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# English-101 Class Size Pilot Program Research Brief #244

## **College of the Canyons**

Santa Clarita Community College District  
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Institutional Research, Planning, and  
Institutional Effectiveness

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## **Introduction**

### **Background**

In 2021 the Santa Clarita Community College District (SCCCD) and the College of the Canyons Faculty Association (COCFA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding for a three-year pilot program beginning in spring 2022 to set ENGL-101 class sizes to 30 students. This memorandum calls for a meeting between COCFA and SCCC representative in fall 2024 to evaluate the pilot program and whether success and retention rates have returned to referenced baseline rates of 2017-18. If demonstrable improvement of these rates is seen, class sizes will remain at 30, and if not, class sizes will return to 35 beginning spring 2025.

The Institutional Research, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness (IRPIE) Office conducted analyses to evaluate ENGL-101 success and retention rates for fall and spring terms starting in 2017-18 through 2023-24. The pilot program of capping class sizes at 30 students started in spring 2022.

As background, in fall 2018 IRPIE received a request from English faculty to compare success and retention rates of students in ENGL-101 classes between classes with 35 or more students and classes with fewer than 35 students. The subsequent analysis of fall 2017 and spring 2018 ENGL-101 courses found that success rates were negatively impacted by larger class sizes (35+ students) in evening classes, but not in daytime classes. These evening classes were attended by a larger proportion of disproportionately-impacted students, and, as such, yielded lower success rates for these student groups (e.g., part-time students, African-American/Black students, Hispanic/Latinx students, and students age 25 and older). This analysis recommended that a reduction in class size, specifically in evening classes, could help improve success rates. A literature review also suggested that larger class sizes were associated with more negative perceptions of instructors and course content.

Between the baseline year of 2017-18 and the most recent two years, a few events that had direct effects on the course data and outcomes are to be noted. First in fall of 2018, the department adopted the direct placement model into ENGL-101, giving more students access into transfer-level English. The following year, the department fully implemented AB1705 (fall 2019), and subsequently the college faced numerous challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic closure in spring 2020. In addition, the department has made, and plans to make, curriculum changes that could affect the results in this brief.

## **Methodology**

Two local data sources were used to compile the results for this research request. The first was IRPIE program review data visualizations, for success/retention data through spring 2023. In addition, for the terms summer 2023 through spring 2024, the student grade report from Informer was used. Students who dropped before census and who received “incomplete” were excluded from the analysis. ENGL-101H courses were also excluded.

Course retention is defined as the percent of students retained in courses out of the total enrolled in courses (numerator = number of students [duplicated] with A, B, C, D, F, FW, CR, NC, P, or NP; denominator = number of students [duplicated] with A, B, C, D, F, FW, CR, NC, P, NP, W, or EW).

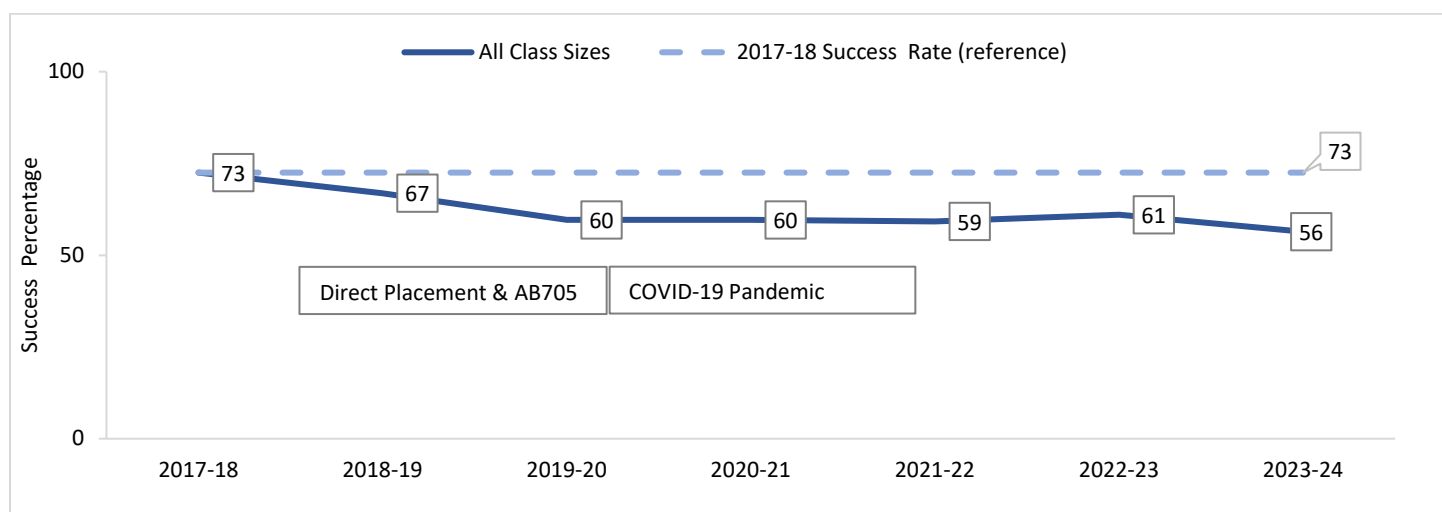
Course success is defined as the percent of students successful in courses out of the total enrolled in courses (numerator = number of students [duplicated] with A, B, C, CR, or P; denominator = number of students [duplicated] with A, B, C, D, F, FW, CR, NC, P, NP, W, or EW).

