From a Culture of Evidence to a Culture of Inquiry & Action

Dr. Rob Johnstone

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National Center for Inquiry & Improvement

Acknowledgements

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- Content has also been developed by and with a host of national partners, including:
  - Community College Research Center (CCRC)
  - Jobs for the Future
  - JBL Associates
  - Public Agenda
  - The Research & Planning (RP) Group
- Infographics were primarily designed by Greg Stoup

Formalistic Doublespeak…

- Give your 1st reaction to the following list of words:
  - Accountability
  - Accreditation
  - Assessment
  - Continuous Improvement
  - Data-Driven Decision Making
  - Evaluation
  - Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
  - Logic Model
  - Performance-based Funding
  - Strategic planning

Recapturing the Movement…

- Vivid imagery from previous slide
- Faculty, Student Services folks & leaders have been beaten over the head with these phrases
  - ✓ they are correct to analyze that they too often haven't led to authentic improvement
  - ✓ and the more formal the process, often…
- There is good news for our improvement efforts – you can do all of the things captured by those words in more authentic and less formalistic ways

Changing the Conversations…

- We have to make the conversation about things faculty, staff & administrators care about – students, their learning, and improving their outcomes and lives
- Not everybody will come along – but we don't need everybody
- Org Change Thought: Red light / Yellow light / Green light
- People need to see their expertise acknowledged and integrated – and the effect of their efforts on outcomes

April 2014

The Student Experience

An Applied Inquiry Framework for Student Completion

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Successful Completion

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A Culture of Inquiry & Action

A RESOURCE for INSTITUTIONAL change

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What is a Culture of Inquiry?

Institutional capacity for supporting open, honest and collaborative dialog focused on strengthening the institution and the outcomes of its students.

Culture of Inquiry: Features

- Widespread access to user-friendly information on student outcomes
- Encouraging more people to ask a wider collection of questions and use their evidence and conclusions to enhance decision making
- Reflective and dynamic discussions across constituency groups

Culture of Inquiry: More Features

- Continuous feedback so adjustments can be made along the way and processes can be adapted
- A sense of ownership over improving student outcomes – not blaming the student
- Using insight generated from inquiry to act at varying levels of the institution to create the conditions to improve outcomes

An Applied Inquiry Framework for Student Completion (CBD)

- ✓Stage 1 – Explore how to improve outcomes
- ✓Stage 2 – Gather meaningful evidence
- ✓Stage 3 – Discuss evidence broadly
- ✓Stage 4 – Use evidence to inform change
- ✓Stage 5 – Measure the impact of change

STAGE 1

Explore how to improve student outcomes

Focus inquiry on designing approaches that improve student outcomes

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How We Spend Our Time Matters…

- When was the last time you sat in a standing committee meeting on your campus that used evidence to explore a key student progress, completion, labor market, learning or equity outcome for more than 20 minutes?
- What types of questions do we spend most of our organizational resources answering?

Malcolm Gladwell talks about the right question…

- Link to full video: http://www.ted.com/talks/malcolm_gladwell_on_spaghetti_sauce

Organizing Question of Improvement Science:

What problem are you trying to solve?

The Right Question in the CC World… Placement Tests & Cut Scores

- What was the problem we were trying to solve?
- I'd posit it was something like:
  - ✓ "Can we find a short instrument that will help us assign incoming students to various levels of math & English?" Or…
  - ✓ "How do we ensure higher levels of course success in transfer-level math & English courses?
- Are these the best questions? Why or why not?

✓ Note: current system of placement tests may not even be the best solution for this question: LBCC / CCRC

What if we tried to solve…

- What placement process is the most predictive of transfer-level course success?

  Or….

- What is the optimal curricular structure to ensure that the greatest number of students pass transfer-level math / English courses with appropriate rigor?

  Or….

More questions…

- What is the optimal math curriculum that produces computational learning outcomes that most students will need in the real world?

  Or…

- Is writing about literature the optimal way to teach students the writing skills they need in their general education courses? What about in the real world?

