Using Student Success Research to Inform Curriculum

Research Project 2010-2017

TRENT UNIVERSITY

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Outline

1. Trent-ESL Program & Curriculum
2. The Research
● Objectives
● Findings
   ○ Quantitative Research
   ○ Qualitative Research
      ● Course Syllabi
      ● Student and Professor Feedback
3. How student success research informs curriculum
4. ESL Student Success Video

Our Program

Established in 1999 to prepare international students for academic success at Trent.

Core English (levels 1-3)

- Students gain proficiency in speaking, pronunciation, vocabulary, reading, writing & grammar
- Instruction centered around general themes (ie food, weather, travel) to build essential language basics.Themes gradually become pre-academic in nature (ie popular science, urban studies, literature, arts, culture, environment)
- Use of textbooks, technology, campus resources, real experience

Foundations for University

- Final preparation for academic success. Themes centered around academic disciplines at Trent
- Research and documentation skills, writing across academic disciplines, critical thinking and analysis, polishing of English skills
- Students are able to begin taking credit courses

Our Curriculum

Two 12-week terms and two 9-week terms per calendar year.

Core English: Levels 1-3 (and sometimes "Prep")

                           -24 hours per week

Foundations for University: FFUI

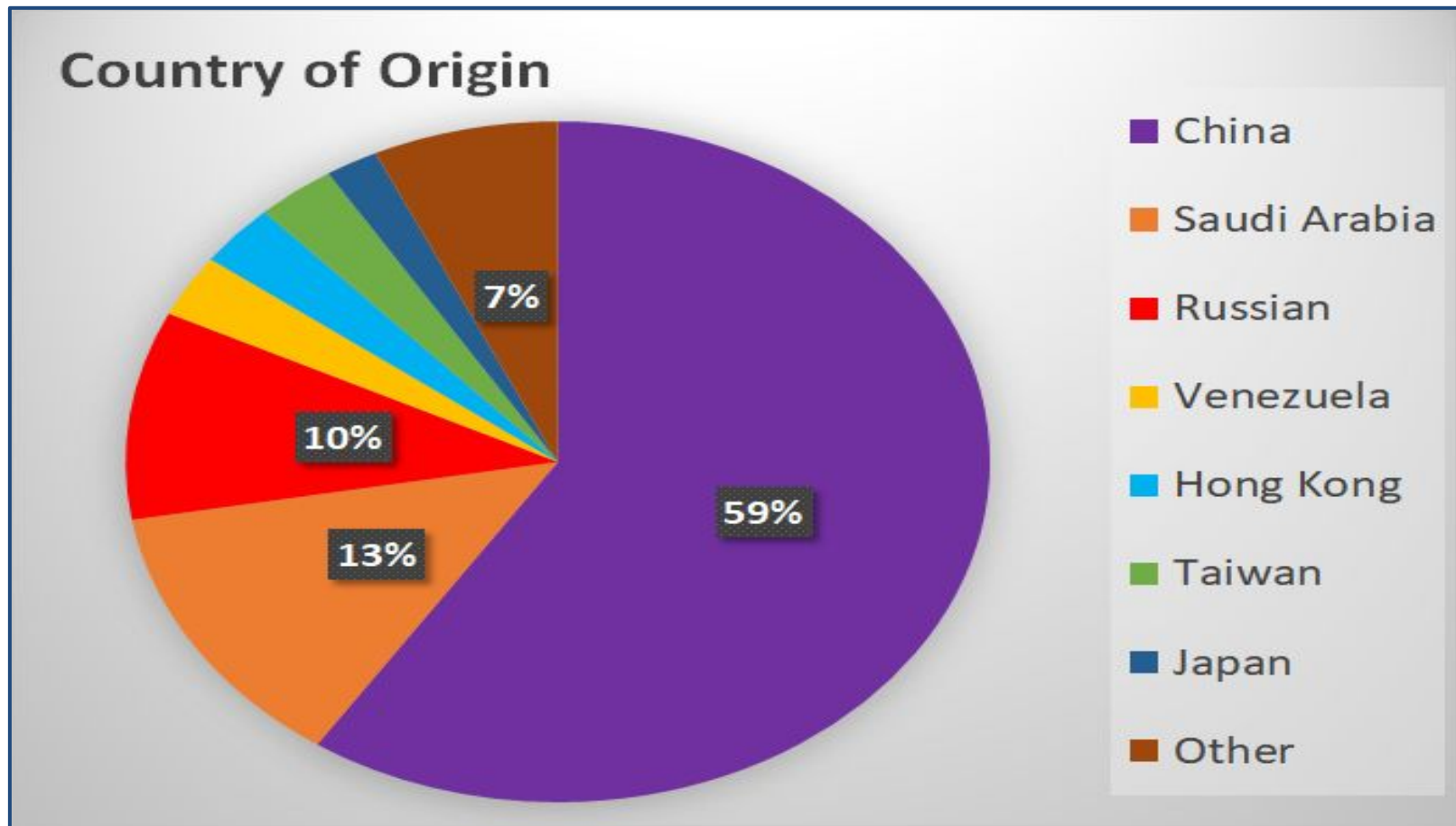   -24 hours per week (+ possible credit course)

