

University System of Georgia
Learning Support/Core Curriculum Feedback Summary
Grade Performance in Selected Core Courses, FY2003

Introduction

The purpose of USG Learning Support (LS) programs is to prepare students for success in college-level courses. One way to examine the success of LS students and to evaluate LS program effectiveness is to compare the grades of students who completed LS with the grades of students who did not require LS in specific Core Curriculum courses: English 1101 (English Composition I), Math 1101 (Mathematical Modeling), and Math 1111 (College Algebra). Reports are provided for additional Core Courses, and a USG institution may want to compare its institution's report with sector and System reports for courses such as History 1111 and History 1112 or History 2111 and History 2112, Sociology 1101, and Political Science 1101.

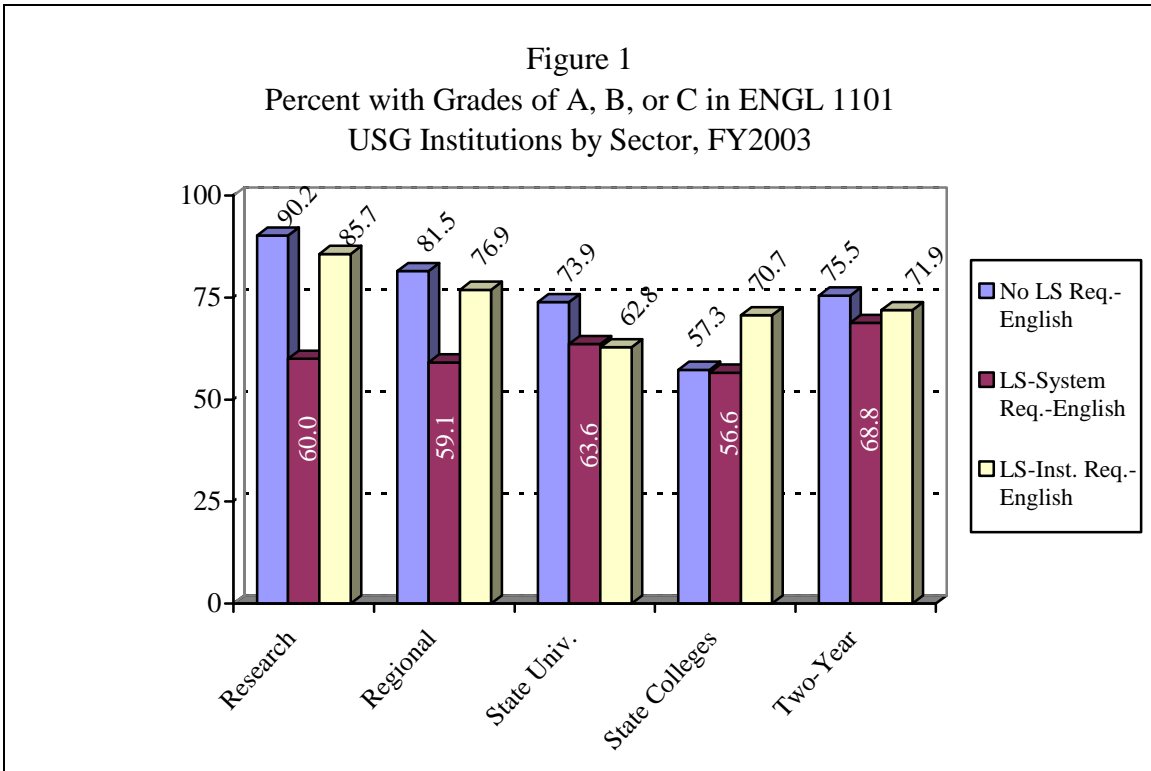
The following analysis compares students with LS requirements at the System level (equivalent across all USG institutions), LS requirements at the institutional level (higher standards, but may differ across institutions), and no LS requirements.

At research, regional, and state universities, the numbers of students with LS requirements at the System level, and also at the institutional level (but to a lesser extent), have decreased significantly since 1997, and the remaining numbers of students are small. This caveat should be considered when analyzing the results.

