



The Liberal Arts Gateway Program, Austin Community College

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Disciplines Represented

Please Give Us a Sense of Who is in the Room

- ❖ What do you teach?
 - ❖ What program do you administer?
-



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Faculty Buy-in

Faculty Excitement When Asked to Review Programming and Courses They Teach



I HAVE SO MUCH TO DO ALREADY, AND NOW THEY WANT ME TO DO MORE?



THINKING OF WAYS TO SABOTAGE THIS...



OH GREAT. LOOKS LIKE THERE'S NO GETTING OUT OF THIS.



WHOA! THIS COULD ACTUALLY BE FUN...



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Seeds of Change

Gardner Institute Annual Gateway Course Experience Conference,
2018

❖ **The Problem**

- ❖ Large and Diffuse Department
- ❖ Stagnant Curriculum
- ❖ Lack of Innovation
- ❖ Cycle of Dysfunction

❖ **Atlanta 2018 Conference**

- ❖ **Team from ACC**
 - ❖ Representative from CLS
 - ❖ Dean of Liberal Arts,
Communication and Humanities



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The Mission

To Save Civilization by Equipping Students for Productive Lives in a Pluralistic World

- ❖ **What courses would we create for our disciplines if the goal were to enable students to live aware, meaningful, and informed lives?**
- ❖ **Make the student experience central** and do everything we could to connect the student's experience to the heart of our discipline
- ❖ **Cast the largest possible net**, and welcome divergent voices and perspectives into our ever-expanding great conversations
- ❖ **Anticipate the needs of everyone** touched by our students in the future, and build in reflective preparation for those needs



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The Solution

Find the Right People: Implementation and Development

- ❖ **Identifying and Empowering Faculty**

- ❖ Small innovative group
- ❖ Open to change

- ❖ **Reconnect Faculty with Their Passion: The Discipline**

- ❖ Thematic courses
- ❖ Courses structured around "big" questions

- ❖ **Provide Institutional Support**

- ❖ Course load reduction
- ❖ Stipend for adjunct faculty

- ❖ **Articulate the Principles**

- ❖ Create pilot courses
- ❖ Create an application process

- ❖ **Experimentation without Consequences**

- ❖ Suspend emphasis on student evals
- ❖ Dean/Chair's role: create a space for faculty group to innovate



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The State of the Program

What Growth Looks Like Three Years In

❖ **Students Served**

- ❖ 9000 estimated students since Spring 2020

❖ **Faculty Impacted**

- ❖ 7 faculty members in Spring 2020
- ❖ 50+ faculty by Spring 2023 end
- ❖ Anticipated 70+ for 2023-2024 academic year

❖ **Courses Redesigned**

- ❖ 60+

❖ **Departments Impacted**

- ❖ Composition and Literary Studies
- ❖ Philosophy
- ❖ Humanities
- ❖ Student Development
- ❖ World Languages



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Classroom Guiding Principles

