



This issue of DataWave focuses on several aspects of ENMU Students—their readiness for college, their retention, and their mastery of general education skills. By examining these data, the campus community can make better-informed decisions about advising, curriculum, and other issues of academic remediation and retention.

In the coming months, DataWave will provide institutional data about Eastern's assessment initiatives, measures of student learning, comparisons with other New Mexico institutions and with national norms for institutions of higher education.

DataWave is a publication of the Assessment Resource Office. Comments and questions about this information, and ideas about topics for future issues, are welcome. Please contact me at the Assessment Resource Office at 562-4313. I look forward to working with you.

Larry Smith  
Assessment Coordinator

**HOW WELL PREPARED  
ARE ENMU FRESHMEN?**

There are two commonly used indicators of academic preparation of the freshmen who enter Eastern - ACT scores and high school grade point averages. As the data below indicates, those two indicators seem to be inconsistent, and that inconsistency has widened in recent years.

**ACT Composite Scores  
Degree-Seeking First-time Freshmen**

<u>Year</u>	<u>ACT Average</u>
2000	19.1
1999	19.5
1998	19.5
1997	20.4
1996	20.5
1995	21.1
1994	20.4

**Average High School GPA  
Degree-Seeking First-Time Freshmen**

<u>Year</u>	<u>High School GPA Average</u>
2000	2.97
1999	2.95
1998	2.92
1997	2.96
1996	2.86
1995	2.89
1994	2.79

Two theories that might be advanced to explain the "widening" between ACT scores and high school GPA's are (1) grade inflation in high schools and (2) lack of intensity of high school curriculum of many of our freshmen.

Further clues as to whether to rely more heavily on ACT scores or high school GPA's can be found in how students rate their own abilities. ENMU has been administering the national Cooperative Institutional Research Project (CIRP) survey to incoming freshmen since 1986. In the 2000 survey, our incoming freshmen were asked if they considered their



abilities in the following areas to be in the top 10% compared to others their age. Generally, Eastern freshmen rated themselves lower than their national counterparts.

	<u>ENMU</u>	<u>National</u>
Academic Ability	48.6%	58.3%
Artistic Ability	23.8%	27.3%
Computer Skills	27.6%	32.5%
Leadership Ability	52.4%	57.6%
Math	27.6%	37.6%
Public Speaking	36.2%	33.9%
Intellectual	57.1%	56.5%
Spirituality	49.5%	43.1%

Having rated themselves lower than the national cohort in abilities, it's not surprising that the ENMU freshmen completing the CIRP recognize some need for special tutoring or remedial work in core areas. Eastern freshmen indicated greater needs for remedial work or tutoring than reported by their national counterparts.

**Require tutoring in**

	<u>ENMU</u>	<u>National</u>
English	30.8%	11.0%
Reading	7.5%	5.3%
Math	56.1%	30.0%
Social Studies	11.2%	4.5%
Science	25.2%	12.3%
Writing	26.2%	12.9%

Further clues can be found in the self-reports of freshmen regarding their study habits their last year of high school. They were asked how many hours per week they spent studying and doing homework.

Less than 1 hour	15.5%
1 to 2	28.2%
3 to 5	32.0%
6 to 10	16.5%
11 to 15	4.9%
16 and over	2.0%



Each year, universities across the country report their freshmen-to-sophomore retention rates of first-time, full-time freshmen. While not a comprehensive snapshot of retention efforts, this retention number generally tends to be a good predictor of student success and of five-year and six-year graduation rates, another required report.

Eastern's efforts to improve students' first year experience have resulted in improved retention rates from the freshman to the sophomore year. ENMU's rates actually exceed retention of a cross section of public, open admissions institutions.

ENMU has initiated several programs to improve retention in the past three years. Improved advising for all students, but particularly during pre-fall registration periods, the Freshman Seminar (UNIV 101), and careful monitoring of students' progress during the freshman year have all had positive effects on freshman-to-sophomore student retention. \*Table 1 shows ENMU's change in retention since 1995.