                           FFUII

                           -18 hours per week (+ possible credit course)
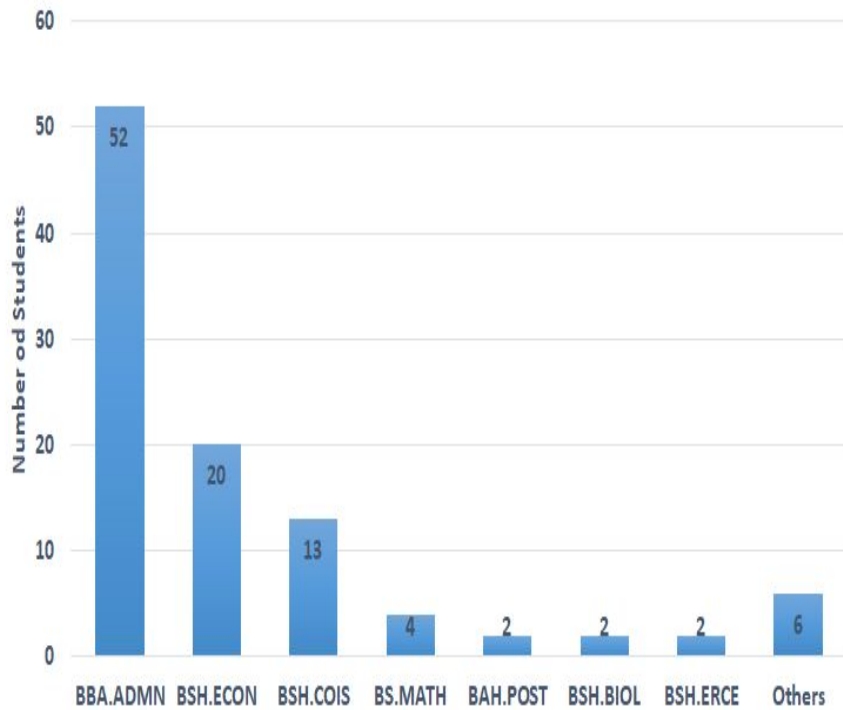
Objectives of the Research

- To track the success of ESL grads who graduated with a degree 2010-present and to compare them to international students who did not complete Trent-ESL (direct admits).
- To track the success of ESL grads currently in degree studies.
- To compare grades in ESL with grades in degree studies.
- To examine the most popular 1st year courses taken by ESL grads.
- To raise awareness of our program and obtain feedback from students and professors.
- To inform curriculum.
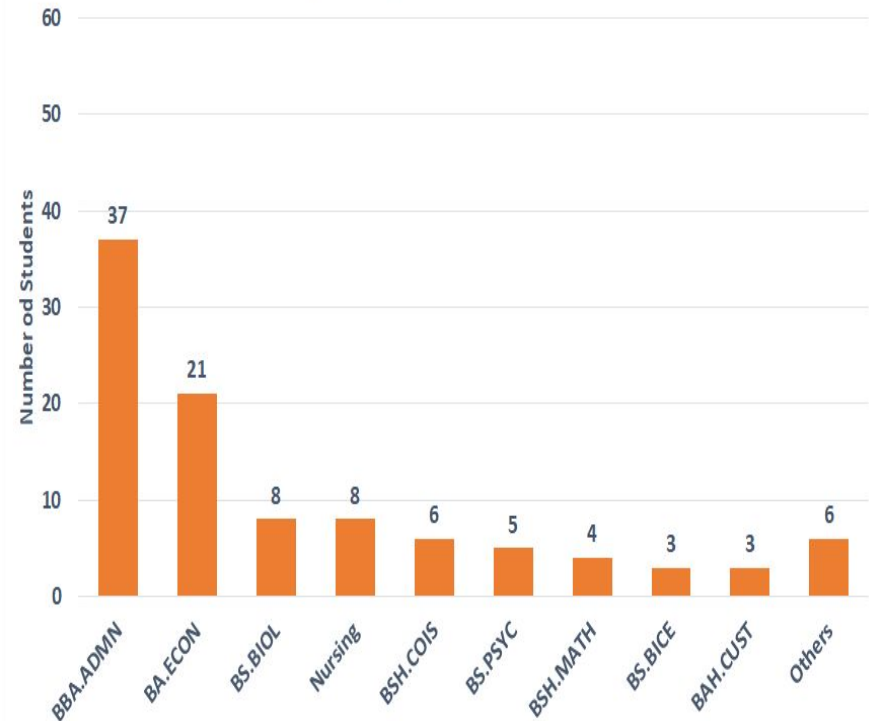
The Sample (ESL/Direct Admits)

Country of Origin

- China — 59%
- Saudi Arabia — 13%
- Russian — 10%
- Venezuela
- Hong Kong
- Taiwan
- Japan
- Other — 7%

Most Popular Degree ESL Students/Direct Admits

Most Popular Courses (ESL/Direct Admits)