Composition and Literary Studies

❖ Pluralism

❖ Literacies

❖ Evidence

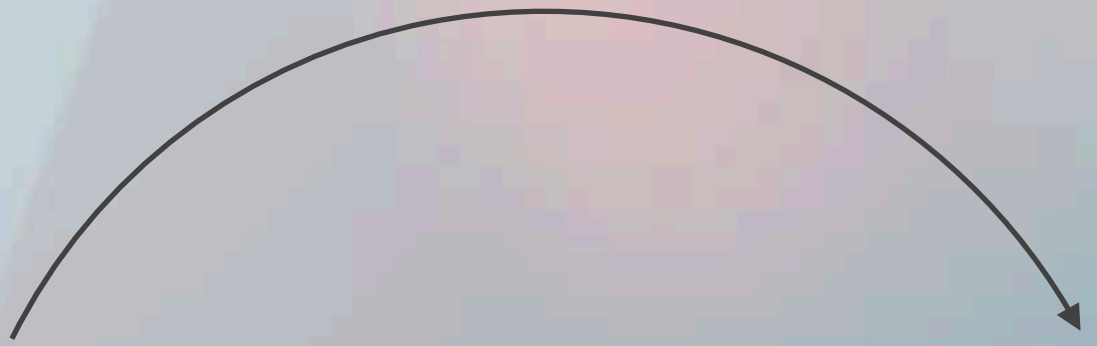
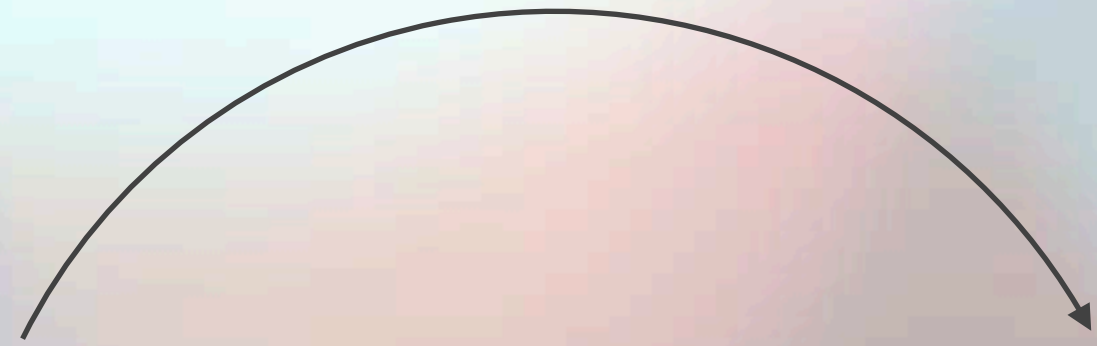
❖ Equity

❖ Engagement

Principle

Implementation
Idea

Assignment





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Principle: Equity

Promote Student Success Regardless of Previous Educational Experience or Technological Mastery.

- ❖ **Brainstormed idea:** Provide information on multiple avenues of support for student success (tutors, counselors, emergency fund assistance, childcare)
 - ❖ Assignment: College Resources Scavenger Hunt (in teams)
- ❖ **Brainstormed idea:** Assign readings and/or writing assignments that explore issues of equity and social justice
 - ❖ Assignment: Analysis Essay on the UN Declaration of Human Rights

Principle

Implementation
Idea

Assignment



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Ideas for Equity

Promote Student Success Regardless of Previous Educational Experience or Technological Mastery.

- ❖ Create welcoming and inclusive syllabi
- ❖ Discuss/demystify college/academia norms and expectations
- ❖ Explore English trauma, concepts of multiple intelligences and growth mindset
- ❖ Chunk up/scaffold assignments so that skills build
- ❖ Discuss belonging in college and its links to signifiers such as clothing and speech
- ❖ Explore idea of multiple discourse communities

Principle

**Implementation
Idea**

Assignment



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Disciplinary Toolkit

Assignments for Equity

- ❖ Adversity personal narrative
- ❖ Discussion Board posts on real lived experiences of race, class, gender, religion
- ❖ Readings and videos on varieties of English: dialects, jargon, levels of diction, code-switching, power of Standard Spoken and Edited English
- ❖ Persuasive essay on a local problem

Principle

Implementation
Idea

Assignment



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Liberal Arts Gateway Redesigns

A Sampling of Redesigned Courses in the Program

❖ **Composition and Literary Studies**

❖ **ENGL 1301: “Into the Wilderness”**

- ❖ Students begin with the legal definition of physical wilderness in the United States and then trace discussions of this type of wilderness in American literature, history, scholarship, and popular culture.
- ❖ Students consider how America’s interaction with wilderness as a place and a concept relates to its interaction with figurative kinds of wilderness: less obvious or tangible kinds of unknowns.
- ❖ As the course progresses, each student will be asked to formulate their own unique definition of wilderness and apply it analytically to a topic of their choice.
- ❖ Previous students have explored topics such as college as a wilderness for first-generation students and the teenage mind as a wilderness in adult-dominated discourse.



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Liberal Arts Gateway Redesigns

A Sampling of Redesigned Courses in the Program

- ❖ **Composition and Literary Studies**
- ❖ **ENGL 1302: “Food and Place”**
- ❖ Course focuses on the ways in which food is linked to place (or terroir) and the way in which food and the places and cultures from which foods originated are depicted in poetry, short stories, a novel, and film.
- ❖ Students discuss questions of representation (i.e. who gets to tell stories and who is left out) while sharpening writing, critical thinking, and analysis skills over the course of the semester.



