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## CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE - GENERAL EDUCATION A RESEARCH BRIEF

### Research Briefs

The dissemination of relevant information is a critical component of the performance improvement process. Research briefs are one mechanism used by St. Petersburg College (SPC) for this purpose. Research Briefs are short publications prepared by the Department of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IRE) that are intended to provide relevant important information regarding a variety of College-related topics. These topics include, but are not limited to, student achievement, state accountability measures, institutional survey results, student enrollment, and faculty/adjunct compensation.

### Introduction

The purpose of this research brief is to evaluate the performance of students in general education courses. These courses focus on knowledge, skills, and abilities that are crucial to further study within the major, encourage the pursuit of life-long learning, and provide a foundation for becoming an informed independent thinker who can comprehend, evaluate, and address issues that occur in personal lives, careers, and in the community and public affairs. Major learning outcomes for the general education curriculum are listed in the St. Petersburg College Mission Statement (<http://www.spcollege.edu/central/ie/mission.htm>).

Performance in this assessment is defined as the percent of students passing (earning a grade of A, B, and C). The information was compiled from the collegewide grade distribution report generated at the end of a session. Only lower division courses that were considered general education were examined. In addition, the number of enrollments is a duplicated headcount where students are counted for each class registered, however, only A, B, C, D, and F grades are included in the calculations. The general education categories were established using the specific courses listed in the general education requirements for an Associate of Arts degree (<http://www.spcollege.edu/webcentral/acad/genedaa.htm>).

### Results

Visual 1 shows four years of Fall historical data by the general education category. It appears that the pass rates were showing a steady decline for several years with a slight increase in the most recent term for Communications, Ethics and Humanities; however the pass rates are still lower than the benchmark year.



Visual 1  
**General Education Pass Rates (A, B, C)  
Fall**

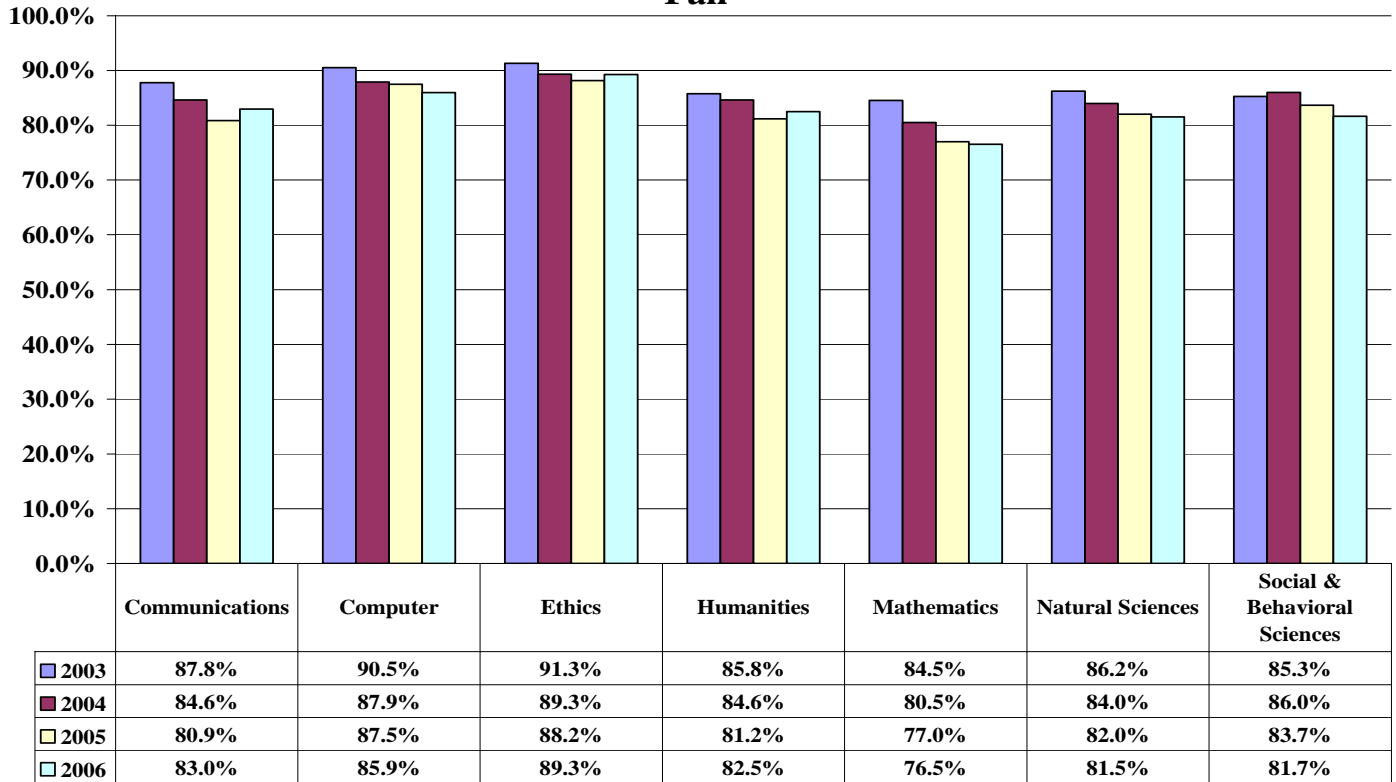
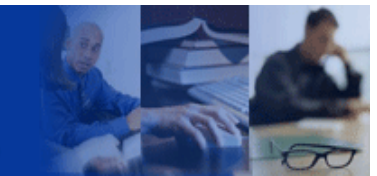


