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**ABSTRACT**

A study was conducted at Miami-Dade Community College (MDCC) to assess the success of the college in offering a start for students who would not be accepted by institutions with more selective admissions policies. The study focused on all students who entered MDCC for the first time in the fall of 1981. Of the 7,097 fall 1981 freshmen, less than one-third would have been eligible to enter the state university system on the basis of their Comparative Guidance and Placement (CGP) examination scores at MDCC and 25% needed college preparatory work in all three basic skills areas. Study findings revealed: (1) slightly less than one-quarter of the original group took the College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) by the end of fall 1984; (2) of the students who fell below the cut in all three areas of the CGP only 10% had written the CLAST by the end of the fall term compared to 36% of those who scored above the cut in all three areas; (3) the MDCC students who were initially eligible to enroll in the state university system performed similarly to university students in each of the four subtest areas; (4) 688 of the students who were initially ineligible to enroll in the state university system passed three of the four CLAST subtests and were therefore eligible to enter the system; this was equivalent to 77% of those who took the CLAST and 14% of those who first enrolled at MDCC in fall 1981; and (5) the proportion of students passing in each subtest area declined as the number of areas in which a student needed preparatory help increased. (HB)

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PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDENTS  
WHO WERE INITIALLY INELIGIBLE TO ENROLL  
IN THE STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

Research Report No. 85-15

April 1985

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JC 850 2.36

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

**Miami-Dade Community College**

## Providing Educational Opportunity for Students Who Were Initially Ineligible to Enroll in the State University System

One of the main purposes of community colleges is to offer a start in higher education to those who would not be accepted by institutions with less than open door admissions policies. Though a number of students do not survive, even within the shelter of the community college environment, many do and even thrive. For these students and for society as a whole, the community college system has performed a valuable "salvage" function.

The purpose of this study was to assess Miami-Dade's role in providing students with a good start toward earning a four-year degree, students who would otherwise not have received any higher education because of low test scores. All students who entered college for the first time in the Fall of 1981 formed the data base. It was assumed that students who fell below M-DCC's cut in any one of the three basic skills areas (reading, writing, computation) would not have been admitted to the State University System (SUS) because of the need for skill development in that area. These criteria were probably lenient and more students actually were ineligible to enter the SUS than are shown by these numbers. Miami-Dade's 1981 cutscores corresponded to national percentile ranks of 31 in reading, 30 in writing, and 57 in computation.

Of the 7,097 Fall 1981 freshmen, less than one-third would have been eligible to enter the SUS based on their CGP scores at Miami-Dade. In fact, more than 25% needed college preparatory work in all three basic skills areas. As shown by Table 1, students who entered Miami-Dade needing work in all three areas of basic skills were unlikely to receive a degree. Those students who passed more of the CGP tests were more likely to obtain a degree. Yet, it is clear from the attrition rates in Table 1 that half of the most academically able students still leave M-DCC without a degree.

Slightly less than one-quarter of the original group took the College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) by the end of the Fall Term in 1984. Over 50% of the group that took the CLAST did so in either the Summer

or Fall of 1983. Again, students that fell below the cut in all three areas of the CGP were least likely to have reached the point where they wrote the CLAST. Only 10% of this group had written the CLAST by the end of the Fall Term as opposed to 36% of those that scored above the cut in all three areas. As shown by Table 2, passing all three areas of the CGP virtually assured this group of students that they would pass three or four parts of the CLAST and be eligible to continue in the SUS.

Recall that this is a group which is more similar to the population taking the CLAST in the State University System. Comparing the performance of M-DCC's "SUS eligible" students to the performance of students enrolled in the State University System results in the finding (using Fall 1983 comparisons) that M-DCC students in this category performed as well as or better than students in eight of the nine universities in passing all four parts of CLAST. Using the Fall 1984 standards when scores overall were higher, Miami-Dade outperformed all but three institutions (Florida State, University of Florida, University of Central Florida).

The M-DCC students who were initially eligible to enroll in the SUS also performed similarly to university students in each of the four subtest areas using Fall test data. In reading, 97.7% of the Miami-Dade students passed compared to 97.1% of the state university students. In writing, 97.3% of the Miami-Dade students passed compared to 97.6% of the university students. In computation, both the Miami-Dade and the state university students had the same passing rate: 98.2%. On the essay, Miami-Dade edged the university students with 95.5% of the Miami-Dade students passing the essay compared to 92.7% of the state university students.