Top-10 level-1000 courses taken by ESL/ Direct Admits

Top- 10 first year courses taken by ESL Grads

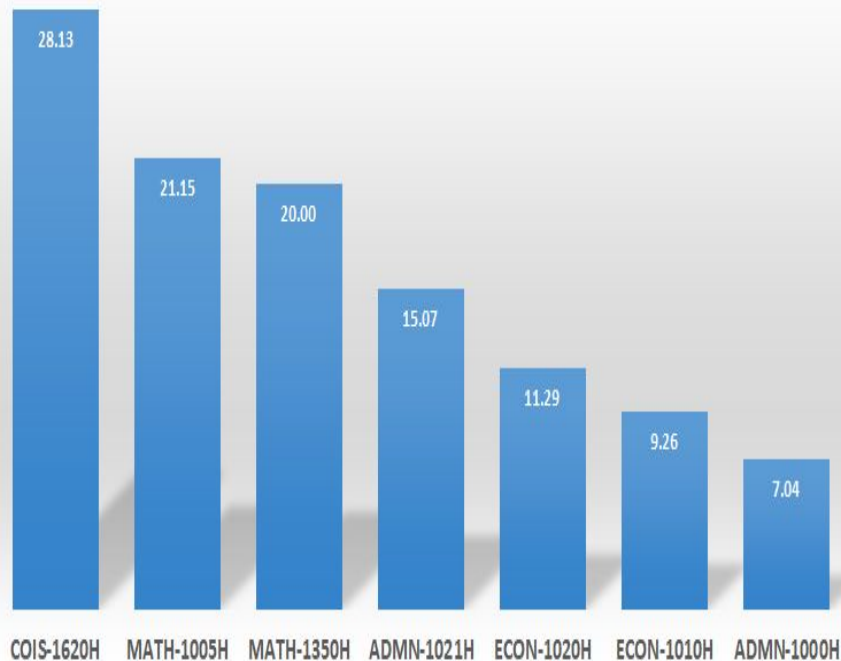| Course Title	Course Name
ECON-1010H	Introductory Microeconomics
ECON-1020H	Introductory Macroeconomics
ADMN-1021H	Financial Accounting I
COIS-1010H	Digital World
ADMN-1000H	Contempt. Issues Management
MATH-1005H	Applied Calculus
MATH-1550H	Introduction to Probability
COIS-1620H	Intro Information Systems
MATH-1350H	Linear Algebra I Matrix Alg
PSYC-1020H	Intro to Psychology I

Top- 10 first year courses taken by Direct Admits

Course Title	Course Name
ECON-1010H	Introductory Microeconomics
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COIS-1010H	Digital World
ADMN-1021H	Financial Accounting I
MATH-1005H	Applied Calculus
PSYC-1020H	Intro to Psychology I
PSYC-1030H	Intro to Psychology II
COIS-1620H	Intro Information Systems
MATH-1550H	Introduction to Probability

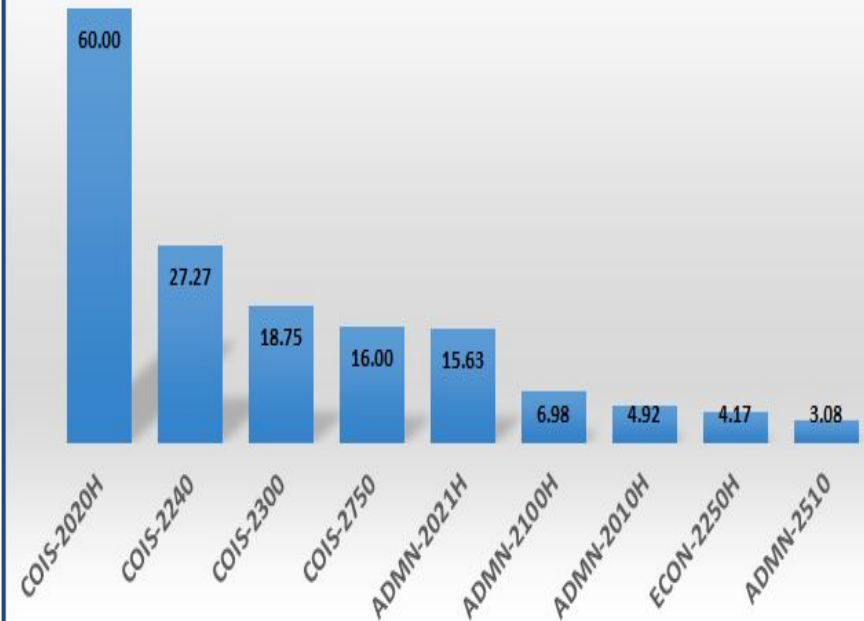# Repeats per Course Level-1000 & 2000

Top-10 level-1000 & 2000 courses taken by ESL.

First Year Courses

Second Year Courses

% of Students Who Repeated Per Course Level-1000

Course	%
COIS-1620H	28.13
MATH-1005H	21.15
MATH-1350H	20.00
ADMN-1021H	15.07
ECON-1020H	11.29
ECON-1010H	9.26
ADMN-1000H	7.04

% of Students Who Repeated Per Course Level-2000

Course	%
COIS-2020H	60.00
COIS-2240	27.27
COIS-2300	18.75
COIS-2750	16.00
ADMN-2021H	15.63
ADMN-2100H	6.98
ADMN-2010H	4.92
ECON-2250H	4.17
ADMN-2510	3.08