## Results

### Course Success and Retention Trends

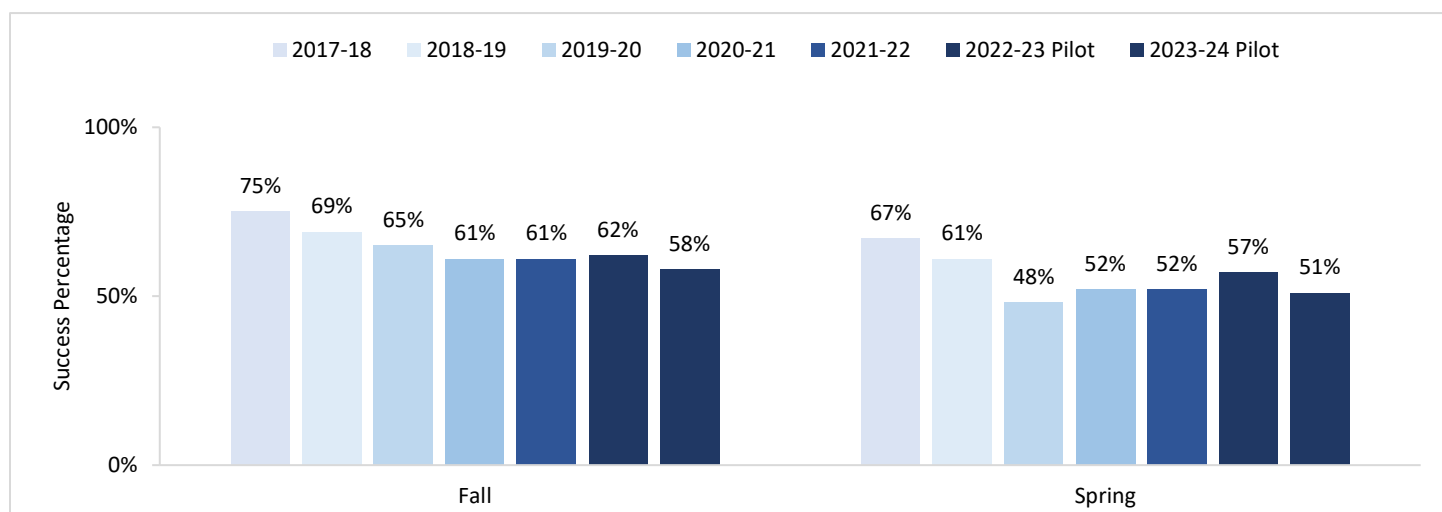
For fall and spring terms, success rates have displayed a slight, continued decrease since the 2017-18 baseline rate of 73%. The lowest success rate within this timeframe (56%) occurred during the most recent year, 2023-24. The figures below note the period of Direct Placement, AB 705, and COVID-19, as described in the introduction.

Figure 1. ENGL-101 Yearly Success Rates, 2017-18 to 2023-24, Fall and Spring Terms



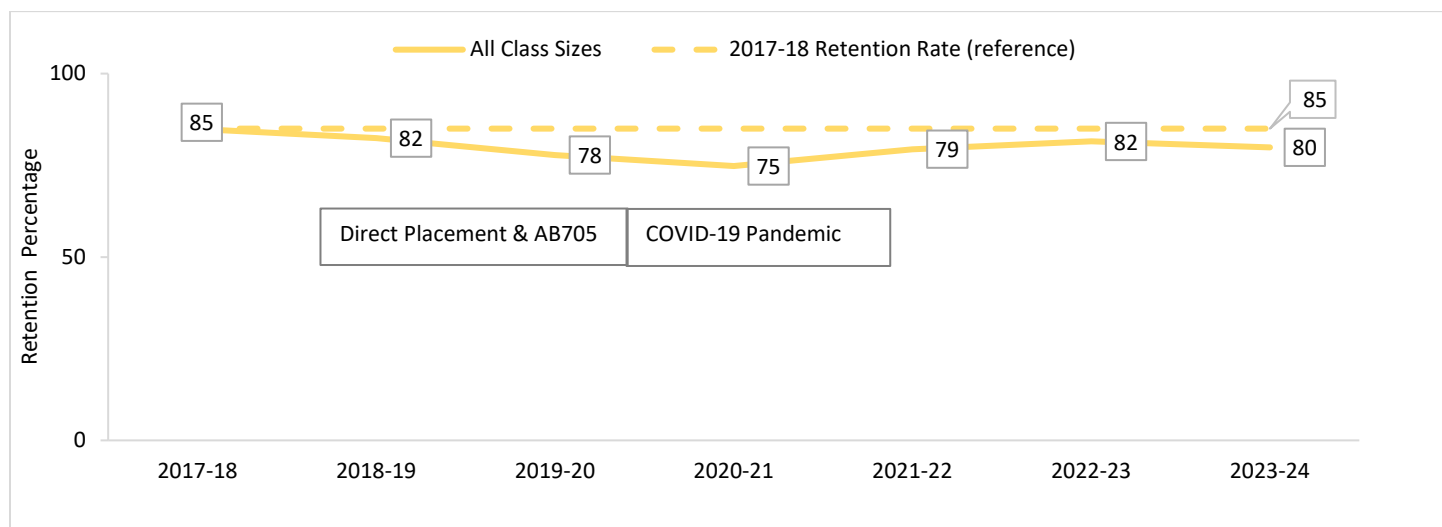
Comparison of fall terms and spring terms separately display a similar trend of decline for success rates. Overall rates decreased 16-17 percentage points since 2017-18 both in fall and spring terms respectively.