To sum up the starting line stage…

- More focus on asking the right question, less on the answers
- Sometimes exploring the data can help you realize you've been asking the wrong question - The Right Pepsi vs. The Right Pepsis
- Traditional questions: enrollment, course success, material covered
- Emerging questions: improving outcomes - completion, progress, learning, labor market, equity

STAGE 2

Gather meaningful evidence

Collect high-quality, meaningful evidence at the student support, classroom, program, and institutional levels

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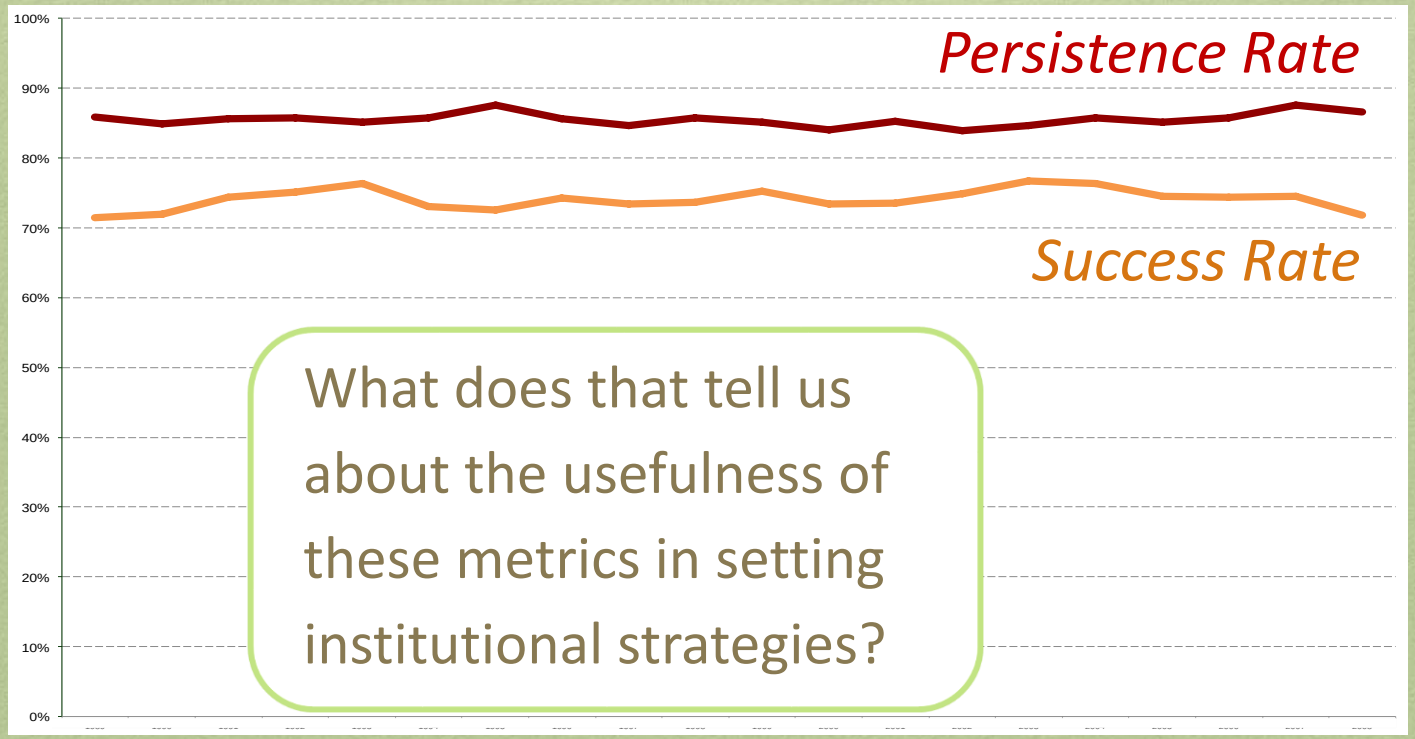
When gathering evidence, make sure you are focusing on **the right data…**

