic ESL certificate by testing or completing all levels.

5. Students would take the third level of ESL and complete the college prep class in conjunction with major courses
6. Students would also have the ability to test after the third level to place into regular English level college classes (Figure 5.2).

To implement the recommendation to create a *Certificate of General English*

1. Form a committee to restructure the beginning level to accept students formerly turned away due to low LOEP scores.
2. Develop a Certificate of General English studies for those who do not want to gain a college degree.
3. Get approvals from administration for certificate.
4. Develop guidelines for students for pathway to achieve certificate.

Recommendation Three: Review ESL Curriculum to Reduce Segmentation and to Strengthen Continuity and Integration

Reduce Grammar Emphasis: Increase Reading and Writing

The classes are in blocks of nine hours of grammar, and four hour blocks of listening/speaking, writing, and reading. However, if we consider the needs of the students in the areas of writing and reading and the low ratings given to the grammar classes, the evidence suggests students need more support in reading and writing to advance into college level classwork. The survey indicated that after taking writing class, students still felt there was a need for more writing practice in this area.

Therefore, the recommendation is to reduce or eliminate the hours of grammar and add more hours devoted to writing. Furthermore, survey and anecdotal data indicate

students often do not perceive or understand connections among the different ESL courses and do not understand how the different skills focused on in the different courses are interconnected. We need to do more to make clear in our course and in our instruction the connections between grammar, reading, writing, and listening/speaking and how readings and assignments support both real-world and academic competencies. Our current segmentation of skills into separate courses needs to be critically examined and we need to develop curriculum to create more transfer of knowledge and skill between courses and from coursework to real-world applications and subsequent academic work. As done in Kingsborough, students are given the opportunity to have content material intertwined with their ESL instruction to transfer skills between those classes rather than learn in isolation.

Secondly, we need to examine and perhaps improve the sequencing of content from beginning to advanced courses. Beginning level courses should focus more on “receptive skills” – on comprehension and understanding, thus these courses should give relatively more emphasis to listening, reading, and grammar. As the students progress through the program, more emphasis can be placed on “expressive skills” such as speaking and writing. As students’ progress through courses they attain more content knowledge and master more vocabulary and this supports improvement in writing and speaking. The goal is to prepare students optimally for both job success and furthering their education in an academic field.

To implement this recommendation:

- (1) Meet within ESL program to discuss the lack of alignment of curriculum and the benefits of a less segmented program. A committee of instructors

should review all syllabi, assignments, and assessments and recommend ways to better align curricula between levels and, in addition, create incentives and supports to implement best practice instruction throughout all courses.

- (2) Instructor teams revise curricula as per findings of prior curriculum.
- (3) Revise grammar course to create a new, “integrated course” and evaluate the course outcomes with survey, interview, and assessment data.
- (4) Adjust class scheduling to support these changes.
- (5) Continue to collect and analyze data and make adjustments to curricula.

Revise and Improve College Prep Course (ESL 100)

The *College Prep* course (ESL 100) should be restructured. The college preparatory class is seen as a roadblock because many students fail, and one reason is that many feel it is not useful (or fail to understand how it is useful). Much of the college prep class is a review of the advanced level reading and writing classes. The course uses an ESL book that does not prepare students well for academic majors. The students need to be exposed to vocabulary and content from their majors. Therefore, excerpts from introductory level classes should be provided to students in mini lessons in the college prep class. This would allow students exposure to content and academic English lessons. As done in many programs around the country such as Kingsborough Community College, Bunker Hill Community College, and the Community College of Philadelphia, students are given the opportunity to learn content alongside English which has proven to increase retention rates and pass rates in these colleges. Furthermore, if learning communities are offered, the academic

English class can use the same textbook as the class which is linked to it and ESL skills and lessons could be reinforced using the college level textbook. Therefore, the student in ESL 100 should encounter more text material from college classes and be introduced to college major classes at this point. There should be more integration of content classes with the college prep class.

