

**English as a Second Language/Linguistics
ESL Students in Limited Enrollment Programs**

Fall 2007

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Introduction

As part of its program review process, the English as a Second Language/Linguistics department of Harper College was interested in investigating how ESL students perform in the Limited Enrollment programs at Harper. The Limited Enrollment programs have a limited number of seats available and the seats are filled on the basis of admissions criteria. The Limited Enrollment programs are:¹

- Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA),
- Cardiac Technology (CTE),
- Dental Hygiene (DHY),
- Diagnostic Medical Sonography (DMS),
- Emergency Medical Technician (EMS),
- Nursing (NUR),
- Phlebotomy (PHB), and
- Radiologic Technology (RAD).

The admissions requirements for five of these programs (CTE, DHY, DMS, NUR, and RAD) are uniform and include a consideration of grade point average and the score on a standardized admission test, the National League for Nursing test (NLN). The admissions requirements for the other programs are varied and generally do not include a standardized admission test.

Harper's Regent system was used to identify students who had enrolled in at least one ESL course during fiscal years 2002 through 2004. A database from Admissions Processing was used to identify students in Limited Enrollment programs from FY2005 through FY2007.² A total of 4,191 students were enrolled in at least one ESL course between FY02 and FY04.

This report is organized into an Introduction, a Results and Discussion section that presents the results in tabular form, and a Summary section that highlights key findings.

Results and Discussion

As noted above, 4,191 students took at least one ESL course between FY02 and FY04. Table 1, below, shows the number of students applying to one of the Limited Enrollment programs. A very small proportion of the ESL students (152 students, or 3.6%) applied to one of Harper's Limited Enrollment programs. Half of the applicants

¹ Five of these programs include both certificate and degree options. Two programs are certificates only (CNA and PHB). The DHY program offers only a degree (no certificates).

² The Admissions Processing database contains information regarding applicants to all Limited Enrollment programs beginning in the fall semester of FY05. Prior to FY05, systematic information on all applicants was not maintained in an electronic format.

completed the application process. Over 60 percent of those who completed the application process were accepted into a Limited Enrollment program. Compared to all Limited Enrollment applicants, ESL students were statistically less likely to complete the application process. The application completion rate was 69 percent for non-ESL and 50 percent for ESL students ($\chi^2=23.88$, $df=1$, $p<.01$). Once their applications were completed, however, the ESL students were accepted into the programs at equivalent rates (i.e., the acceptance rate was not significantly different comparing ESL students and non-ESL students).

Table 1: Students Applying to Limited Enrollment Programs

Application Status	ESL Students (N=4,191)		Non-ESL Students (N=4,870)	
	N	%	N	%
Students Applying to Limited Enrollment Programs ^a	152	3.6%	4,870	n/a
Students Completing Application Process ^{b, c}	76	50.0%	3,348	68.7%
Students Accepted into Limited Enrollment Programs ^d	46	60.5%	2,303	68.8%

^a In some cases students applied to multiple programs.

^b The application process contains several steps. Many students begin, but do not complete, an application. Percent completion is based on the number of students applying.

^c ESL students were significantly less likely to complete the application process ($\chi^2=23.88$, $df=1$, $p<.01$).

^d Percent accepted is based on the number of students completing the application process.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of ESL Students Applying to Limited Enrollment Programs

Characteristic	Applied to Limited Enrollment		Did Not Apply to Limited Enrollment	
	N	%	N	%
<i>Age Group</i>				
18 and under	0	0.0%	1	<.01%
19 to 24	20	12.5%	422	10.5%
25 and older	140	87.5%	3,608	89.5%
<i>Gender^a</i>				
Female	129	84.9%	2,473	61.3%
Male	23	15.1%	1,560	38.7%
<i>Racial/Ethnic Group^b</i>				
Asian/Pacific Islander	70	46.1%	1,427	35.3%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	0.0%	10	0.2%
Black	4	2.6%	27	0.7%
Hispanic	9	5.9%	1,162	28.8%
White	59	38.8%	1,199	29.7%
Other/Unknown	10	6.6%	214	5.3%

^a Gender was significantly different based on Limited Enrollment status ($\chi^2=34.54$, $df=1$, $p<.01$).

^b Racial/ethnic group was significantly different based on Limited Enrollment status ($\chi^2=44.61$, $df=5$, $p<.01$).

Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of ESL students applying to Limited Enrollment programs compared to other ESL students. Compared to ESL students in general, those applying to Limited Enrollment programs were more likely to be female, more likely to be either White or Asian, and less likely to be Hispanic. There were no statistically significant differences in application completion rate or acceptance rate based on any demographic characteristic.

Table 3 shows the Limited Enrollment programs for which ESL students applied and those for which they were accepted. The largest number of ESL students (57% of Limited Enrollment applicants) applied to the Nursing program; roughly equivalent numbers (13 to 16 percent) applied to CNA, DHY, PHB, and RAD. The programs with the largest numbers of ESL students accepted were CNA, PHB, and NUR.