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Activity: Brainstorm and Share

Apply Your Disciplinary Lens

- ❖ What are some guiding principles of your discipline?
- ❖ Composition and Literary Studies example:
 - ❖ Pluralism
 - ❖ Literacies
 - ❖ Evidence
 - ❖ Equity
 - ❖ Engagement

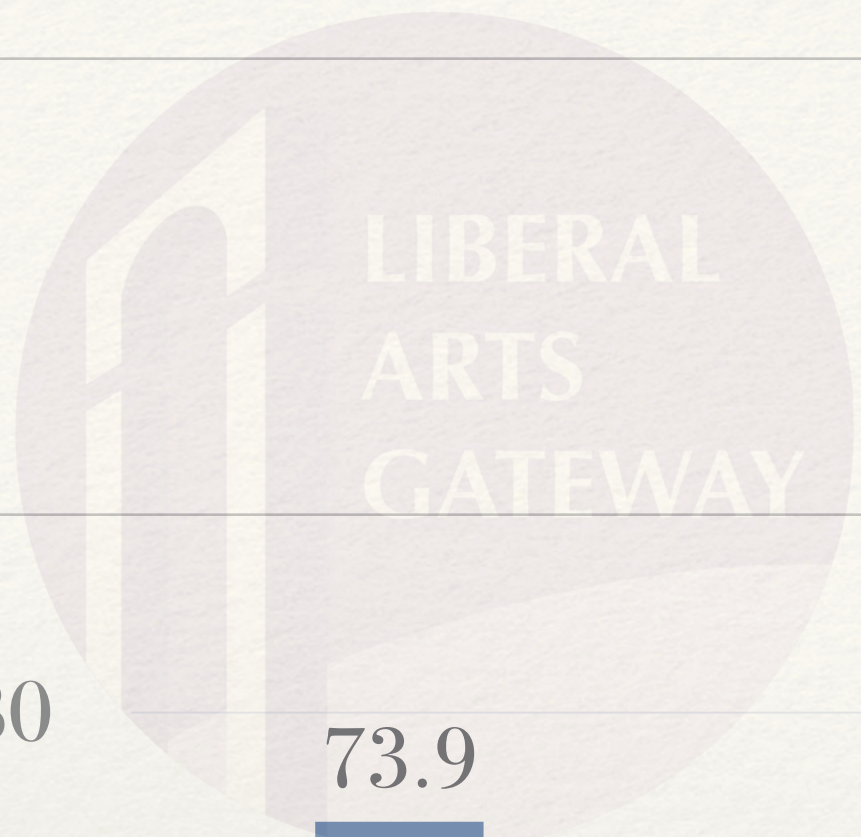


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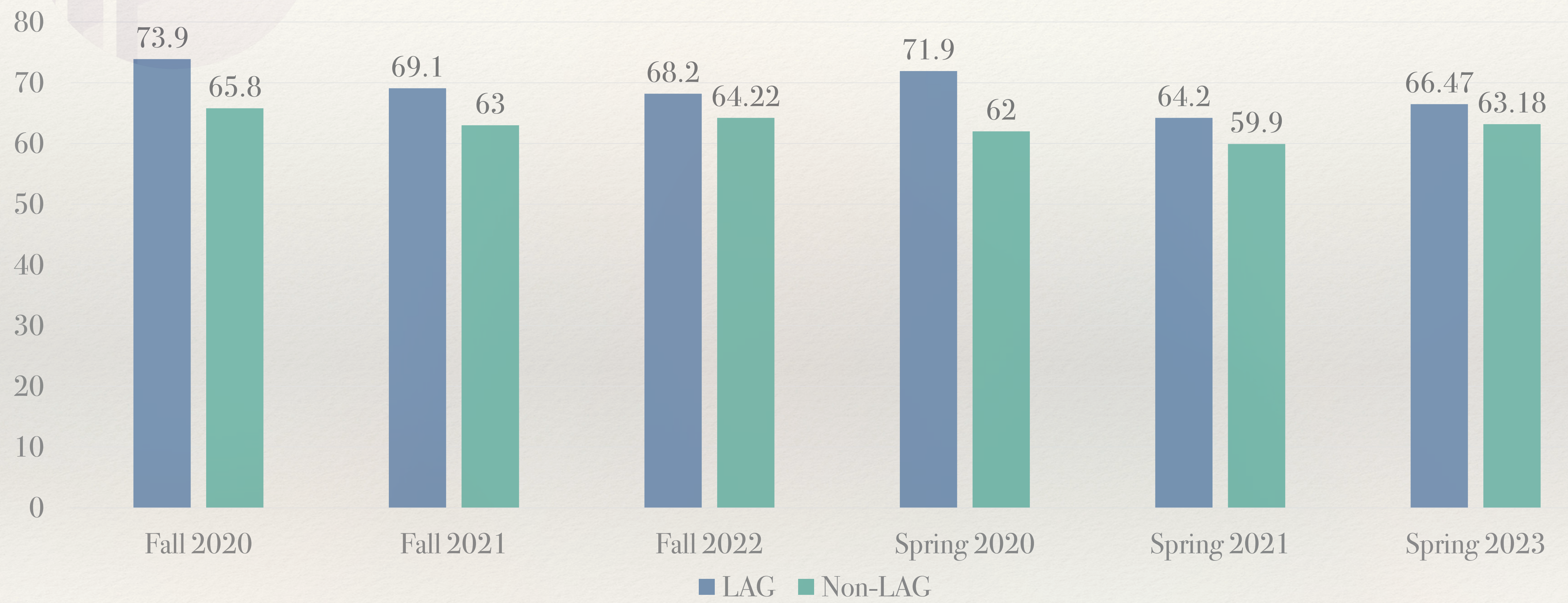
Program Effectiveness