English 1101: English Composition I

In FY2003, 41,446 students with no transfer college history (i.e., "native" students) enrolled in English 1101. Of those, 29,349, or 70.8 percent, had no Learning Support or Developmental Studies (DS) requirements in any area. A much larger percentage, 86.9 percent, had no LS or DS requirements in English.

Of those who had LS-System requirements in English, 66.4 percent made an "A," "B," or "C" (hereafter called a "success rate") in English 1101, compared to 77.6 percent of students who did not have an English LS requirement and 71.4 percent with an institutional requirement. There was an 11.2 percentage point gap in the success rates between students with no LS requirements and students with System-level requirements, but this gap was much smaller at state and two-year colleges than at universities (see Figure 1).

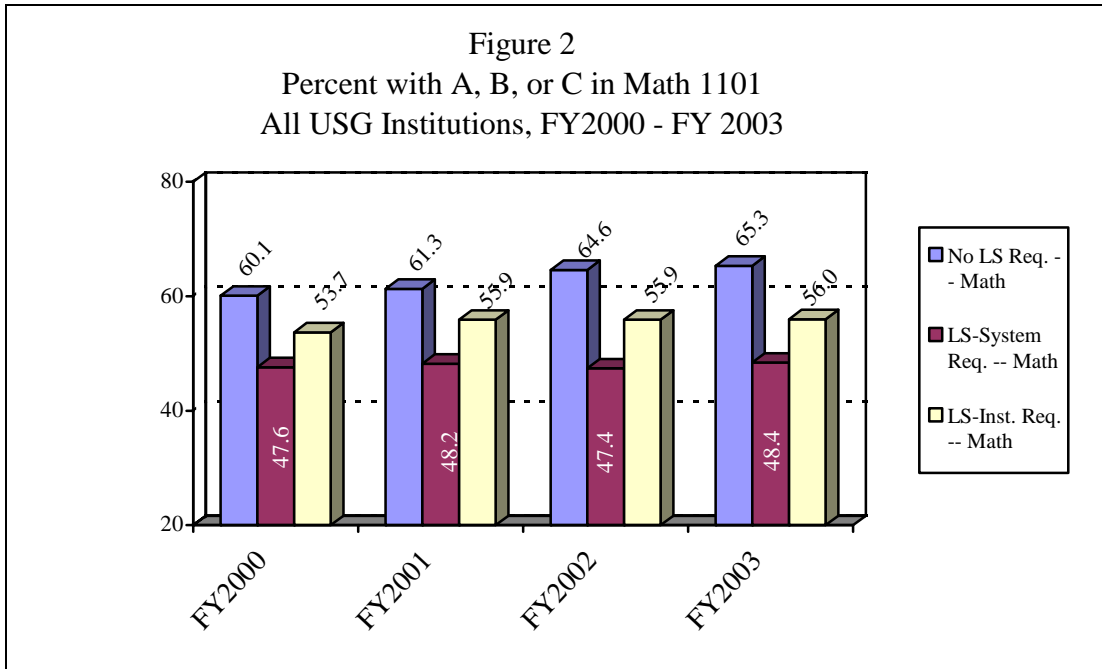


Math 1101: Introduction to Mathematical Modeling

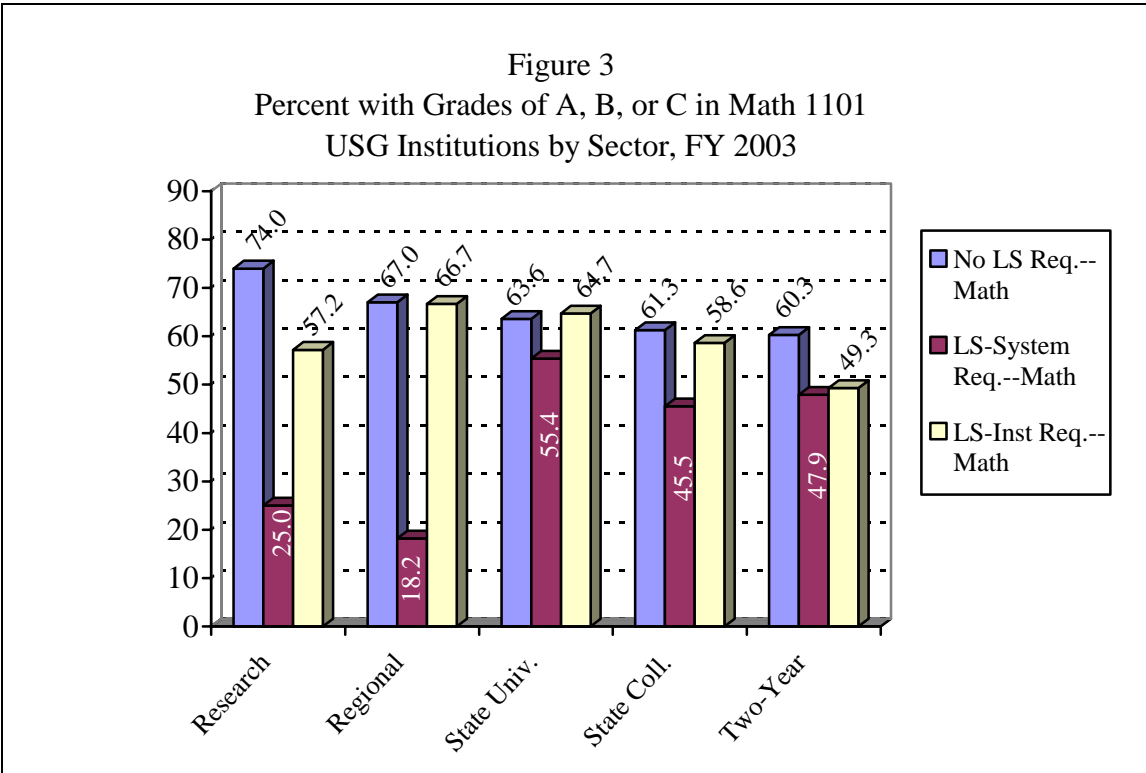
During a time of unprecedented enrollment growth from FY2000 to FY2003, fewer students took Math 1101. Of the non-transfer students taking an Area A mathematics course (Math 1101 or Math 1111) in FY2003, only 30.3 percent took Math 1101 compared with 35.5 percent in FY2000. This decrease could reflect curricular changes at several institutions (dropping Math 1101 as an option), changes in advising, or other factors not accounted for here (see Figure 2). System-wide, students taking Math 1101 in FY2003 appeared to have been better prepared than students taking Math 1111, with 13.2 percent of the Math 1101 students having a System LS mathematics requirement compared with 18.4 percent of the Math 1111 students. This difference, however, may be a function of the differences in institutions offering the courses. Some institutions offer both courses, while others offer either Math 1101 or Math 1111.

The requirements for exemption and exit from LS mathematics increased in fall 2002. Despite this increase, a greater percentage of students taking Math 1101 in 2003 had no LS requirements than in FY2000 (80.6 percent versus 75.4 percent). Students with System LS requirements were slightly more likely to succeed in Math 1101 in FY2003 than in FY2000 (48.4 percent versus 47.6 percent), but the success rate for students with no LS requirements increased from 60.1 percent to 65.3 percent.

The increased success rate of those with no LS math requirements increased the gap between students with System LS requirements in math and those with no LS math requirements to 16.9 percentage points. This gap was smallest at state universities and two-year colleges and largest at research and regional universities (see Figure 3).



