

Lessons from the Trenches

Evolving Cultures of Inquiry in
California Community Colleges

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PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

- 1) framing the issue**
- 2) a model for change**
- 3) tools for action**
- 4) making the connection**

WHO IS THE RP GROUP?

Putting our work in context

The RP Group

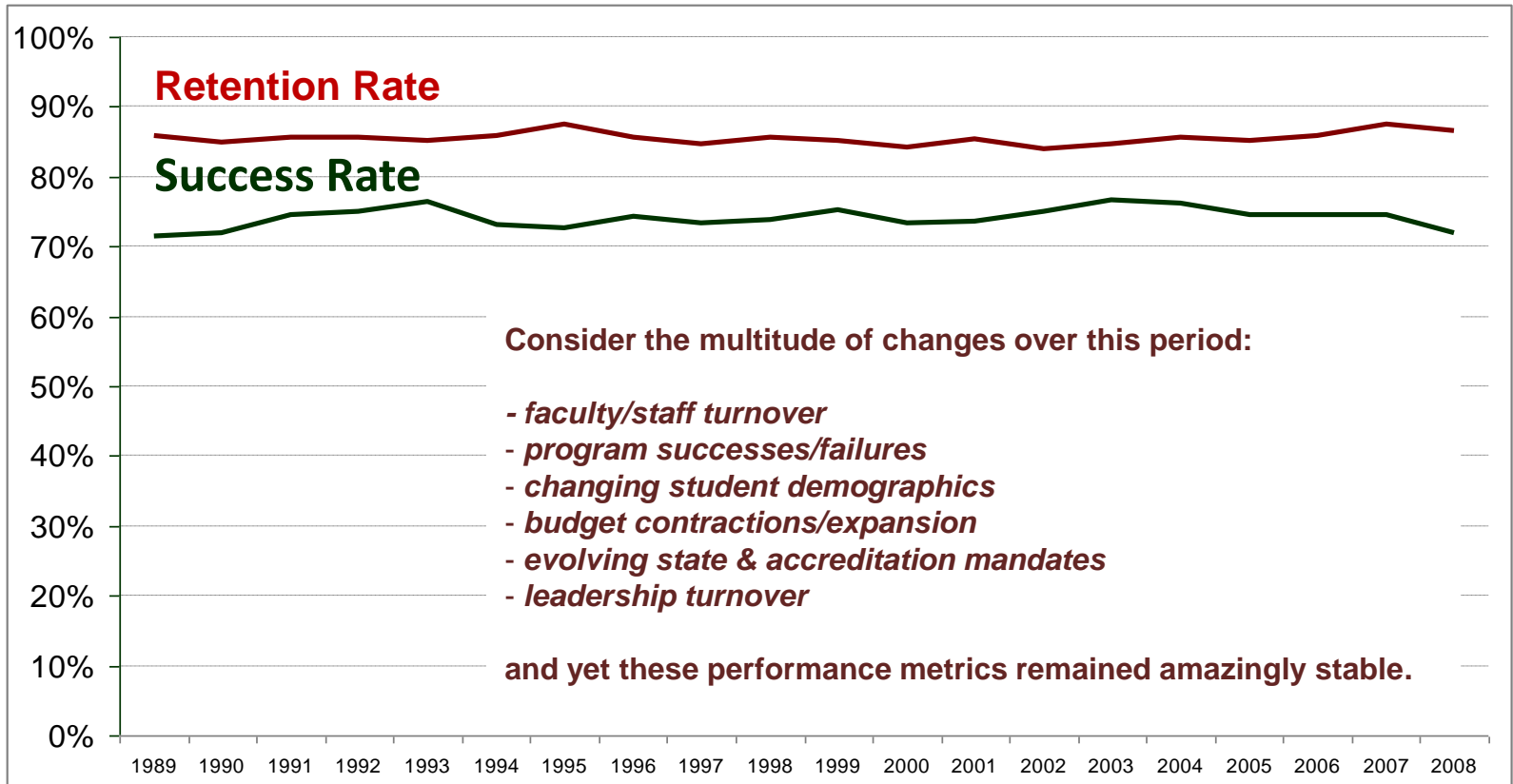
- strengthens the abilities of California community colleges to gather, analyze and act on information in order to strengthen student success
- provides research, evaluation, professional development, and technical assistance services that support evidence-based decision-making and inquiry
- work is defined and conducted by community college practitioners

THE IMPETUS FOR OUR WORK

What's getting between data and action

Colleges may be
focusing on
the **wrong data.**

20 Year Trend for Institutional Outcomes



What does that tell us about the usefulness of these metrics in setting institutional strategies?

Much of what is
needed to support
good decision making is
**beyond the
grasp of
institutional
databases.**

What is Our College's Transfer Rate?



What is our
college's
transfer rate?

Data
does not
speak
for itself.