Average course load per academic year and summer sessions
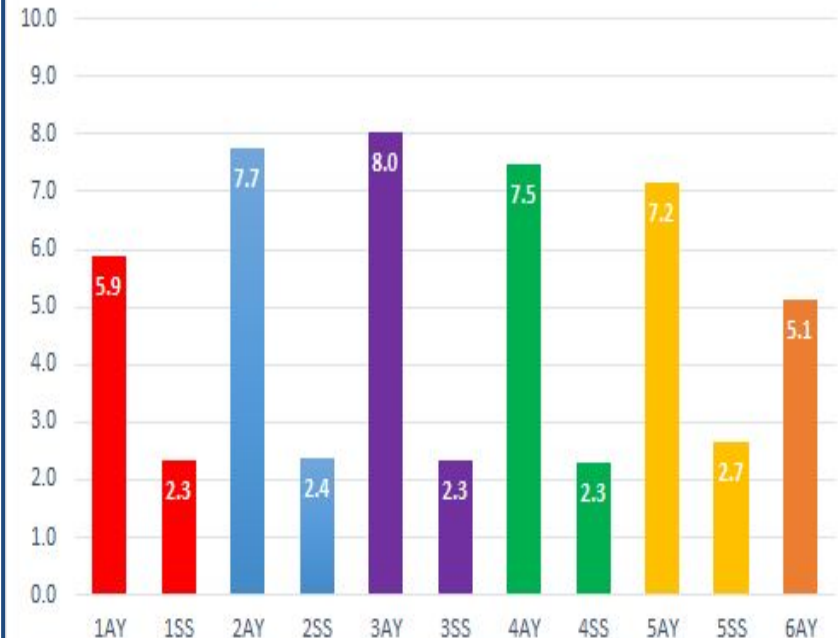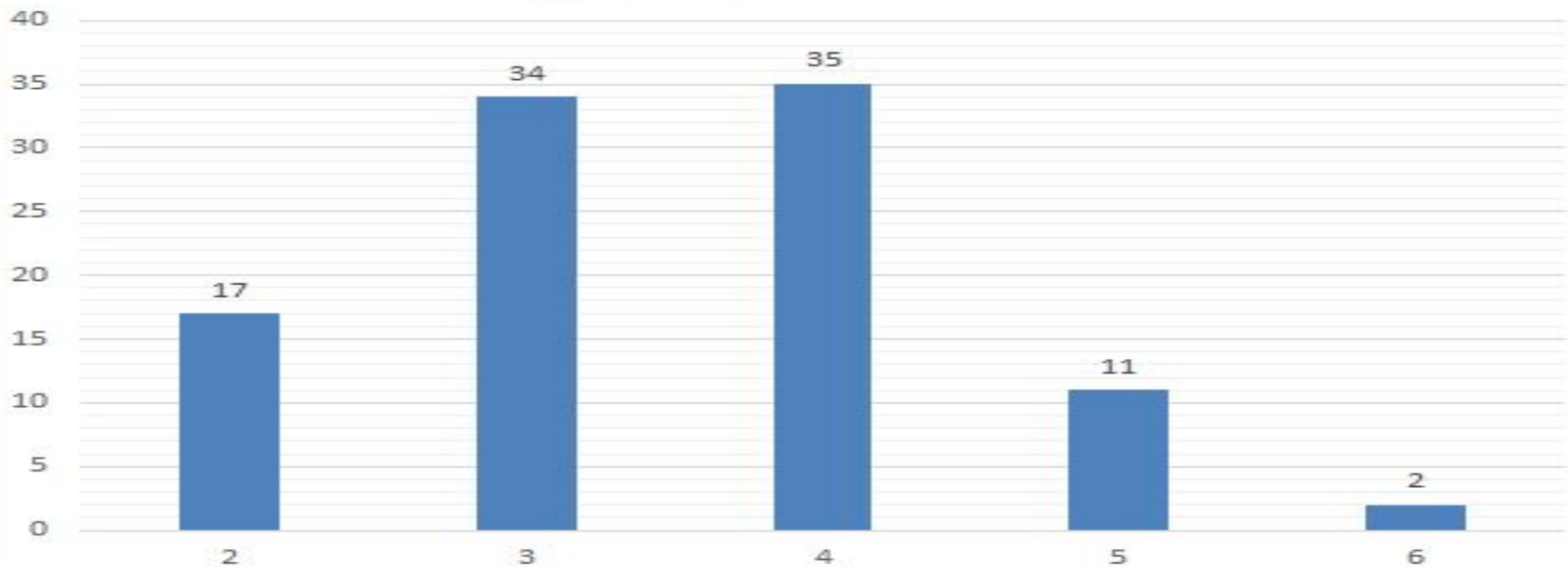