



# Research Brief

## Persistence and Academic Success



Department of Planning, Research, and Effectiveness  
 (http://www.accd.edu/spc)

**Achieving the Dream (AtD) Initiative**

**July 2008**

*"Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count" is a multi-year initiative funded by the Lumina Foundation for Education that addresses the challenge of providing low income students and students of color with opportunities for academic success. The AtD student outcome indicators are the following: (1) Successful completion of developmental (remedial) courses and progression to college-level courses; (2) Enrollment and successful completion of college-level "gatekeeper" courses; (3) Productive grades (C or higher) in all courses; (4) Semester to semester persistence; (5) Graduation; and (6) Transfer (a PAC-specific goal). All colleges of the Alamo Community College District participate in this initiative to cultivate and promote a culture of evidence, accountability, equity, and excellence in support of the student outcomes. Feedback? Questions? Contact Mecca Salahuddin, msalahuddin1@mail.accd.edu, (210) 531-4897.*

### Introduction

Tutoring at SPC is offered free of charge to most students. Previous data has shown that male students of color, especially African-American male students, did not use tutoring. Through focus groups students indicated their lack of comfort in attending tutoring in a centralized location. Fall 2007 tutoring was offered in various locations across campus (student life, cafeteria, gymnasium, etc.). The focus of this research brief is to analyze the impact of ethnicity and Pell grant status on persistence and GPA for students visiting the tutoring lab.

### Methodology

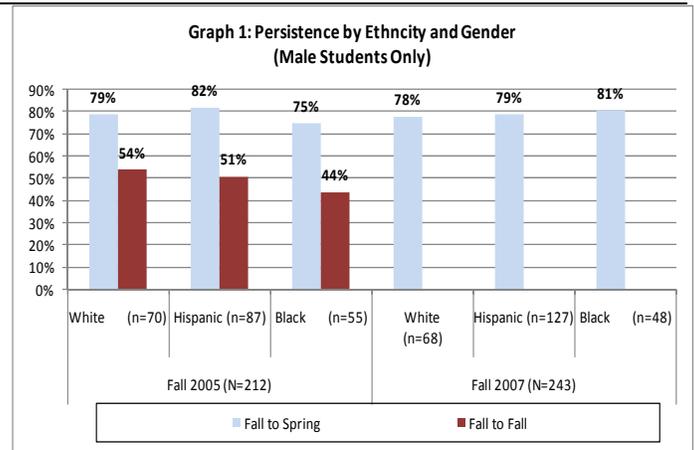
Student visits to the tutoring lab is tracked using the SIS+ module, On Track. Data are collected on student demographics for Fall 2007. Expected outcomes include an increase in persistence and average GPA and an overall increase in the use of tutoring. Tutoring lab visits is defined as students visiting the tutoring lab two or more times.

### Results

#### 1) Persistence by Ethnicity for Visits to the Tutoring Lab

Persistence is defined as the proportion of Fall semester students who re-enroll in the same institution the following Spring semester (Fall-to-Spring) or the following Fall (Fall-to-Fall).

The data in Graph I indicates differences in Fall-to-Spring and Fall-to-Fall Persistence. Black male students at SPC persist from semester to semester at a rate of 81% (Fall 2007 Cohort) up 6% from the Fall 2005 Cohort. White males persist at rates slightly less than the Fall 2005 Cohort (78%; 79% respectively) and Hispanic students persist at a lower rate (82%, 2005 cohort and 79%, 2007 cohort).



Overall, Fall 2007 cohort students persisted to the next semester at a slightly higher rate than the Fall 2005 student cohort regardless of race, See Table 1.

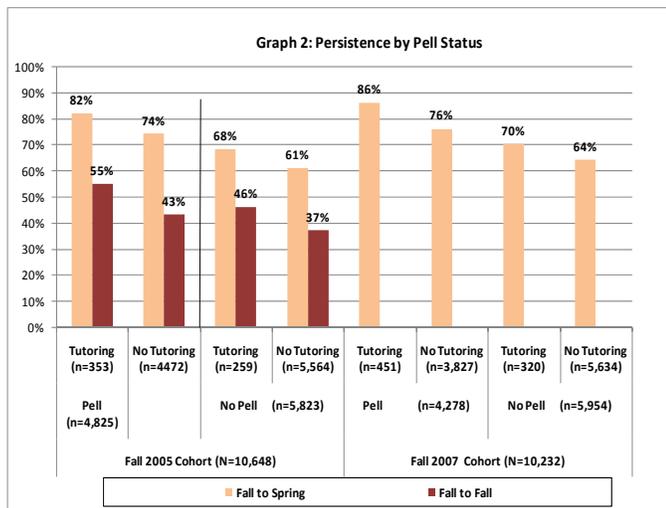
**Table 1: Persistence**

	Fall to Spring	Fall to Fall
<b>Fall 2005</b>		
White(n=190)	79%	53%
Hispanic(n=256)	78%	53%
Black (n=148)	70%	45%
<b>Total (N=594)</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>51%</b>
<b>Fall 2007</b>		
White(n= 222)	79%	----
Hispanic(n=353)	77%	----
Black(n=177)	81%	----
<b>Total (N=752)</b>	<b>79%</b>	

