

Keys to college:

IELTS score gains among international students in an undergraduate conditional admission program

Drexel University

REESE M. HEITNER, PhD

rmh54@drexel.edu

English Language Center

BARBARA HOEKJE, PhD

hoekje@drexel.edu

www.drexel.edu/elc

PATRICK BRACISZEWSKI

plb36@drexel.edu

The Drexel International Gateway Program ("Gateway") is a one-year (four 10-week term) conditional admission program designed to provide international students a foundational year of intensive English program (IEP) study supplemented by test preparation courses as well as credit-bearing university courses within the College of Arts and Sciences (CoAS) at Drexel University. In order to matriculate, participants must progress through the Gateway curriculum, earn a letter of recommendation from their academic advisor, and achieve a minimal IELTS program exit score of 6.0. The current study addresses three research questions:

1. What is the dynamic of English language proficiency as measured by successive IELTS scores and IEP course level progression?
2. What is the relationship among initial program entry IELTS scores and credit-bearing university course GPAs?
3. Are first-term post-Gateway matriculated student GPAs comparable to direct admission peers?

In short, does the Gateway program prepare low-proficiency international students to succeed in college?

GATEWAY PROGRAM DESIGN

Requirements

Gateway entry score requirements:	Gateway exit requirements:
TOEFL 460	Satisfactory progress
IBT 49	Letter of recommendation
IELTS 4.5	IELTS 6.0

Gateway students have one year (consisting of four 10-week terms) to progress through program.

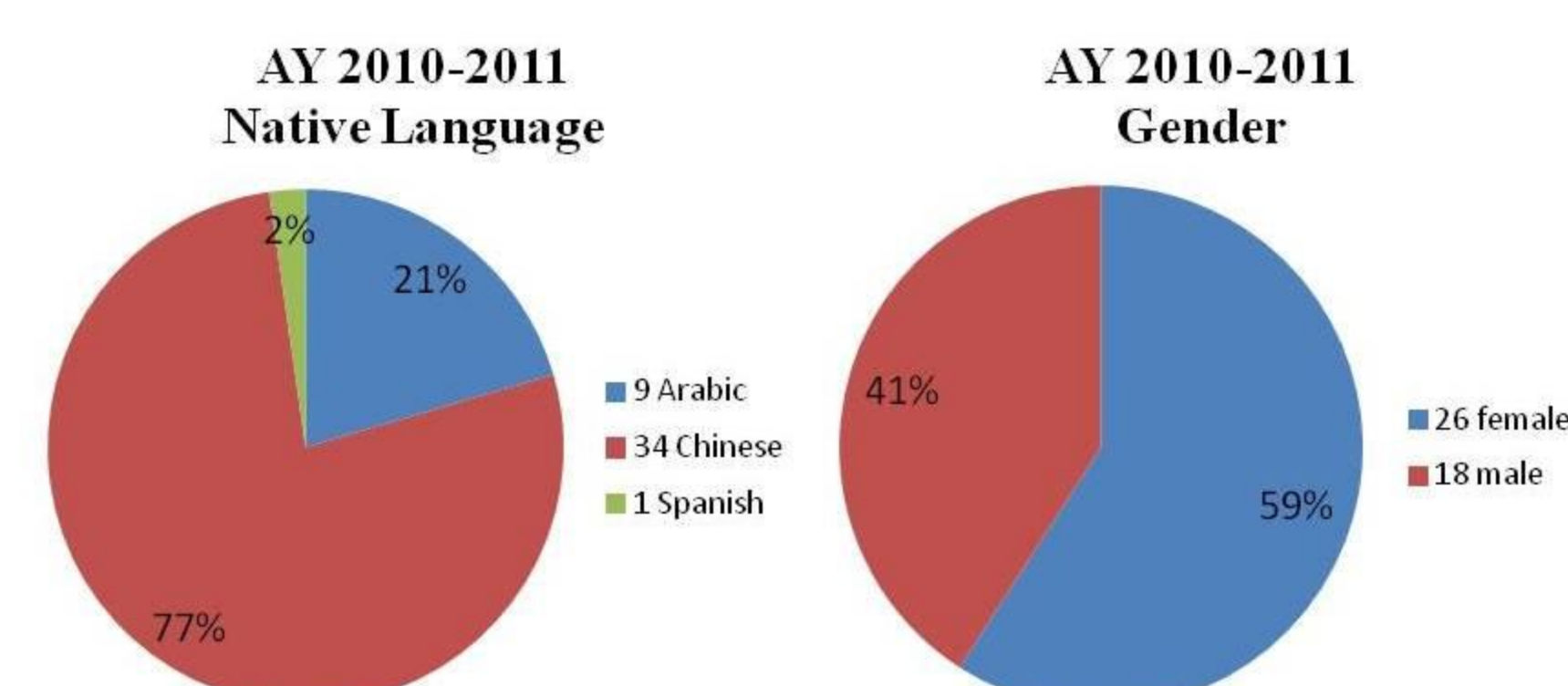
Features

- ✓ Intensive English language courses
- ✓ IELTS preparation courses
- ✓ Up to 17 hours of university credit courses in mathematics, science and communication