The Vital Role of Conversation

- In order to make data useful, time and space are needed for information to be discussed and analyzed.
- Answers are not always immediately apparent, so skilled facilitation may be needed to dig out the deeper meaning.
- Multiple perspectives and types of information are often needed to make sense of individual data points.

The nature of
institutional
research
is **changing.**

What Institutional Research Needs To Be

- IR is about helping the college and its practitioners make better decisions.
- Institutional research is fundamentally an interventionalist discipline.
- We are using non-experimental data to examine behavior in complex human systems.
- We are not seeking absolute truths; rather we are looking for patterns of evidence that inform action-oriented decisions .

BRIC INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Increasing institutional capacity to act on evidence

What is BRIC?

- 1. Streamlining the work of institutional researchers**
 - Efficiencies in data production enable greater conversations with practitioners around the use of information to foster student success.
- 2. Offering statewide professional development**
 - Resources that support the development of a culture of evidence and collaborative inquiry among a variety of practitioners.
- 3. Providing the Technical Assistance Program (TAP)**
 - Customized technical assistance on data usage for 15 colleges, including site visits and remote support.

Inquiry Guides

- 1. Assessing Student Learning Outcomes**
- 2. Using an Equity Lens to Assess Student Learning**
- 3. Assessing Student Services Outcomes**
- 4. Building Info Capacity and a Culture of Inquiry**
- 5. Assessing Institutional Effectiveness**
- 6. Assessing Basic Skills Outcomes**
- 7. Maximizing the Program Review Process**
- 8. Turning Data into Meaningful Action**
- 9. Assessing Non-credit Student Learning Outcomes**

BRIC's Technical Assistance Program (TAP)

- BRIC TAP aims to strengthen cultures of inquiry and evidence at 15 California Community Colleges
- We look to do so by identifying strategies and venues for increased collaboration between faculty, staff, researchers, and administrators
- In the end, our shared goal is to integrate information and data into practices that foster greater student success

TAP Outcomes

1. Develop actionable data
2. Interpret data through discussion
3. Facilitate dialogue
4. Integrate data into institutional processes
5. Build an inquiry-based practice

BRIC TAP Assistance Teams

Technical experts from various California colleges and areas of the academy:

- Instructional faculty
- Support services professionals
- Institutional researchers and planners
- Administrators

INSIGHTS FROM BRIC TAP

Initial Findings

What the Colleges Wanted

1. Colleges are searching for **clarity and sustainability** in key processes.
2. There was a strong desire for **actionable models** that could be tailored to local environments.

Clarity & Sustainability

- In times of shrinking resources and technological developments, colleges need streamlined approaches and models to consider.
- At the same time, they need these processes to have meaning and not exist for the sole purpose of accreditation / accountability.

Common issues: SLO assessment, program review, integrating budgeting & planning

Actionable Models

- Colleges want to learn from the experiences of their peers in implementing models.
- There is a desire not to reinvent the wheel, but to create a “best-of-breed” approach.
- This desire is multifaceted – not just workload issues but also a desire for sustainable and meaningful models that fit the culture.

Resources

Comprehensive Assessment Report Examples

<http://www.rpgroup.org/resources/comprehensive-assessment-reports-best-practice-examples-around-country>

Resource Compendium on Assessment

<http://www.rpgroup.org/resources/assessment-strategies-and-models-help-tell-story>

What Happened

- 1. Deep campus conversations were started or expanded.**
- 2. When given a framework, colleges were able to swiftly develop meaningful and sustainable processes.**

Campus Conversations

The presence of the assistance team started or evolved campus conversations about a variety of topics:

- Understanding and acting to improve student success
- Are assessment mechanisms useful?
- How can we inject meaning into our processes?

Campus practitioners noted that many of these conversations wouldn't have started without BRIC – provided both motivation and external cover.

Even the process of applying had an effect.

Meaningful and Sustainable Processes

Using BRIC assistance teams and resources, colleges were able to hash out, in one-day or shorter meetings, items such as:

- overhauling program review processes
- integrating various SLO assessment tracks
- creating KPI processes

Colleges felt that these new systems were both more manageable and aligned processes to institutional needs.

What Worked Well

- 1. An external, peer point of view was valuable.**
- 2. Colleges appreciated BRIC TAP's flexible design.**
- 3. Mobilizing the base as well as the leadership was well received.**

External Point of View

- It was vital that the assistance teams were peers that included faculty, researchers, and administrators.
- When assisting teams sat in on existing campus meetings, they were able to facilitate conversations and add new perspectives.
- External assistance team members were helpful in providing a new perspective on conflicts.

Flexible Design

- Colleges liked that there wasn't a proscriptive "off-the-shelf" solution.
- Support was focused on the areas of greatest need that were identified by the college.
- Some colleges wanted more control over agendas, some wanted it designed for them.
- Assistance teams recognized successes as well as challenges.