What Does the Data Show?

- ❖ Compiled disaggregated data on student success in LAG courses compared to traditional courses
- ❖ Conducted end-of-semester surveys to LAG composition students
- ❖ Compared results for LAG students and traditional students in departmental assessment of student analysis essays

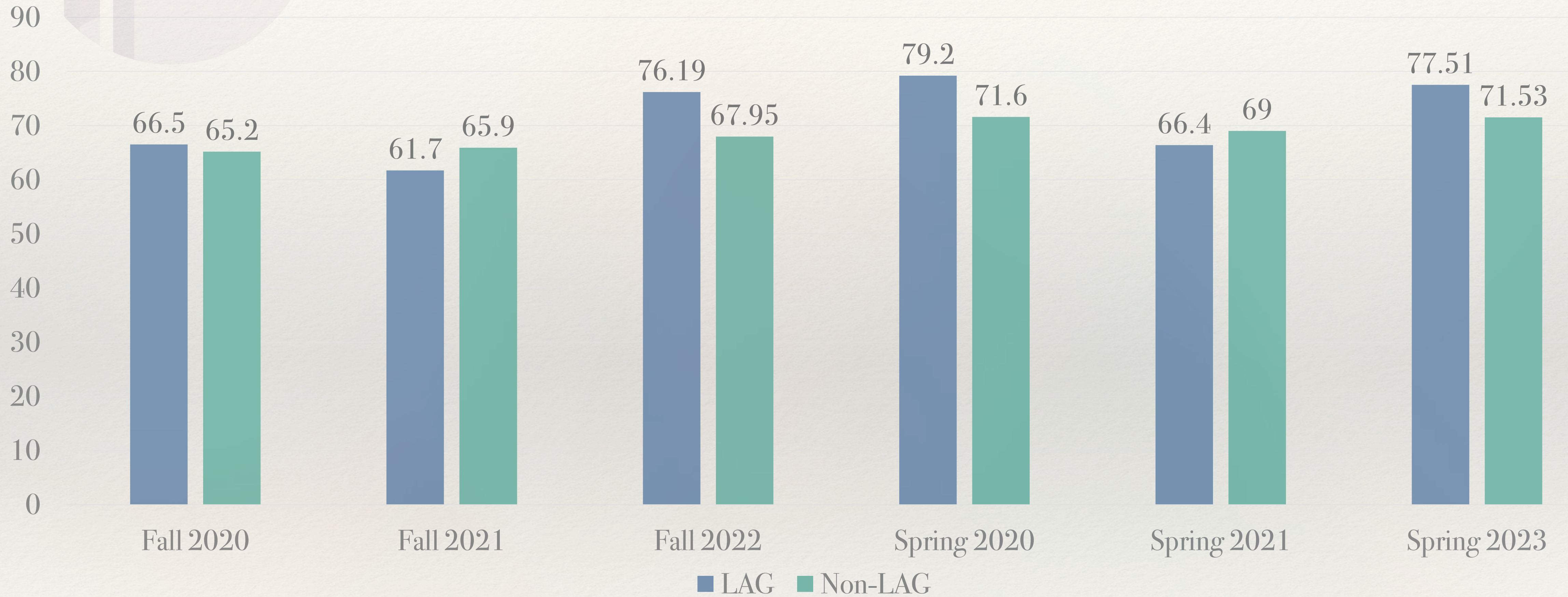