Course of Study

Term Requirements	Term 1—Fall	Term 2—Winter	Term 3—Spring	Term 4—Summer
English Language/Communication Skills	15 hours ELC: • Oral Communications • Written Communications	15 hours ELC: • Oral Communications • Written Communications	7.5 hours ELC: • Oral Communications OR • Written Communications	10.5 hours ELC: • English for University Success • Oral Communications
ELC Support	• Advising	• Advising	• Advising	• Advising
College of Arts & Sciences Credit Courses		• MATH (3 credits)	• MATH (4 credits) • COMM: Special Topics in Communication (3 credits)	• MATH (4 credits) • SCIENCE (3 credits)
Test Preparation	• 6 hours IELTS/TOEFL preparation	• 6 hours IELTS/TOEFL preparation	• 3 hours IELTS/TOEFL preparation	
Testing	• IELTS/TOEFL	• IELTS/TOEFL • Math placement test	• IELTS/TOEFL • Math placement test	• Testing as needed
Drexel Support		• Math Resource Center	• Math Resource Center	• Math Resource Center

Basic Demographics

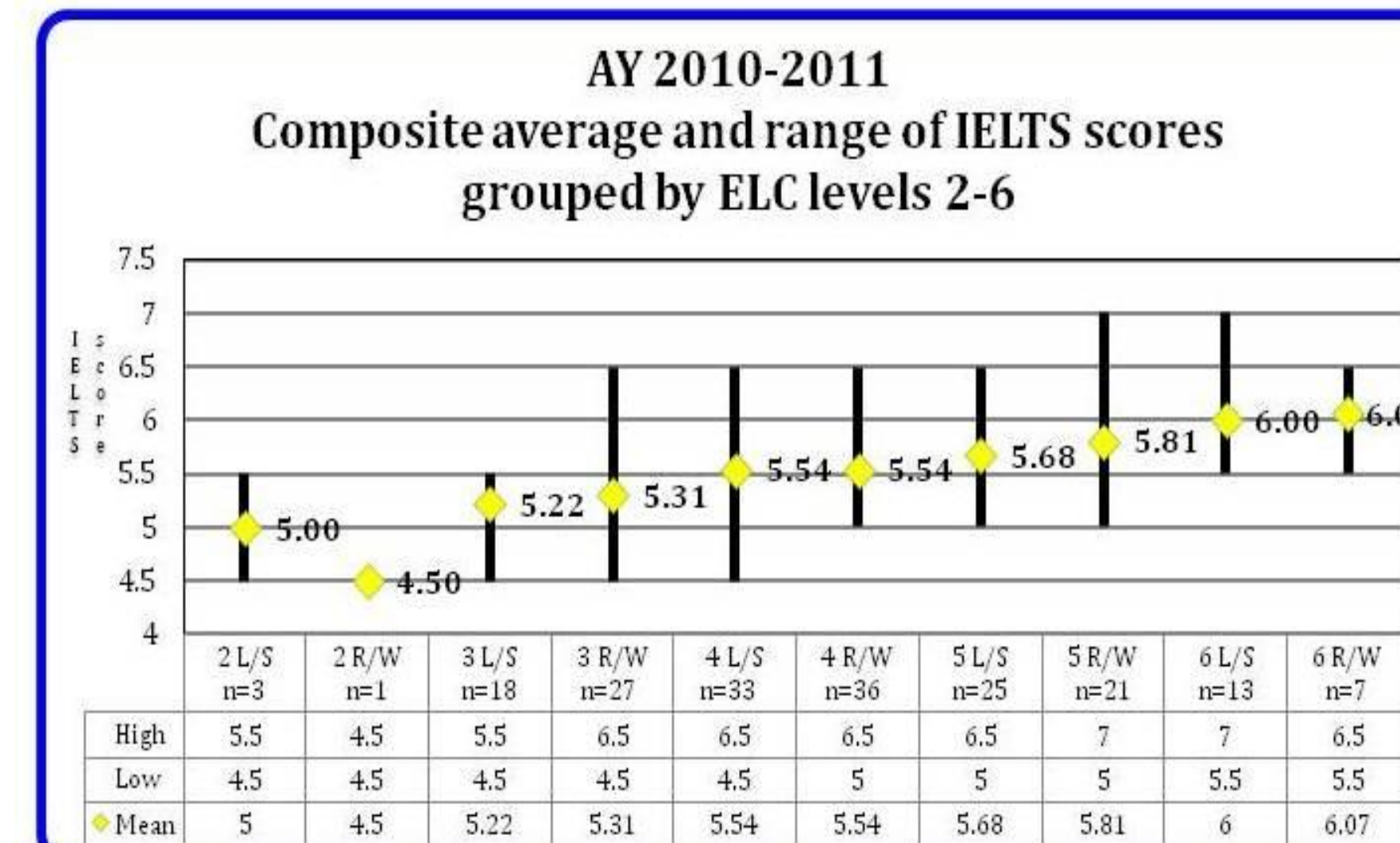
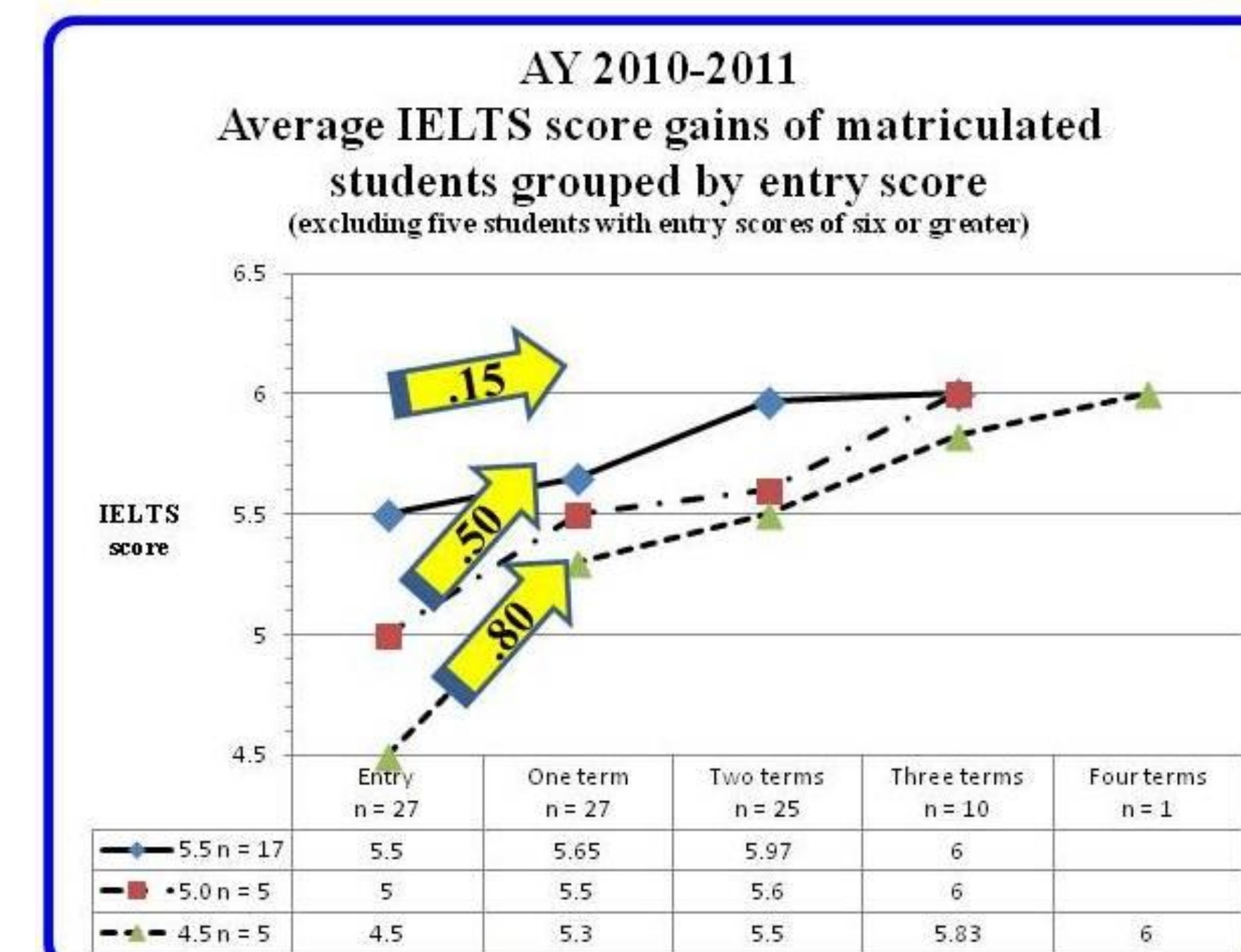
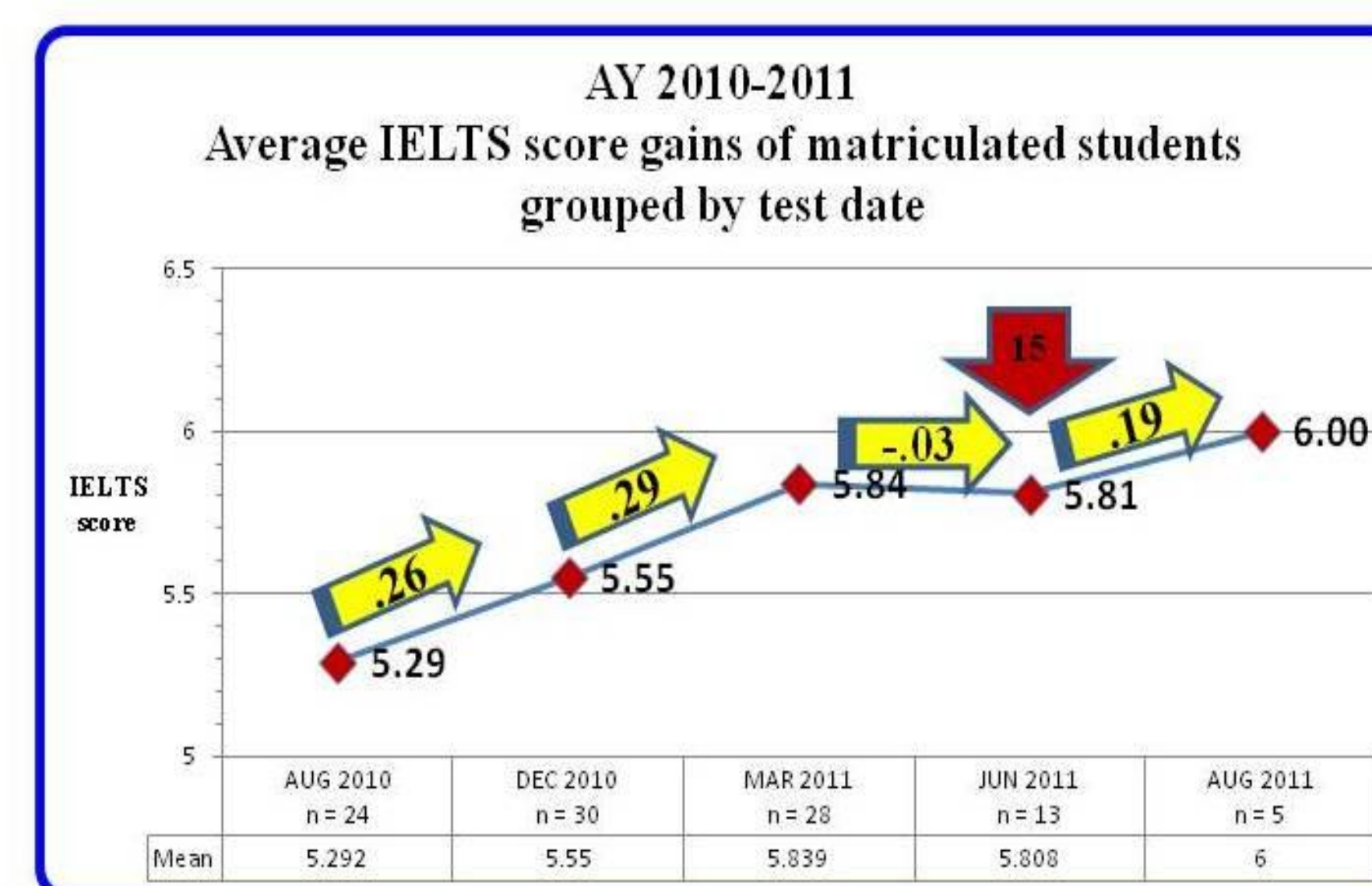