Figure 2. ENGL-101 Success Rates 2017-18 to 2023-24 Fall and Spring Trends



Retention rates have also declined below the 2017-18 rate of 85% (with the lowest rate at 75% in 2020-21), however have improved in more recent two years. The most recent year of data, 2023-24, had a retention rate of 80%.

Figure 3. ENGL-101 Yearly Retention Rates, 2017-18 to 2023-24, Fall and Spring Terms



Retention rates within fall and spring terms display similar trends: overall rates dipping since 2017-18; rates decreasing more in the spring term; and the lowest rate being during the COVID-19 closure of on-campus instruction in spring 2020. Since 2020, rates are improving.

Figure 4. ENGL-101 Retention Rates 2017-18 to 2023-24, Fall and Spring Trends

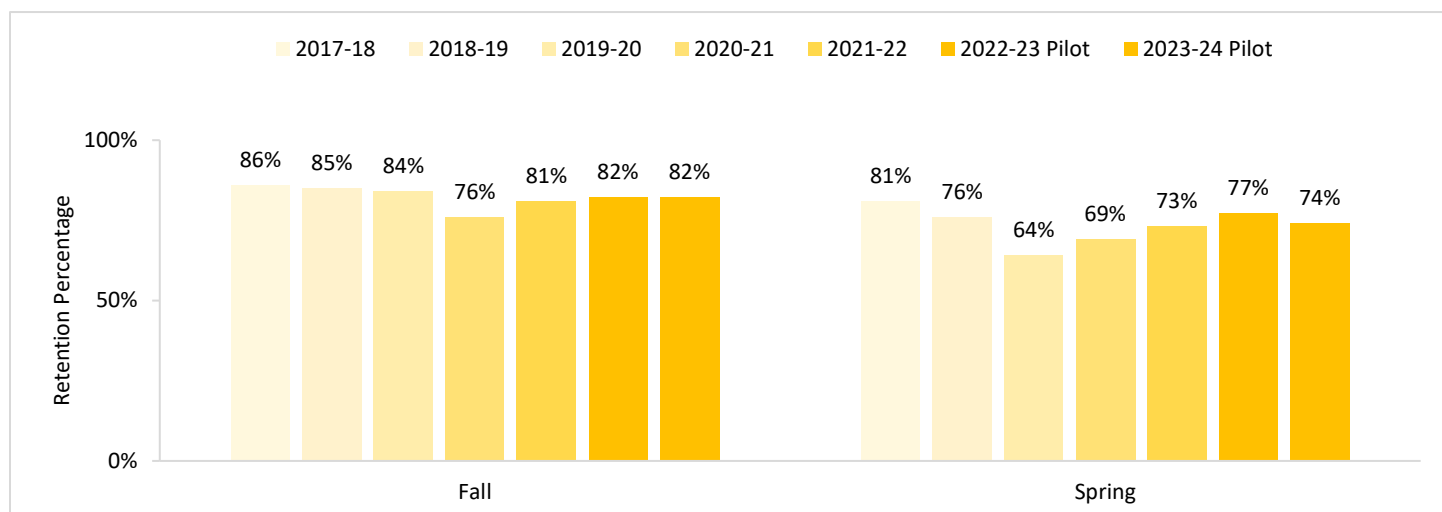


Table 1 compares success/retention rates of the *pilot* program terms, from spring 2022 to spring 2024 including summer and winter during the pilot years. With the exception of summer, enrollments increased during this pilot period from fall to fall, winter to winter, and spring to spring. The median class size has remained mostly the same.

Table 1. ENGL-101 Retention and Success Rates by Term in Pilot Years, Spring 2022 to Spring 2024

Term	Year	Success Rate (%)	Retention Rate (%)	Number of Sections	Number of Enrollments	Median Class Size
Summer	2022-23	61	88	12	261	22
Summer	2023-24	61	82	10	197	20
Fall	2022-23	63	83	78	2143	28
Fall	2023-24	59	82	88	2391	28
Winter	2022-23	75	90	11	272	26
Winter	2023-24	75	88	13	326	26
Spring	2021-22	52	73	36	838	26
Spring	2022-23	57	78	40	950	26
Spring	2023-24	51	74	42	1025	25

### Effects of Class Sizes, Fall and Spring Terms

Sections with 30 or fewer enrollments previously had lower success rates than sections with 31 or more enrollments. The exception is the most recent two years where the success rate for sections with 30 or fewer students was 61% and 57% in comparison to 58% and 52% for sections with 31 or more students. Retention rates for sections with 30 or fewer students has remained lower than that of sections with 31 or more students, but both follow a similar trend since 2017-18. The number of sections with 31 or more students was declining since 2017-18, even before the pilot program began in 2022. In the most recent year, section counts for classes with 30 or fewer students returned to 2019-20 levels.