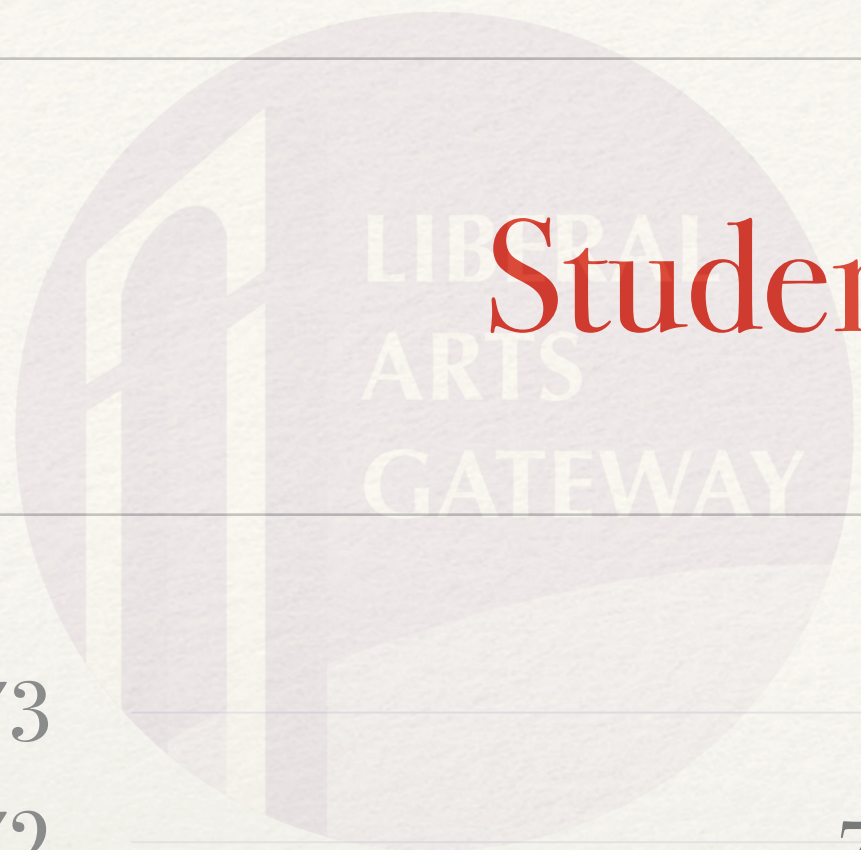
Composition I Student Success



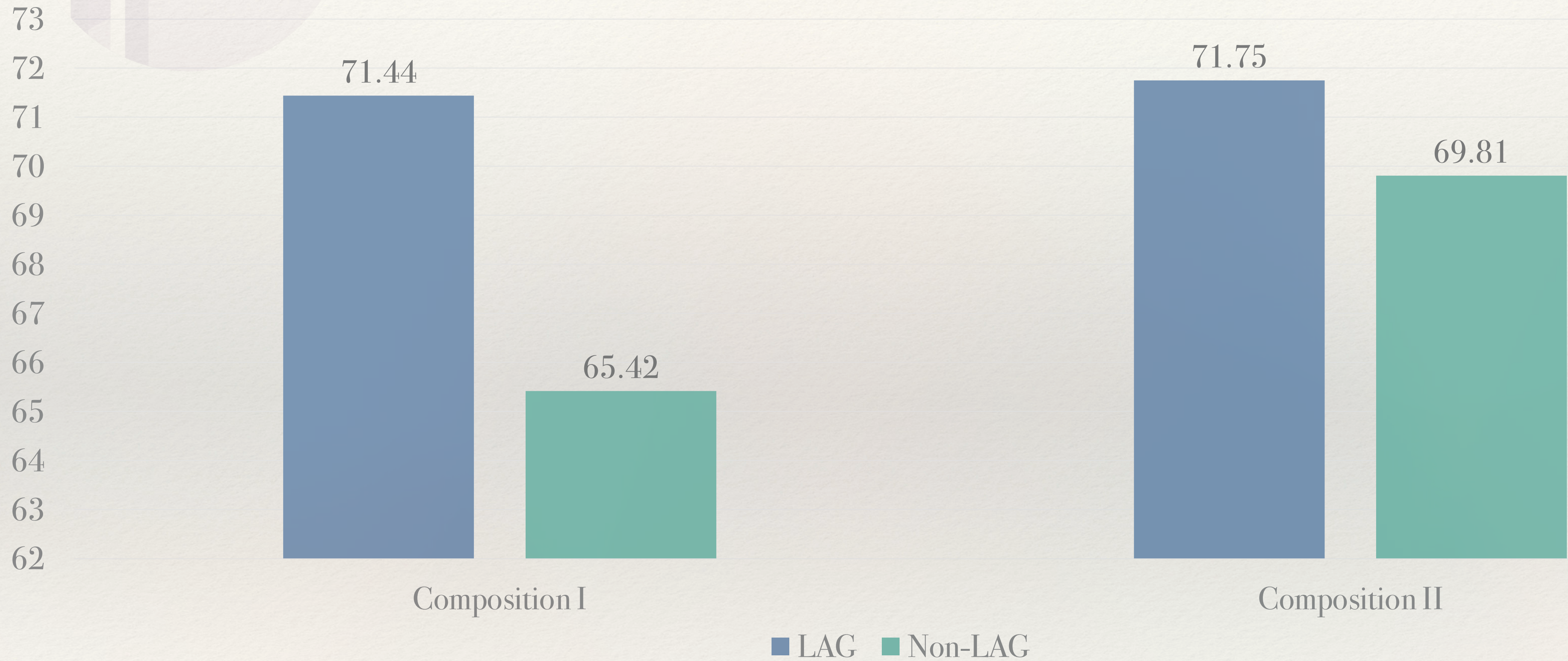


Composition II Student Success

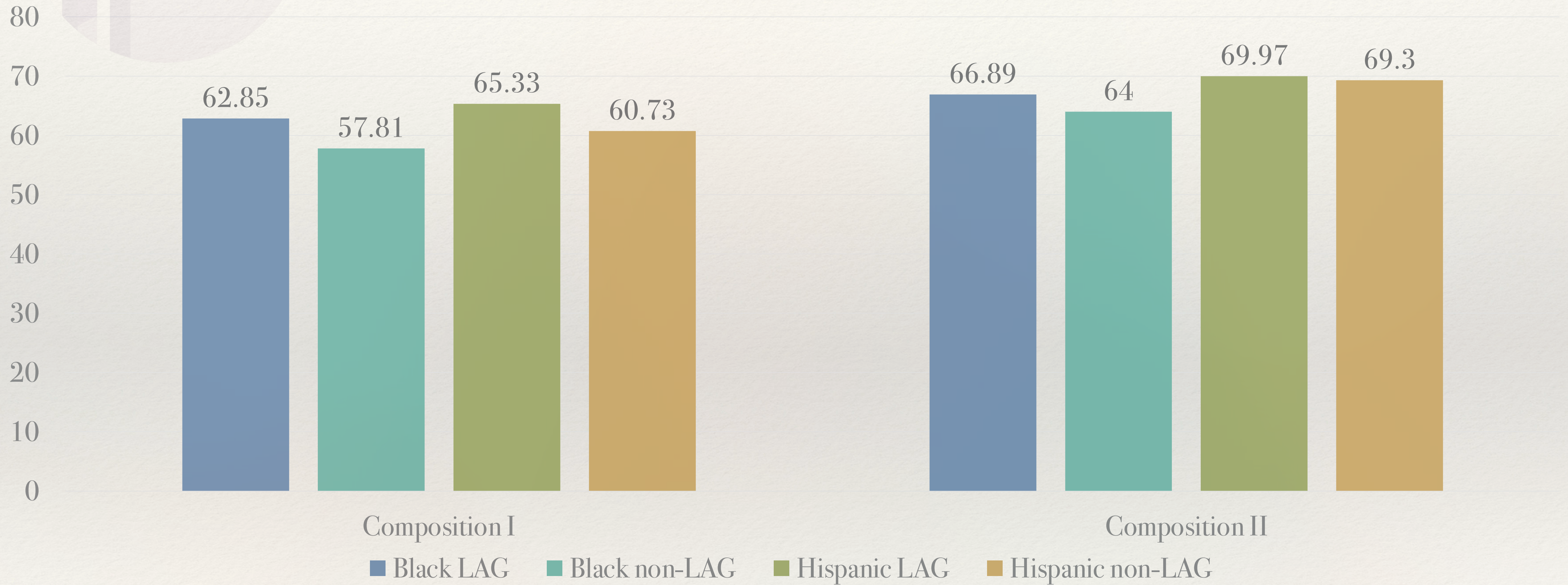