20 year trend for California CC course success & persistence rates



The Aspen Prize's Take on Data & Outcomes that Matter

- Progress / Completion Outcomes
- Labor Market Outcomes
- Learning Outcomes
- Equity in Achieving First Three Outcomes

- Examples of each in Appendix presentation…

STAGE 3

Discuss evidence broadly

Engage a variety of campus stakeholders in evidence-based discussions about improvements in practice

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Key Concept: Data do not speak for themselves

Time & Space Needed to Explore Data, Make Meaning & Generate Insight

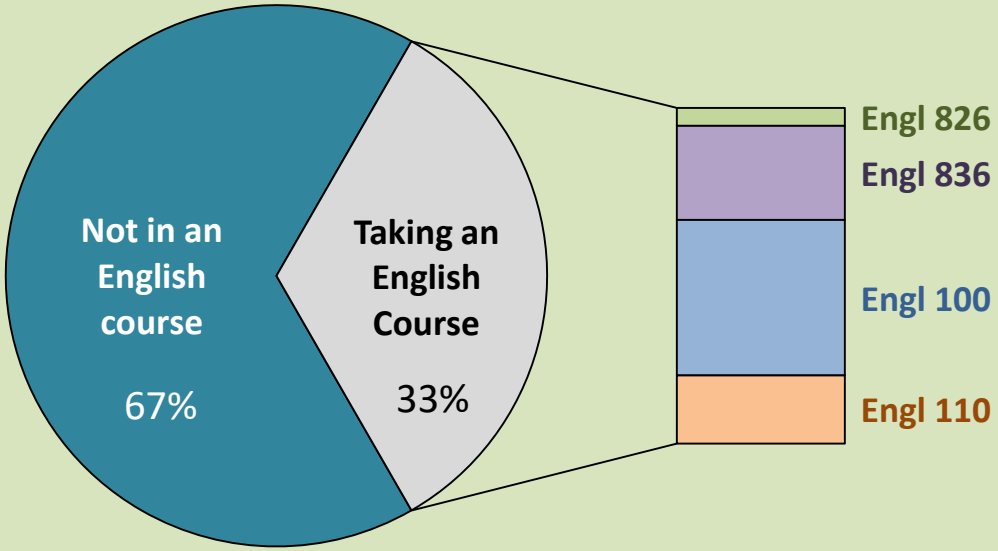
Exploring Data Example:

English & Math Preparedness & Success in GE Courses

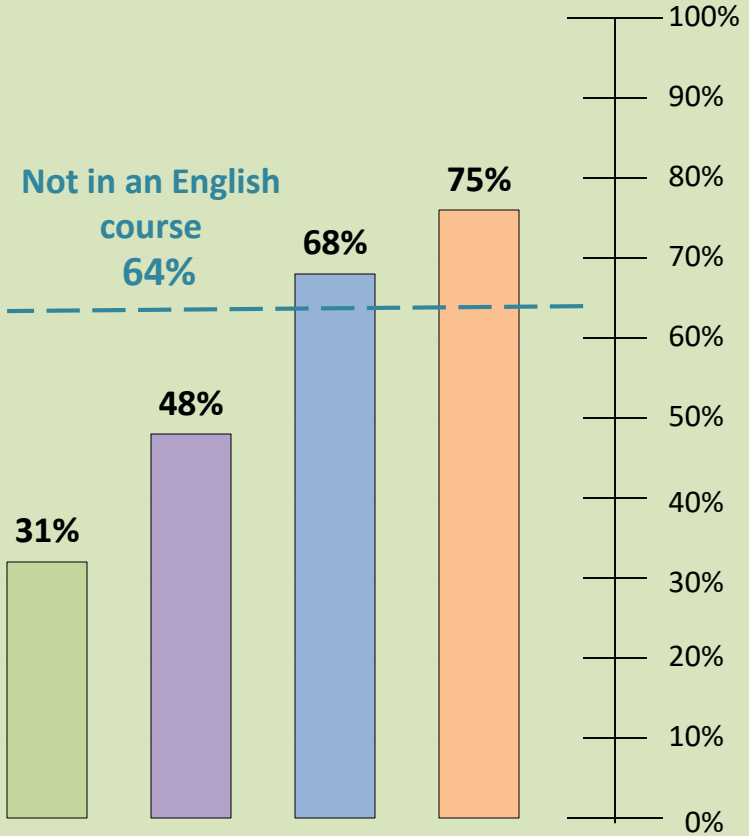
Success in Psychology 101 for students simultaneously enrolled in an English course

