

Assessment is Everybody's Business

The Art of Collaboration Across Campus

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Overview

- Why Collaborate?
- Various Forms of Collaboration
- Examples
- Lessons Learned
- Guidelines

Why Collaborate?

- Changing expectations about the outcomes of college
- Dramatic changes in the demography of who pursues college
- Increasing demand for accountability

Changing expectations about
the outcomes of college

Parent Expectations About College Outcomes

Sense of maturity and the ability to manage on one's own	71%
Ability to get along with people different than self	68%
Problem solving and thinking ability	63%
High technology skills	61%
Specific expertise and knowledge in a chosen career	60%
Top-notch writing and speaking ability	57%
Responsibilities of citizenship	47%

Greater Expectations Report

- Informed Learner should know about
 - The human imagination, expression, and the products of many cultures
 - The interrelations within and among global and cross-cultural communities
 - Means of modeling the natural, social, and technical worlds
 - The values and histories underlying our concepts of democracy

Greater Expectations Report

- To produce Responsible Learners education should foster:
 - Intellectual honesty
 - Responsibility for society's moral health and for social justice
 - Active participation as a citizen of a diverse democracy
 - Discernment of the ethical consequences of decisions and actions
 - Deep understanding of one's self and respect for the complex identities of others, their histories and their cultures

Schneider and Shenberg (2002)

- Acquire intellectual skills or capacities
- Understand multiple modes of inquiry
- Acquire general knowledge
- Develop societal, civic, and global knowledge
- Gain self knowledge and grounded values
- Develop a concentration and integration of learning

AAC&U –Our Student's Best Work

- Strong analytical, communication, quantitative and information skills
- Deep understand of and hands-on-experience with the inquiry practices of disciplines that explore the natural, social and cultural realms
- Intercultural knowledge and collaborative problem-solving skills
- A proactive sense of responsibility for individual civic and social choices
- Habits of mind that foster integrative thinking and the ability to transfer skills and knowledge from one setting to another.

Equity, access and the democratization of higher education

Democratization of Higher Education

- Demand for higher education is exploding
 - Nearly 3 of 4 hs graduates enroll
- Demand increasing among poor, rural, inner-city, first generation, and students of color
- Demand is high among students not well prepared for college-level work
 - Less than 40% of hs students take college track
 - Only 32% of all students leave high school qualified to attend four-year colleges.
 - More than half (53%) require remediation in college
 - Only 33% graduate in four years, only 50% in 6 years

Increasing Demands for Institutional Accountability

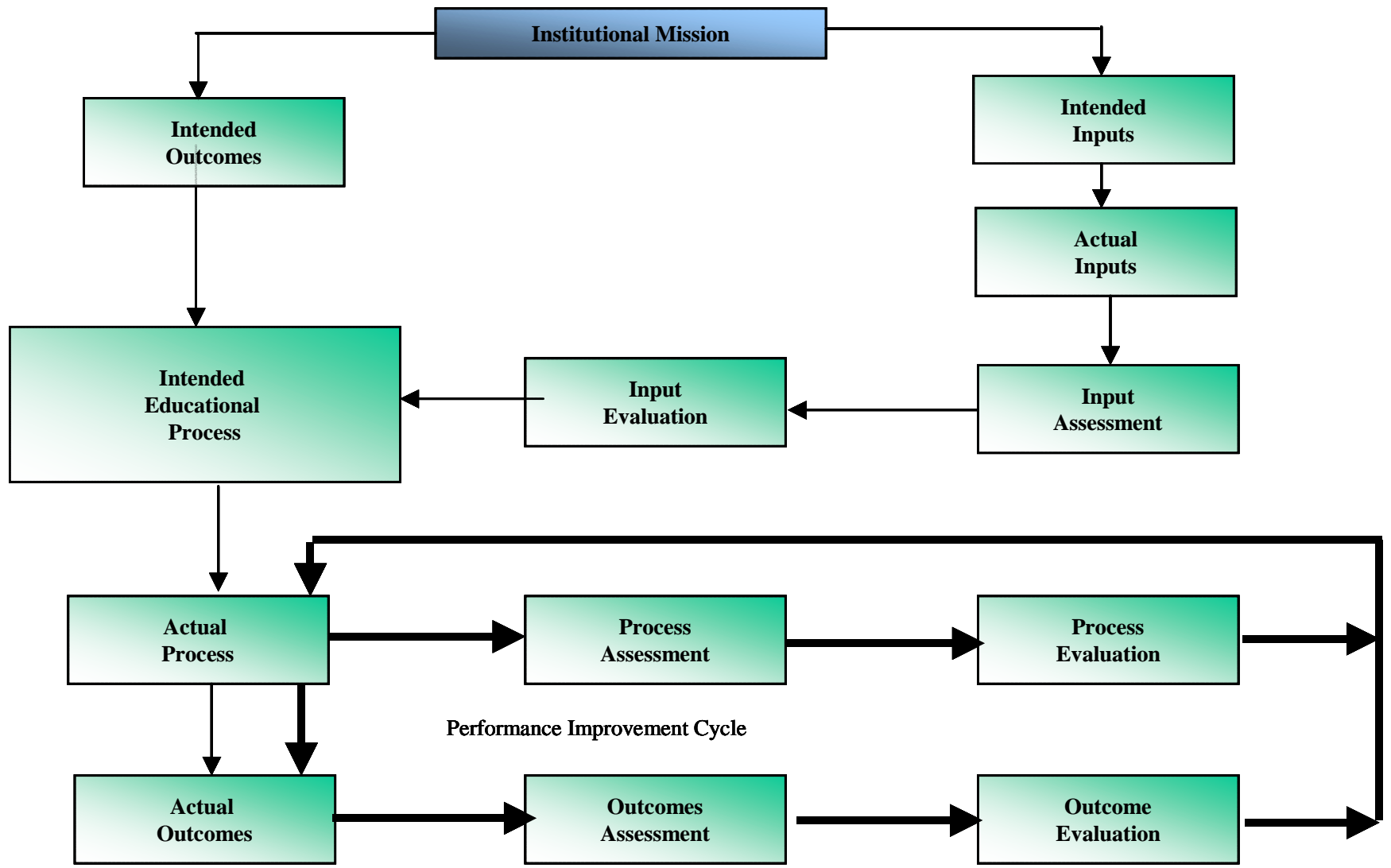
State of Texas

- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's *Closing the Gaps* efforts
- U. T. System Accountability initiative
- National Accountability
 - Miller Commission