Mobilizing Multiple Constituencies

- BRIC seeks to mobilize the people who work directly with students as well as energizing leadership.
- Constant focus on practitioners eased campus resistance.
- Having many different champions throughout the college may make change more durable as leaders come and go.

MOVING FROM PROCESS TO PRACTICE

**A concrete example of what
the leading data
conversations looks like**

Galvanizing Conversations on Student Success

Three studies that can change how practitioners think about developmental education:

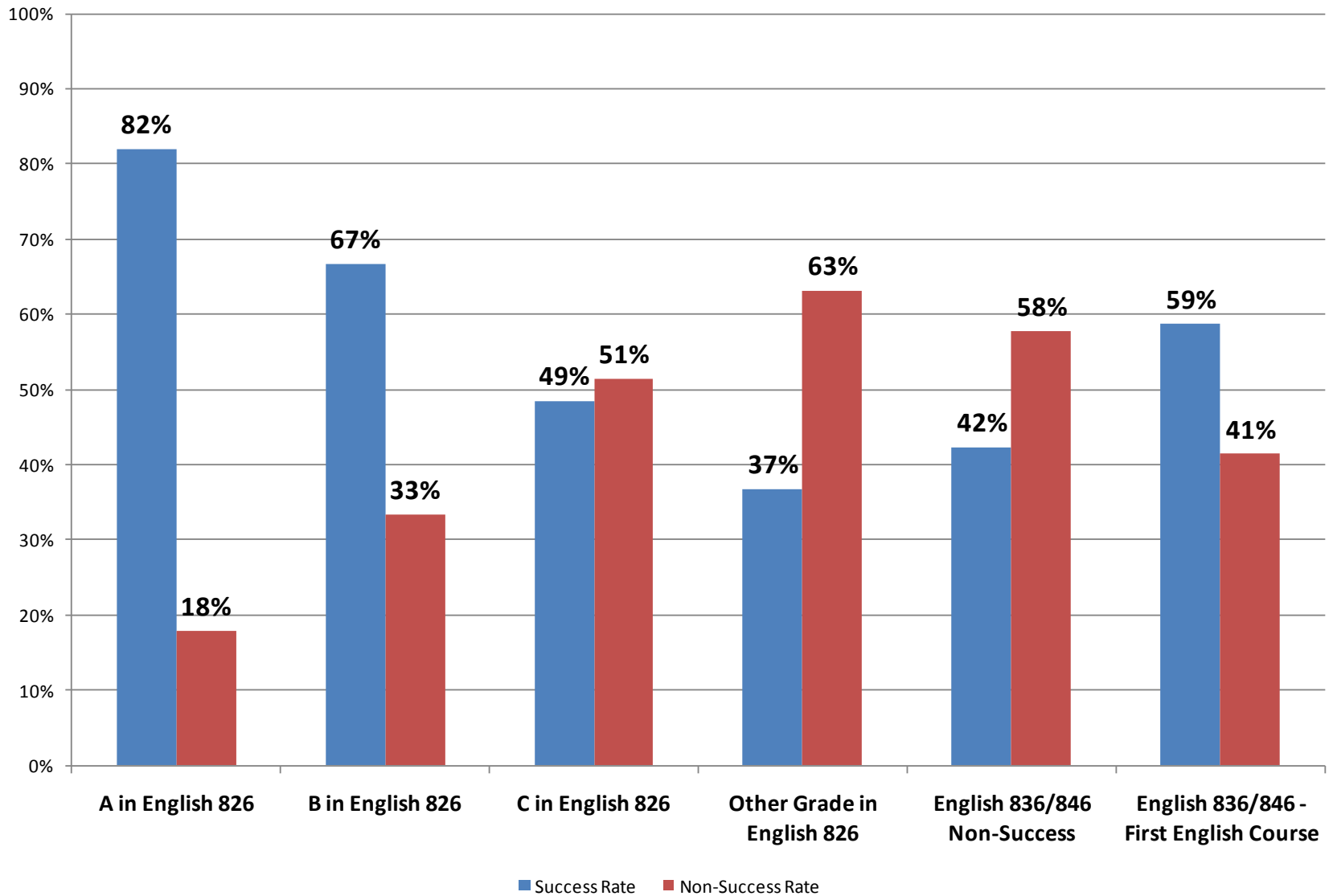
- Grades and success in sequenced courses
- Success in GE courses by simultaneously enrolled English / math students
- Cohort tracking in basic skills sequences