English 826 (Two Below) → English 836 (One Below) → English 100 (Transfer A) → English 110 (Transfer B)

English course taking profile for students in Psychology 101



Success Rate of those same students in Psychology 101

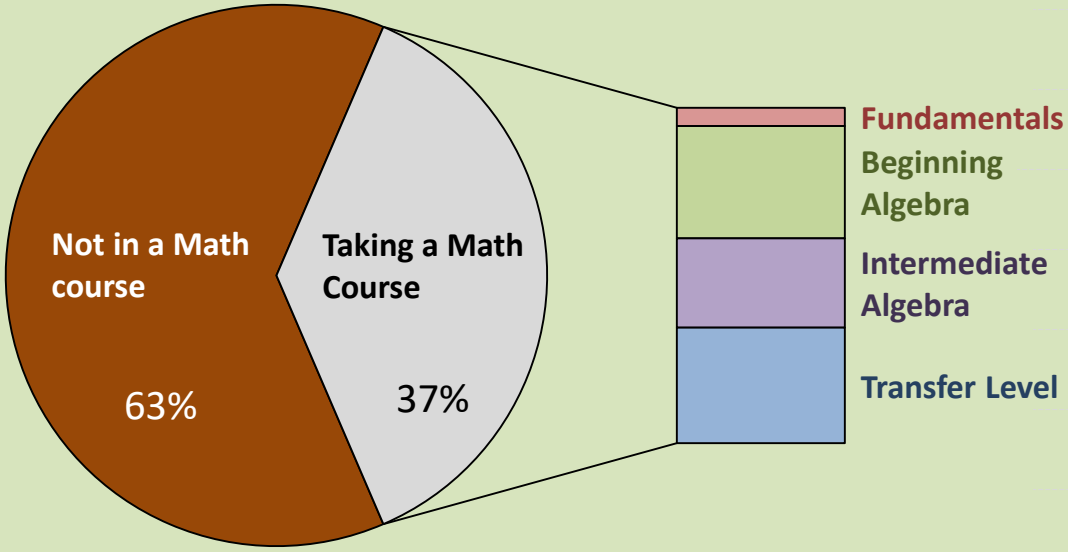


Note: Enrollments from Summer 2000 to Spring 2009; Success is defined as A/B/C/CR grade

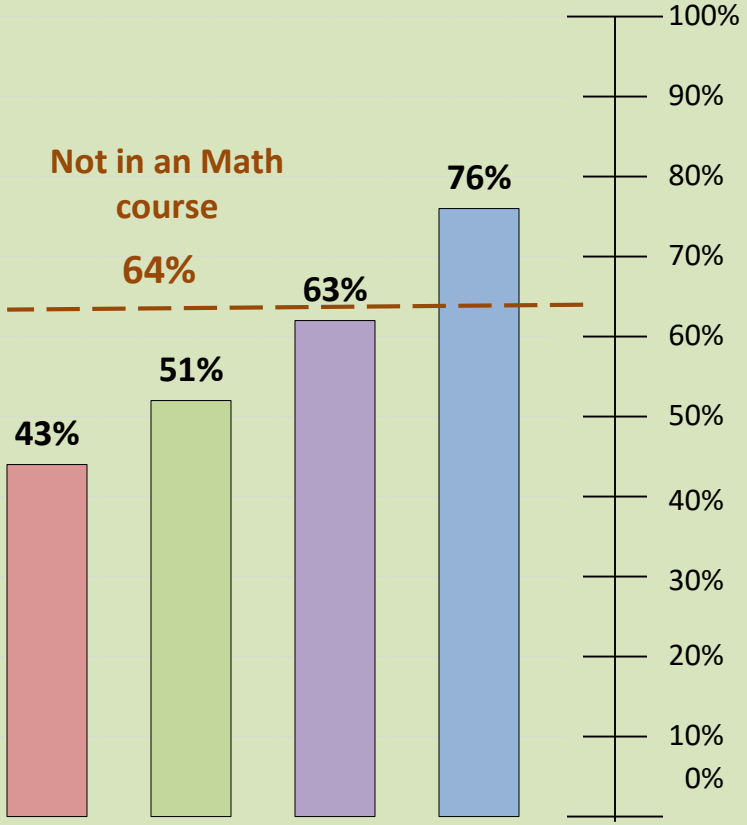
Success in Psychology 101 for students simultaneously enrolled in an Math course