Figure 5. Section Counts and Success Rates by Class Size of 31+ vs. 30 or fewer, Fall and Spring Terms

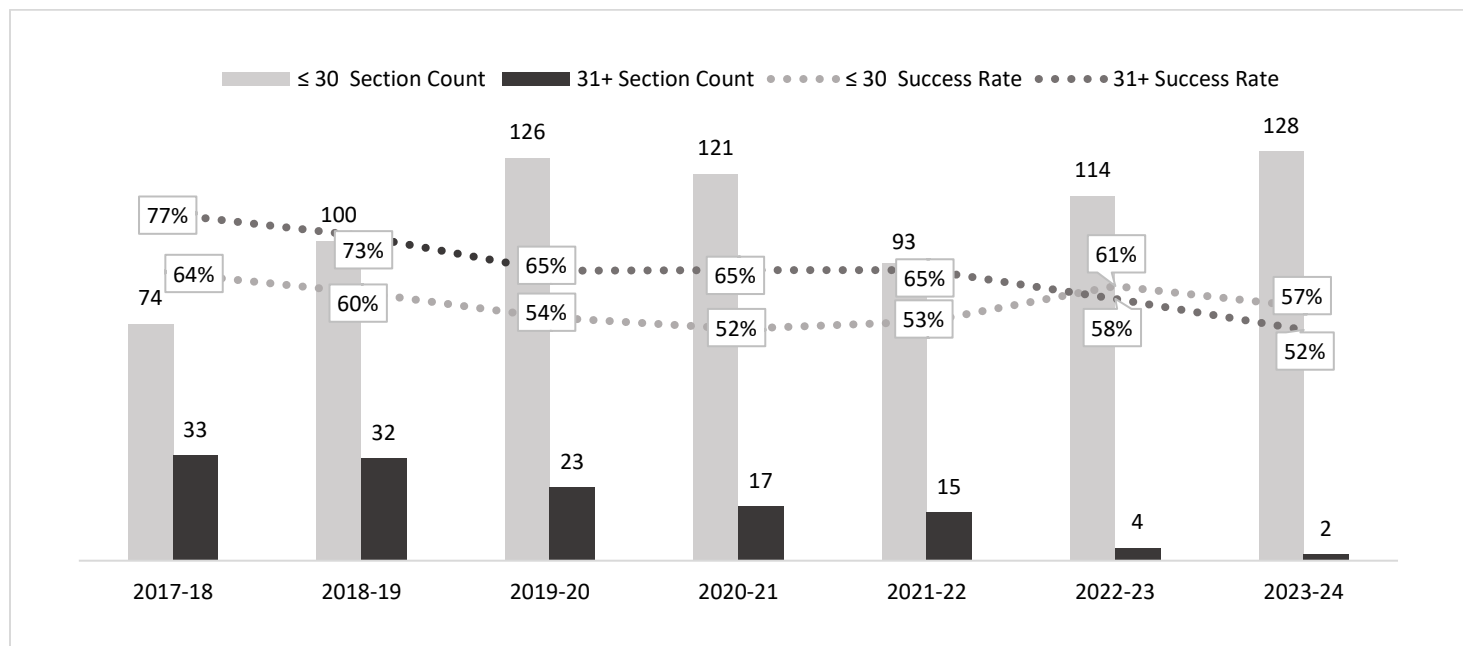
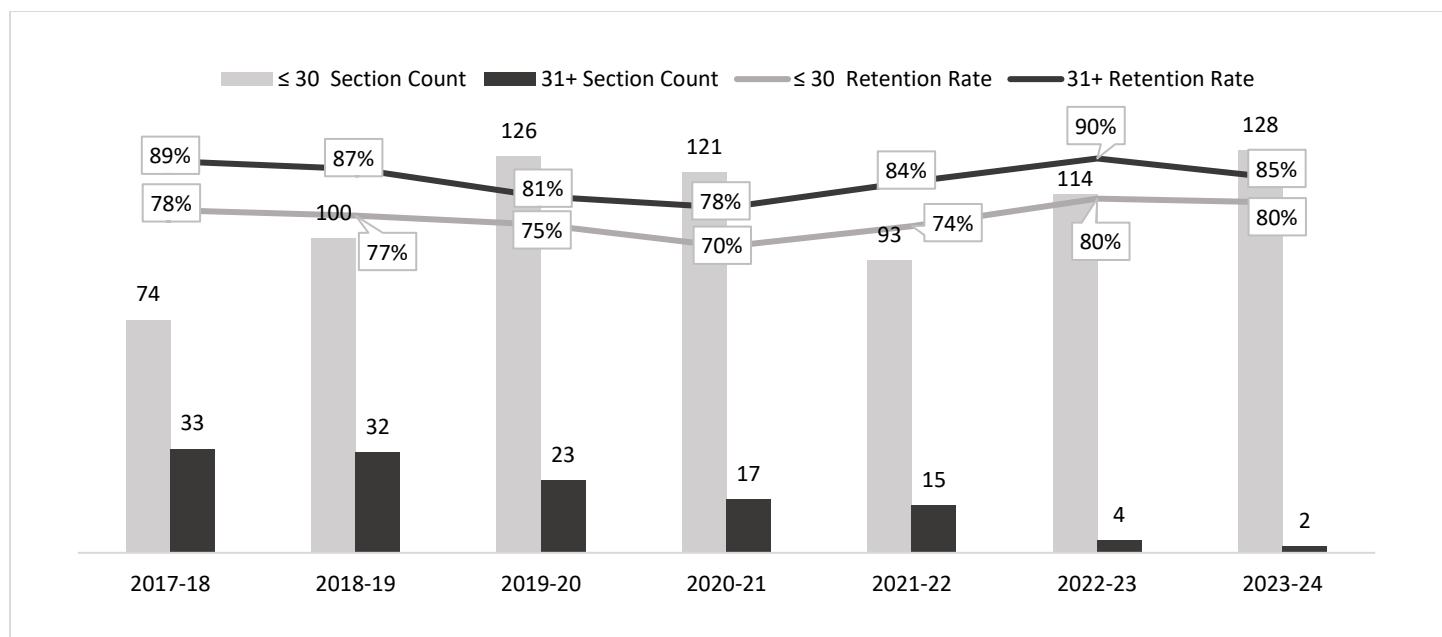