Before We Collaborate

An Assessment Perspective

- From Mission to Intended Outcomes to Classrooms and Programs and Services
- 5 Important Assessment Questions to Ask



Gardiner, L. (1989). Planning for Assessment: Mission Statements, Goals, and Objectives.

Five Assessment Questions

Who are our students?

How do they engage our campus?

What do they learn and who do they become?

How will we know that what we teach in our programs and services made a difference?

Was the result worth the cost?

Some Practical Reasons for Collaboration

- Conceptual clarity
- Setting priorities beyond workday boundaries
- The 'Whole' is greater than the sum of the parts...or Outcomes have multiple causes!
- Using it depends on doing it

Types of Collaboration

Types of Collaboration

- Crisis induced
- Spontaneous
- Planned
- Natural Networks
- Forced

Crisis Induced

- Problem: 60% drop out rate between freshman and sophomore year in College of Engineering
- Players: Dean of the College, Director of the Counseling Center, Psychology Department, Testing Center, Registrar, Housing

Crisis Induced

- Strategy
 - Analyze the situation
 - Assess
 - Standardized tests
 - Hours and hours of interviews
 - Reflect
 - Poorly prepared
 - Lack of career knowledge
 - Socially isolated

Crisis Induced

- Response
 - Tutoring
 - Learning community with ‘live-in tutors’ in campus housing
 - Faculty feedback
- Result
 - In two years, reduced drop-out rate from 60% to 40%.

Crisis Induced

- Lessons learned
 - Desperation leads to thinking outside the box
 - Dean of Engineering called Counseling Center
 - Assessment information shaped the response
 - Solution may fall outside the control of the faculty
 - Jargon [e.g. learning communities or qualitative assessment] wasn't needed to communicate the needed response

Spontaneous Collaboration

Process Assessment

Spontaneous Collaboration

- Issue: How to link student retention program participation to student success or... 'How do you know YOUR effort makes a difference?'
- Problem: When students participate in MANY retention efforts, how to determine which effort or combination of efforts contribute to student success?