AY 2010-2011 enrollment

	Fall 2010	Winter 2011	Spring 2011	Summer 2011	AY 2010-2011 Matriculation
Total participants	35	38 ¹	32 ²	6 ³	32 ⁴
Numbered cleared for matriculation	0	0	26 ⁵	6	32
Percentage cleared for matriculation	0%	0%	81%	100%	100%
Completion rate					32/44 73%

1. Although a total of 44 students participated in the year-long program, six of 35 Fall 2010 students left the program during Fall 2010 (29 remaining). Nine students then joined the program prior to Winter 2011 (ending 33).
2. Prior to Spring 2011, one student transferred while five students were dismissed (ending 32).
3. Six students were required to attend classes during Summer 2011.
4. Thirty-two of the 44 participants successfully completed the program and matriculated.
5. Twenty-six students met all program requirements by end of Spring 2011.
6. Sixteen of the 44 participants entered the program with TOEFL scores that met the IELTS score. Their TOEFL scores were converted to IELTS scores for the uniform tracking of score gains according to a conversion chart provided by Educational Testing Services, see www.ets.org/ielts/ielts-to-ielts-conversion.

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

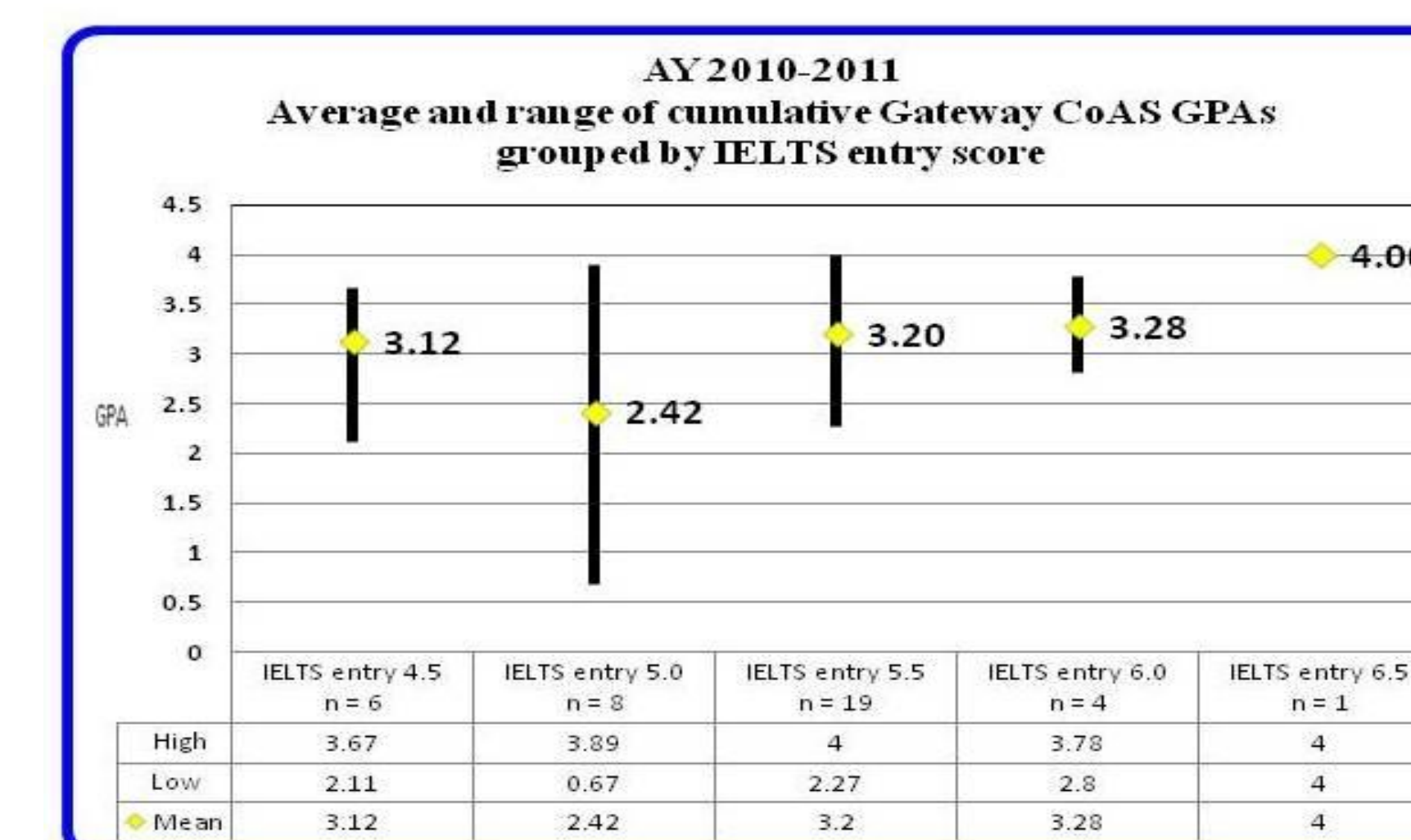
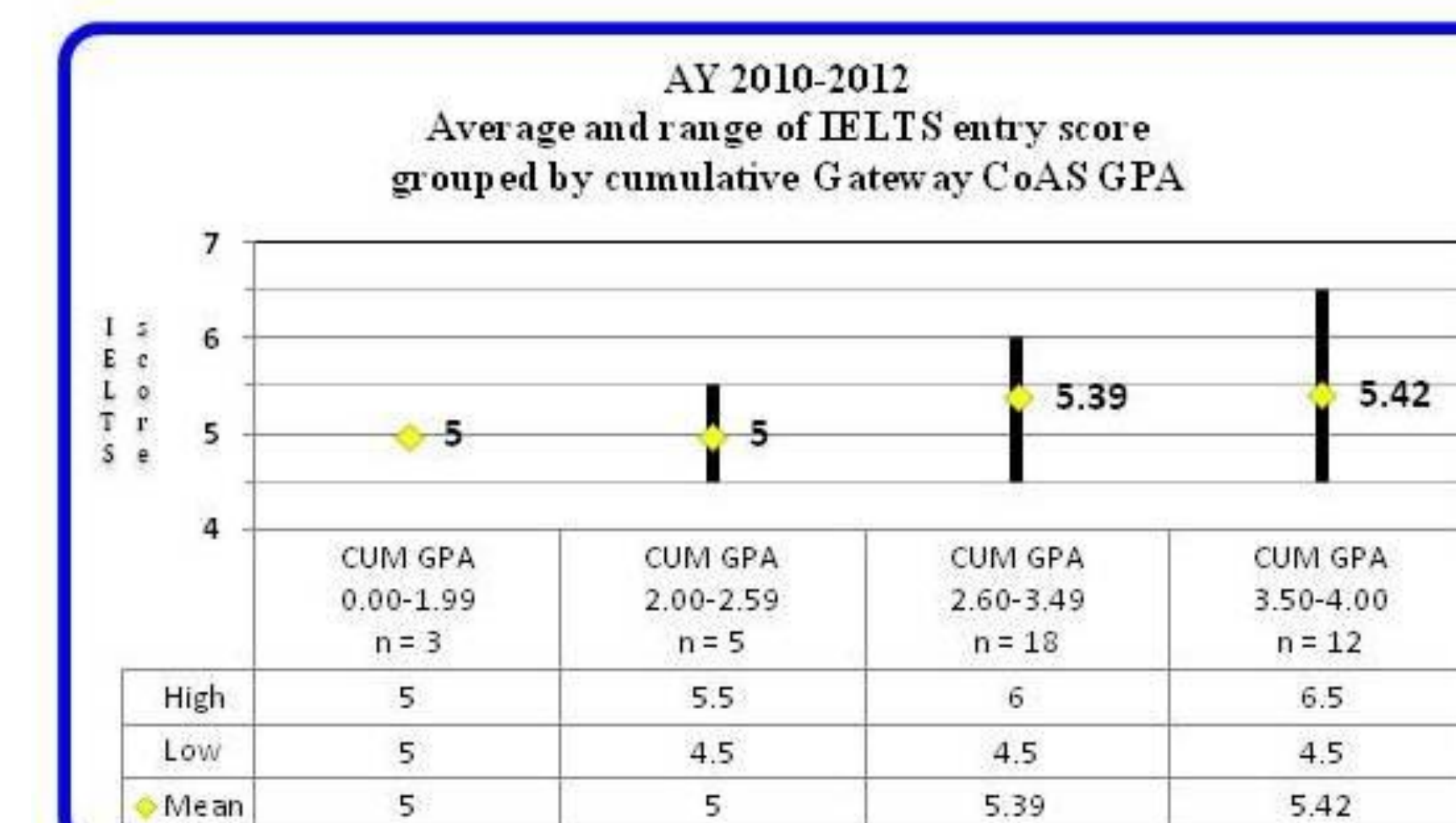
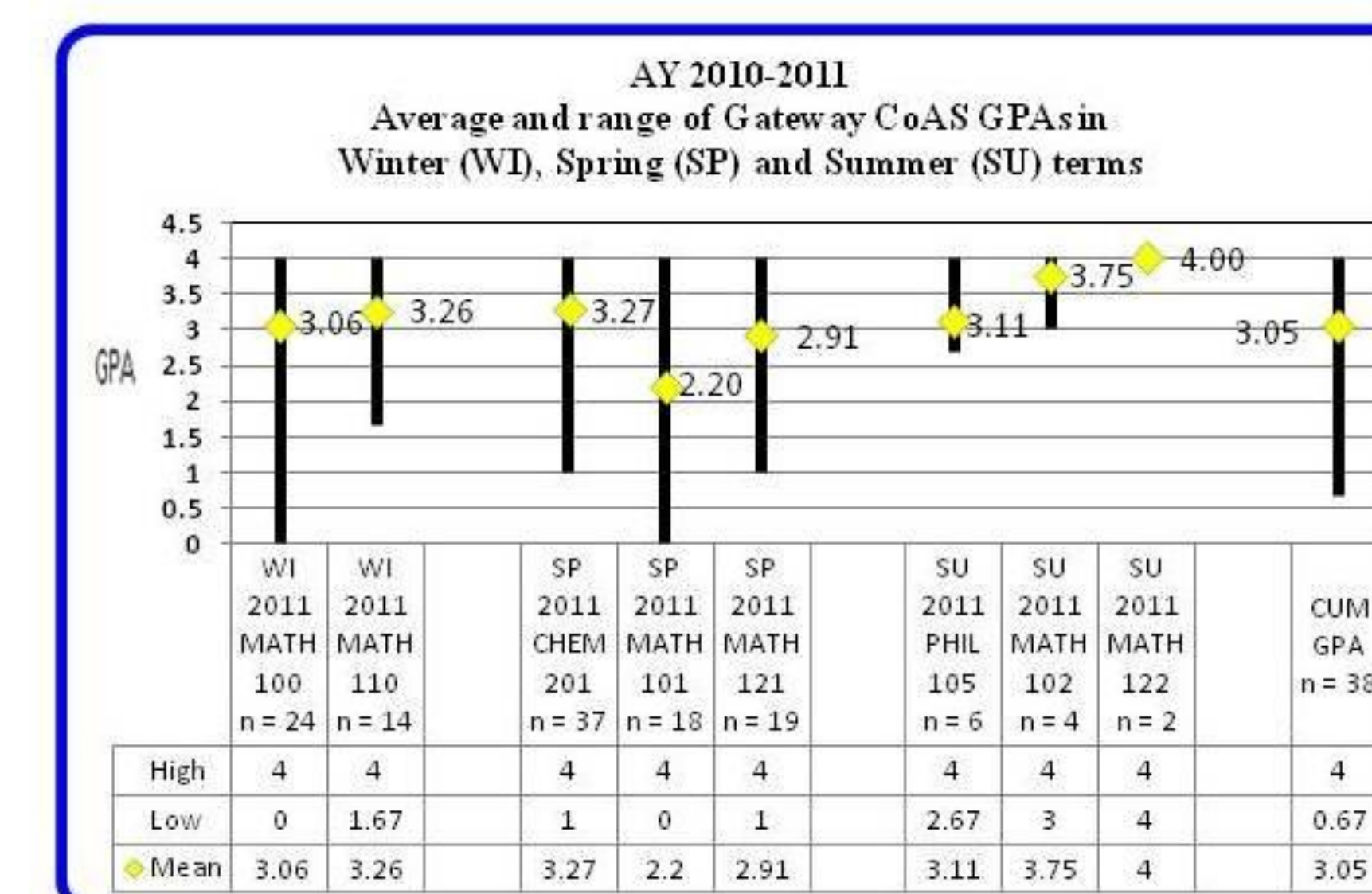


