

I'm honored to present the Award for Excellence in Innovation of a Program-level Assessment Project. This project is being recognized today because of its creativity, relevance, and exemplary design. This award goes to Katie Leite and Pamela Fornieri and the supporting members of the ESOL/TRS Department, for their assessment of English for Speakers of Other Languages Program.

This program-level assessment project is innovative in its design. The ESOL/TRS Department wanted to know if students who earned a low passing grade in an introductory course, would also be successful in subsequent courses. To answer their question, Katie and Pamela identified students who earned a "C-minus" to "C" in ESL 130, then tracked their success in ESL 201 and in English 101. This is important because ESOL students must achieve a "C" or better in ESL 201, the program's capstone course, before entering English 101, a common degree requirement. This information was then used to determine if the ESOL Program should offer additional coursework to help students prepare for higher-level courses, or if the time was right to expand their program.

What makes this assessment unique is that they focused on the borderline population of students. A letter grade of C-minus to C traditionally represents a student who has a working knowledge-base, but has yet to master the subject matter. These students seem most "at risk" of falling behind in more advanced courses.

Two words can describe why this approach is significant—retention and completion. While the ESOL team was tracking students between courses, they also checked in on the graduation rates of their students. They found that, “*ESOL students have begun to graduate at a rate comparable to the general MCC population.*” In fact, in the last two years of their study, graduation rates between ESOL student and the general MCC population were the same. Here is a program-level assessment that directly supports the College’s mission: “*...to educate and prepare diverse learners to achieve scholarly, professional, and individual success within a local and global context.*”

So what did the ESOL team learn? It turns out that the vast majority of ESOL students are prepared for the next step. Can you say the same for students in your programs? How would you know? I suggest following ESOL’s creative solution.

Congratulations to Katie and Pamela for a design concept that is highly innovative and one that could be applied across the curriculum.