Resources

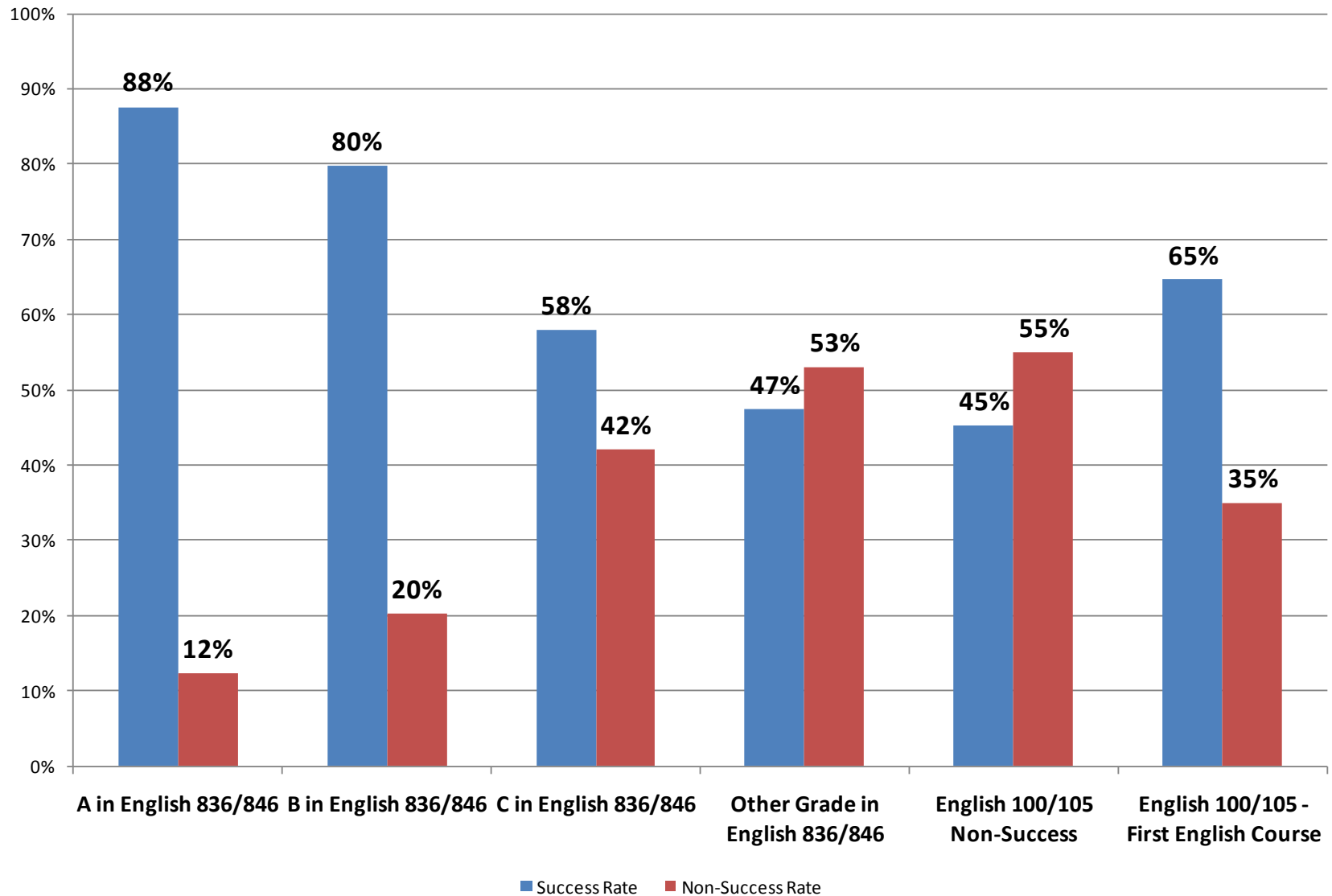
Presentation outlining the three reports

<http://www.rpgroup.org/resources/three-reports-could-energize-your-campus-discussions-about-student-success>

