

Rapid Track 2001-2002

History: The Rapid Track program began in the fall semester of 1998 as another option in the growing area of flexible class schedules available to students. This program is designed to offer highly motivated students a chance to complete their studies for an AAS degree within one year. The Rapid Track program offers four sessions of six-week length classes and one session of three-week length classes each year. A majority of the students in the program take Rapid Track courses as a supplement to their regular semester-length classes.

A study of the 2001-2002 Rapid Track program was done to fulfill one of the SACS core requirements which states that the College must demonstrate that each educational program, for which academic credit is awarded, establishes and evaluates program and learning outcomes. With this in mind, the purpose of this report is to determine whether or not Rapid Track students were as successful as their peers in sections of the same courses not meeting in a compressed format.

Student Demographics: A majority of the Rapid Track students were sophomore-level, white, non-Hispanic females between the ages of 20-24 years. This compares to the majority of college-wide students who were freshman-level, Hispanic females in the same age group. The average age for the Rapid Track student was about one year younger than the college-wide average age; however, the Rapid Track student characteristically had more college experience.

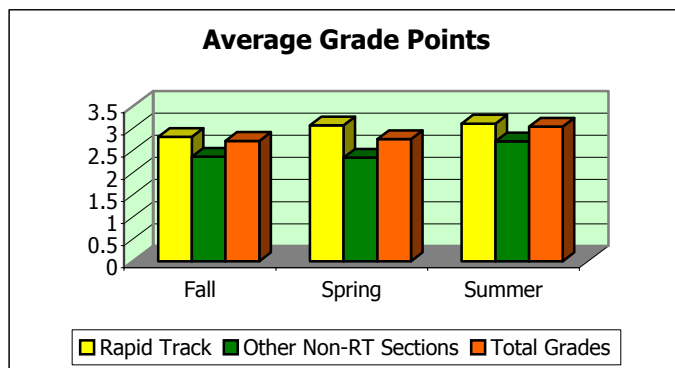
Enrollments: Annual enrollments have grown 76 percent over the past four years, from 480 students in 1998-99 to 843 students in 2001-02. The number of sections available to students each year has grown from 33 to 58 for the same period. Average class size in the Rapid Track program for 2001-2002 is the same as 1998-99 at 14.5 students per class. This compares to the 2001-2002 average class size for all Arts and Sciences programs of 21.2 and the college-wide average class size of 18.9.

Survey Results: Over two-thirds of the students surveyed were enrolled in their first Rapid Track course; and of those surveyed, 67 percent were enrolled in only one Rapid Track course for the session. A majority of the students surveyed (68%) stated that they do intend to get a degree or certificate from Del Mar College; only 7.4 percent plan to get a degree or certificate by using only the Rapid Track format.

Survey results indicate that 73 percent of the students learned about the Rapid Track program by reading the information printed in the class schedule. Almost all of the students surveyed found the Rapid Track program a good or excellent choice as an alternative scheduling option. Over 90 percent of the survey respondents agreed that there was enough time to adequately cover the material, and that they learned as much in a Rapid Track format as they would have in a traditional semester course. Almost all the students (98%) would recommend the Rapid Track program to other students, and 69 percent planned to take other Rapid Track courses.

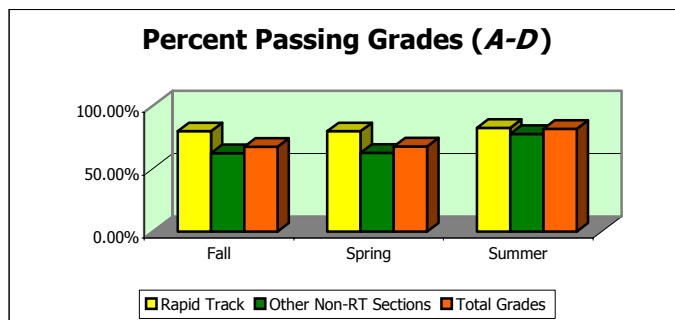
Success Factors: A program can be defined as being successful if students meet or exceed performance standards and if students are retained in the course until the end of the session. Four factors were analyzed in this report to measure student success: percent passing grades, percent failures, percent withdrawals, and average grades.