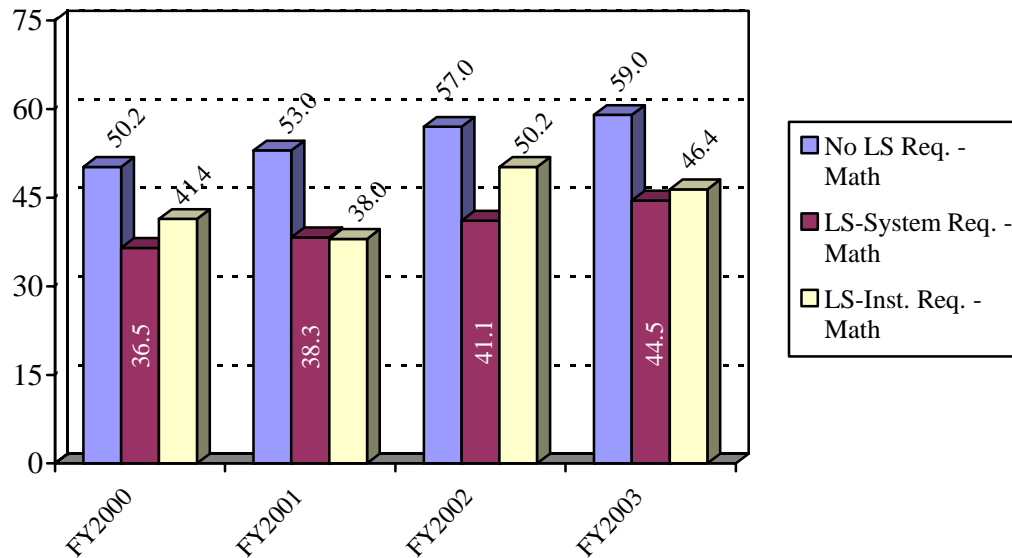
Notes: The data are restricted to students with no transfer history who had grades (students with incompletes are excluded from the base). In FY2000, 11,111 students took the course; in FY2001, 10,047; in FY2002, 9,879; in FY2003, 10,774. For students taking LS with System requirements, n = 1,697 in FY2000; 1,647 in FY2001; 1,353 in FY2002; and 1,419 in FY2003. For students taking LS with institutional requirements, n = 1,039 in FY2000; 920 in FY2001; 807 in FY2002, and 671 in FY2003.



Math 1111: College Algebra

The success rate of non-transfer students taking Math 1111 improved substantially from FY2000 to FY2003. In FY2003, 59.0 percent of non-transfer students with no LS math requirement made an "A," "B," or "C," compared to 50.2 percent in FY2000. The success rate of students with System LS math requirements increased from 36.5 percent in FY2000 to 44.5 percent in FY2003. The number of students taking Math 1111 increased from 20,159 to 24,785 (see Figure 4).

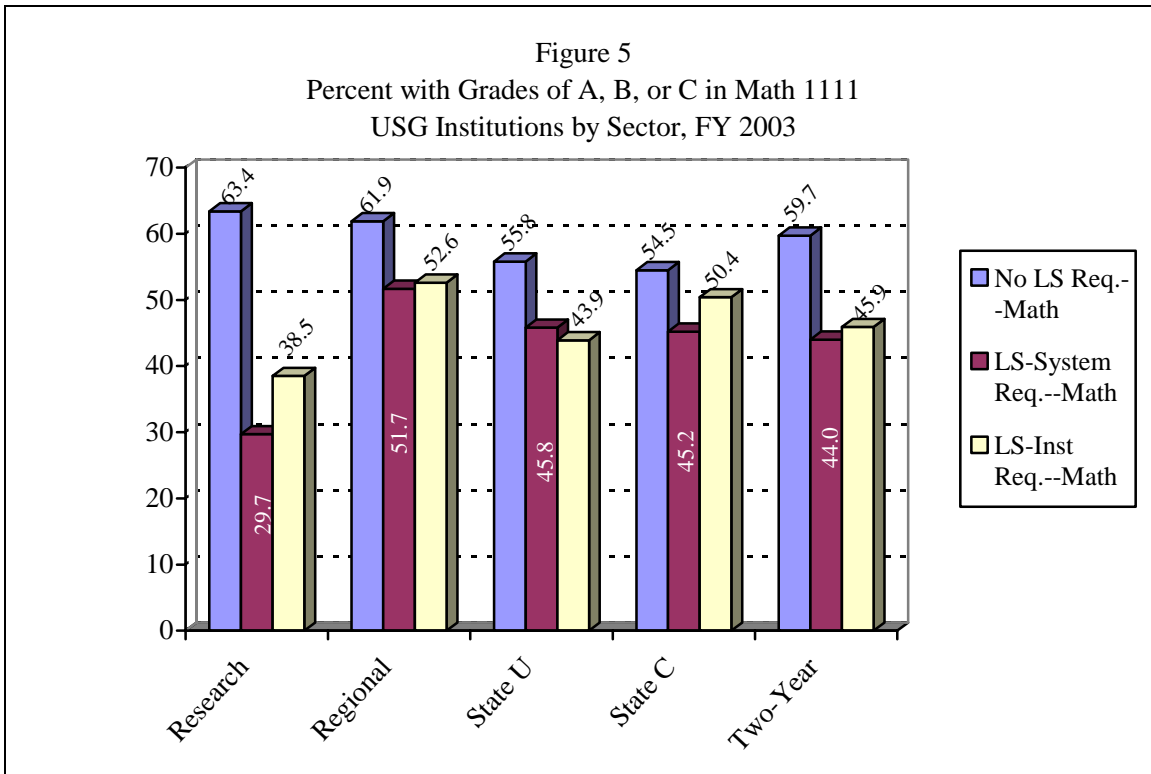
Figure 4
 Percent with Grades of A, B, or C in Math 1111
 All USG Institutions, FY2000 - FY2003