In order to implement this recommendation:

- (1) The ESL department as a unit will set up a meeting with one instructor of an introductory course from each of the DTCC departments offering a major.
- (2) ESL 100 instructors will learn about the other majors' introductory courses and review syllabi and determine ways to combine lessons, assignments, and assessments.
- (3) Drawing from best practice literature, design effective ways to integrate language skills and content (readings, assignments, assessments) in the college prep class (ESL 100) as well as the introductory classes.
- (4) Choose instructional materials, textbook, and technologies that promote the integration of listening, speaking, writing, and reading as well as the associated content and vocabulary.
- (5) Discuss learning strategies that can enhance performance of second language learners in the classroom.
- (6) Update syllabi and calendars to reflect integration of skills and content.

Also, students in the ESL 100 college prep course should be encouraged to take a course in a major alongside their ESL class. This will give them the chance to

interact with other (non-ESL) DTCC students and experience content material that draws from their areas of interest. Currently, Delaware Tech, pre-tech English students are allowed to take certain major classes while finishing their pre-tech track. Those students who are native speakers of English are also given credit for studying classes that are classified as dual enrollment. Dual enrollment status is granted when Delaware Tech agrees to accept credit for college classes that are completed in high school. Native speakers are also offered the opportunity to take college level classes if they enter the college with a 3.0 GPA from high school. ESL students should also be given this chance. By offering students more pathways to their major with continued ESL support, ESL students will progress faster and be more likely to complete their studies with a certificate or degree.

In order to implement this recommendation:

(1) Increase the number of paired courses between ESL and academic majors.

These would be designated ESL classes tailored to pair with a developmental or introductory course in selected majors. Assignments and assessments would overlap giving ESL students the opportunity to learn ESL and academic content at the same time. This would also create opportunities to build learning communities where students would collaborate on assignments.

(2) Offer specific English 101 (Introductory English) credit courses for ESL students that are taught by ESL trained faculty.

- (3) Investigate a proposal to award foreign language or elective credits for completing ESL programs, helping with credits towards graduation or transfer.
- (4) Develop pathways for advanced level ESL students to go into the workforce vocational training if necessary.

Recommendation Four: Develop More Consistency in Standards and Assessments Across Courses and Section

As shown in Chapter 2 (Tables 2.4 and 2.5), there is considerable variation in grade distributions and passing rates among ESL class sections (different sections of the same course), particularly in ESL 100. Some sections have double the pass rates as others. While a certain amount of variation between course sections with different instructors is normal, the amount observed raises possible concerns about uneven standards and insufficiently clear expectations across instructors. Thus, it may be worthwhile to institute measures to promote greater consistency in standards, instruction, and assessments across class sections. This can be done without undermining needed autonomy among instructors to design, implement, and evaluate innovative practices aligned with the department goals.

Here is one way to proceed for the ESL 100 course, which is offered at two locations. The instructors from each location should meet, collaborate, and adopt a common set of expectation and objectives for the class. Grading rubrics from the English department and previous ESL classes can be used as templates to be used across different course section. In addition, the number of assignments and tests should be the same as well as test format.

Periodic meetings of instructors during the semester should take place to review alignment of assignments, assessments, and grading expectations. Each class should require the same final project – a research essay. Instructors should review and discuss this to insure that it is the same across class sections in terms of format, requirements, and grading, although the topic can change to fit the needs of their students.

The Blackboard platform can aid in this initiative to create more uniformity of standards. We can place materials online and create course “shells” to promote greater consistency.

Recommendation Five: Provide More Mentor and Career Counseling

We must improve advising and mentoring, especially for the younger Hispanic 1.5 generation students. Enrollments for these students have increased substantially in the last decade and brought challenges to the program. One difficulty these students face is choosing a career plan for the future as noted in the survey conducted in Chapter 3 in which students noted that they did not know who their advisor was and therefore visited the advisor only minimally for the sole purpose of registering for classes. The students are not getting advice on academic programs, future goals, and career pathways. By offering these students a mentor in the program, students can make choices that are more informed and be held accountable to their decisions and plans. Chapter 2 provided insight into the disparity of completion rates among ethnicities. Hispanic and African students tend to have lower rates of completion in comparison to other ethnic groups. Mentoring has a great deal of potential to support and equalize academic outcomes for traditionally

underrepresented students. By providing a one-on-one mentee, students can gain the knowledge and tools to be successful in college and create a career path forward.