Figure 6. Section Counts and Retention Rates by Class Size 31+ vs. 30 or fewer, Fall and Spring Terms



Enrollments and success rates were also analyzed for the following disproportionately-impacted (D-I) student groups that were prioritized in the college's [Student Equity and Achievement Plan 2022-25](#): Hispanic/Latinx, Hispanic/Latinx Male, African American/Black, and First Generation students.. Each group demonstrates similar trends to each other and to the overall success rates presented in Figure 5. Success rates for class sizes of 31+ were consistently higher than the rates of class sizes of 30 or fewer until either 2022-23 or 2023-24 when success rates for classes with 30 or fewer students became slightly higher. See [Appendix A](#) for more details.

Additionally, fall and spring term success and retention rates were analyzed by class size using the following categories: 19 or fewer, 20-25, 26-29, 30, and 31+. Table 2 illustrates the change in number of students enrolled per class size category. Since the implementation of the ENGL-101 class size pilot program, the proportion of sections with 31+ students dropped from an average of 55% to 7% in 2023-24.

The percentage of students in sections with 20-25, 26-29, and 30 students rose significantly during this period while classes with 19 or fewer students saw no such increase. In 2023-24, 43% of students were in a class of 26-29 students, 27% were in a class of 20-25 students, 18% were in a class of 30 students, 7% were in a class of 31+ students, and 5% were in a class of 19 or fewer students.

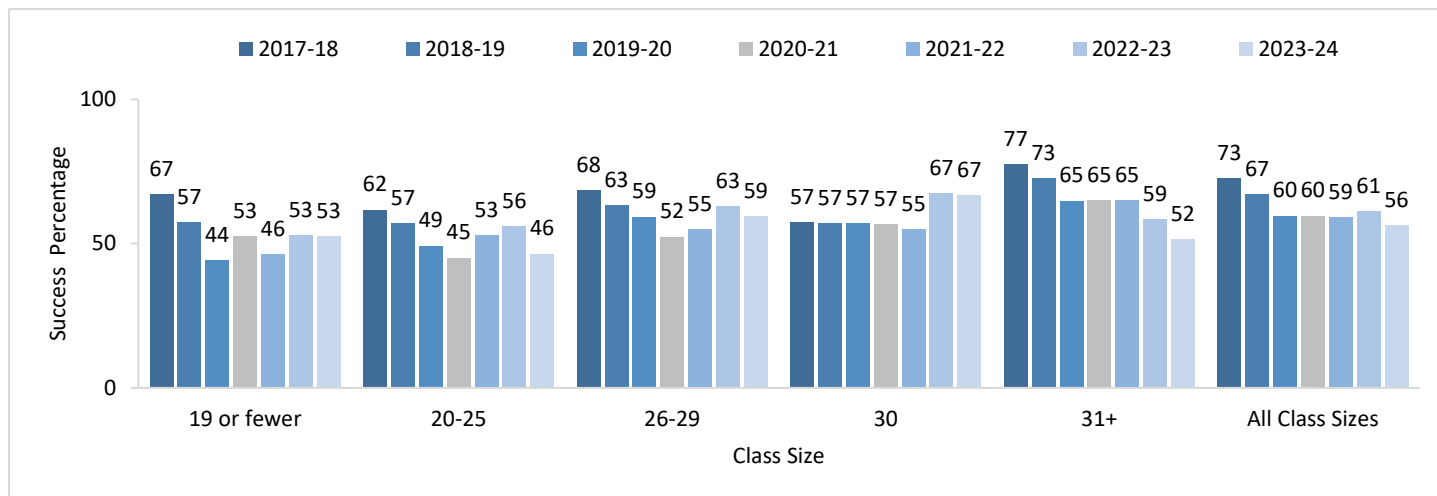


Table 2. Number of Students Enrolled in ENGL-101 by Class Size, Fall and Spring Terms

Class Size	Year	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
All Class sizes	Total Enrollments in year	3017	3801	4215	3978	3082	3093	3411
	Total Sections in year	107	132	149	138	108	118	130
19 or fewer	Enrollments	188	183	209	217	195	180	154
	% of all enrollments	6%	5%	5%	5%	6%	6%	5%
	% of all section offerings	32%	31%	37%	38%	31%	35%	38%
20-25	Enrollments	412	457	649	317	298	562	933
	% of all enrollments	14%	12%	15%	8%	10%	18%	27%
	% of all section offerings	20%	24%	28%	33%	32%	40%	37%
26-29	Enrollments	360	796	936	752	835	1667	1467
	% of all enrollments	12%	21%	22%	19%	27%	54%	43%
	% of all section offerings	13%	19%	17%	12%	17%	20%	22%
30	Enrollments	150	270	300	330	180	330	630
	% of all enrollments	5%	7%	7%	8%	6%	11%	18%
	% of all section offerings	5%	2%	2%	4%	6%	2%	2%
31+	Enrollments	1907	2095	2121	2362	1574	354	227
	% of all enrollments	63%	55%	50%	59%	51%	11%	7%
	% of all section offerings	31%	24%	15%	12%	14%	3%	2%

For success rates, as detailed in Figure 7, only class sizes of 26-29 and 30 had higher rates (2022-23: 63% and 67%, respectively; 2023-24: 59% and 67%, respectively) than that of all class sizes (2022-23: 61%; 2023-24: 56%) for these two years. In the fall and spring terms, classes with 25 or fewer students have had lower retention and success rates than that of all class sizes every year since 2017-18.

