

SLA replaces developmental studies

By **MARC WALLS**
News Writer

For the first time in 22 years, developmental studies classes will no longer be offered at Austin Peay State University.

As part of a Tennessee Board of Regents mandate, institutions were required to redesign their developmental studies program to be community college based and technology driven.

APSU modeled its new program after an initiative originally created at Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Mich. named Structured Learning Assistance (SLA).

The SLA program is designed for students whose ACT, SAT or COMPASS scores in mathematics and/or English require developmental preparation.

The new classes are called "enhanced classes," according to an APSU press release, and feature a weekly two hour SLA workshop in addition to the regular lecture.

As opposed to DSP classes, which were not considered college level classes and didn't provide credit toward graduation, the new enhanced classes satisfy the required core.

"[SLA] allows students to come to APSU, enroll in a core class, taught with the same standards and are provided with supplemental learning assistance," said Nell Rayburn, mathematics professor.

"Rather than focusing on the students'

deficiencies, we're getting the students in the courses they need and providing what they need to be successful," said Harriet McQueen, dean of enrollment management and academic support.

Objective A8 of TBR's 2005 to 2010 strategic plan called for institutions to "increase speed and success of remedial/developmental work for students requiring to become college ready."

Though APSU is not required to offer remedial and developmental studies courses, admissions standards are up to the university.

The reality that such a significant number of students enter college with an academic deficiency, even though they satisfy the general requirements for university admission, led to the DSP program lasting so long.

"DSP was always a temporary program," McQueen said.

"When it was originally designed many years ago, it was to be a five-year program."

"No one was surprised that TBR decided to make a change," McQueen said. "In 1992 the state took away DSP funding. Then in 2002, TBR told schools if they offer developmental classes, they had to charge community college rates. Two years later the program became computer based."

One problem the DSP program suffered from was a lackluster passing rate.

"Rarely did you have a pass rate greater than 50 percent," McQueen said.

In fact, mathematics DSP pass rates surpassed

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60 percent only twice in the Fall semesters since 2001.

Those rates were for the lower level, DSP 0800 class. The last Fall semester that DSP classes were offered, 2006, featured a joint 59 percent pass rate.

The SLA workshops are held for English and mathematics core courses.

The mathematics workshops are taught by the assigned professor for the class. The mathematics department hired five new staff members this year to account for the nearly 1,000 new students taking classes which had previously been taught by DSP professors.

The English workshops are taught by qualified students who are paid at a higher rate than other student workers.

"By the design of the program, the instructor may choose at their discretion to factor performance or attendance of the workshops into the overall course grade," Rayburn said.

The mathematics department was recently awarded a \$40,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education Fund for the

Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) to help fund the redesign.

APSU was one of six institutions to receive the grant; but was the only university.

SLA was created at Ferris State University in 1993. APSU chose to model its new developmental program after SLA because of the success Ferris students had in completing courses.

During the Fall 2006 semester, 85 percent of students enrolled in SLA classes at Ferris passed their respective courses.

Unlike APSU's SLA program, the program at Ferris was not designed for developmental classes.

According to the Ferris University Web site, SLA was designed "to help increase the number of students passing some historically high-risk-for-failure courses."

(www.ferris.edu/htmls/academics/sla/)

Though APSU has no plans to expand SLA to include upper division courses, McQueen said other departments have looked into the benefits.

"The nursing department has looked into the idea," she said.

(www.ferris.edu/htmls/academics/sla/)

To date the only results on SLA come from the first semester of classes at the Fort Campbell branch of APSU.

"Seventy-two percent of the students enrolled in math 1010 passed the class and removed it from their core requirement," McQueen said.

"Fifty-eight percent of 1,530 students passed." ♦

OBESITY IN TENNESSEE

Annual Fat Study released: Tennessee receives an F in obesity



DUSTIN KRAMER/ART DIRECTOR

Obesity could be related to income, bad dietary norms

By **TANYA LUDLOW**
Assistant News Editor

Tennessee has the fifth highest rate of adult obesity and the fourth highest rate of overweight youths (ages 10-17) according to a new report by the Trust for America's Health (TFAH).

The annual report "F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies are Failing in America," found that eight of the 10 states with the highest rates of obesity are located in the south.

According to Laura Segal, director of public affairs for TFAH, the overrepresentation of Southern states in the top 10 for the highest rates of obesity in both adults and children is an issue that is not fully understood.

"There are several hypotheses, but there has never been a direct study," Segal said.

Segal said that those hypotheses included economic and cultural differences as well as differences in environment that are not conducive to physical activity.

Anne Black, associate professor of human health and performance at APSU, said that the link between poverty and obesity is a complex one which is not fully understood.

"People who are poorer tend to have food and security issues. They tend to spend food dollars on items that give high amounts of energy and that can last a long time," Black said.