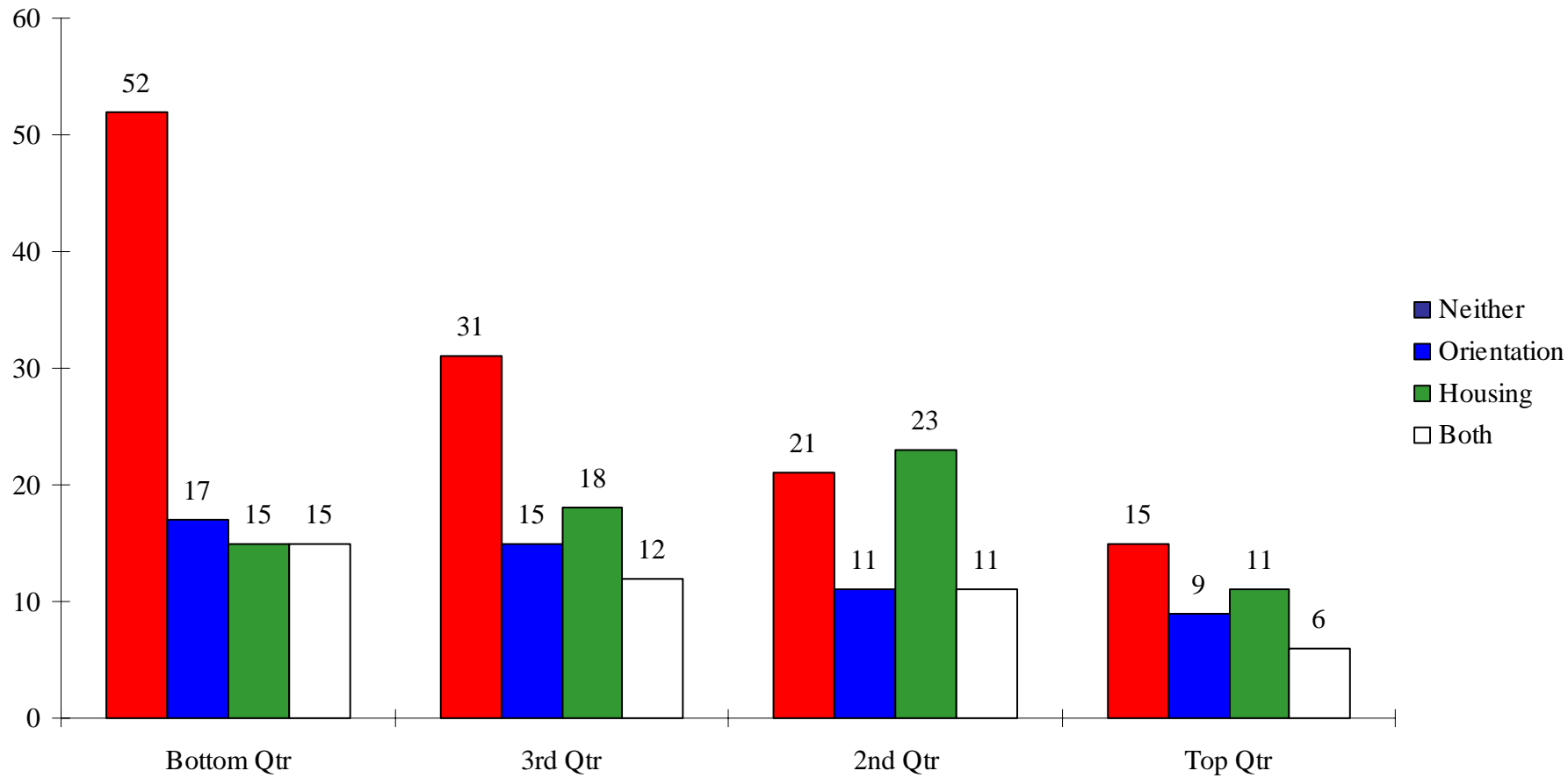
Spontaneous Collaboration

- Players: IT system analysts, Dean of Students, VP of Student Affairs, College of Engineering
- Committee designed data collection process
- Pilot-tested for one semester with Dean of Students Office

Spontaneous Collaboration

- Some interesting results
 - Used to track Supplemental Instruction
 - Used to compare multiple tutoring efforts across many academic and student affairs departments
 - Adapted to track undecided student contacts with advising center
 - Modified to track academic advising case load and link process data to outcome data

First Year Attrition Rate by SAT Category and Service Received --Entering Class of 1995



Spontaneous Collaboration

Lessons Learned

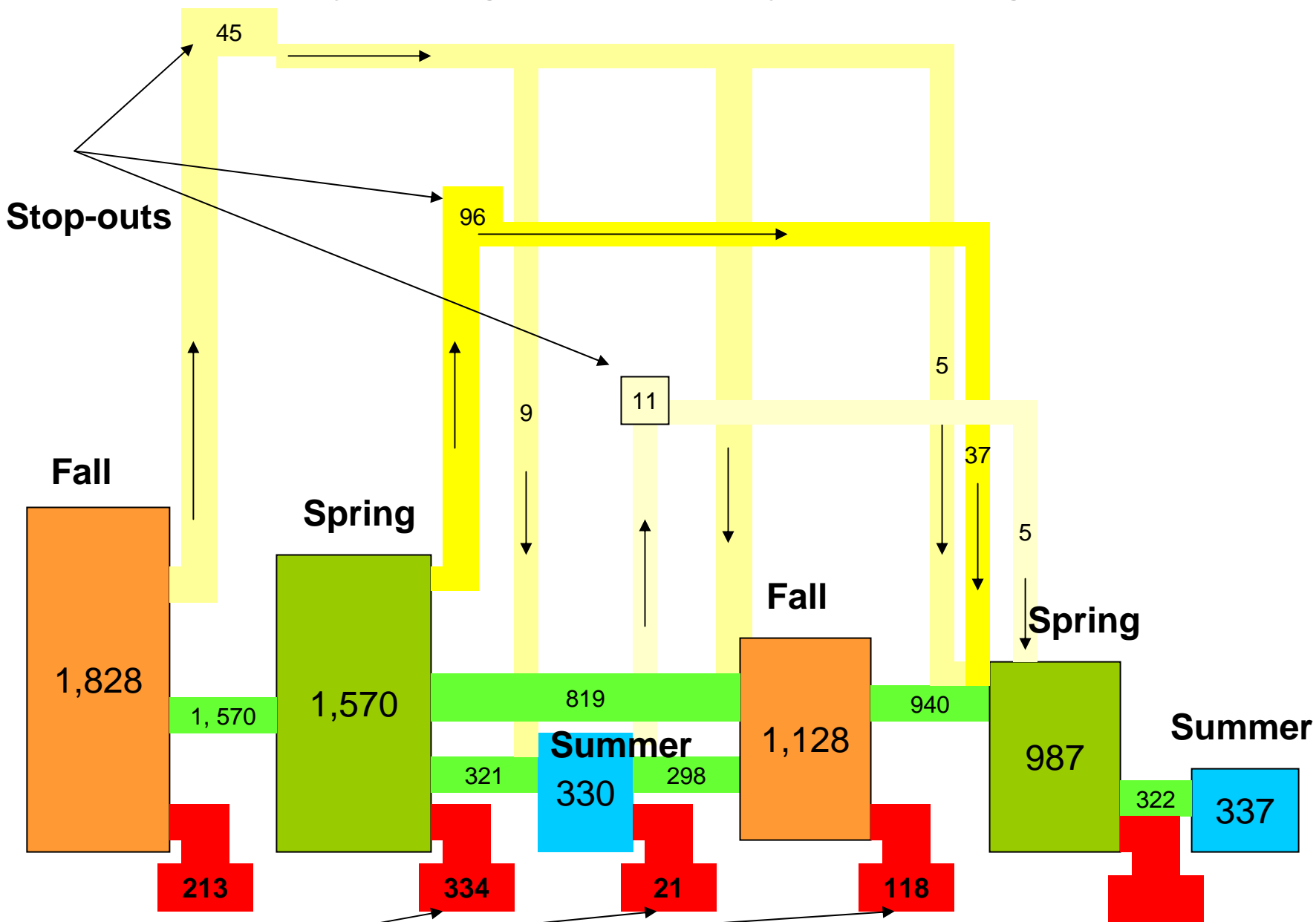
- Assessment-driven need for information brought diverse community together to design a data collection process
- Didn't cost very much to do
- High adoption and adaptation rates
 - Undeclared major advising center
 - Campus-wide advising tracking system

Spontaneous Collaboration

Example #2

- What do fluid mechanics and student retention have in common?
- Or what happens when a fluid dynamics engineering professor collaborates with a psychologist to rethink student retention?

Pathways through the first two years of college



Drop-outs

Which leads to...