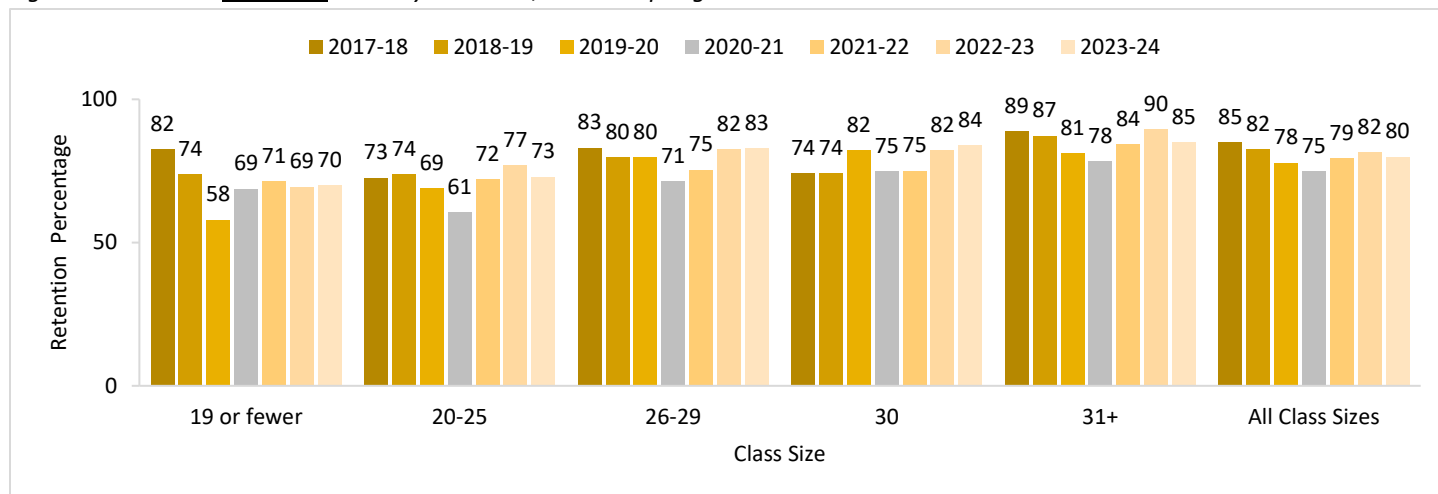
Figure 7. ENGL-101 Success Rates by Class Size, Fall and Spring Terms



For the past two years, class sizes of 26-29, 30, and 31+ have each demonstrated the same or higher retention rates (2022-23: 82%, 82%, and 90%, respectively; 2023-24: 83%, 84%, and 85%, respectively) than that of all class sizes (2022-23: 82%; 2023-24: 80%).

Across all class size ranges, except for class sizes of 30 students, retention rates dip to low points in either 2019-20 or 2020-21, then begin a slow rebound over the next three years. Class sizes of 30 students start lower in comparison but demonstrate the same rise in retention rates during the last two years.

Figure 8. ENGL-101 Retention Rates by Class Size, Fall and Spring Terms



### Summary Findings

- ENGL-101 retention and success rates decreased in 2018-19 (direct placement), 2019-20 (AB 705), and 2020-21 (COVID-19). In the past two pilot years, retention rates have increased while success rates have remained around the same rate.
- During the timeframe of the ENGL-101 class size pilot program, term to term retention and success rates have, overall, remained steady or decreased slightly. Spring-to-spring comparisons are the only exception, where both rates rose in spring 2023.
- Larger class sizes of 31+ students, during fall and spring terms, have demonstrated higher retention rates than that of all class sizes since 2017-18. However, success rates for these class sizes have steadily decreased since 2017-18 and have been below the rates of all class sizes for the past two years, 2022-23 and 2023-24. Conversely, success rates for class sizes of 26-29 and 30 students have been higher than that of all class sizes for the past two years.
- Among disproportionately impacted groups, patterns of course success rates were not substantially different from the overall rates by class size. In the most recent year (2023-24) all D-I groups had slightly higher success rates in class sizes 30 or fewer.

### Supplemental Findings

The following were noted during the course of this analysis but were not covered in detail within this brief:

- 100% online (asynchronous) sections had similar success rates to other modalities, hovering around 58%-60% year-over-year (fall and spring terms)
- In 2023-24, the lowest success rate was for online 12-week sections (46%, out of approx. 350 students).

## ***Implications***

"The Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness office collects information on how data and research conducted assist the campus community in making evidence-based decisions. In light of this, we ask that requestors, and/ or members of any department/area that utilize the data, provide action implications for each report."

Using the [Action Implication Form](#), please report actions and/or decisions that emerge from the data and findings presented in this report.

Once completed, action implications will be made available upon request.

## ***Recommendations (if analysis yields)***

Upon review of the results of ENGL-101 Class Size Pilot Program, the following recommendations should be taken into consideration:

- Consider collecting more data as there were external and internal factors that may have had a stronger impact than class size, on success/retention rates in ENGL-101.