Table 1 shows the differences in the pass rates shown in Visual 1 compared to the previous year by general education category. The last column shows a comparison between the most recent term (Fall 2006) and the benchmark year. Chi-squares were conducted on each comparison group which showed the difference in proportions (pass/fail) were statistically significant in several categories.

Table 1  
**Distribution of Grades by General Education Category  
Difference between Percent Passing (Prior Year Comparison)**

	2004 vs. 2003 Difference	2005 vs. 2004 Difference	2006 vs. 2005 Difference	2006 vs. 2003 Difference
Communications	-3.2% *	-3.8% *	2.1% *	-4.8% *
Computer	-2.6% *	-0.4%	-1.5%	-4.6% *
Ethics	-2.0% *	-1.1%	1.1%	-2.0% *
Humanities	-1.1%	-3.4% *	1.3%	-3.3% *
Mathematics	-4.0% *	-3.5% *	-0.4%	-8.0% *
Natural Sciences	-2.3% *	-1.9% *	-0.5%	-4.7% *
Social & Behavioral Sciences	0.7% *	-2.3% *	-2.0% *	-3.6% *
General Education Total	-2.0%	-2.6%	0.1%	-4.5%

\*Statistically significant at Alpha .05



The number of students enrolled in online classes has increased dramatically over the past four years. The following information provides a comparison between general education courses offered on-line versus all other methods. Visual 2 shows the overall pass rates for all general education classes and method of course delivery. The overall pass rates for both methods appear to have stabilized in the current year after declining for several years. On-Line pass rates appear to be lower than classes offered at the campuses.