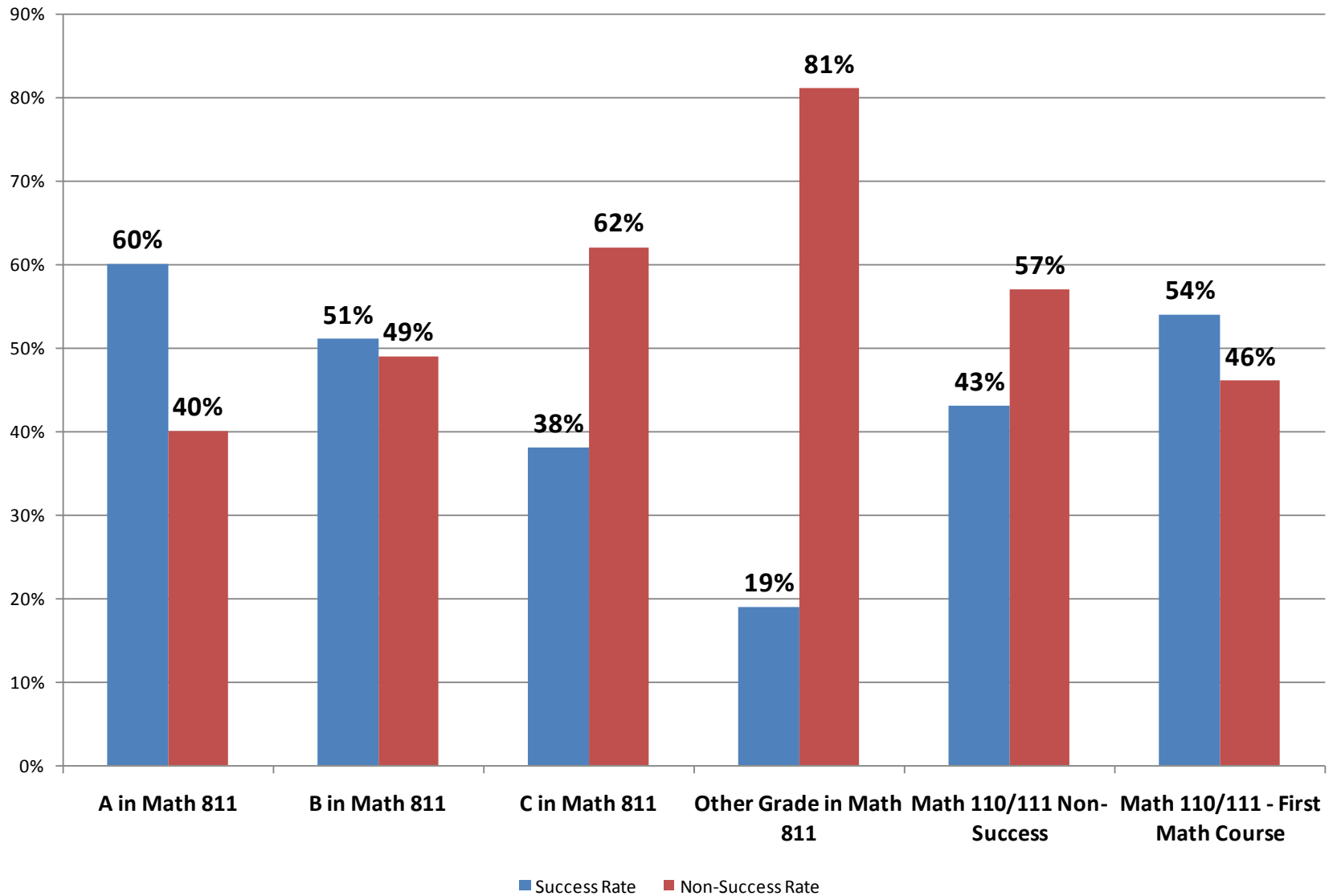
Success Rates of English 836/846 Students by Entry Group



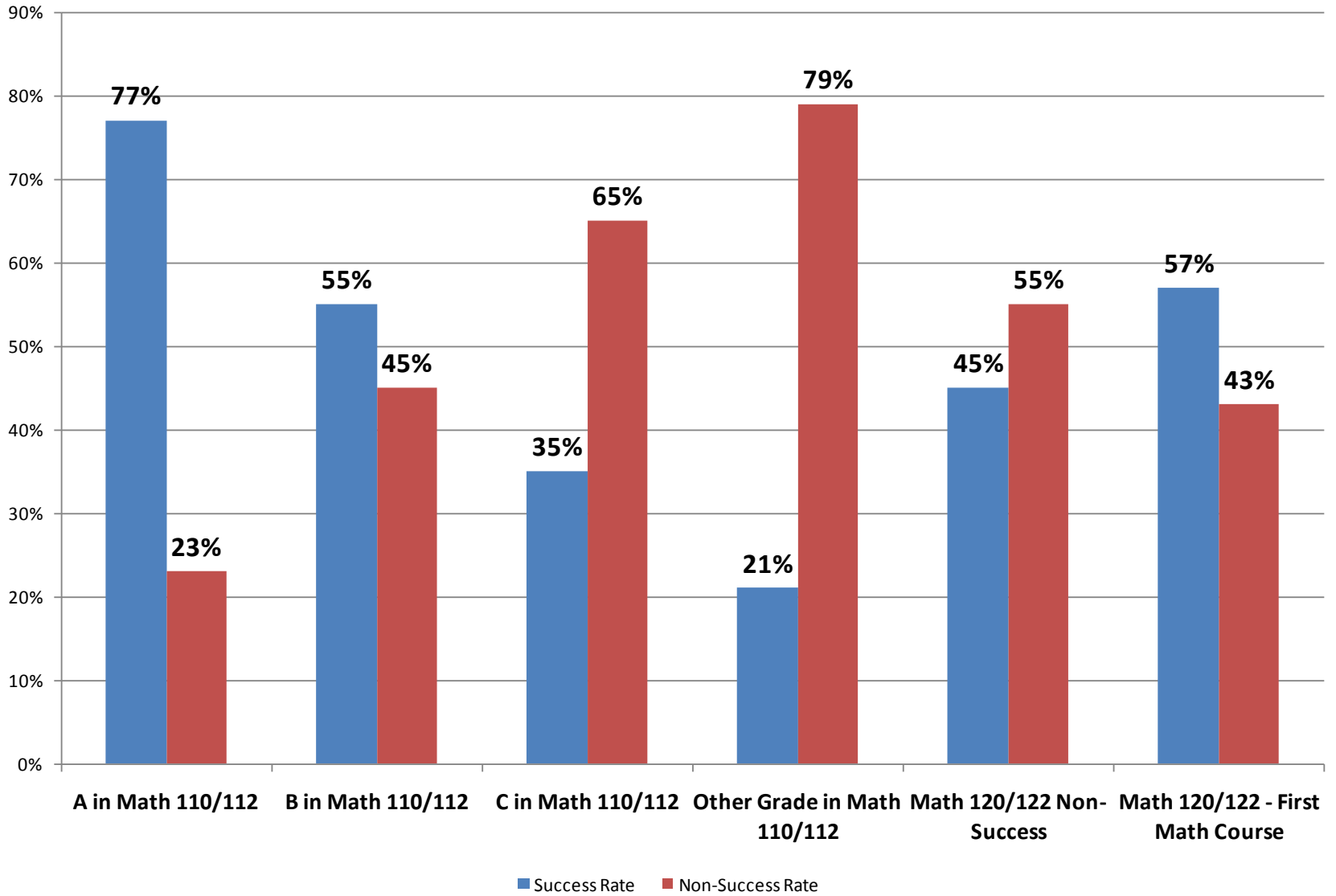
Success Rates of English 100 Students by Entry Group