For questions, or more detailed information on this research brief, contact Meredith Hamilton at [meredith.hamilton@canyons.edu](mailto:meredith.hamilton@canyons.edu) or Preeta Saxena, Ph.D., Director Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness at [preeta.saxena@canyons.edu](mailto:preeta.saxena@canyons.edu).

## Appendix A – Enrollments and Success Rates for D-I Groups

Figure 9. Appendix A: Enrollments and Success Rates for Hispanic/Latinx Students by Class Size, Fall and Spring Terms

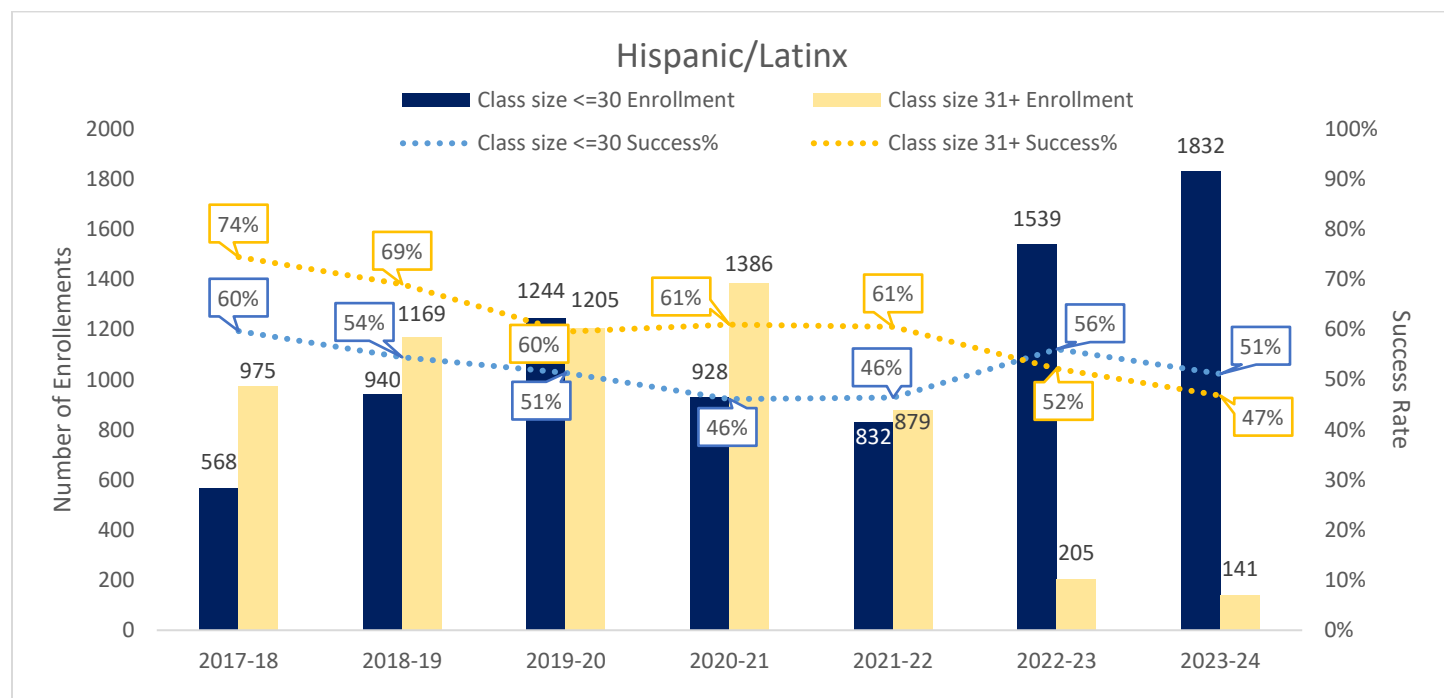


Figure 10. Appendix A: Enrollments and Success Rates for Hispanic/Latinx, Male students by Class Size, Fall and Spring Terms