Pearson product-moment correlations

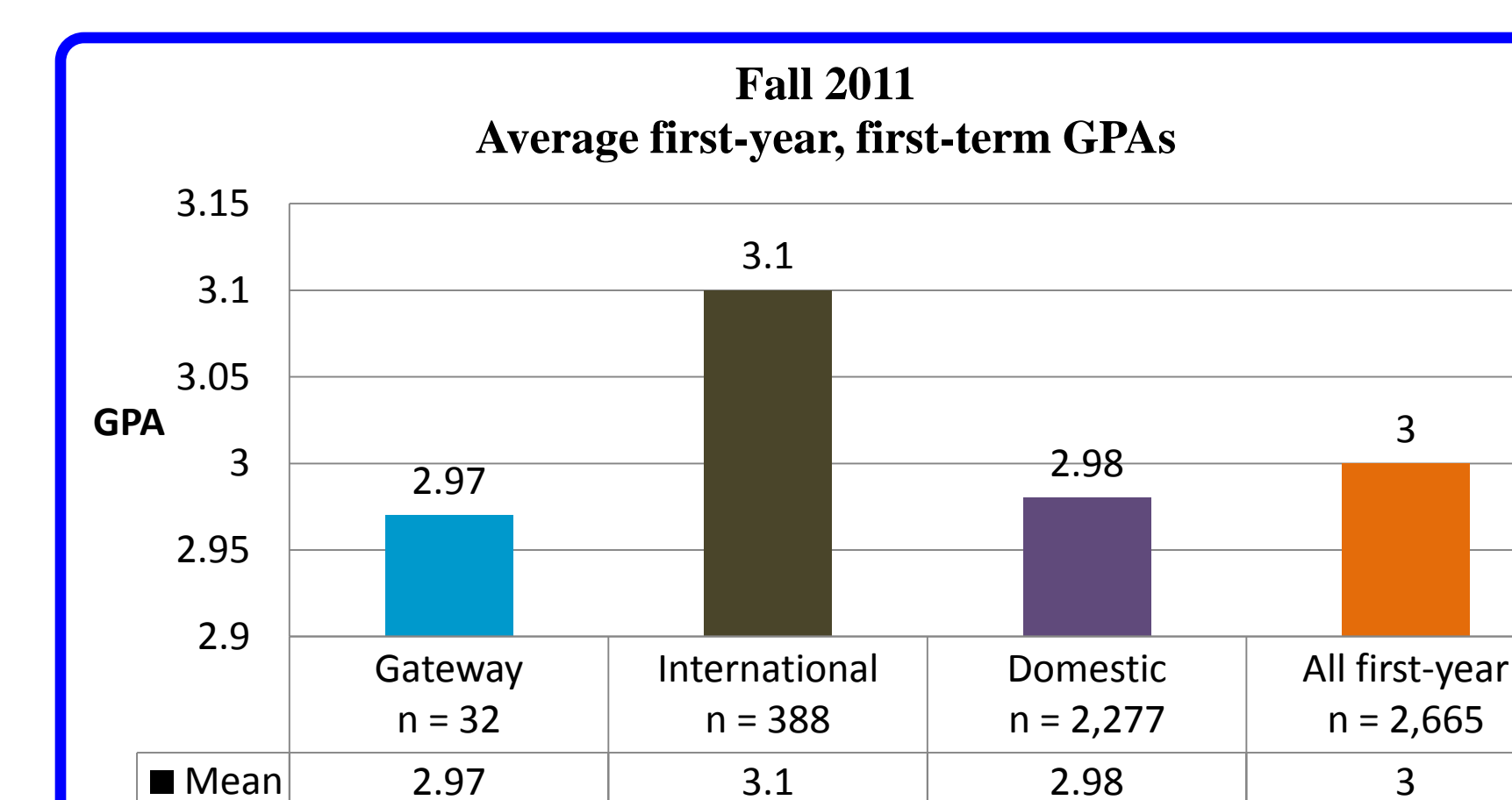
Term-by-term IELTS scores to Listening/Speaking levels
.406** ($p < .01$)
Term-by-term IELTS scores to Reading/Writing levels
.372** ($p < .01$)
Statistically significant moderate to strong positive correlations

Term-by-term Listening/Speaking to Reading/Writing
.693** ($p < .01$)
Statistically significant strong positive correlation