This means a higher consumption of packaged and highly processed foods, instead of

lean meats and vegetables which are highly perishable in comparison.

In terms of setting examples for their children by engaging in exercise and physical activity, providers in low-income families "may be working jobs that have odd hours and don't have the hours to model active behavior for their children," Black said.

The report also found that Tennessee requires school lunches meet higher nutritional standards than the U.S. Department of Agriculture requires, as well as nutritional standards limiting the kinds of foods sold in vending machines on school property.

Also, Tennessee is one of 16 states that screen students' body mass index and provide that information to parents or guardians.

Segal says that BMI screening is a useful tool for parents to identify health problems, much in the same way a report card or vision screening results do.

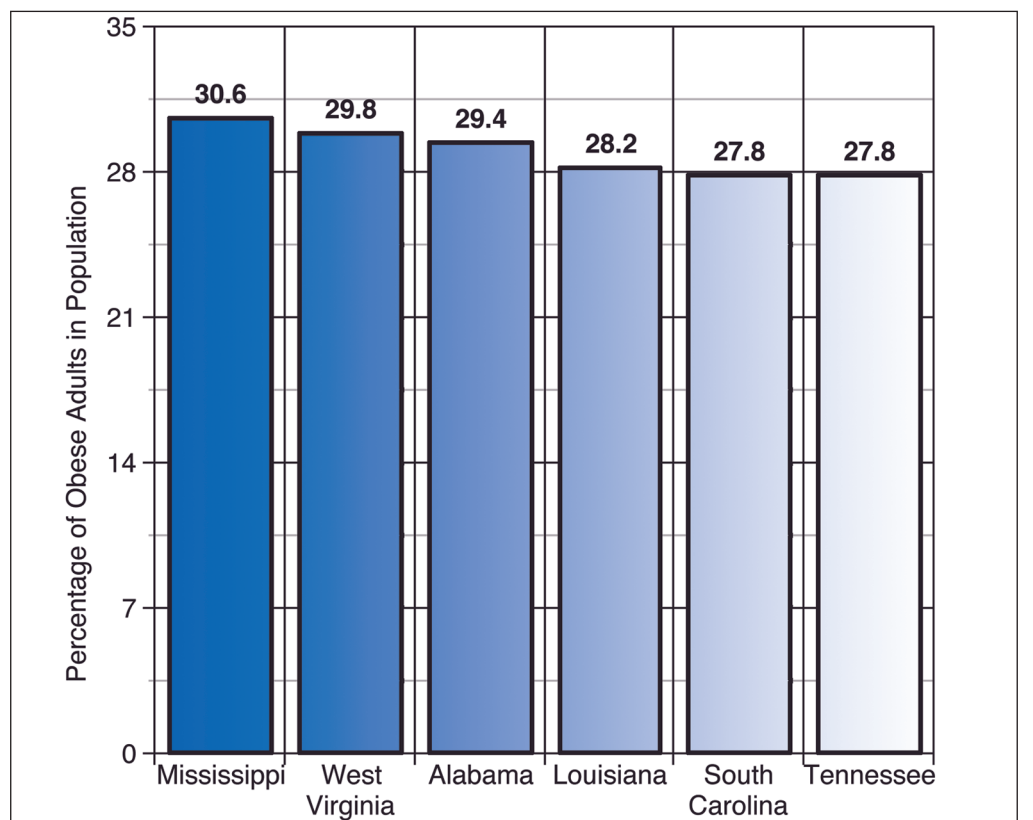
Mandatory BMI screening has come under scrutiny as there is a fear that it will label children and actually be counterproductive to encouraging healthy lifestyles.

Segal said that the negative effects of such reports have not yet been studied.

"There has not been a real study to identify the negative effects of BMI screening, although there are certainly conjectures," Segal said.

Black points out that the screening itself isn't problematic, but that the way the information is given in order to shield the child from the trauma of being labeled overweight or obese is the sensitive issue.

"Children are not told their BMI, the protocol is to send information home to the



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Information for the graph above was taken from the from the "F as in Fat 2007 study." This study was conducted by TFAH and can be found at healthyamericans.org/reports/obesity2007/.

parent," Black said.

Black is optimistic about Tennessee's proactive approach to encourage healthy lifestyles in school children.

"Tennessee is a top-ranking state for initiatives to combat childhood obesity," Black

said.

Black also added that these initiatives also point to a change in the way society views obesity.

"Obesity is clearly recognized as a full-fledged disease in itself," Black said. ♦

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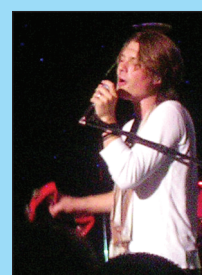
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