Notes: The data are restricted to students with no transfer history who had grades (students with incompletes are excluded from the base). In FY2000, 20,159 students took the course; in FY2001, 21,158; in FY2002, 23,535; in FY2003, 24,785. For students taking LS with System requirements, n = 2,942 in FY2000; 3,089 in FY2001; 3,793 in FY2002, and 4,563 in FY2003. For students taking LS with institutional requirements, n = 1,421 in FY2000; 1,410 in FY2001; 1,492 in FY2002, and 1,440 in FY 2003.

There is insufficient information to know why the success rates have increased. We hope that the improved preparation of students in high school, by adding a fourth math course, is a major factor, but the college curriculum could also have changed. In addition, the recent increase may be in part a result of the increased requirements for exemption and exit of LS implemented in fall 2002. The percentage of students with no LS math requirement decreased from 78.4 percent to 75.8 percent, but the overall success rate for Math 1111 students increased from 47.6 percent to 55.3 percent from FY2000 to FY2003.

The gap between the success rate of students with no LS requirement and students with System LS requirements was 14.5 percent in FY2003, slightly larger than the 13.7 percent gap in FY2002. For Math 1111, the gap for two-year colleges was not substantially smaller than for the other sectors, with the exception of the research university sector (see Figure 5).



Interpreting Gaps

For each Core Curriculum course examined, students with LS requirements were less likely to receive passing grades than students with no LS requirements. The lower passing rates for LS students are expected given that these students entered college with less preparation and were identified as not having the skills necessary for success. That many of the LS students were able to pass Core Curriculum courses despite their lack of preparation can be a sign of the effectiveness of LS, although it is likely that some of these students would have succeeded without LS. A method is needed to compare the performance of LS students with the performance that would be expected for these students if they did not participate in LS. A study that, although based on FY2000 data, may be useful in interpreting the gap between the performance of students with LS requirements and those with no LS requirements is provided at www.usg.edu/sra/students/ls/ls-feedback/. The study, *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Learning Support Placement*, provides evidence that students placed in LS are at a high risk of failure and that their performance after exiting LS is higher than would have been predicted if they had not participated in LS.

In evaluating the effectiveness of LS programs, each institution must determine how narrow the gap in performance should be between those students with LS requirements and those with no LS requirements for LS to have effectively served its purpose. In addition, institutions with low success rates in Core Curriculum courses for those students without LS requirements might consider strengthening institutional LS placement and exit requirements to ensure that students are getting the support they need.