#### 2) Persistence by Pell Status for Visits to the Tutoring Lab

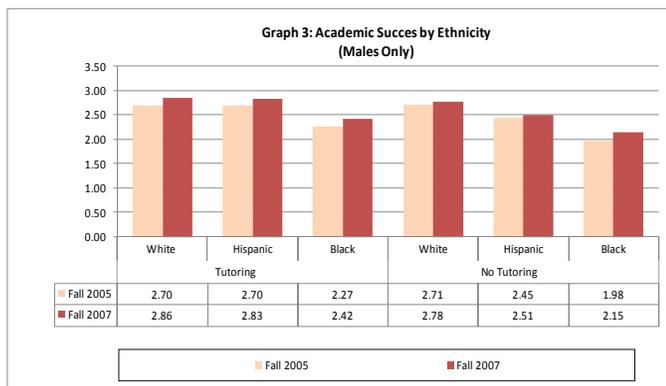
Graph 2 illustrates the Fall-to-Spring and Fall-to-Fall persistence by Pell grant status for both 2005 and 2007 cohorts for students visiting the tutoring lab. Pell-grant

recipients attending tutoring have a higher Fall-to-Spring and Fall-to-Fall persistence rate (82% and 86%) when compared to students not visiting the tutoring lab. Data also shows that students visiting the tutoring lab who received Pell-grants persist from Fall-to-Spring at higher rates than the cohort students who did not receive Pell grants for both the Fall 2005 (No Pell: 68%, Pell: 82%) and Fall 2007 (No Pell: 70% Pell: 86%) cohorts. These data suggest that Pell-grant status is a possible predictor of student persistence as it relates to visits to the tutoring lab.



### 3) Academic Success (GPA) by Ethnicity for visits to the Tutoring Lab

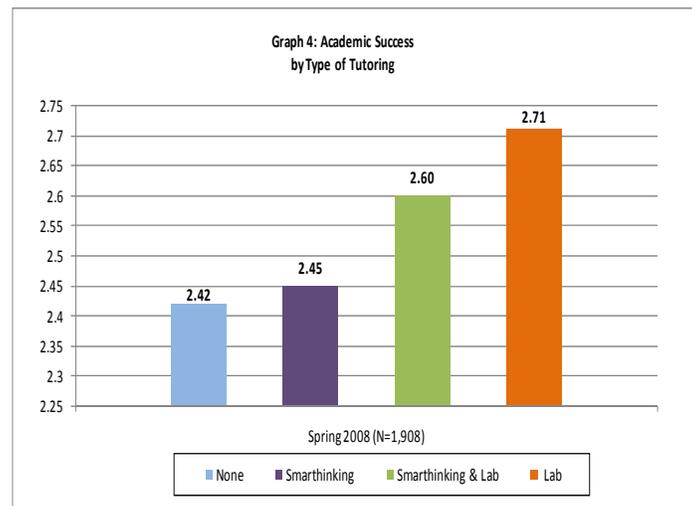
Graph 3 shows the academic success of students based on their ethnicity, gender, and visits to the tutoring lab. Results showed an increase in the average GPA from Fall 2005 to Fall 2007 for White males (2.70 and 2.86) Hispanic males (2.70 and 2.83) and Black males (2.27 and 2.42).



### 4) Academic Success (GPA) by visits to Tutoring Lab and SmartThinking

In Fall 2007, SmartThinking, an on-line tutoring service was purchased to increase the number of students availing themselves to tutoring. Data were not available for the Fall semester; however, Graph 4

shows data for Spring 2008 of students who used tutoring services either through visits to the lab, accessing SmartThinking, or both. Data indicated an increase in average GPA for students accessing both types of tutoring services (2.60) or visits to the tutoring lab only (2.71). Additionally, there was a 14% increase in the number of students using tutoring services compared to the Fall 2005 cohort (6% and 20%, respectively).



### Summary

Both ethnicity and Pell status had an impact on persistence for students using the college's tutoring services. African-American students, more important, males showed the biggest impact from the Fall 2005 to the Fall 2007 cohort. Pell grant students who participated in tutoring are more likely to persist from Fall to Spring than those Pell students not using tutoring. Additionally, tutoring had a positive impact on the academic success of students. Data showed increases for White, Hispanic, and Black students. The tutoring data are promising as more students are availing themselves of the free service either through lab attendance or through accessing SmartThinking.

**Stay tuned for further information on Achieve the Dream outcome indicators in future research briefs.**