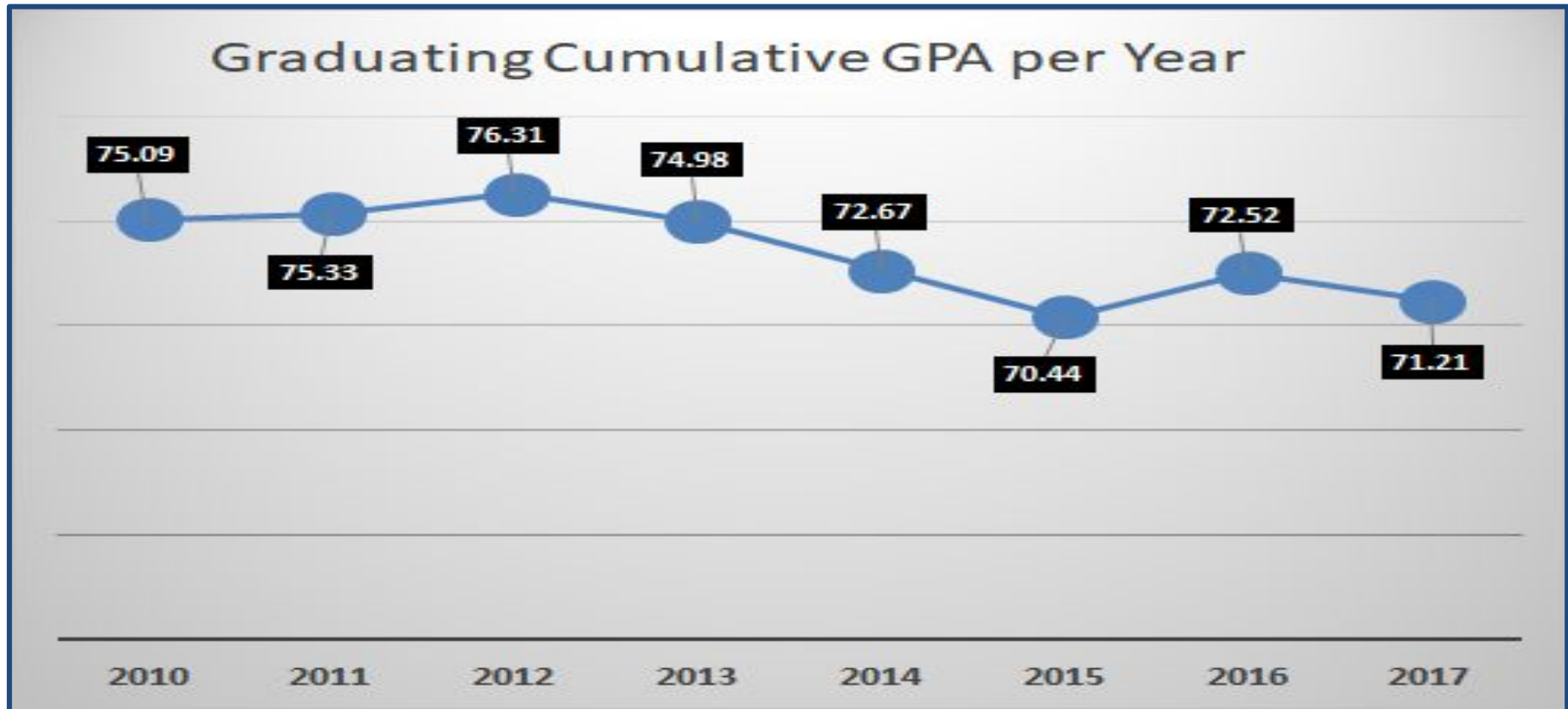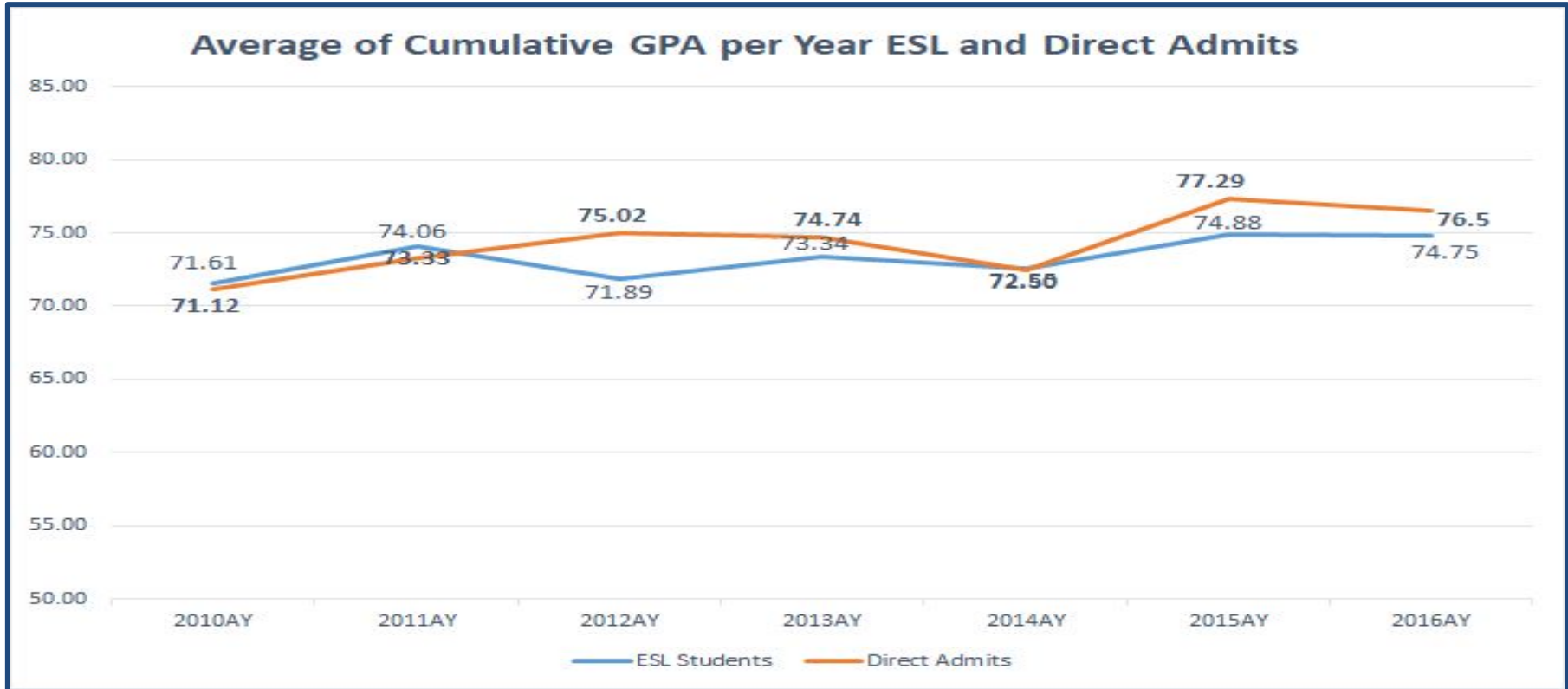
Years Taken to Complete Degree (ESL Students)
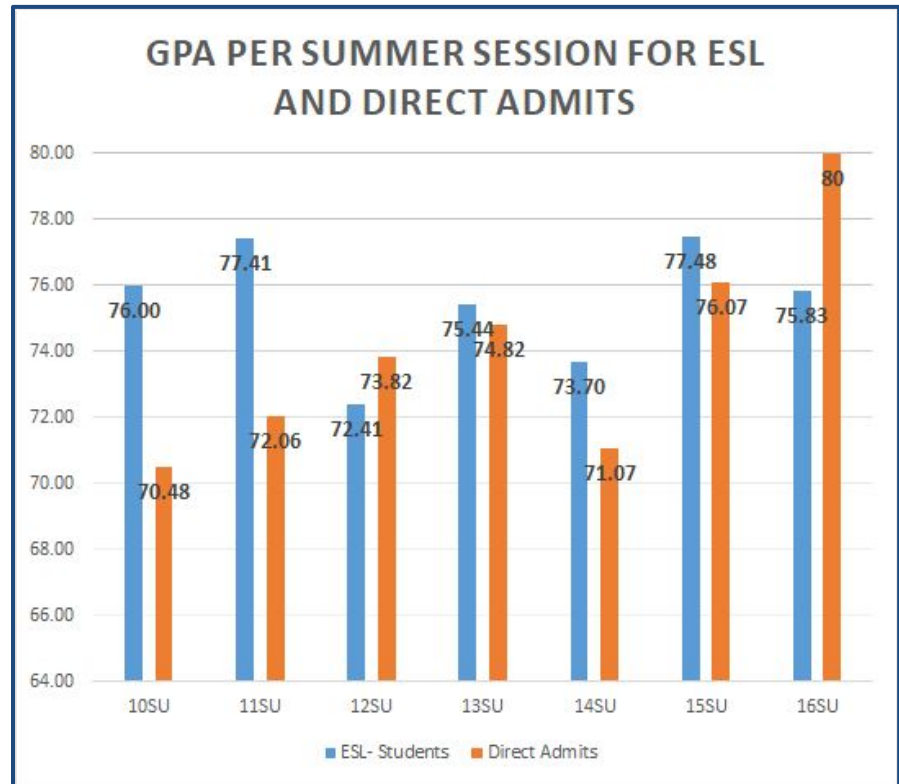

