HIGH STAKES AND LOW DATA:
A Critical Review of the Accountability Reporting for the California Community Colleges

George Prather, PhD
Chief of the Office of Institutional Research and Information
Los Angeles Community Colleges
http://research.laccd.edu

High Stakes??

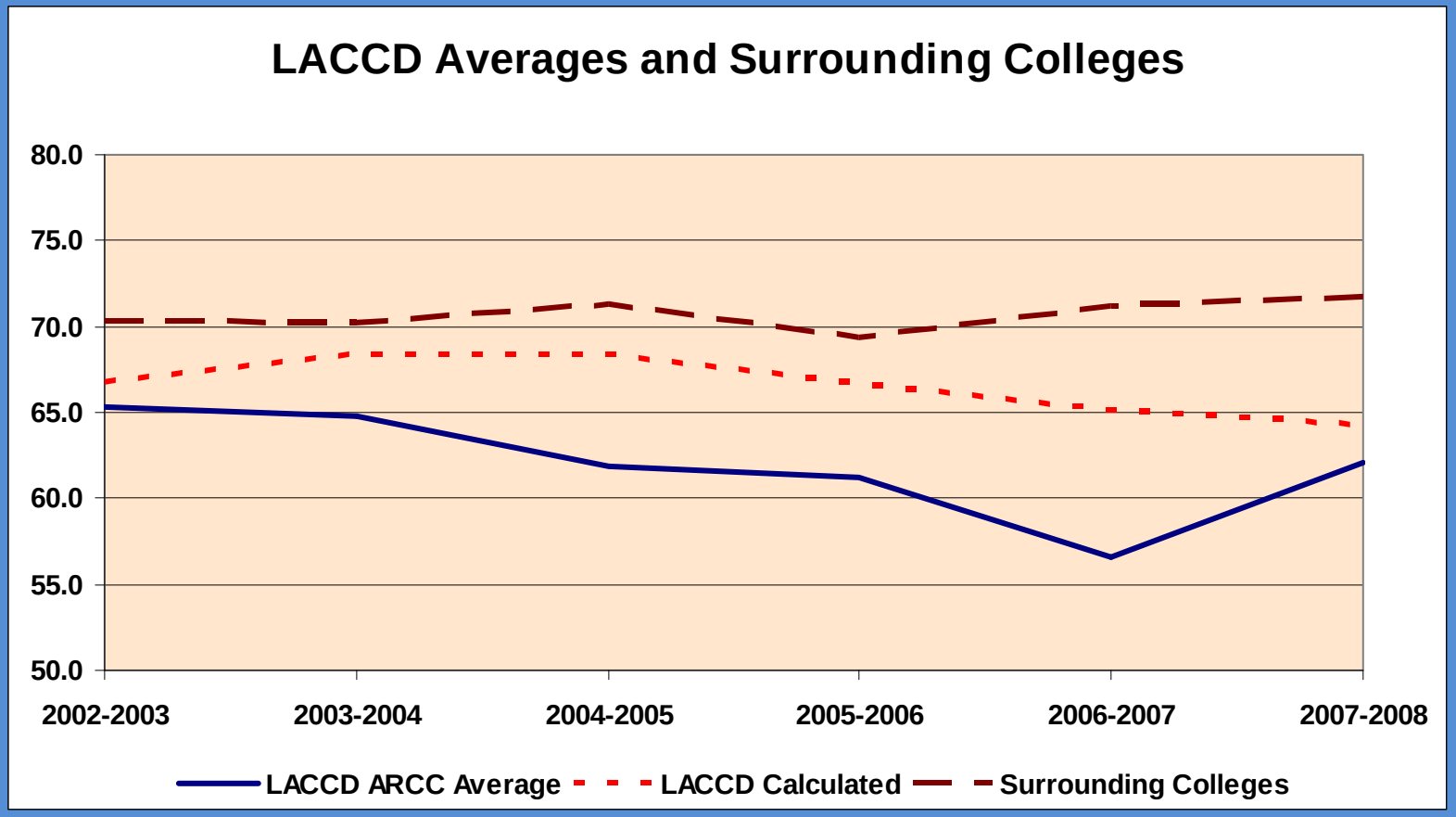
Problem 1: Data Leakage

ARCC Persistence Rates Compared to Local Calculations

	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	Average	*Peer Group Average*
City	**61.0**	**61.7**	**60.8**	**60.4**	**52.6**	**61.4**	**59.4**	**59.9**
Concurrent & 1st Time	66.1	66.6	67.6	66.2	66.8	61.4	65.7	
1st Time Only	66.5	66.5	67.8	65.3	67.0	63.2	66.0	
East	**73.4**	**75.6**	**69.9**	**69.6**	**61.4**	**66.9**	**68.7**	**68.8**
Concurrent & 1st Time	73.8	74.2	75.6	77.1	74.6	72.3	74.7	
1st Time Only	76.1	77.2	78.1	78.3	75.7	72.2	76.3	