**Visual 2**  
**General Education Pass Rates (A, B, C)**  
**On-Line and Other Methods**

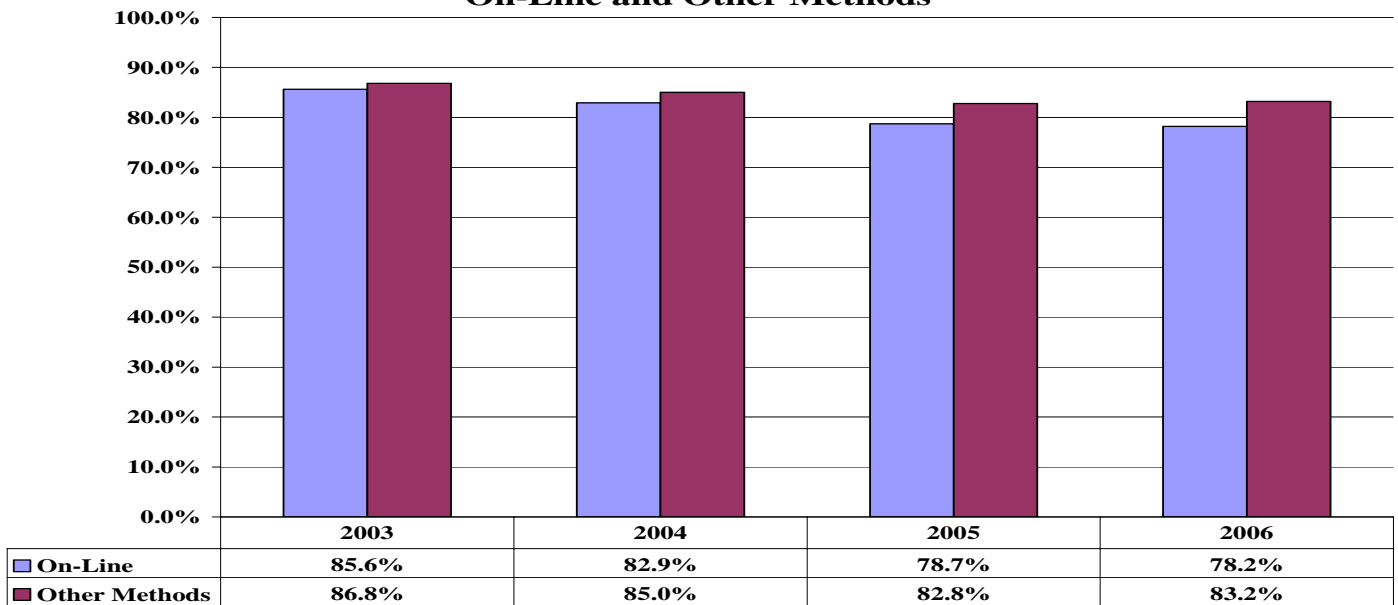


Table 2 shows the pass rates for each general education category and the method of course delivery. Graphical representation of this information for each category is available in the Appendix. In general, students appear to pass at a higher rate in courses using more traditional instruction.

**Table 2**  
**Distribution of Grades by General Education Category**  
**On-Line vs. Other Methods**

	2003		2004		2005		2006	
	Other	On-Line	Other	On-Line	Other	On-Line	Other	On-Line
Communications	87.8%	87.6%	85.0%	79.8%	81.7%	73.9%	84.4%	73.5%
Computer	90.6%	89.1%	88.0%	86.9%	88.7%	82.1%	88.2%	79.2%
Ethics	91.0%	93.3%	89.3%	89.2%	88.0%	89.2%	89.4%	88.7%
Humanities	85.7%	86.3%	84.8%	83.6%	81.4%	80.5%	82.4%	82.7%
Mathematics	84.7%	82.8%	82.0%	69.2%	77.6%	72.5%	77.5%	71.3%
Natural Sciences	87.0%	80.9%	84.3%	82.2%	83.1%	76.1%	82.8%	75.7%
Social & Behavioral Sciences	84.8%	87.7%	85.4%	89.6%	84.0%	82.1%	82.6%	79.2%
General Education Total	86.8%	85.6%	85.0%	82.9%	82.8%	78.7%	83.2%	78.2%



Table 3 shows the difference or gap between the pass rates (On-Line vs. Other Methods). For Fall 2006, Communications (-10.9%) had the largest gap between the pass rates for on-line and all other methods followed by Computers, Natural Science, Mathematics, and Social and Behavioral Sciences. In other words, students were less successful in taking on-line courses in these areas.