Number of Years Taken to Complete Degree ESL Student

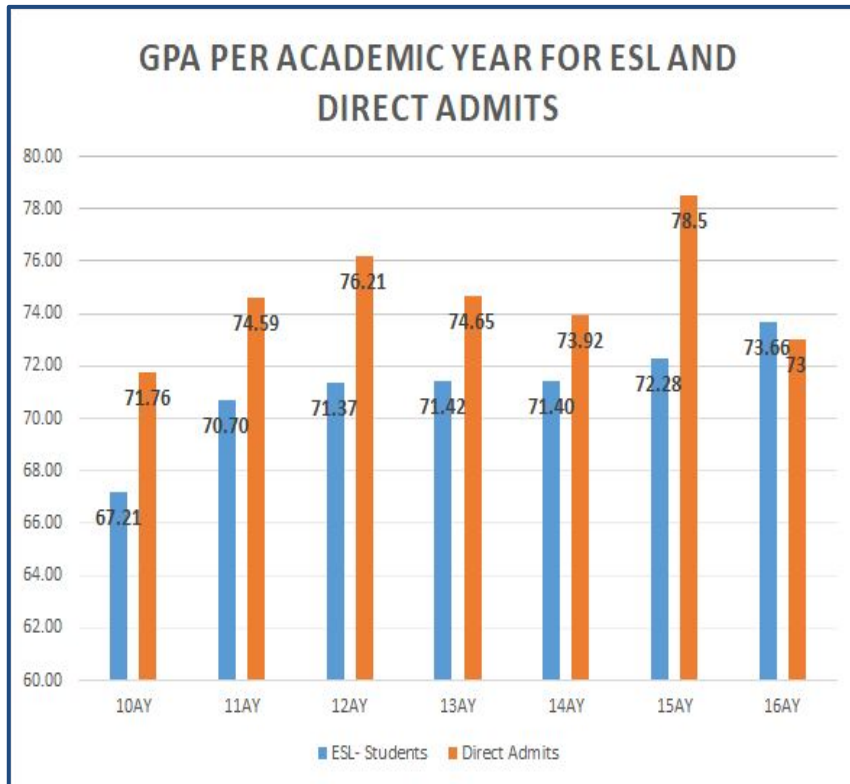# Graduating cumulative GPA per year-all ESL grads (294)