When a student does not have a clear plan, they are more likely to drop out because they do not see an end result. Therefore, we need to strengthen student advising and also, to the maximum extent possible, involve families. As Hoekje and Stevens (2017) note, the success of mentoring programs in supporting minority students is well documented highlighting one study in a major university where students assigned to an active faculty mentor achieved a dropout rate 55 percent lower than that of a group matched by gender, ethnicity and major. Mentors have the power to influence students, open doors of opportunity, and welcome them into the next step of their higher education journey. Here are key steps toward this goal:

- (1) Contact the Student Affairs Department to appoint a liaison between their department and our department so that coordination of information filtering to students is consistent and accurate. Also, Student Affairs coordinates all career planning activities. Therefore, it would be helpful to give them input as to what would be appropriate for our students.
- (2) Set up a summer bridge program that would offer information about the program and allow parents to come to the college and partake in activities with students.
- (3) Assign mentors in the department who offer advice and set up goals for each entering 1.5-generation student.
- (4) Have a “meet and greet” session for students midway through the semester so they can meet other faculty and find out what other majors available to them.

- (5) Provide support to students transitioning from careers in their countries to the associated program at the college. For instance, a student with a degree in business could be given credit and proceed more rapidly at the College.
- (6) Set up “boot camps” for high school students to prepare for the transition to college. A boot camp would be a program for high school students planning to enter college in the subsequent year. They would be given test preparation for the placement test, application and procedures mentoring, and workshops on study skills, stress management and career planning. These boot camps will take place on campus and could be expanded to include other grades.

Conclusions

The number of ESL students in the United States is growing and will continue to grow. The goal for this study was to review our ESL program and to develop a plan to increase the rate of student retention and graduation, especially Hispanic students. The data show that there are many obstacles to their success. At the same time, as the review of model programs shows, there are many ways we can improve our program. Furthermore, there are funding opportunities through Achieving the Dream and Excelencia in Education that allow community colleges to implement and evaluate these projects.

For too many years, little has changed in our curriculum and program structure and it is now time to consider better ways to address the needs of our ever changing student population. Therefore, steps should be taken to improve the program and student performance. Hopefully, these recommendations will improve

the program, increase student success, because these students will ultimately affect the society in which they have chosen to live.

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Appendices

Appendix A

SURVEY QUESTIONS

This survey is anonymous. Your name is not on it. Please answer with honesty. This information is to help us try to serve you better and make our program better. Thank you so much!

Rate your English BEFORE you started the ESL program in the following areas.

	Lowest level - English language very difficult; hard to understand	In between low and middle level	Middle level; sometimes OK; sometimes difficult	In between middle and highest level	Highest level; I did not need help in this area
writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
reading	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
listening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
speaking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
grammar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Last fall and this spring so far, how many times have you met with a course instructor outside of class?

- Never
- Once
- Twice
- Three times
- 4 - 5 times
- More than 5 times

Last fall and this spring so far, how many times have you met with a Tutor?

- Never
- Once
- Twice
- Three times
- 4 - 5 times
- More than 5 times

Last fall and this spring so far, how many times have you met with your Advisor?

- I don't know my Advisor
- Once
- Twice
- Three times
- 4 - 5 times
- More than 5 times

Last fall and this spring so far, how many times have you used the Computer Lab?

- Never
- Once
- Twice
- Three times
- 4 - 5 times
- More than 5 times

Last fall and this spring so far, how often do you use Del Tech's "online resources" (pronunciation software, Focus on Grammar, Rosetta Stone, Blackboard online activities)

(pick the closest option)

- Almost every day
- A few times a week
- Once a week
- Once every few weeks
- About once a month
- Once or twice a semester
- Have not used "online resources"

The next nine questions ask you to rate whether you agree or disagree with statements about your educational experience here at Del Tech

It is easy to get help from my course instructor if I need it

- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree

It is easy to find parking on campus

- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree

It is easy to get to and use the Computer Lab

- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree

My instructors care about the quality of my coursework

- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree

My instructors treat me well

- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree

My class assignments are good for helping me understand and improve in english language

- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree

It is hard for me to do my homework

- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree

A lot of the time, I cannot understand the reading material from class

- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree

Did you go to college in your country?