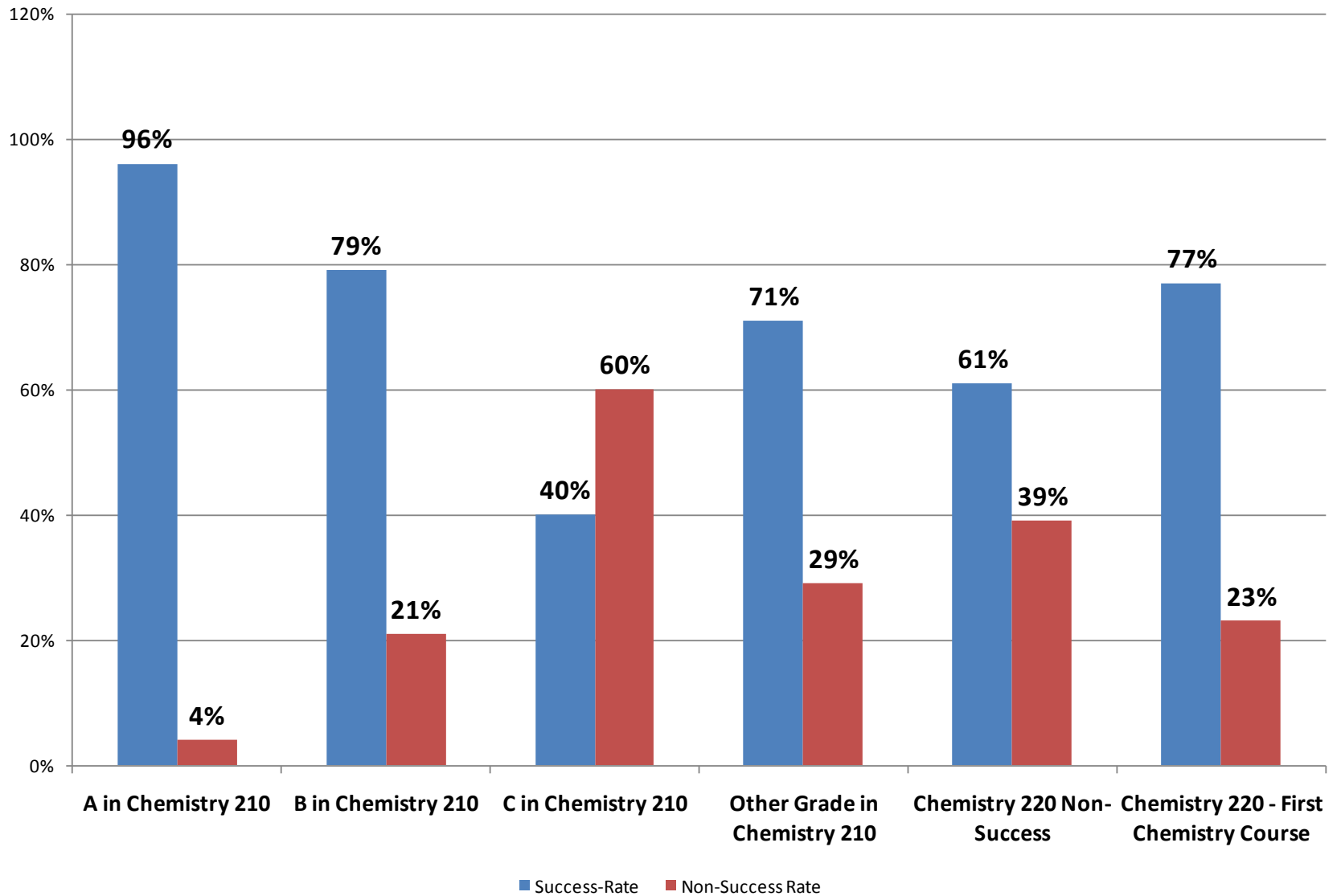
Success Rates of Math 110 Students by Entry Group