Average per year- ESL and Direct-Admits (101 sample already graduated)

Average of Cumulative GPA per Year ESL and Direct Admits

Average per academic year and summer session - ESL and Direct Admits (101 sample already graduated)

Average in ESL vs Average in 1st year
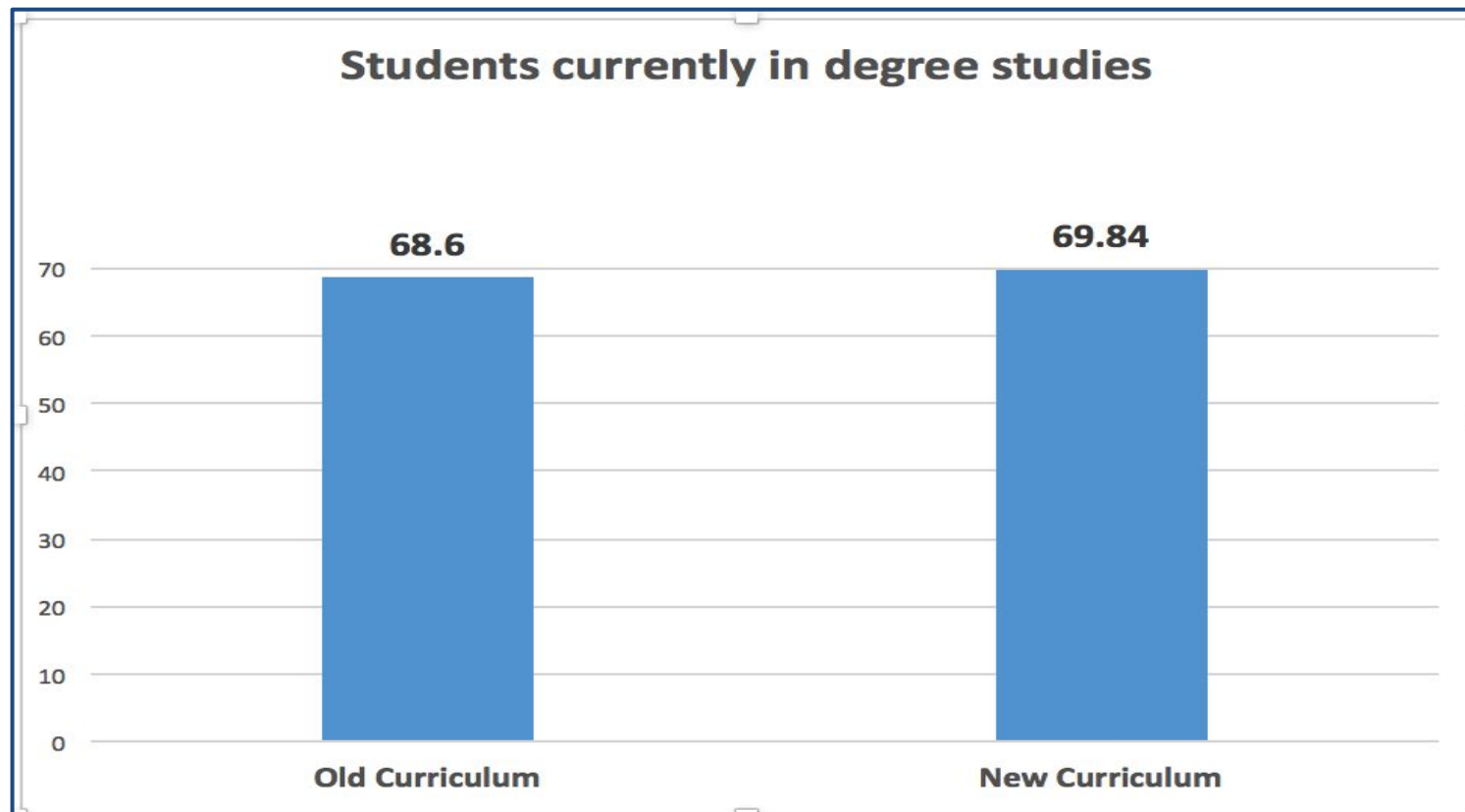

MARKS IN ESL VS MARKS IN DEGREE STIDIES

■ ESL Aveage ■ Degree Average

Year	ESL Average	Degree Average
2012	84	76.8
2013	79.8	74.4
2014	81.9	73.8
2015	81.1	71.4
2016	80.7	73.2
2017	81.6	72.3

Average GPA: Students currently in degree studies

Students currently in degree studies

68.6 — Old Curriculum

69.84 — New Curriculum

Summary of Top-10 Syllabi

Highlights of Top-10 Syllabi

Reading: Textbook, e-text, APA Publication Manual, online labs, academic integrity module, Student Portal--lecture notes, syllabus, course materials, discussions

Writing: online labs, journals, summary, annotated references, lab reports, essays, Student Portal discussions

Listening/Speaking: lectures, lecture webcasts, tutorials, seminars

Exams: applied Q, conceptual Q, multiple choice, short answer, problems, essay, definitions

Student Feedback: How did Trent-ESL help you transition into degree studies?