All the students remaining can be classified as students who were initially ineligible to enroll in the SUS. Of this group, 688 passed three or four parts of the CLAST and were therefore eligible after attendance at Miami-Dade to continue in the SUS. This number is equivalent to 77% of those who took the CLAST and 14% of those who first enrolled in Miami-Dade in the Fall of 1981 and fell below the cut in basic skills in one or more areas.

As shown by Table 3, students who needed college preparatory work in one basic skill area at Miami-Dade had passing rates which were fairly close to those of students who did not need any help. Again, the proportion passing in each subtest area declined as the number of areas in which a student needed preparatory help increased. As shown by Table 4, the areas where students needed help upon entry to Miami-Dade remained the areas where students had the most difficulty on the CLAST. This finding suggests that support systems are not advancing skills in weak areas as much as has been hoped for. In the non-preparatory areas, the passing rates of these students were similar to students that needed no college preparatory work and were university-eligible upon enrollment at Miami-Dade.

Clearly the community college system in general, and Miami-Dade in particular, serves a valuable function in preparing students for continuance in the State University System, even though they would have been initially ineligible to enroll. On the other hand, the academically well prepared student who enrolls at Miami-Dade is not academically handicapped by attending a community college in terms of future CLAST performance. This fact might be useful in developing intervention techniques to stem the current outward flow of students with more academic preparation who leave M-DCC without a degree and in marketing the College to potential students.

Table 1

Status of Fall 1981 First-Time-in-College Students At the End of the Fall 1984 Term

Number of CGP Tests Passed	Status						
	Number	Left Prior to 84-2 With No Degree		Left Prior to 84-2 With a Degree		Current Student	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0	1,823	1,289	70.7	127	7.0	407	22.3
1	1,462	917	62.7	228	15.6	317	21.7
2	1,639	928	56.6	346	21.1	365	22.3
3	2,172	1,078	49.6	669	30.8	425	19.6
Total	7,096	4,212	59.4	1,370	19.3	1,514	21.3

Table 2

Percent of Fall 1981 Enrollees Passing  
Zero Through Four CLAST Subtests  
Based on Need for College Preparatory Work Upon Entry to M-DCC

Number of CGP Tests Passed	Number in Group	Percent Passing Each CLAST Subtest									
		0		1		2		3		4	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0	179	4	2.2	44	24.6	48	26.8	43	24.0	40	22.3
1	285	2	0.7	24	8.4	56	19.6	100	35.1	103	36.1
2	431	1	0.2	5	1.2	23	5.3	82	19.0	320	74.2
3	778	1	0.1	2	0.3	9	1.2	60	7.7	706	90.7
Total	1,673	8	0.5	75	4.5	136	8.1	285	17.0	1,169	69.9

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**Table 3**

**Percent of Fall 1981 Enrollees Passing  
Each CLAST Subtest Based on Need For  
College Preparatory Work Upon Entry to M-DCC**

Number of CGP Tests Passed	Number	Percent Passing Each CLAST Subtest			
		Reading	Writing	Computation	Essay
0	179	44.1	66.5	75.4	53.6
1	285	65.6	79.6	87.7	64.6
2	431	88.9	94.0	94.0	89.1
3	778	97.7	97.3	98.2	95.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,673</b>	<b>84.2</b>	<b>90.1</b>	<b>92.9</b>	<b>84.1</b>

**Table 4**

**Performance on the CLAST Subtests of Students  
Who Needed College Preparatory Work in One or Two Areas**

Subtests	Number in Group	Percent Passing Each CLAST Subtest			
		Reading	Writing	Computation	Essay
<b>Needed Preparatory Work in One Area (N=431)</b>					
Reading	153	81.0	91.5	94.1	88.9
Writing	88	88.6	87.5	94.3	83.0
Computation	190	95.3	98.9	93.7	92.1
<b>Needed Preparatory Work in Two Areas (N=285)</b>					
Reading & Writing	167	60.5	76.0	91.0	58.7
Reading & Computation	72	65.3	83.3	81.9	73.6
Writing & Computation	46	84.8	87.0	84.8	71.7