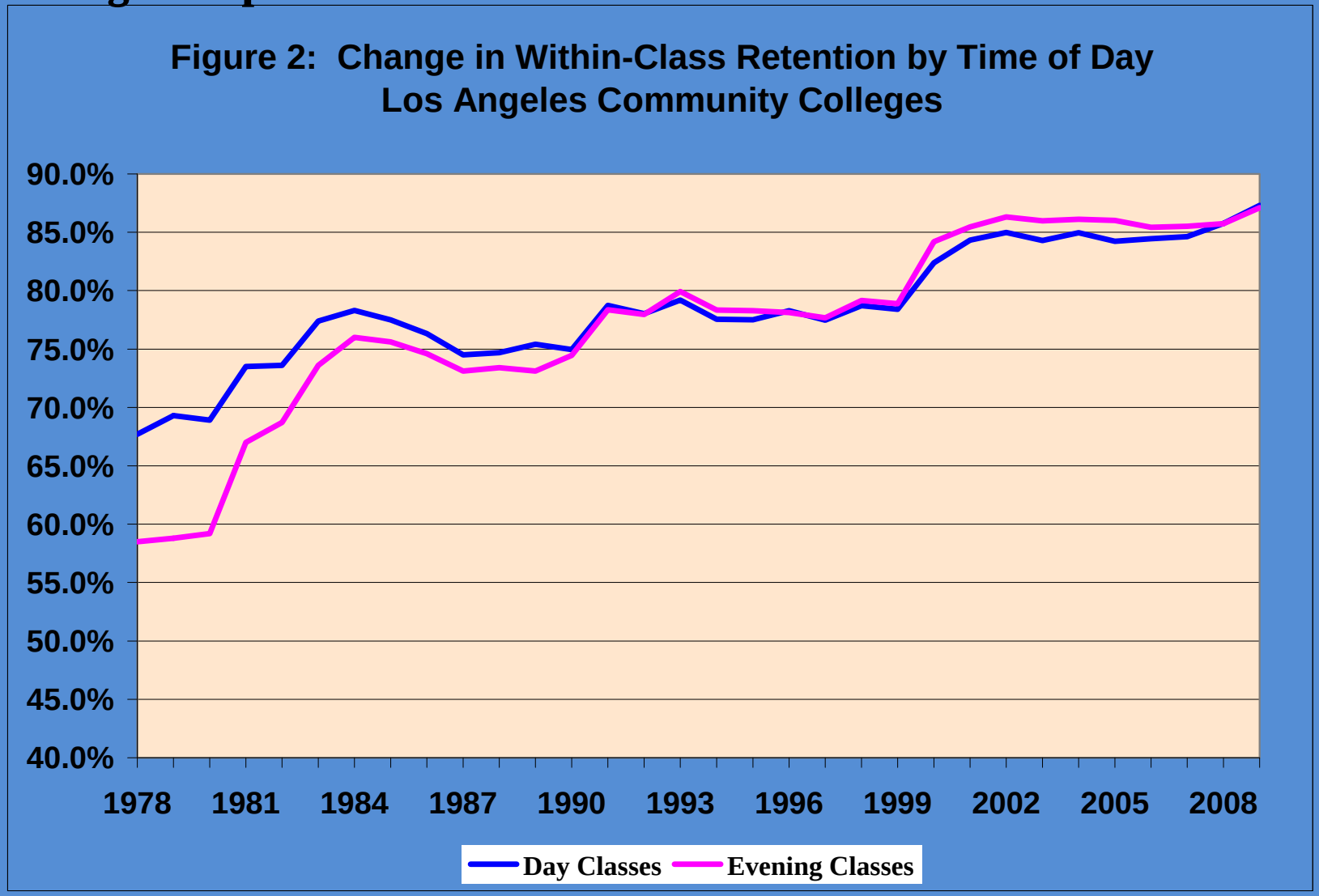
Problem 1: Data Leakage

ARCC Persistence Rates Compared to Local Calculations



Problem 2: Window of Progress

Change is episodic



Problem 2

Change in Within-Class Retention Rates by College

	City	*East*	*Harbor*	*Mission*	*Pierce*	*South-west*	*Trade Tech*	*Valley*	*West*
1990	75.5	75.9	72.5	79.3	74.1	76.1	76.4	73.4	72.3
1991	79.7	79.4	77.2	78.0	77.9	78.9	80.6	78.2	76.4
1992	78.4	78.8	75.7	79.2	78.9	76.3	79.1	78.1	75.1
1993	79.8	81.1	76.9	81.6	79.9	77.6	80.5	79.3	76.0
1994	79.0	80.0	75.5	79.4	78.0	73.1	79.8	77.1	74.8
1995	76.3	78.8	75.4	82.9	78.4	76.1	77.0	79.2	76.5
1996	79.7	78.6	75.7	80.7	78.3	75.1	79.4	78.3	77.1
1997	77.9	77.7	76.1	80.5	77.7	72.8	79.4	78.1	75.8
1998	78.7	78.5	77.1	81.0	80.2	78.6	78.5	78.8	79.6
1999	78.9	77.3	76.2	81.9	78.6	76.9	77.7	80.4	79.7
2000	83.3	82.7	78.5	85.4	84.6	83.1	80.4	86.3	82.2

Problem 3: Non Comparable Programs

Inclusion of External Populations

Table 4: Annual Successful Course Completion in Credit Vocational Courses

	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	Average	Peer Group Average
East Los Angeles College	87.3	86.2	88.8	88.0	88.8	87.8	75.8
Excluding Public Service Academies	*76.5*	*75.8*	*75.4*	*74.8*	*76.0*	75.7	

Problem 4: Inadequate Coding

ESL Improvement Rates

	2003-04 to 2005-06	2004-05 to 2006-07	2005-06 to 2007-08	2006-07 to 2008-09
East	55.9	58.2	56.9	48.9
LACCD calculated	71.0	68.4	73.8	72.3
Harbor	51.7	68.0	38.5	58.3
LACCD calculated	58.0	67.2	60.5	54.1
Southwest	80.0	60.7	57.1	56.6
LACCD calculated	70.4	60.7	60.8	57.4
Trade-Tech	38.9	40.0	28.6	37.0
LACCD calculated	52.2	58.0	44.5	47.8
LACCD ARCC Average	54.5	52.8	52.3	51.9
LACCD calculated	67.2	66.4	67.1	66.4

Problem 5: Small Numbers and No Report of Absolute Size

ESL Improvement Rates

	2003-04 to 2005-06	2004-05 to 2006-07	2005-06 to 2007-08	2006-07 to 2008-09