Table 3: ESL Students' Application and Acceptance in Specific Limited Enrollment Programs

Limited Enrollment Program	Applied ^a (N=152)		Accepted ^b (N=46)	
	N	%	N	%
CNA	24	15.8%	16	34.8%
CTE	14	9.2%	5	10.9%
DHY	23	15.1%	5	10.9%
DMS	16	10.5%	3	6.5%
EMS	1	0.7%	0	0.0%
NUR	86	56.6%	7	15.2%
PHB	25	16.4%	12	26.1%
RAD	20	13.2%	2	4.3%

^a Percentages add to more than 100% because students applied to multiple programs.

^b Acceptance rates by program are based on number of ESL students accepted into all Limited Enrollment programs.

Table 4 shows ESL students' grades in their Limited Enrollment courses. The ESL students were generally quite successful in their Limited Enrollment coursework. Only three percent non-successful grades were awarded (grades of D, F, or W). Nearly half (42%) of the grades awarded to former ESL students were As, and 73 percent were grades of B or better.

Table 4: ESL Students' Grades in Limited Enrollment Courses

Grade (N=169 courses)	N	%
A	71	42.0%
B	53	31.4%
C	24	14.2%
P	16	9.5%
D	2	1.2%
F	2	1.2%
W	1	0.6%

Finally, we examined the extent to which ESL students completed their Limited Enrollment programs. There are several factors that make the computation of completion rates a complex undertaking. Just as students can apply for more than one Limited Enrollment program, in some cases students are accepted into a program but decide not to enroll. Some programs (the Nursing program is perhaps the best example) have a waiting list: students are sometimes admitted into a program later, even if they were not initially accepted. In addition, programs differ in length; it is important to select an appropriate range of start dates depending on the length of a specific program. Finally, there are many factors that can contribute to a student not completing a program, especially programs as challenging as the Limited Enrollment programs tend to be. Even students with successful grades in their completed courses (see Table 4) can be forced to stop out by a change in their life circumstances.

With those caveats in mind, Table 5 presents the numbers of ESL students graduating from Limited Enrollment programs. Table 5 shows the number of students accepted into a program,³ the number who actually started the program (gauged by taking at least one course in that prefix), and the number who had completed a degree or certificate in that program by Spring FY07. Because of the small numbers of students in many of these programs, it is important not to over-interpret these counts. For example, a single ESL student started the DMS program and this student has not graduated; it would not be advisable to interpret this as a zero percent graduation rate for this program.

Taking the Limited Enrollment programs as a whole, the ESL students had a completion (graduation) rate of 52 percent. The non-ESL students admitted to the Limited Enrollment programs⁴ had an overall completion (graduation) rate of 71 percent, with very large differences in graduation rate by program (11 to 95 percent). It is not known how much of this variation can be attributed to differences in the rates at which students have petitioned to graduate, as opposed to difficulties in completing the courses successfully.⁵ Given the small numbers of ESL students in these programs, a comparison of graduation rate by program would not be appropriate.

³ Counts will vary from those in Table 3: Table 5 shows only those students who may have been able to complete a program by Spring FY07 based on their start date.

⁴ The non-ESL students were those admitted to Limited Enrollment programs from Fall FY05 onwards who may have been able to complete their program by Spring FY07 based on their start date.

⁵ In order to receive a degree or certificate, students must submit a form petitioning to graduate. They receive their degree/certificate after the Student Records office confirms that they have met all the requirements for their degree/certificate. Prior to FY06, students were required to pay a \$25 fee to petition for graduation. As a result, many students did not petition and did not receive their degree. Beginning in FY06, that fee was waived and the number of completions has increased. It remains up to the student's initiative to petition, however.

Table 5: ESL Students Graduating from Limited Enrollment Programs

Program	Program Status		
	Accepted	Started	Graduated
CNA	14	13	10
CTE	2	2	0
DHY	1	1	1
DMS	2	1	0
EMS	0	0	0
NUR	2	2	2
PHB	6	5	1
RAD	1	1	0
Overall	28	27	14

Summary

From FY02 to FY04, a total of 4,191 students were enrolled in ESL courses. From 2002 to the present time, a very small proportion (3.6%, or 152 students) had applied to one of Harper's Limited Enrollment programs. Of those applying, half completed the application process. Of those who completed the application process, 60 percent were admitted into a Limited Enrollment program. Compared to non-ESL students, the ESL students were less likely to complete the application process. However, once applications were completed, acceptance rates were comparable.

The most common Limited Enrollment programs for former ESL students were Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Phlebotomy (PHB), and Nursing (NUR). Compared to other ESL students, those applying to Limited Enrollment programs were more likely to be female, more likely to be White, and less likely to be Hispanic.

The former ESL students tended to perform quite well in their Limited Enrollment coursework: 97 percent of the grades awarded were grades of C or better. Despite success in their courses, the overall completion (graduation) rate for ESL students in Limited Enrollment programs was just over 50 percent. It is unknown whether the low completion rate can be attributed to difficulties the students encountered (the Limited Enrollment programs are challenging, and anecdotal evidence suggests that many students are unable to complete the programs due to difficulties balancing their non-academic responsibilities), or if they simply did not submit the form required to petition for graduation.