Student Success Averages over Eight Semesters, 2020-2023



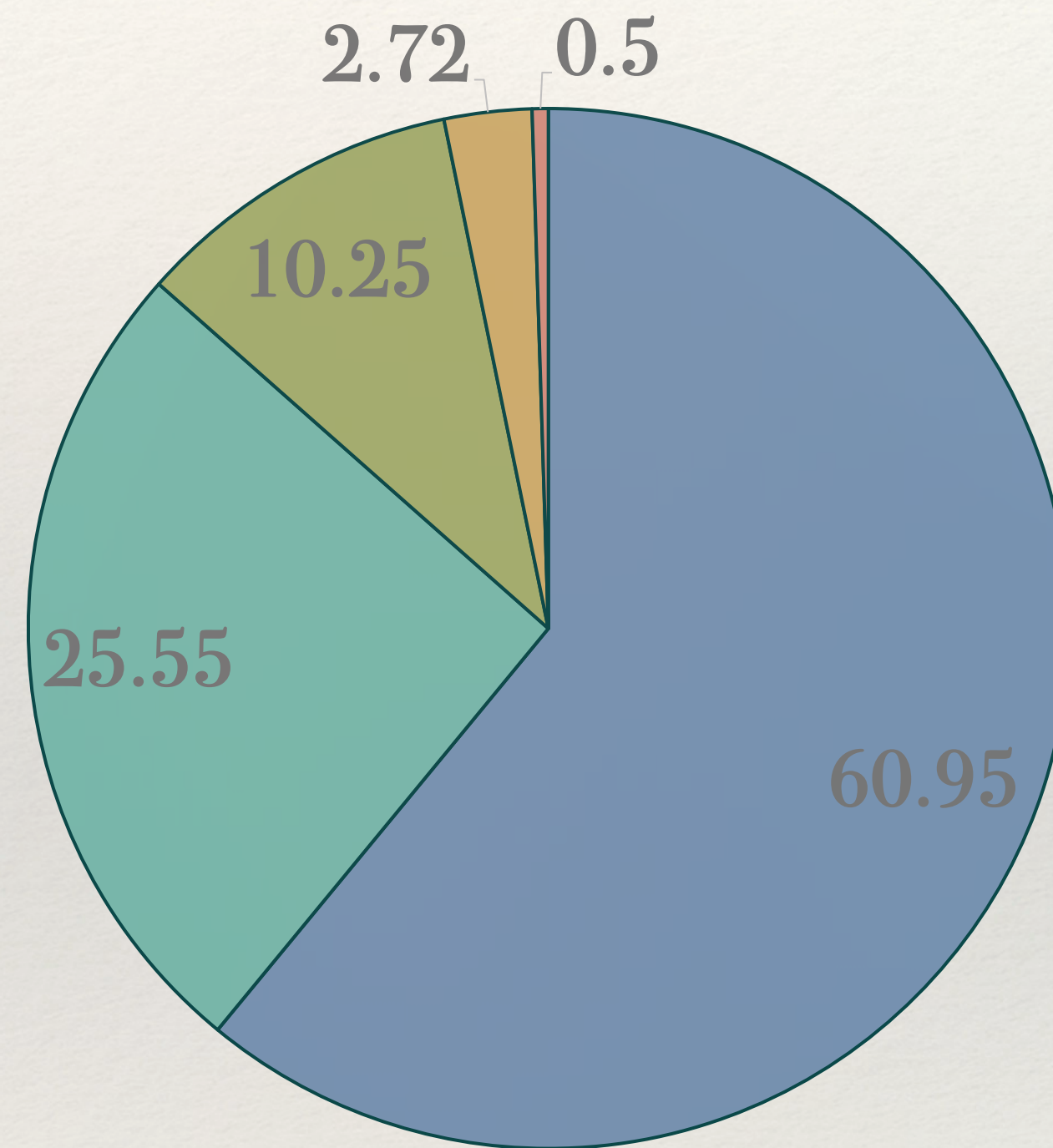
Black and Hispanic Composition I Student Success Averages over Eight Semesters, 2020-2023