Harbor	51.7	68.0	38.5	58.3
Sections			1	
Students			14	

Problem 6: Inappropriate identification of cohorts and consequent distortion of indicators

No theoretical focus

"The term *accountability* raises several deceptively simple but devilishly difficult questions: *Who* is accountable to *whom*, for *what* purposes, for *whose* benefit, by *which* means, and with *what* consequences."

Joseph C. Burke, "The Many Faces of Accountability", Joseph C. Burke (Ed.), Achieving Accountability in Higher Education: Balancing Public, Academic, and Market Demands, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005, p 2

Problem 6:
SPAR Cohort example

- 11% of LACCD SPAR Cohorts have been concurrent high school students only and over 2/3 of this group completed less than half of their qualifying units within the district
- 25% were concurrent high school students who became regular students but their six-year completion windows were set from their first enrollment
- 5-7% of those beginning as regular students complete less than half of their qualifying units in LACCD
- At least 2% of enrollments prior to their SPAR cohort
- Overall 20% of the district SPAR cohort, and ranging much higher by college, should have been assigned to another district or should not have been included at all

Problem 7:
Disconnected from Other System Efforts

Does anyone remember Matriculation?

Problems 8-13: Peer Groups

ECOLOGICAL FALLACY

Shifting predictor variables

Strained “ad hoc” justifications

No theoretical or modeling structure

No-name groups

Problem 14: Presentation Implies Precision that Indicators Cannot Possess

- Three-year window assumes change can be seen in short time frame
- Year-by-year indicators assumes “true state” can be estimated from single observation
- Peer grouping likely to be interpreted as benchmarks

Opportunity 1: