Title: English Composition I: An Effective Predictor of Persistence and Retention at a
         Community College

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Attrition is a major issue facing nearly all institutions of higher learning. The loss of students affects colleges and universities on many levels and can have a negative impact on students. Community colleges often experience greater attrition than other types of institutions and have an increased need to curb the outflow of students. This study sought to identify an accurate, effective predictor of persistence that could have a major impact on the ability of the entire higher education community to reduce attrition and increase retention.

Using archival transcript data from 500 students at a community college, this research determined that performance in English Composition I does correlate to student persistence to a point two semesters post completion of the course. English Composition I was selected because it is required in most, if not all, degree and diploma programs across a wide segment of post-secondary institutions. The results show that students who earn a grade of C or below are less likely to persist than those who earn a grade of A or B in the course. This dissertation research also explored combinations of other variables along with English Composition I performance including the semester in which the course was taken, the gender and age of the student, and whether the student completed developmental coursework. Chi-square analysis found that these additional variables did not have significant correlation with persistence.

This study offers a practical contribution to the study of persistence and an uncomplicated means to identify students at risk for attrition. Performance in English

Composition I provides a simple measurement for attrition risk which can be used by institutions that lack personnel or other resources necessary to implement a more complex model. The results of this research have numerous beneficial implications for both institutions and students. The ability to categorize students who perform at a level of C or below in this course as being at-risk for attrition creates the opportunity to undertake interventions to improve the likelihood that these students will persist. Increased retention can financially benefit institutions and students by increasing their chances for educational and future success.