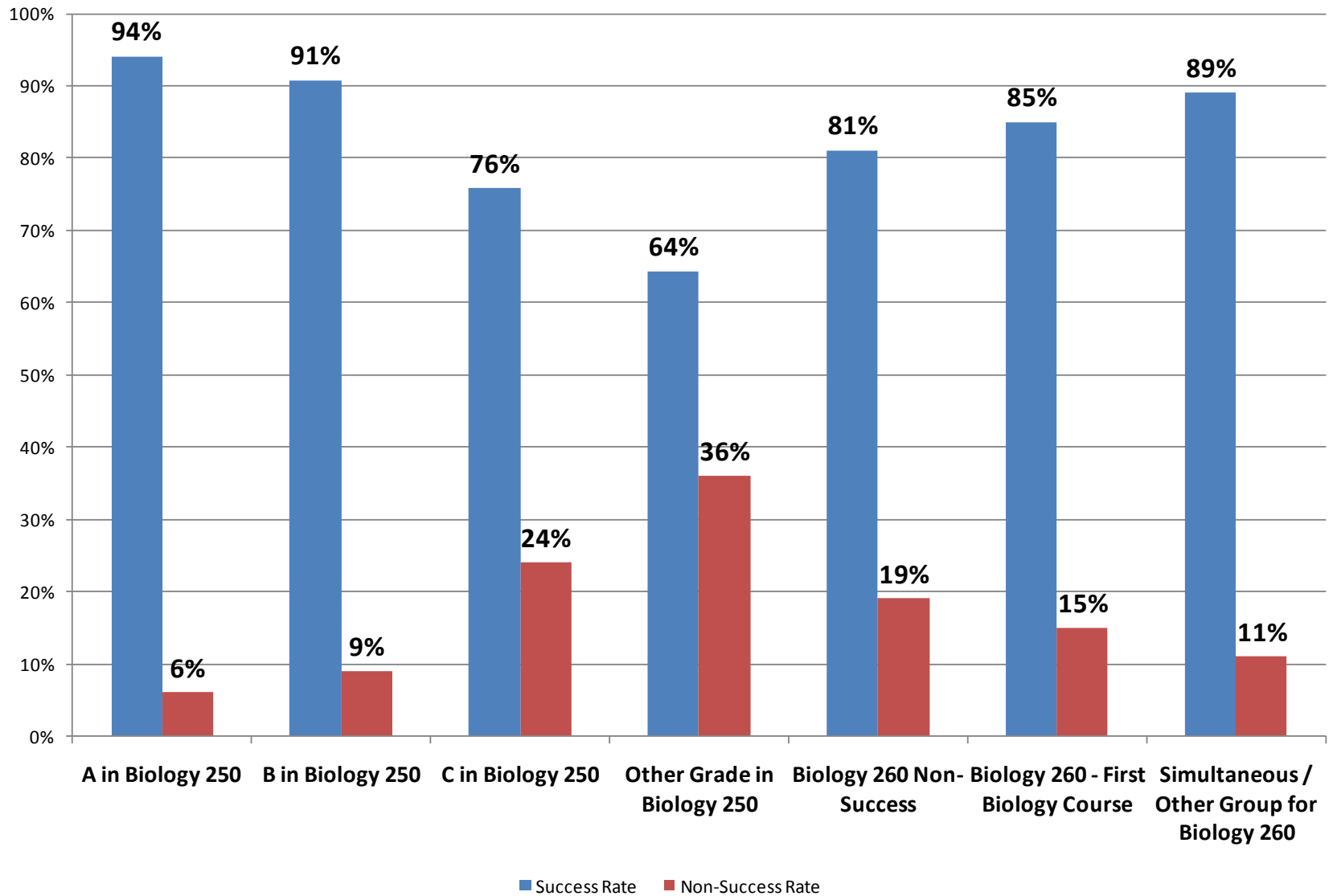
Success Rates of Math 120 Students by Entry Group