Fundamentals → Beginning Algebra → Intermediate Algebra → Transfer Level Math

Math course taking profile for students in Psychology 101



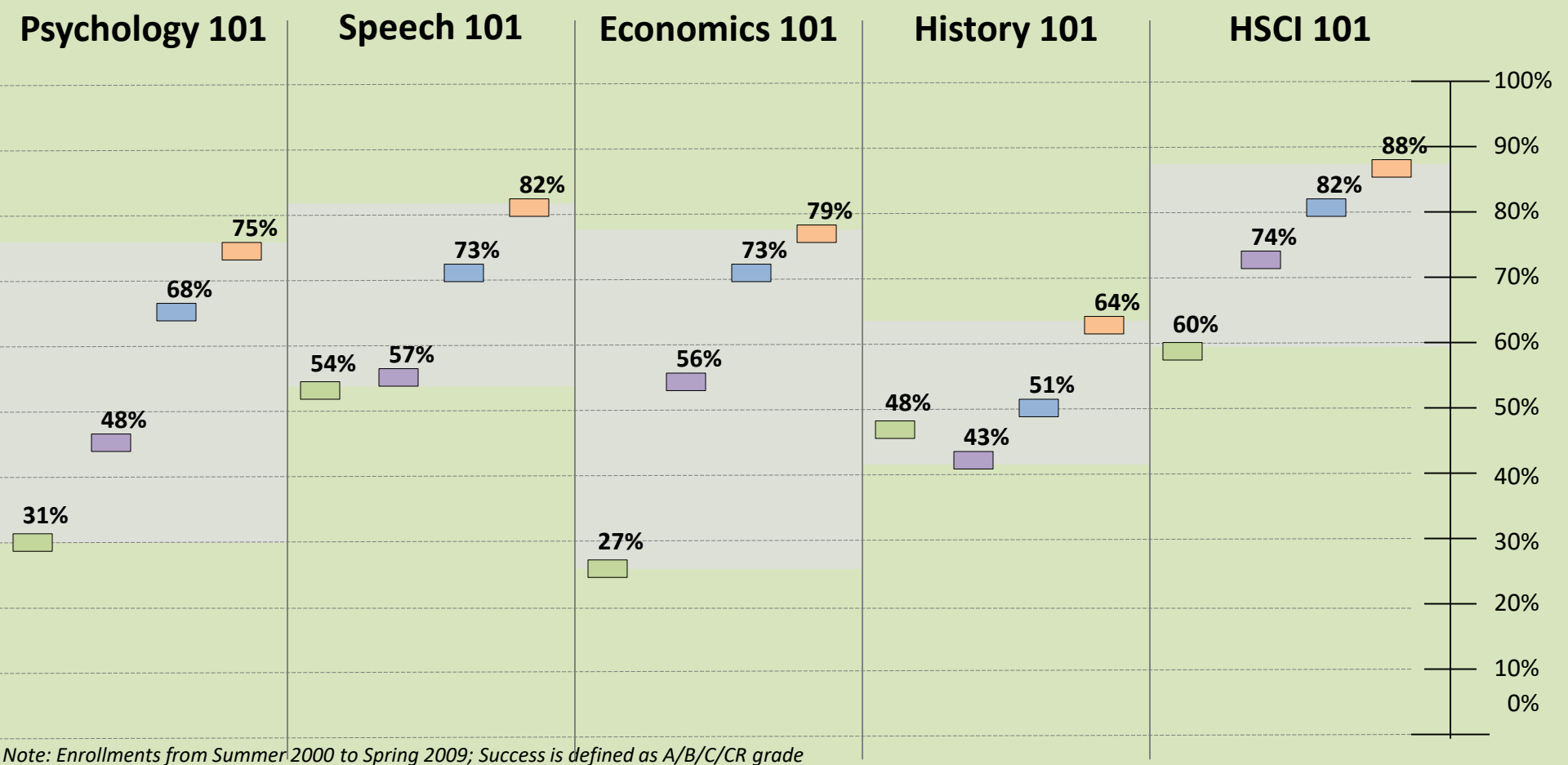
Success Rate of those same students in Psychology 101