- *"With writing, speed of reading, referencing, citation, avoiding plagiarism, UT (University Transition) preparation"*
- *"The last level of ESL is pretty much the same as 1st yr intro course"*
- *"Created the platform and exercised the fundamentals of undergraduate degree which resulted in less negative experience"*
- *"Academic skills training--got familiar with multiple skills needed for academic survival ie how to read, how to participate in seminars. Eventually had concept how academic courses look and was able to pass them."*
- *"Everything I was taught in my ESL class was directly applicable in the undergraduate course"*

Highlights of meetings with professors

What is the greatest challenge for ESL/International students in your course?

- *"Volume of reading, volume of new terminology, reading MC questions"*
- *"Coming from a culture of memorization rather than comprehension, analysis, extension of ideas"*
- *"Writing the essay--writing, research, analysis, writing conventions. All students are writing less these days due to all the online stuff. It will be the end of us all!"*
- *"Seminar participation"*
- *"Speed of lectures, understanding lectures, note-taking"*
- *"Amount of writing"*

How can Trent-ESL better prepare students for your course?

- Help educate instructional community (instructors, TAs) about how to better facilitate learning for these students.
- Practice MC questions.
- Encourage study groups.

What can students do to succeed in your course?

- Attend all lectures to learn terms used in MC questions.
- Look at sample online assignments and sample exams.
- Seek help
- Get to know classmates-connect with former ESL students who took the course successfully.

Are ESL students comfortable approaching you with questions

- *"Students don't come to office hours"* (exception is math)

- *"Very few students ask questions, perhaps they are embarrassed? Shy? Don't want to reveal they need help?"*

- *"We are both humans. The prof is building confidence in students. The prof won't tell you what the exam questions are but gives tips/advice. The more you come, the more you get confidence. The more you distance yourself from profs the more you will struggle."*

- *"You're not going to hurt my feelings if you say you need help, in fact we like it"*

- *"Students are encouraged to go to tutorials to bring questions and get clarity."*

How are students managing course-work, exams, deadlines

- *"Highly variable. Some very successful, some scrape by, some disappear, some displace into summer courses where they get higher grades"*

- *"Students must not skim through readings (read vertically) rather, read carefully (horizontally) which takes more time for ESL students."*

- *"No different than the others. Time management is an issue for everyone."*

How is attendance/participation at lectures & seminars

- *"Attendance at lectures is terrible overall--well under 50%"* (except math).

- *"Overall, students want to get by with 65% and don't care about learning."*

- *"Only 5% watch webcasts. Therefore many are not attending NOR watching."*

- *"Webcasts not posted to encourage attendance at lectures"*

- *"We are looking into an application for clickers that will reward asking questions and take attendance."*

- *"Not participating in lectures is a psychological barrier not a language barrier"*

- *"Only 4-5% of students ask questions. You are appreciated when asking a question even if English is not your first language"*

- *"Participation in seminars is encouraged by skilled seminar leaders who work to get all students involved"*

How is written language evaluated?

- Business--marks are allocated in 1/3s as follows:
  - ⅓ research quality, sources, information, understanding of sources.
  - ⅓ quality of communication (writing, editing, organization).
  - ⅓ quality of analysis, insight, perceptiveness, value added, critical analysis and thinking.

- In math/computers--point form is ok but meaning must be clear

- In tech courses no marks deducted for grammar

- In COIS-1620 students are advised to have their writing proofread

- In astronomy and economics, writing increases in upper year courses.

Comments on plagiarism and cheating...

- *"Plagiarism happens because of lack of skill & experience with writing. Students have to do LOTS of writing practice to get a good sense of it. They are aided and abetted by online culture to take short cuts. International students candidly say they get papers 'edited' which often means re-written. In smaller courses it is easy to get a sense of what students are capable of and to catch plagiarism.*

- *"Ultimately plagiarism & cheating is a way to avoid learning which is sad."*

- *"Among international students there is a lack of understanding of plagiarism"*

- *"We worry about websites that sell papers"*

- *"Students do well on online work but write jibberish on exams. We devalue assignment weight and increase exam weight to avoid this"*

- *"Online courses have in-person exam to avoid this"*

- *"Not always a problem. You always get a few bad apples."*

Other comments

- *"We love international students. We want to take everyone. We don't want to deprive students of taking economics" --Zafar Kayani*

- *"1st year intro course averages are always low. In 1st year students are still adjusting."*

- *"We want to help, not discourage"*

- *"I want to make a professor's top 10 list of recommendations for students". --Ray Dart*

- *"We don't webcast lectures (COIS). Quality is not the same as an interactive lecture. If it's an in-class course you should come to class"--Richard Hurley*

- *"ESL Students treat me with the utmost respect--almost too much! They're afraid to speak to me."*

How Student Success Research Informs Curriculum

- Increased emphasis on MC questions
- Instruction on short-answer questions
- Increased variety of rhetorical modes
  - Science and business reports
  - Annotated bibliography
  - Critical review
  - Reflection papers
- Updated UT course to reflect recent findings
  - academic integrity, MC, seeking help, fostering resiliency, approaching profs etc

ESL Student Success Stories-Video

Thank you!

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