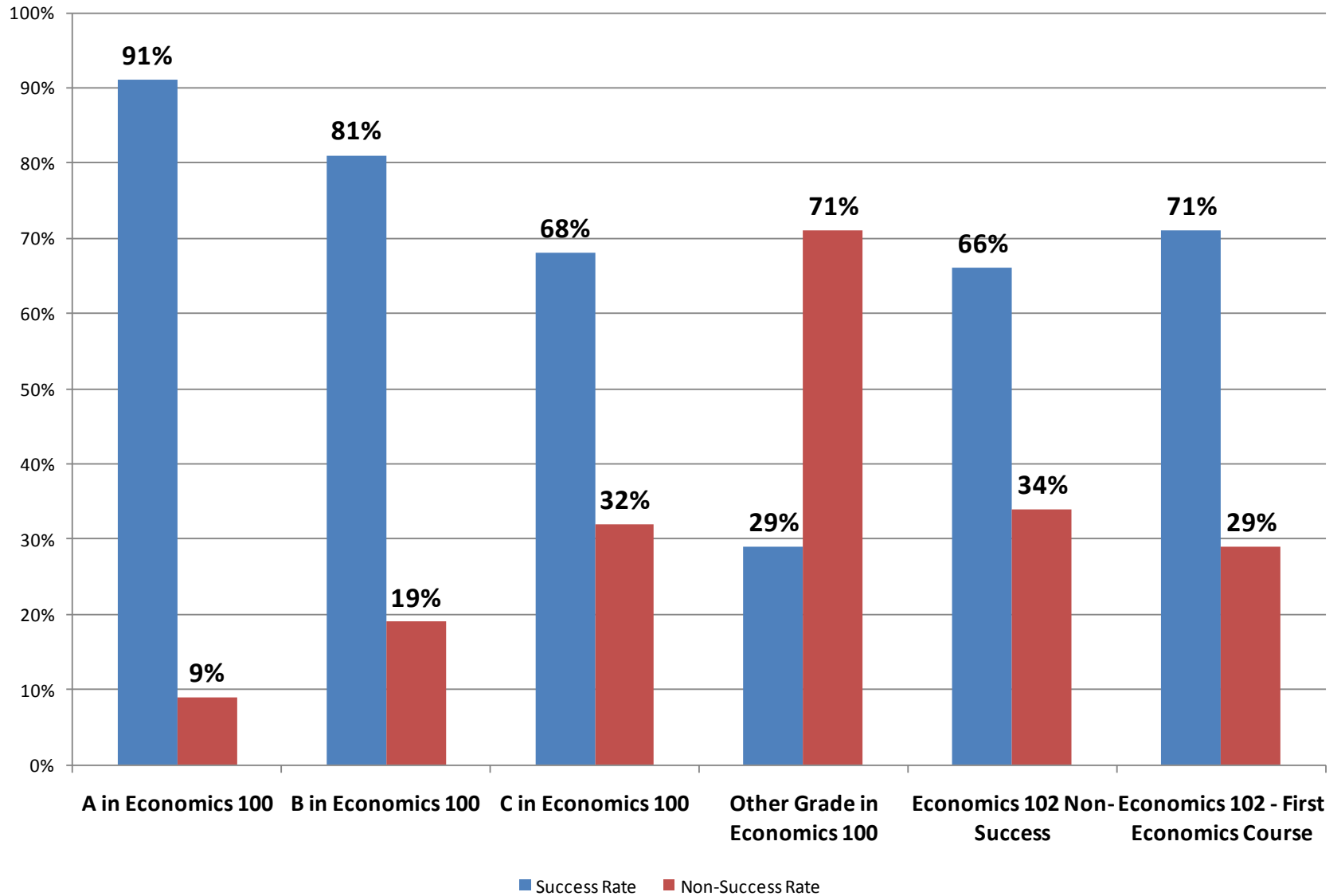
Success Rates of Chemistry 220 Students by Entry Group



Success Rates of Biology 260 Students by Entry Group



Success Rates of Economics 102 Students by Entry Group



Leading the Data Conversation

1. Create a safe place for brainstorming and idea generation from practitioners with multiple perspectives
2. Focus on the outcome you are trying to produce - as ground-level as an SLO in a chemistry course to as 30,000-foot as degree attainment for developmental education students
3. Ensure that you leave every meeting with clear action items, even if you are not "done" with idea generation

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

From our data to your action

Brainstorm (5 minutes)

- Take a few minutes to identify a question that would spark a meaningful dialog on student success at your college.
- Write down your question and what kind of information you could gather on this issue.

Discuss (5 minutes)

Pair up with someone and share ideas:

- How could this research be implemented at your college?
- Who would it be important to discuss this evidence with?
- How could you build this into an existing process so it would be feasible to undertake?

Shout Out

- What was your question?
- What kind of information could you gather on this issue?
- Who should discuss this data?
- How could you incorporate gathering and discussing this evidence into existing college processes?

Final Take Aways

- We can redefine how we define and gather data so that it becomes more meaningful and useful.
- We need to create time and space for conversation that engage a wide range of people in analyzing information and developing action plans.
- We can use existing mechanisms for research, planning, and assessment rather than building additional processes.

Find Out More

RP Group Website

www.rpgroup.org

BRIC TAP

<http://www.rpgroup.org/projects/BRIC.html>

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