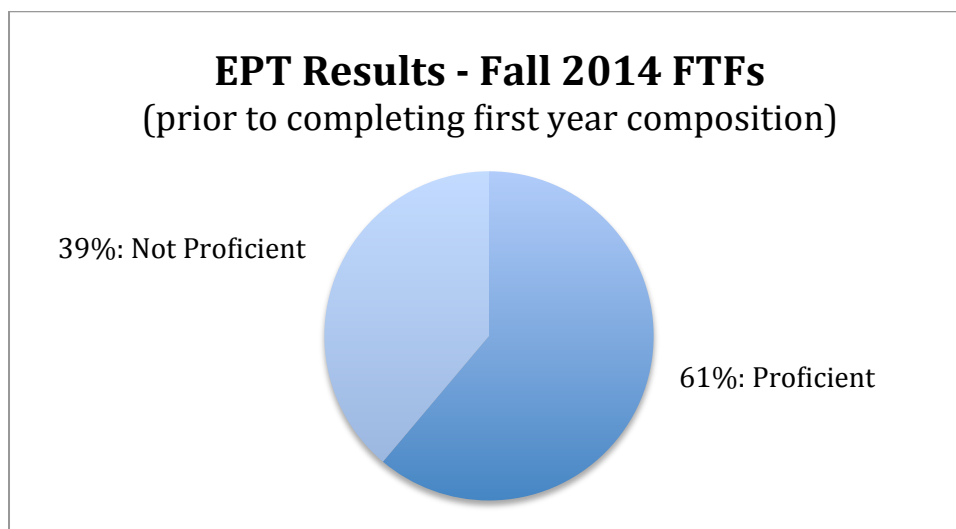


Directed Self Placement Assessment: 2014-2015 Academic Year

Stacey Anderson, First Year Composition Coordinator

In the fall of 2014, CI admitted 903 first time freshmen (FTFs). Of these, 555, or just over 61%, were deemed as proficient in English based on the scores they received on the CSU's English Placement Test (EPT).



Our Directed Self Placement (DSP) program gives students two options for fulfilling their first year writing requirement (G.E. Category A2 – English Writing). **Rather than relying on EPT scores and forcing nearly 40% of our incoming students into remedial courses that give them no credit towards their college degrees, our first year composition program provides guidance to students that can help them decide for themselves how to fulfill the writing requirement.**

Students who do not feel ready for college level writing and research can enroll in our two-semester Stretch Composition Sequence (ENGL 102 and ENGL 103). ENGL 102 serves as a three-credit, graded elective course that helps students make the transition from high school to college. ENGL 102 prepares students for ENGL 103, a faster paced course with higher expectations with regards to writing and research that fulfills the first year writing requirement.

Students who feel ready for college level writing and research can choose to enroll in ENGL 105, our one-semester writing and research intensive course that fulfills the first year writing requirement. (When available, students can also take ENGL 106, our service learning course, to complete the FYC requirement.)

Traditionally, at least two-thirds of our students choose the two-semester Stretch option, so our course offerings (budget permitting) are scaled accordingly. When we are able to offer additional sections of Stretch, we find that nearly three-fourths of students choose this option. **In the 2014-2015 academic year (AY), about 73% of students chose Stretch, while about 27% chose a one-semester option (ENGL 105 or ENGL 106).**

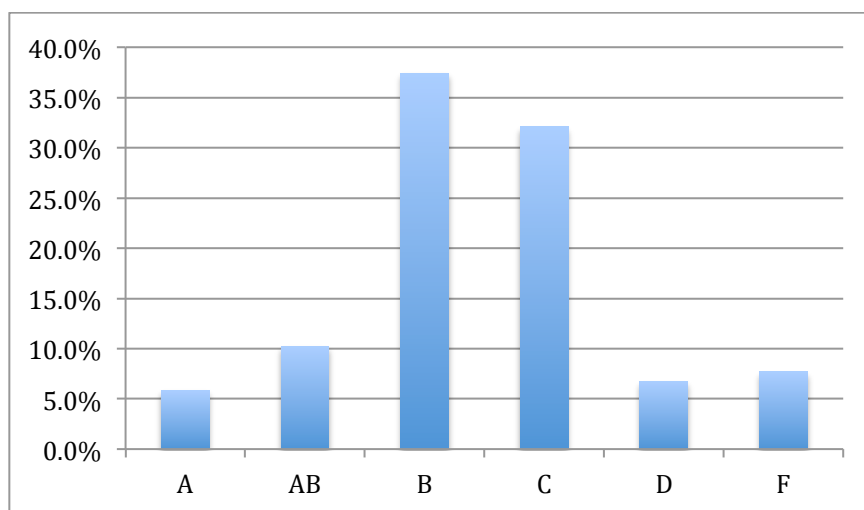
These numbers are revealing in light of the EPT results discussed above. **39% of our incoming students would have been placed in remedial writing at a campus that relied on the EPT for placement.** We might assume that the percentage of students who chose Stretch, our alternative to remediation, would be about the same, or perhaps even lower since students might well choose to save money and time by opting for the one-semester option. **Instead, nearly twice that many students chose our full year Stretch Sequence.** When empowered to make their own placement decisions, students do not automatically gravitate towards the shortest path of our one semester course. Instead, they make choices that suit them best, and in most cases this entails devoting a full year to completing the writing requirement.

In order for a student to fulfill the first year writing requirement, he or she must pass the final portfolio that is submitted at the end of the semester in ENGL 103, ENGL 105, or ENGL 106. The portfolio is assessed holistically by members of the composition faculty other than a student's classroom teacher. This assures that all student writing is assessed in a consistent, unbiased manner that takes only the final written product into consideration.