Note: Enrollments from Summer 2000 to Spring 2009; Success is defined as A/B/C/CR grade

Success in five highly enrolled GE courses by English enrollment level

English 826 (Two Below) → English 836 (One Below) → English 100 (Transfer A) → English 110 (Transfer B)



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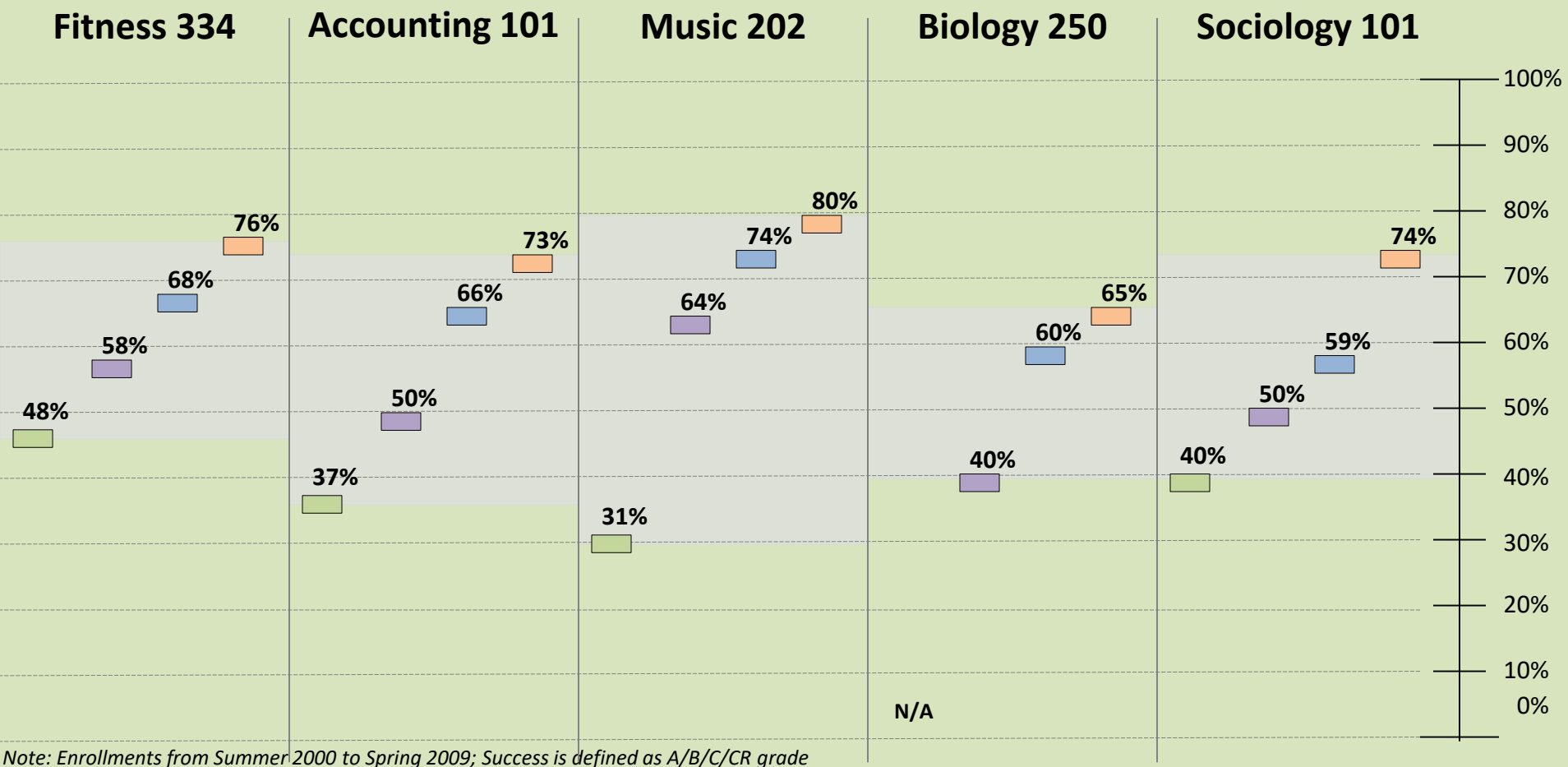