CREDIT-BEARING COURSES

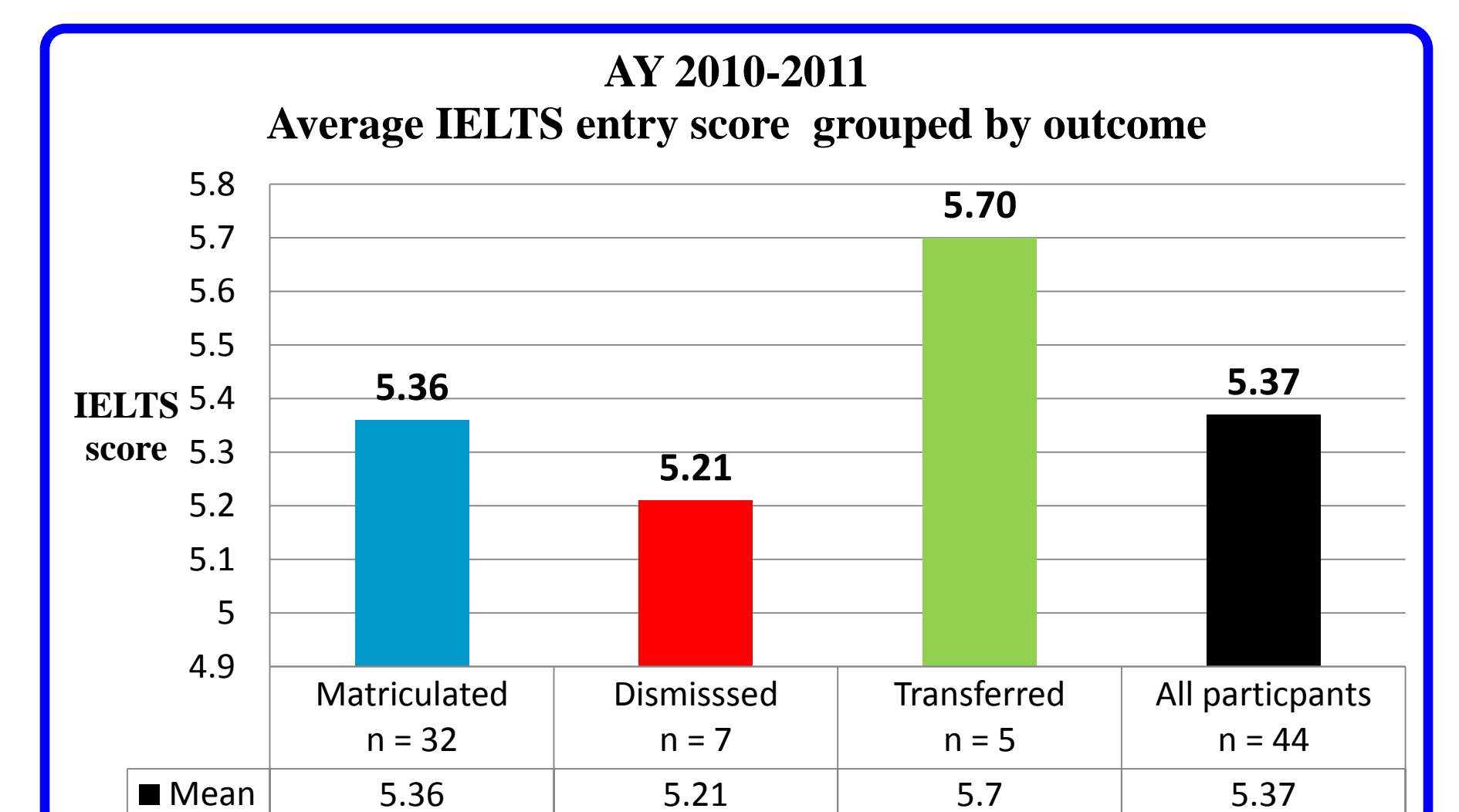
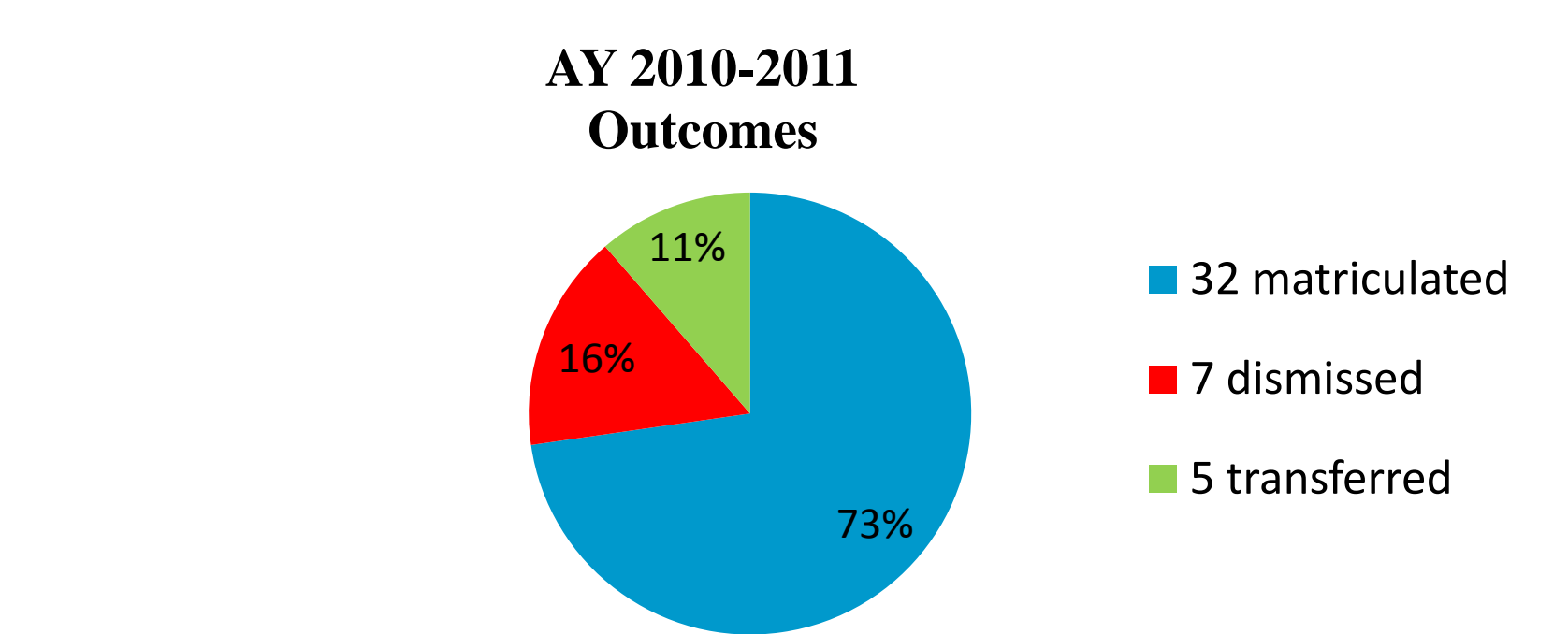


Pearson product-moment correlation
IELTS entry scores to Gateway CoAS GPAs
.263 ($p > .05$)
Not statistically significant weak positive correlation



Independent means t-tests were not statistically significant
($p > .05$)

GATEWAY PROGRAM RESULTS



CONCLUSIONS

Thirty-two of 44 participants (73%) achieved the required program IELTS exit score of 6.0 within four terms.

1. **ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**
 - ✓ The average IELTS score gain per 10-week term was 0.32.
 - ✓ IEP progression was moderately correlated (.372** to .406**, $p < .01$) with IELTS scores, suggesting course work was supporting score gains.
2. **CREDIT-BEARING COURSES**
 - ✓ Mean Gateway CoAS GPA was 3.05.
 - ✓ Mean first-term GPA was 2.97.
 - ✓ GPAs were not correlated with IELTS scores, suggesting that GPAs reflect course-specific performance, not language proficiency.
3. **COMPARABILITY**
 - ✓ Matriculated Gateway GPAs were statistically comparable to direct admission students.