In the 2014-2015 AY, 92% of students enrolled in ENGL 103, ENGL 105, or ENGL 106 successfully completed the course with a portfolio score equivalent to a D or higher. This pass rate is in sharp contrast to the EPT predictions that only 61.5 % of incoming students would succeed in a college level writing course. Were the cut score for passing portfolios raised to the equivalent of a C, we would have still have had a high pass rate, as **85.5% of students passed with scores equal to a C or higher.**

The breakdown of scores for all ENGL 103 & 105 portfolios for the 2014-2015 AY is below. The results are consistent with previous assessments that indicate there is no "grade inflation" in our scoring process, as high scores are reserved for only those portfolios that truly convey excellence. What we have instead is an authentic assessment that indicates students are successfully bridging the gap from high school to college writing in our courses.

Portfolio Grades – 2014-2015 AY



The [scoring criteria](#) that are used to assess student portfolios are based on the rubric that was developed for the EPT. (The most recent version of the EPT Essay Scoring Guide can be found on pages 15-17 of the CSU's [Focus on English](#) publication.) Thus, the standards to which students are held to determine their aptitude for college writing are the same standards to which they are held in our portfolio assessment. In turn, our faculty participated in the G.E. Task Force that helped develop the new G.E. Rubric for Written Communication (Goal 4 Outcome 4.2 on the [G.E. Goals and Outcomes](#) site), such that the standards we use are now being institutionalized at CI.

Our scoring criteria are not static, and they have gone through three significant revisions over the past 12 years to best reflect the expectations for student writing in our program and across our campus. Students who pass the portfolio with a score equivalent to a C or higher have learned how to respond to a rigorous writing and research task, explore ideas logically and analytically, develop a focused and organized academic essay, and integrate and properly cite relevant research into their writing in a manner that conveys engagement with (not merely perfunctory interjection of) scholarly sources.

The high success rate of our program can be attributed to a number of distinguishing features:

- **Student self-efficacy:** students are more likely to succeed when the choice of how to fulfill their writing requirement is theirs alone, without the stigma associated with remediation. Our faculty provide guidance to students to help them make this decision via presentations at each [Island View Orientation](#) session as well as our online DSP materials, which this year will be delivered on our newly designed [First Year Composition Program website](#).
- **Full-time faculty:** unlike other programs that rely on “freeway flyers” who must split their energies among many campuses, our faculty are employed full-time at CI and able to devote their full professional energies to our students. This steady employment also enables our faculty to participate in the various professional development opportunities discussed below.
- **Writing Center support:** our ongoing collaboration with the [University Writing Center](#) means that our students have weekly access to a peer tutor in their composition courses, as well as the opportunity to receive extensive tutoring in the center itself.
- **High Impact Educational Practices:** Writing-intensive courses like ours are a High Impact Practice (HIP) as defined by the [Association of American Colleges and Universities](#). By design, our workshop-structured courses employ other HIPs such as active, collaborative learning, writing, and research. Moreover, several of our faculty teach courses that participate in linked class learning communities, another HIP that has been implemented primarily through [Project ISLAS](#) and is now growing to include [STEM Collaborative Learning Communities](#) as well as an Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Research [Living-Learning Community \(SURF\)](#). In the fall of 2015, 13 of our first year composition courses are participating in one of these initiatives, meaning that about 260 of our incoming students will have the benefit of taking part in a learning community.

- **Ongoing professional development:** faculty in the first year composition participate regularly in professional development opportunities that help maintain consistency across sections while continually raising the bar in terms of our expectations for students. Our faculty are also highly regarded across campus for our participation in initiatives that help facilitate implementation of HIPs. Jill Leafstedt, Director of Teaching and Learning Innovation, recently remarked how our composition team is trendsetting in its eagerness to take on new challenges, explore new tools, and innovate in the classroom. Our **week-long portfolio scoring sessions** have proven to be a particularly fruitful venue for professional development, helping our faculty elevate our standards and expectations for student writing and engagement across the program and develop consistent methods for holding students accountable.
- **Small class sizes:** Our faculty are experts when it comes to working with first year college students, particularly first generation students and others who are at risk for failing to persist after the first year. Our ability to take students who are not predicted to succeed in college and turn that prediction on its head relies heavily on our ability to engage with students at an individual level. Our small class size enables faculty work one on one with students, both during regular class time and in individual conferences during office hours. Students consistently remark that they have never worked with an instructor who has taken such an abiding and personal interest in their writing and in their success as students overall. When students start to fall by the wayside, we do not let them just slip away. Rather, we grab hold and do all we can to pull them forward. If a student is not going to complete one of our courses successfully, it will not be because they stopped coming to class and we did nothing to bring them back into the fold. Our small class size is integral to our student-centered approach to teaching and emulates the University mission as a whole.

First Year Composition Faculty Team

<u>Name</u>	<u>Highest Degree Earned</u>	<u>Year Joined Faculty</u>
Stacey Anderson	Ph.D.	2005
Stacey Beauregard	M.A.	2012
Scott DeLoach	M.A.	2012
Kristin Fitzpatrick	M.F.A.	2014
Rachael Jordan	M.A.	2012
Clifton Justice	Ph.D.	2006
Kathleen Klompien	Ph.D.	2005
Jarret Krone	M.A.	2014
Kendall McClellan	Ph.D.	2015
Kimberly Vose	Ph.D.	2011