Student Survey Ratings of LAG Comp I and II

Rating (average for 4 semesters)



■ Excellent ■ Very Good ■ Acceptable ■ Needs Improvement ■ Unacceptable



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Data on Student Success

Top Value found in Liberal Arts Gateway Composition Classes

- ❖ I felt included in the class—89.2%
- ❖ I am confident that I can find trustworthy evidence—88.5%
- ❖ I am better prepared for future college courses—87.9%
- ❖ Material was relevant to my life—87.9%
- ❖ I was able to assess my learning and track my progress—87.3%
- ❖ I am a more effective writer—87.3%



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Data on Student Success

Departmental Assessment Results

- ❖ 215 analytical essays assessed
- ❖ LAG students had lowest rate of essays assessed as "not passing" (18%)
- ❖ LAG students had highest rate of essays rated "good" or "superior"
 - ❖ LAG 37%
 - ❖ Traditional 31%
 - ❖ Co-Req 26%
 - ❖ Dual Credit 20%
- ❖ LAG students scored highest in the category of critical thinking



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Practical Considerations from the Department Chair

Motivating Faculty and Establishing Guidelines

❖ **Listen to All Faculty**

- ❖ What's important?
- ❖ Who's willing to talk?

❖ **Remove Roadblocks**

- ❖ Quick, small, free to fail
- ❖ Intervene with the higher-ups
- ❖ Compensate

❖ **Spread the Word**

- ❖ Advertise success
- ❖ Create rewards for those who engage

❖ **Create a Narrative**

- ❖ Faculty Empowerment = Student Success



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Impact on the Department

An Engine for Innovation and Change

- ❖ **Disciplinary and Pedagogy Incubator**
 - ❖ Big problems solved on a small scale
 - ❖ Effective practices adopted by the department
 - ❖ Curriculum development: AI policies + retreat
- ❖ **Training, Onboarding, and Ongoing Support**
 - ❖ Recruitment
 - ❖ Mentorship
- ❖ **Showcasing Student Voices**
 - ❖ Student Academic Journal: *Curiositas*
 - ❖ Undergraduate Research Symposium
- ❖ **Building Community**
 - ❖ Communities of practice
 - ❖ Coreq partnerships
 - ❖ Opportunities for adjunct & dual credit/enrollment faculty





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Impact on Faculty

Feedback From Faculty in the Program

- ❖ “Teaching in LAG has allowed me to **reinvigorate my curriculum**—and to feel that these big ideas I cherish are being shared across the community. . . .I believe teaching the liberal arts shapes the city of Austin and our service area in profound ways.”
- ❖ [LAG] is **extremely faculty-centered**. The other faculty in my community of practice were sources of inspiration, trouble-shooters, and reference guides.
- ❖ “**LAG feels very grass roots**. The questions, the work, the conversations feel organically inspired by the group rather than top down professional development. The fellowship is welcoming, inclusive, validating, and collaborative - a group truly represented by the term “fellowship!””
- ❖ “I have never participated in anything remotely like this at ACC.... **This has transformed my relationship to my job** -- especially as an adjunct, where I can feel very isolated and forgotten. I found this whole process invaluable, and I’m GRATEFUL to be able to participate again next year.”



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Reasons for Success

A Simple Formula: Faculty Empowerment Equates to Student Success

- ❖ Energized professors help motivate and energize students.
- ❖ Community building between faculty and students
- ❖ Assigning work relevant to students' lives
- ❖ Shared governance and communal model
 - ❖ “lifts all boats”
 - ❖ Not a top-down approach
- ❖ Faculty driven
 - ❖ keeps the program nimble, responsive, and flourishing



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Q&A Discussion

Do You Have Any Questions for Us?



THANK YOU!

Please visit our website for more information.

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