As a whole, average grades for Rapid Track students were higher than the average grades for sections of the same courses taught in a non-Rapid Track format and for the total grades issued for the semester.



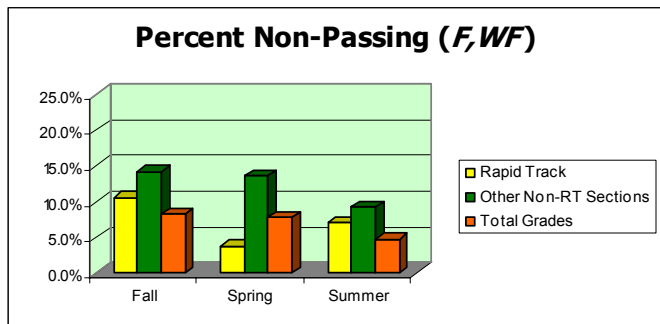
Other factors used to measure success are the comparison of percent passing grades and percent non-passing grades in the Rapid Track sections compared to both the non-Rapid Track sections of the same course and to the total grades for the semester.

Rapid Track students have higher grades and passing rates...



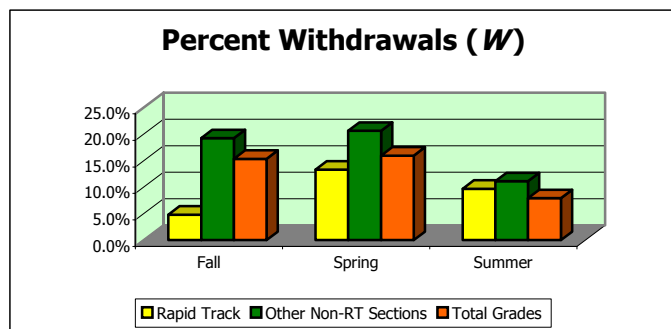
As shown in the graph above, Rapid Track students had a higher percent of passing grades for all sessions held during 2001-2002.

In contrast, the percentage of non-passing grades was lower only in the spring semester for the Rapid Track sections compared to the non-Rapid Track sections and total grades for the year.



Rapid Track students have higher retention rates...

The last factor considered in this study was the withdrawal/retention rates for the Rapid Track sessions compared to both the non-Rapid Track sections and to the College as a whole. In both the fall and spring semesters, there was a notable difference in the percent withdrawals. During the fall semester, the Rapid Track program was three times more successful than the non-Rapid Track courses and the College as a whole in retaining students for the whole session. The percent withdrawals were also lower in the spring semester and were only slightly above the college-wide average for the summer semester.



Conclusions: The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE) is limited in measuring program success to analyzing the quantitative data available. Qualitative data about students' progress in the classroom requires assessment tools in addition to those available to OIRE. Therefore, using the data available, this report finds that Rapid Track students are performing equally as well as or better than non-Rapid Track students.

The Rapid Track program fulfills one of the seven purposes stated in the *Del Mar College Mission Statement* and the program's unit purpose as stated in its *Institutional Effectiveness Unit Plans* by providing fully accredited academic courses leading to certificates, associate degrees, and/or the first two years of transferable credit toward baccalaureate degrees.

By reviewing the *Institutional Effectiveness Unit Plans and Assessments* for the Rapid Track program for the last several years, it is apparent that the program director is making efforts to add additional classes and to expand time offerings for the courses. The *IE Unit Plan for 2002-2003* includes exploring the possibility of offering classes on Saturday and Sunday. Small classes allow students to bond, stay on task, and accomplish their goals in an accelerated format that is suitable for some of the Del Mar College student body.

Copies of the full report have been mailed to divisional deans and department chairs. The full report is also available in the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness.

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