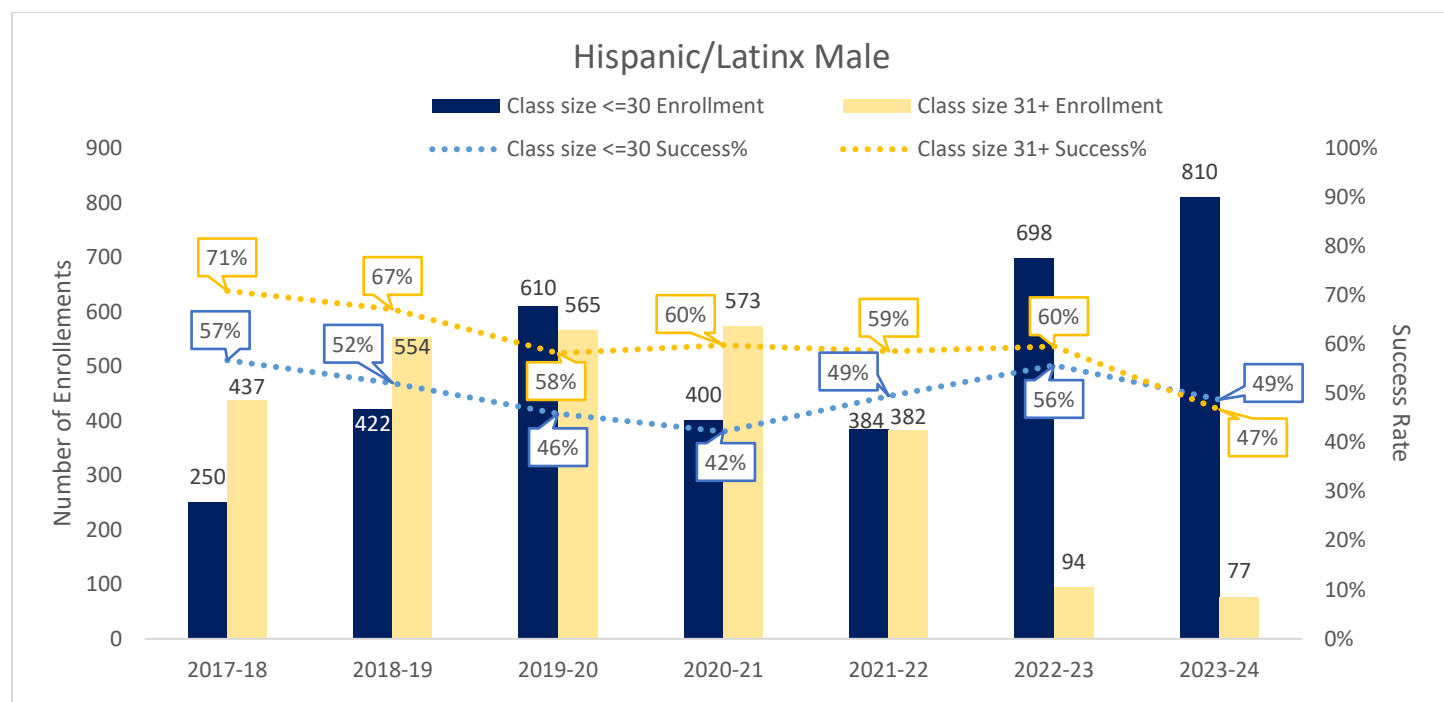


Figure 11. Appendix A: Enrollments and Success Rates for African American/Black Students by Class Size, Fall and Spring Terms

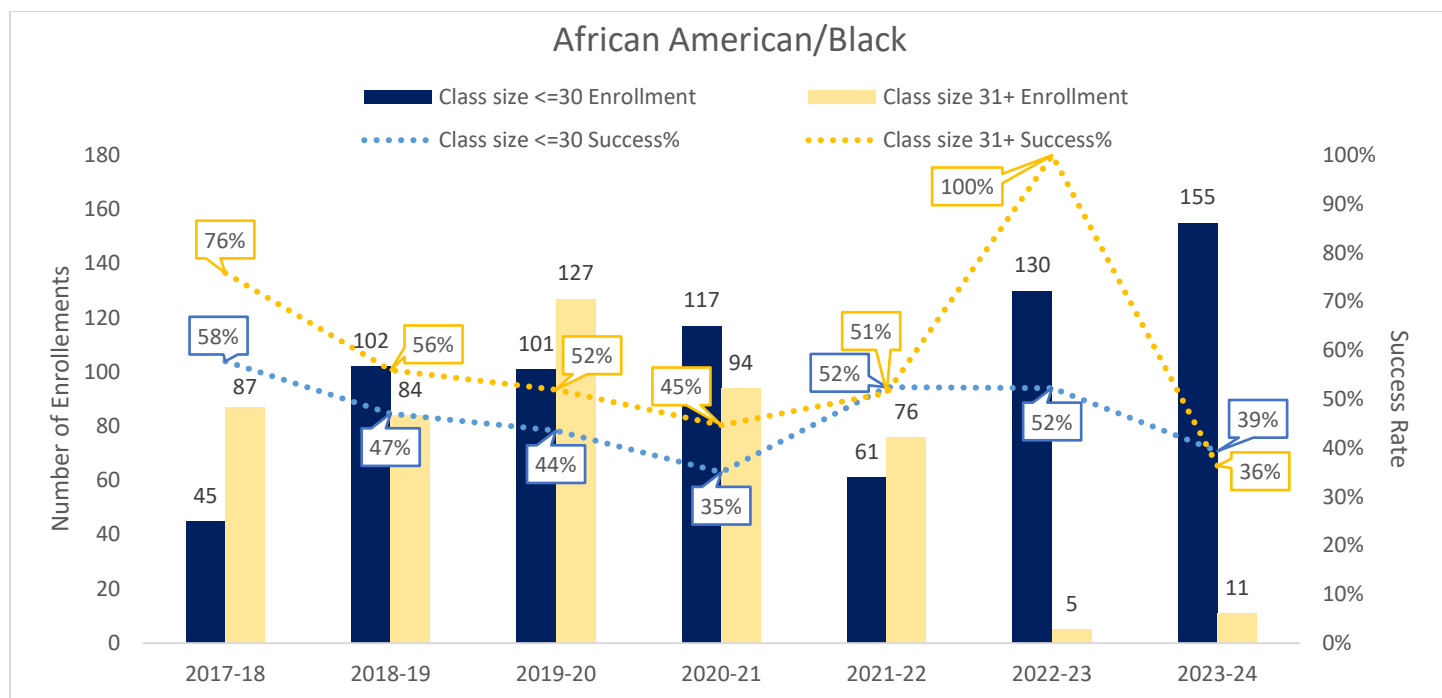


Figure 12. Appendix A: Enrollments and Success Rates for First Generation Students by Class Size, Fall and Spring Terms