- I have a degree from a college in my country
- I took a few courses from a college in my country
- I never attended college in my country

Do you have a degree from high school from your country

- Yes
- No

Is someone encouraging you to go to college?

Check ALL the answers that apply

- Yes, my parents are encouraging me
- Yes, my husband or wife is encouraging me
- Yes, friends are encouraging me
- Yes, brother, sister, or other family members
- No one is encouraging me

Do you have a regularly job you have to work at every week?

- Yes
- No

About how many hours do you work each week (for earning money)?

- 0 hours; don't have a job
- 1 - 3 hours
- 4 - 6 hours
- 7 - 9 hours
- 10 - 12 hours
- 13 - 15 hours
- 16 - 20 hours
- 21 - 30 hours
- 31 or more hours a week

How would you answer, if a friend asked you, "Do you think you will graduate with a college degree?"

- Yes, I am sure I will graduate
- I am pretty sure I will graduate
- I am not sure I will graduate, but I want to
- I might graduate, but there is a good chance I won't finish
- I am just taking some classes, that's all

Do you have a specific job in mind that you want to do when you finish with your college courses?

- Yes, there is a specific type of job I want to have
- No, I just want to get the best job I can

Choose from the following which kind of work you will try to get in the next five years.
Choose only one.

What are the hardest parts about the ESL program? (For example: tests, teacher's expectations, reading material, online activities, textbooks, etc)

How would you rate your English AFTER you took classes in the ESL program in the following areas?

	Lowest level - English language very difficult; hard to understand	In between low and middle level	Middle level; sometimes OK; sometimes difficult	In between middle and highest level	Highest level; I do not need help in this area
writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
reading	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
listening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
speaking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
grammar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Which class was most helpful to you?

Appendix B

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

1. Facilitator provides introductory comments. Welcome and thank everyone for volunteering to participate.
2. Introductions
3. Provide basic guidelines for the focus group, review them with participants. Adapt pertinent guidelines for individual interviews: a. If you feel uncomfortable during the meeting, you have the right to leave or to pass on any question. There is no consequence for leaving. Being here is voluntary. One person talks at a time. Everybody has the right to pass on a question.
4. Questions were broken down into categories.
5. Advisement
 - Who is your advisor?
 - Do you know the difference between an advisor and a counselor?
 - Who do you go to for help signing up for classes, advise, etc.?
6. Classes
 - What classes do you find most helpful? Why?
 - What classes do you find least helpful? Why?
 - What could the Department of Language and Culture do to improve the program?
7. Additional Resources
 - Do you go to tutoring in the lab?
 - Do you use the lab? For what purposes?
 - Are you aware of the additional resources available in the lab? Do you use them? Why or why not?

INSTRUCTIONS:

- There are no right or wrong answers.
- Does anybody have any questions?
- Let people know that project staff will be taking notes about what is discussed, but that individual names or identifying information will not be attached to comments.
- An opening question can help break the ice and should be easy to answer. A first question can be as simple as “How did you find out about this focus group (or interview)?” Your goal is to put the group at ease while keeping the focus on getting the information you need.
- Key questions for any focus group or interviews—whether it is crime victims with disabilities or service providers—will focus on the experiences of crime victims with disabilities or service providers, how community services for crime victims with disabilities are working effectively or ineffectively, and what improvements can be made.
- Let people know when you are going to ask the last question. This cues participants to share relevant information that may not have come up in answer to your key questions. For example, “Is there anything else you want to share that we haven’t talked about yet?”
- For individual interviews and focus groups with crime victims with disabilities, remind participants that they can stay and talk to someone after the meeting if needed. Also tell everyone that if they or anyone they know has been abused, that it was not their fault and help is available.
- Develop resource cards. Include contacts for local crime victim services, crisis services such as domestic violence and sexual assault services, disability advocacy services, and counseling services and explain each briefly.

Thank all for participating.