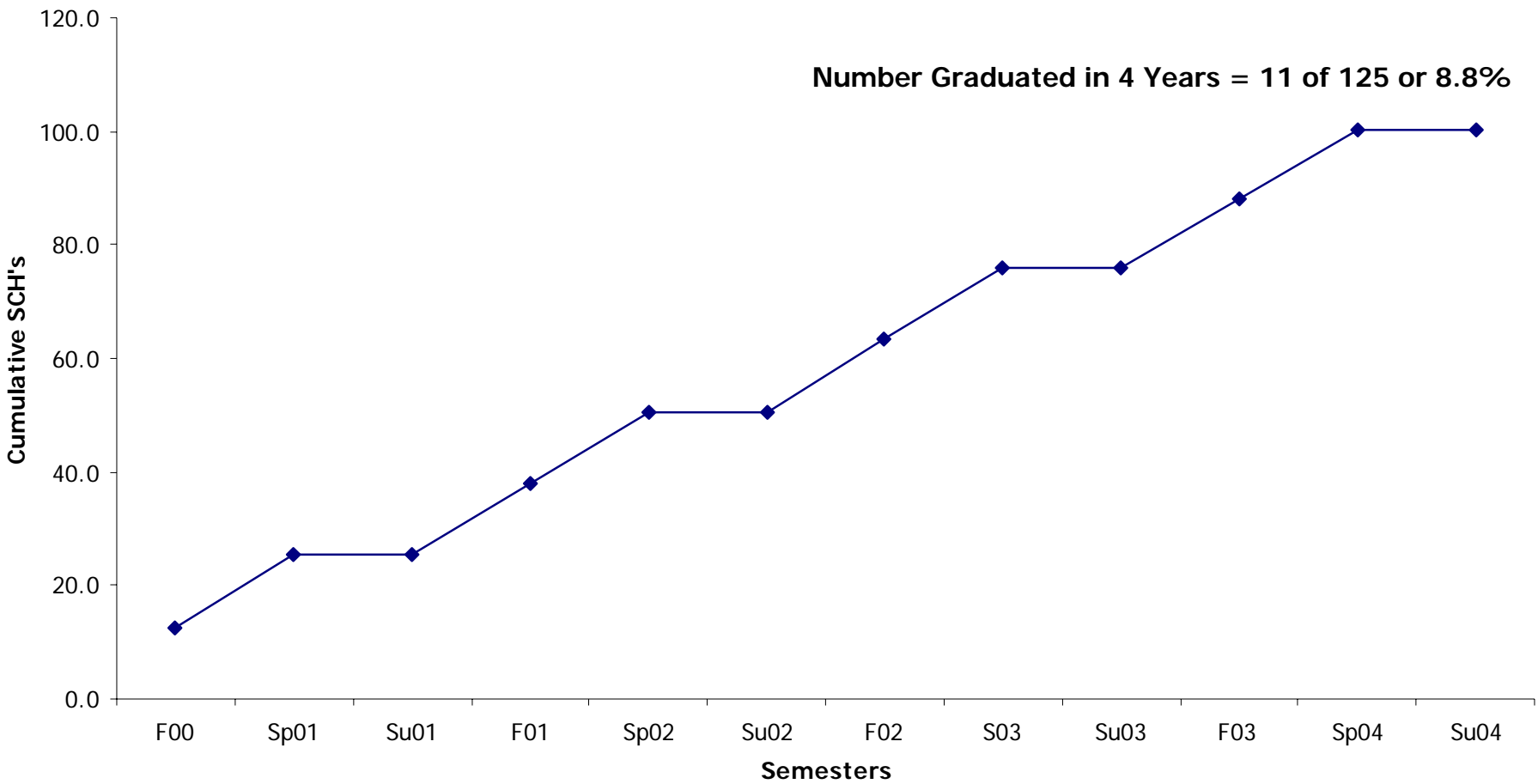
Monitoring Pathways Through College Example

	F00	S01	Su0 1	F01	S02	Su02	F02	S03	Su03	F04	S04
Enrolled?	Yes 1	Yes 1	No 0	Yes 1	No 0	No 0	Yes 1	No 0	No 0	No 0	Yes 1
Semester Credit Hours Completed	12	12	0	12	0	0	11	0	0	0	6
Cumulative SCH	12	24	24	36	36	36	47	47	47	47	53

