A dropout and flunk-out rate of 50% during the freshman year is occurring in many large municipal institutions of higher education, especially those operating under an open admissions policy. This high rate of attrition is felt to be due, in part, to the fact that students entering college under open admissions policies often do not have the basic skills necessary to facilitate learning. It is considered that action research is needed to investigate the relationships between reading scores and grades in order to develop insight and possible administrative solutions to the problems. (HS)
AN OPEN ADMISSIONS POLICY,
READING ABILITY AND GRADES

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Abstract
The relationships among open admissions, reading ability, and grades are varied and complex. The problems have not been resolved. Action research is needed for the benefit of the student and for the benefit of the institution. Money, time, and effort need to be used much more efficiently. This paper selectively surveys the area.
An open admissions policy is practiced by many colleges and universities in America and dictated by law in some states. Such a policy insures matriculation in a state institution of higher education for all high school graduates, regardless of past academic achievement. Consequently, even though the reading ability of approximately one-third of the incoming freshmen has been shown to be deficient, state institutions are required to accept and to meet the needs of these students. As a result, opposition to the theory of open admissions has been forthcoming from educators, governmental leaders, and taxpayers.

If an open admissions policy is to continue, programs meeting the needs of students with limited skills will have to be developed. College reading programs designed to increase reading ability are often very involved and costly. One reason for this is that reading is a body of skills, not a subject, per se, and the skills considered as part

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3Carter, loc.cit.
of reading, vary. Triggs has noted that reading at the college level must involve the following skills: "word recognition, vocabulary, speed, apprehension of meaning, and appreciation."\textsuperscript{4} Cohen developed high intensity learning centers which identify 50 specific reading behaviors.\textsuperscript{5} Carter indicated that study skills are often considered part of reading; he noted that these skills are necessary to identify ideas; to read for a purpose; to make ideas one's own; to make the most of words; what to accept and what to reject; how to skim a textbook effectively; to concentrate; to read different kinds of literature; to read in the field of mathematics; to read in the field of science; to read in the social studies; and to read creatively.\textsuperscript{6}

Another problem associated with college reading programs is attitude--college students are not interested in reading, per se. They want courses which will help them read their textbooks; they want, and expect, courses which will insure that they will get better grades.\textsuperscript{7} Unfortunately, such benefits can not be guaranteed by college reading courses.

Many of the studies evaluating college reading programs use only improved reading skills as the criterion. For example, test score gains have been reported for participants in reading programs at the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Cohen, unpublished paper describing the High Intensity Learning Centers, obtained at the University of Nebraska at Omaha Hilinc Center, March, 1972.
\item Carter, op. cit., p. 337.
\item Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
University of Wisconsin, Quinsigamond Junior College, University of
Maryland, University of Southern Mississippi, and Fordham University. 8
There are fewer studies which utilize grade point average as the criter-
ion of success, but extremely variable results are reported. Studies
done at the University of Minnesota, Washington State University,
University of Pennsylvania, and Lincoln College revealed improved grade
point averages for students taking reading courses, 9 but contrary results
were reported by Losak, Wilson, Regensberg, and Colvin. 10

8V. Bahe, "Reading Instruction and College Achievement, "Read-
ing Improvement, 6:57-61, 77, Winter, 1969; see also J. W. Brown, M.
Watson, and R. Bowden, "Building Basic Skills at the Community Level: A
New Approach," Journal of the Reading Specialist, 9:144-150, 158, May,
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620, May, 1968; see also B. Guice, "An Experiment Combining Instruction
in Comprehension with Practice in the Cloze Procedure in Reading," Dis-
sertation Abstracts, 28:143A, July, 1967; see also J. Cashman, "A Study
of the Relationship Between Organic Factors, Certain Selected Variables
and Progress in a Reading Improvement Program," Dissertation Abstracts,

9Dayton Hultgren and James Crewe, "Athletic Department Read-
ing and Study Skills Program--A Model in Search of Other Applications,"
Seventeenth Yearbook of the National Reading Conference (Milwaukee:
National Reading Conference, 1969), pp. 61-64; see also I. Kelly and D.
Mech, "The Relationship Between College Reading Laboratory Experience
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list, 7:50-54, December, 1967; see also M. Lesnik, "The Effects of an
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30:2725A, January, 1970; see also L. Wade, "A Description of a Junior
College Reading Program," Seventeenth Yearbook of the National Reading

10J. Losak, "An Experiment Designed to Evaluate a Program De-
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sertation Abstracts, 30:5256A, June, 1970; see also R. Wilson, "The In-
fluence of the Effective Study Course at the University of Mississippi
1968; see also G. Regensburg, "Relationship Between Participation in a
Reading Improvement Course and Grade Point Averages Of College Freshmen,"
Dissertation Abstracts, 27:1559A, December, 1966; see also C. Colvin, "A
Reading Program that Failed--Or Did It?" Journal of Reading, 12:142-146,
November, 1968.
A student's deficiency in reading may or may not be suggestive of poor academic achievement at the college or university level. Although it has typically been taken for granted that reading ability can predict college success, there are many studies done in this area which indicate that reading or verbal skills do not contribute significantly or contritute only partially to the accurate prediction of academic success.\textsuperscript{11} There have been many factors other than reading identified as predictors of academic success--high school grades,\textsuperscript{12} intelligence test scores,\textsuperscript{13} knowing how to study,\textsuperscript{14} motivation,\textsuperscript{15} etc.

There are many reading tests available and one of the most popular and frequently used tests of college reading programs is the Nelson Denny Reading Test.\textsuperscript{16} This test has three subtests (reading


comprehension, vocabulary, and reading rate) and was standardized using five types of institutions (universities, liberal arts colleges, teachers colleges, junior colleges, and technical schools). The total standardization population consisted of 7,500 students.\textsuperscript{17} The Nelson Denny Reading Test has also been used for predictive purposes with varying success. Studies by Green and by Pabst did not show scores on the Nelson Denny Reading Test to be predictive of academic achievement,\textsuperscript{18} while Bradshaw's study revealed the test was effective for this purpose.\textsuperscript{19}

A dropout, flunk-out, push-out rate of 50\% during the freshman year is noted in many large municipal, non-live-in institutions of higher education. Reading may be a factor contributing to the "mortality rate."\textsuperscript{20} Action research is needed to investigate the relationships between reading scores and grades in order to develop insight and possible administrative solutions to the problems.