**Table 1:  
ENMU Freshman-to-Sophomore Retention Rates**

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
1 <sup>st</sup> Year Retention	52%	53%	58%	57%	61.2%	63.6%

Retention rates at ENMU have improved, but how do these rates compare to retention rates at other institutions like ENMU? A national database established by ACT and Noel-Levitz provides some measures. Institutions agreeing to share their data are categorized by type of institution (highest



degree granted) and “selectivity.” In the 1999 data released by ACT, retention rates for “open

aggregate results of ENMU's fall 2000 administration of the Academic Profile follow.

admission” institutions (institutions accepting students with <18 ACT composite scores) had the following retention rates:

**Table 2  
Freshman-to-Sophomore Retention,  
1998-1999\***

Open Admissions, Retention		AA	BA	MA	PhD
ACT <18	Mean Percentage	52%	56%	57%	65%
SAT<870	Number of Institutions	691	20	40	7

\*1999-2000 data not yet available

Based on these data, ENMU’s retention rate **exceeds** the retention rate of this selection of masters degree-granting, open admissions institutions.

Source: Levitz, et al., “Strategic Moves for Retention Success.” *Promising Practices in Recruitment, Remediation, and Retention*. Jossey-Bass, Winter 1999.

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\*ENMU students’ retention has also been helped by the New Mexico Lottery Success Scholarship. In Fall 2000, 554 ENMU Students were receiving lottery scholarships.

**A MEASURE OF “RISING JUNIOR”  
OUTCOMES IN GENERAL EDUCATION**

For more than a decade ENMU has been testing its "rising juniors," those students have completed at least 55 credit hours, but not more than 65. (Beginning in the fall 2001 semester, the window will be enlarged to 55-75 credit hours.) In the 1999-2000 academic year, a switch was made from ACT's CAAP test to ETS's Academic Profile test because the Academic Profile provides some criterion-based data as well as normative scores. Some



**Academic Profile Test  
Fall 2000**

*Comparative Scores*

The comparative scores are reported as an observed mean; that is, an average of the students taking the test. The scales for the subscores run from 100 to 130. The scale for the total score ranges from 400 to 500. The comparison is to a self-selected cohort of twelve (12) universities somewhat similar to ENMU.

The comparative scores are:

	<b>ENMU</b>	<b>Cohort</b>
Academic Area Subscores		
Humanities	114	116
Social Sciences	112	115
Natural Sciences	114	118
Skills Dimension Subscores		
College Level Reading	117	120
College Level Writing	114	116
Critical Thinking	110	113
Using Mathematical Data	112	116
<b>Total Scores</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>450</b>

It is important to note that some individual institutions in the cohort scored lower than ENMU in every category. It is also important to note that many of them did not require every student in the credit hour range to take the test. The scores are rounded to the nearest .5.

*Summary of Criterion-Referenced  
Proficiency Levels*

The levels are expressed as percentages of the group performing at each level. The percentages will not total 100% due to some "reversals," scores considered invalid due to various anomalies. The test was administered to 153 students. Level 3 is the highest level to be obtained.

**WRITING**

Level 1 Not Attained	20
Level 1	53
Level 2	16
Level 3	6

**MATH**

Level 1 Not Attained	31
Level 1	40
Level 2	21
Level 3	6

**READING/CRITICAL THINKING**

Level 1 Not Attained	18
Level 1	50
Level 2	26
Level 3	5

The criteria for each of the levels are set forth in an Academic Profile Information Booklet which has been provided for all faculty members. Booklets may be obtained by calling the Assessment Resource Office at 4313.

Beginning in the Spring of 2001 the Academic Profile Score sheets for individual students were provided to the college deans so that they could be distributed to the department in which each student had declared a major. This practice, which will continue for future semesters, is to facilitate the use of Academic Profile scores in advisement of students.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and the dean's council have asked the General Education Committee and the Assessment Committee to confer on the question of setting some sort of standard for performance on the



Academic Profile test. Those conferences will begin during the fall 2001 semester. Although there is currently no standard expectation for ENMU students taking the test, it is obvious that we cannot be pleased that some of our students do not even reach Level 1. It is also obvious that we would prefer that a higher percentage of our students reach Levels 2 and 3.

Because ENMU requires all of its students to take the Academic Profile test, it is somewhat unfair to compare it to other institutions in its cohort, many of which do not have such a requirement. Also, it is clear that the test has not been “high stakes” enough in the past to elicit the best effort of our students. Hopefully

the recent steps to increase the importance of the test to students will change that.

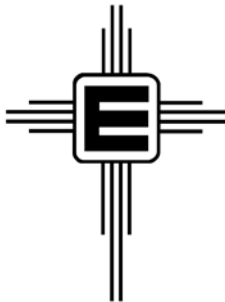
There is an assumption that it will take a period of time, perhaps three or four years, for the “culture” of the importance of the test, and of our expectations that our students improve their learning in the general education curriculum, to take hold with students. At that point, we will be able to use the Academic Profile test as a more accurate measure of ENMU’s general education outcomes.



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