Traditional Persisters U. T. San Antonio

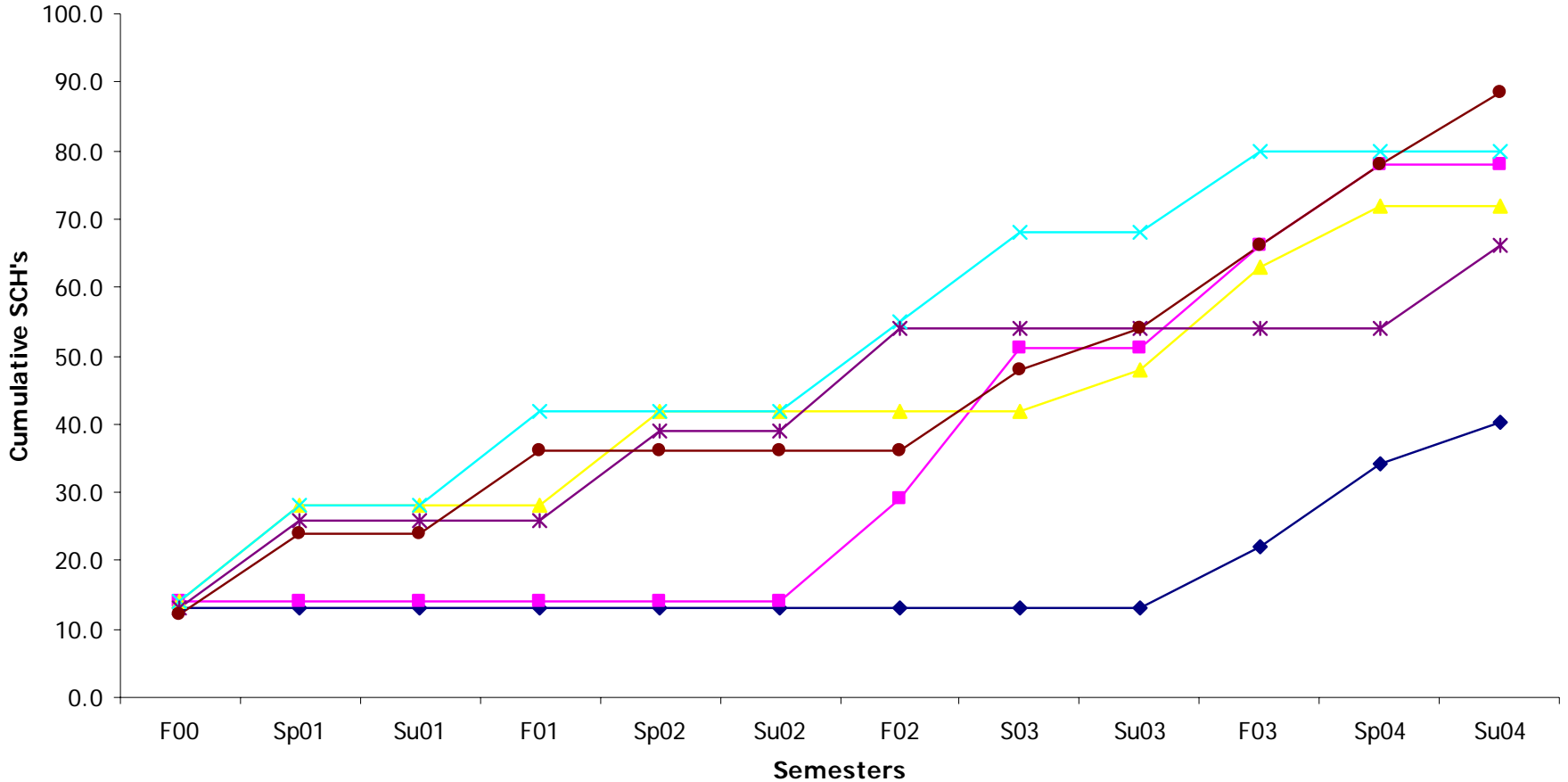
125 of 1,828 = 6.8%

Number Graduated in 4 Years = 11 of 125 or 8.8%



Unique Pathways

In four years, there were 175 different paths through this institution.



Planned Collaboration

- Issue: Understanding why students leave
 - 1982-83 Exit Interview project
- Players: Student Affairs, Executive officers, Students, Counseling Center, Dean of Students, Student Deans Council
- Assessment Goal: Interview EVERYONE who left campus to find out how they made the decision to leave

Planned Collaboration

- Modified institutional policy to require all students leaving institution to participate in an exit interview
- It only took a year !!!

Planned Collaboration

- Trained 12 upper-class students from various disciplines to conduct the interviews for 8 hours a day, five days a week for two long semesters
- Interviewed 1,400 + students...95% of everyone who left the institution
- Sent weekly 'briefing' reports throughout campus to faculty and administration on that week's 'reasons for leaving college'
- Made policy changes based on assessment evidence

Planned Collaboration

Lessons Learned

- In the business of assessment, students are important players
 - Data collection
 - Analysis and interpretation
- Some assessment information is best obtained by ‘listening carefully’
- Systematic feedback drove policy change

Planned Collaboration

Lessons Learned

- Student reasons for leaving had multiple causes
- This form of assessment was very expensive

Natural Networks

- Issue: How to improve retention and graduation rates
- Players: Just about everybody 😊, but especially a campus-wide student retention committee spanning 20 years

Natural Networks

- Listened to students identify poor teaching and ‘unreasonable’ grading practices
- Listened to faculty talk about ‘unmotivated’ students who skipped classes and didn’t do the work
- Searched institutional data base and created comprehensive transcript analysis programs
- ‘Discovered’ the *Graduation Rate Paradox*

Natural Networks

- Graduation Rate Paradox
 - Students coming to college better prepared
 - Nearly all retention programs improved student success
 - Graduate rate had not changed for nearly 30 years

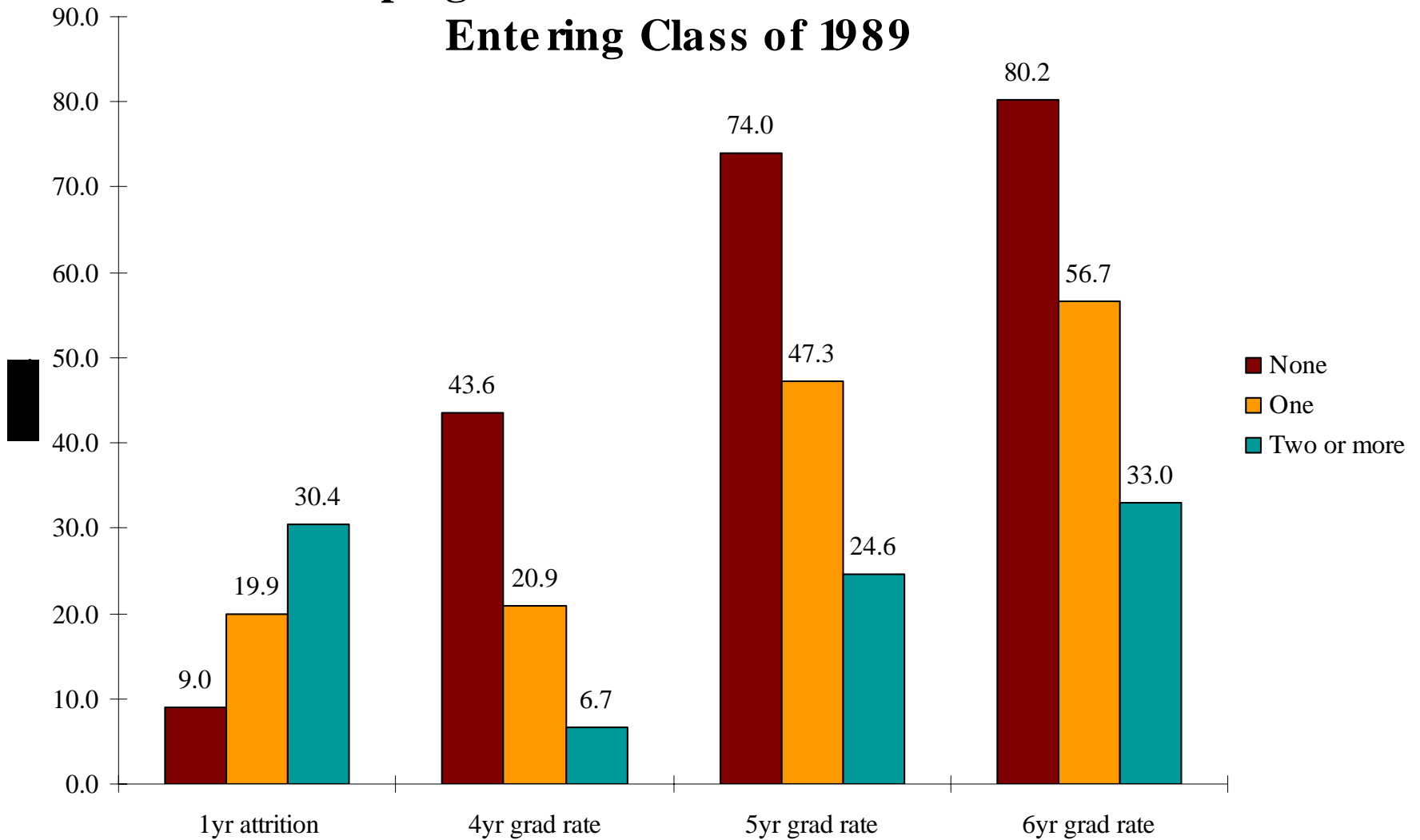
Natural Networks

- Used 'existing' organizational structures
 - Student 'sub deans' council
 - Retention & Graduation Rate Committee
 - Faculty Council
 - VP Student Affairs Deans and Directors
 - Executive Officers
- Used 'friendship' networks within and outside university community

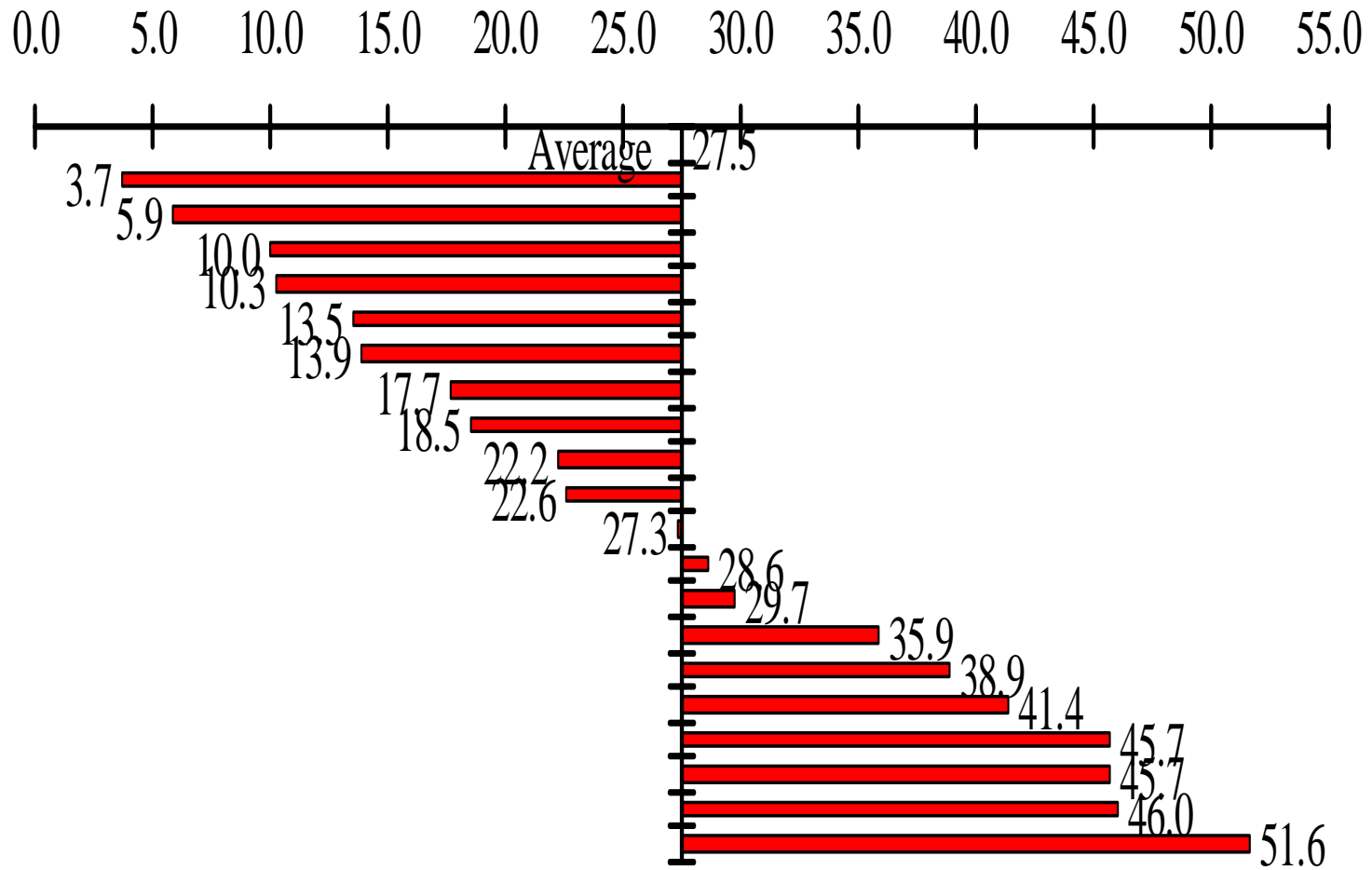
Natural Networks

- In 1981, identified a small handful of gate-keeping courses
- Sent assessment data to unsympathetic deans for approximately 15 years
- Nothing happened
- New dean hired new assistant dean
- New assistant dean suggested....
- Link course grading to outcomes –DUH!

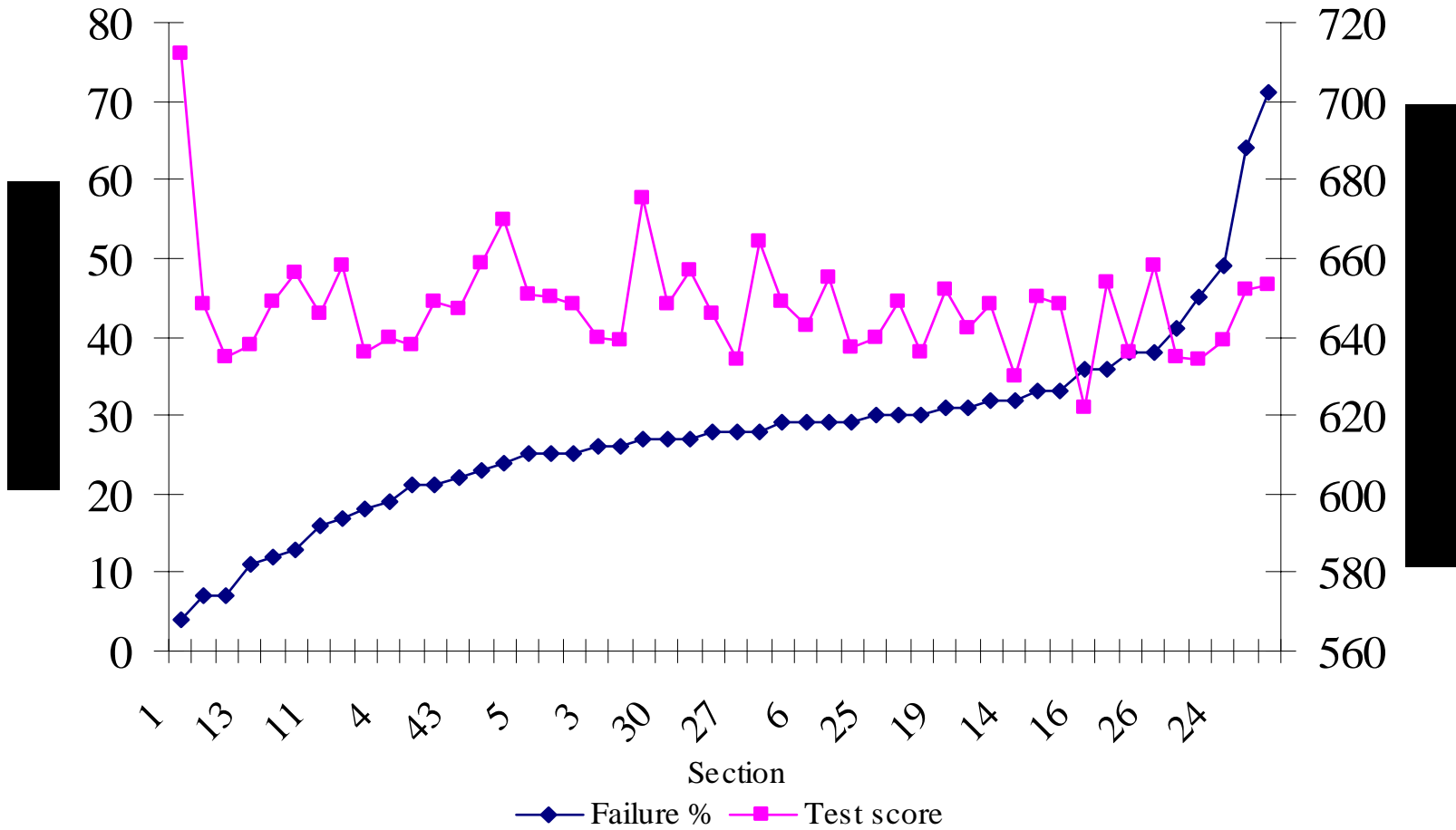
Attrition and Graduation Rates by the Number of Gatekeeping Courses Failed in First 60 Hours Entering Class of 1989



The Percentage of First-Time Freshmen By Unique Section Number Who Earned a 'D' or 'F' in Biology



The Failure Rate by SAT-Math Test Score for Science, Engineering, Math Calculus



What happened?

- One associate Dean in one College took action
 - Reviewed grading practices in gate-keeping courses
 - Reassigned faculty
 - Re-emphasized teaching to high standards
 - Questioned the balance of teaching/learning/student motivation

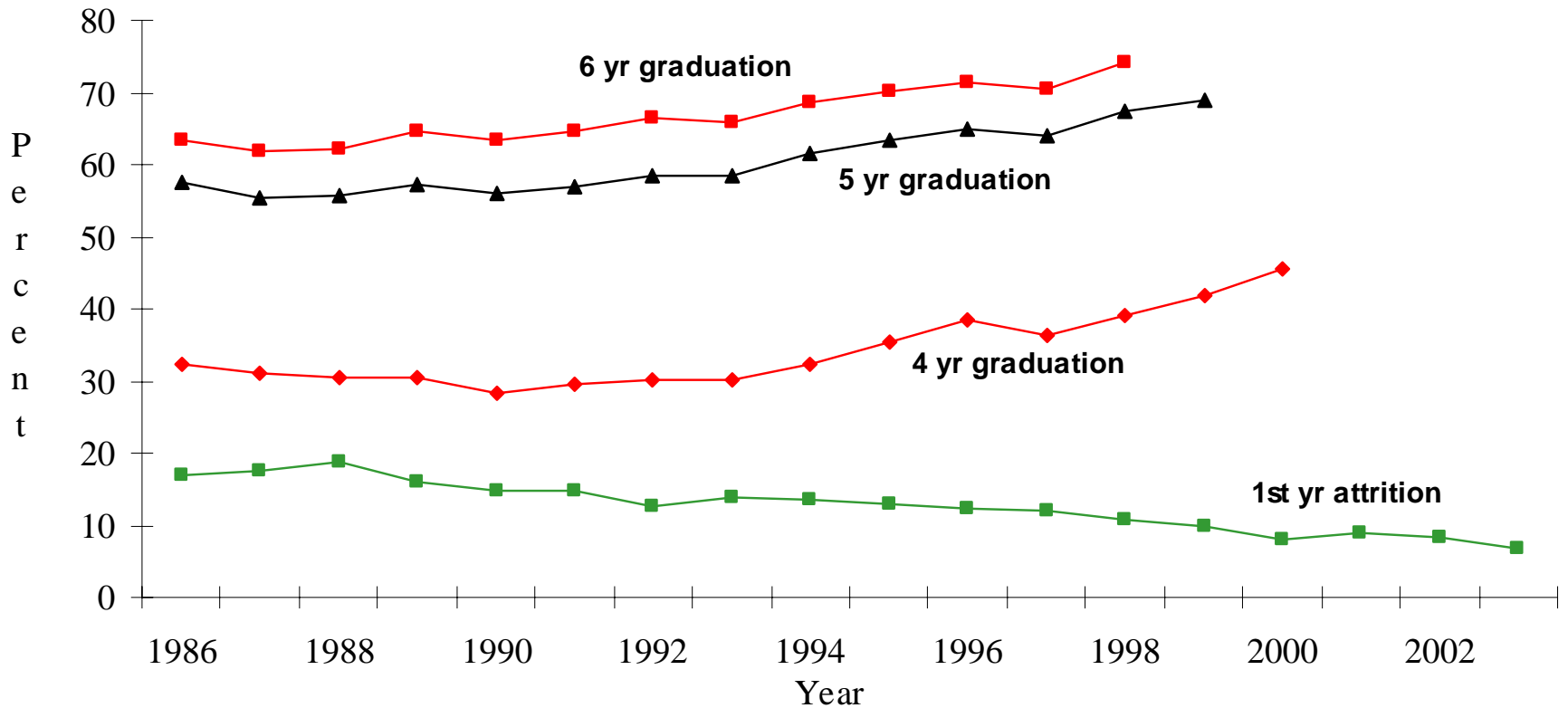
What Happened?

- Used a professional network to gather similar data at 5 other large research universities
- Found same trend at all universities...and essentially the same gate-keeping classes

Other Contributions to Improved Graduation Rates

- Tutoring
- Supplemental Instruction
- Housing
- Orientation
- Advising
- Financial Aid
- Presidential 'interest'
- Admissions policy

Attrition and Graduation Rates for First Time Freshmen at U. T. Austin 1986 - 2003



Natural Networks

Lessons Learned

- Multiple causes to problems force multiple solutions
- Mandated participation for selected students
- Active intervention from data-driven policy makers leads to proactive institutional change
 - Mandated program participation in orientation, housing, tutoring
 - ‘Heavy’ financial aid support
 - ‘Heavy’ support from high level administration

Forced Collaboration

Forced Collaboration

- Don't bother
- In 40 years of looking, I have yet to find an example of where it worked!

Collaborative Assessment

- Requires 3 ingredients
 - The will to do it
 - A network of relationships to get it done
 - Timely evidence widely shared
 - a way to see it and celebrate it

Observations

- Collaborative assessment is all about connections and relationships
 - Yes, STUDENTS should be part of it
 - Faculty bring diverse perspectives about conceptualizing assessment efforts
 - Upper level management can make it happen
- Most assessment issues are INTERCONNECTED...Your issue is my issue
- Think outside of the box, get out of your silo

Observations

- Put everyone on the same page...define expectations of input, process or outcomes assessment
- Anticipate that outcomes **ALWAYS** have **MULTIPLE** sources of influence
- Encourage diverse interpretations

Principles of Collaboration

- Know that engagement in the process **PRECEEDS** adoption of the outcomes
- Solutions often take a very long time

Practicing New Ways of Relating

- Foster a trusting environment
- Master group and social dynamics
- Share information widely
- Engage in cross-boundary discussions
- Create new relationships
- Create a relational instead of organizational chart

Practicing New Ways of Relating

- Stop looking for 'a' solution, find 'families' of solutions for interdependent problems
- Accept the complexities of the system
- Infuse the organization with feedback

Final Observations

- You can't change higher education if you don't understand how it works
- You can't influence the outcomes if you don't know what they are and whether your programs and services contribute to them
- You can change higher education without assessment. You can also drive a car blindfolded. Both strategies only work for a little while!

Final Words

- Assessment done together is assessment done well and assessment done well makes all the difference
- Today is a great day to get started!