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STAGE 4

Use evidence to inform change

Implement changes in practice and policy based on analyses and discussion of college evidence

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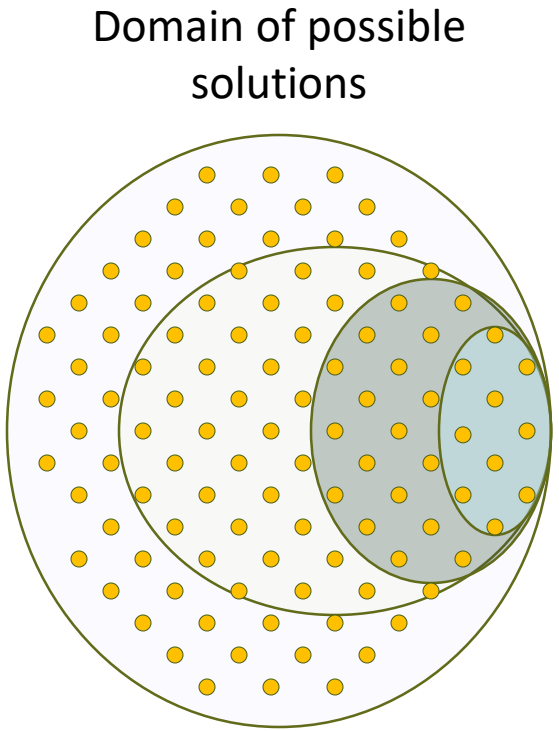
Use evidence to guide innovation

- In this context, research and applied inquiry are fundamentally interventionist in nature.
- We are not seeking absolute truths; rather we are looking for patterns of evidence that inform action-oriented decisions.
- Failure can be seen as an opportunity for learning, especially when outcomes are shared and used to inform further improvements in practice.

And what do we do when the evidence is ambiguous?

What to do when you reach the limits of your research and yet still face multiple choices?

The process of inquiry is not a search for an absolute truth



Trust your expertise & choose !

We answer the questions that eliminate dead end solutions

STAGE 5

Measure the impact of change

Evaluate the impact of practice changes on student outcomes

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Final Thoughts

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Final Reflections

- Creating or evolving your culture of inquiry isn't magic; there are clear steps and resulting artefacts of such a culture
- Don't focus too much on the data – the questions you ask are exponentially more important
- Remind yourself and your team to constantly ask: "What problem are we trying to solve?"

What we are shooting for…

- Great statement of the desired end state from a CC President at the Aspen / ATD Leadership Symposium:

  "A wider range of people on a campus ask a better set of questions about outcomes & act on their reflections to improve them."

Find Out More

- **The National Center for Inquiry & Improvement website**
  www.inquiry2improvement.com
- **Dr. Rob Johnstone, Founder & President**
  rob@inquiry2improvement.com
- **CBD Inquiry Guides on Applied Inquiry & Nuances of Completion:**
  http://www.inquiry2improvement.com/publications-resources