Table 3  
Distribution of Grades by General Education Category  
Difference between Percent Passing (On-Line vs. Other Methods)

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Communications	-0.2%	-5.2%	-7.8%	-10.9%
Computer	-1.5%	-1.1%	-6.6%	-9.0%
Ethics	2.3%	-0.1%	1.2%	-0.7%
Humanities	0.6%	-1.2%	-0.9%	0.3%
Mathematics	-1.9%	-12.8%	-5.1%	-6.2%
Natural Sciences	-6.1%	-2.1%	-7.0%	-7.1%
Social & Behavioral Sciences	2.9%	4.2%	-1.9%	-3.4%
General Education Total	-1.2%	-2.1%	-4.1%	-5.0%

#### Summary:

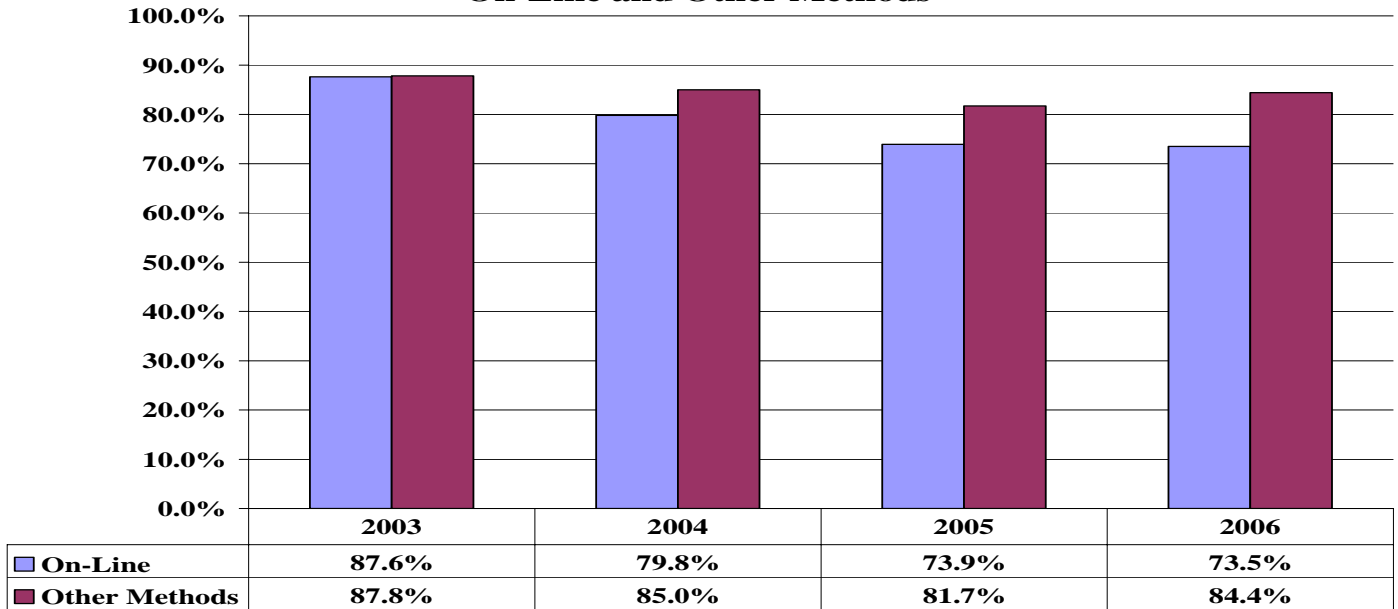
Although the overall pass rates were showing a steady decline for several years, they appear to be stabilizing with a slight increase in 2006 for Communications, Ethics, and Humanities. When comparisons were made between methods (On-Line and Other Methods), it appears students were less successful in taking on-line courses in several areas.



APPENDIX

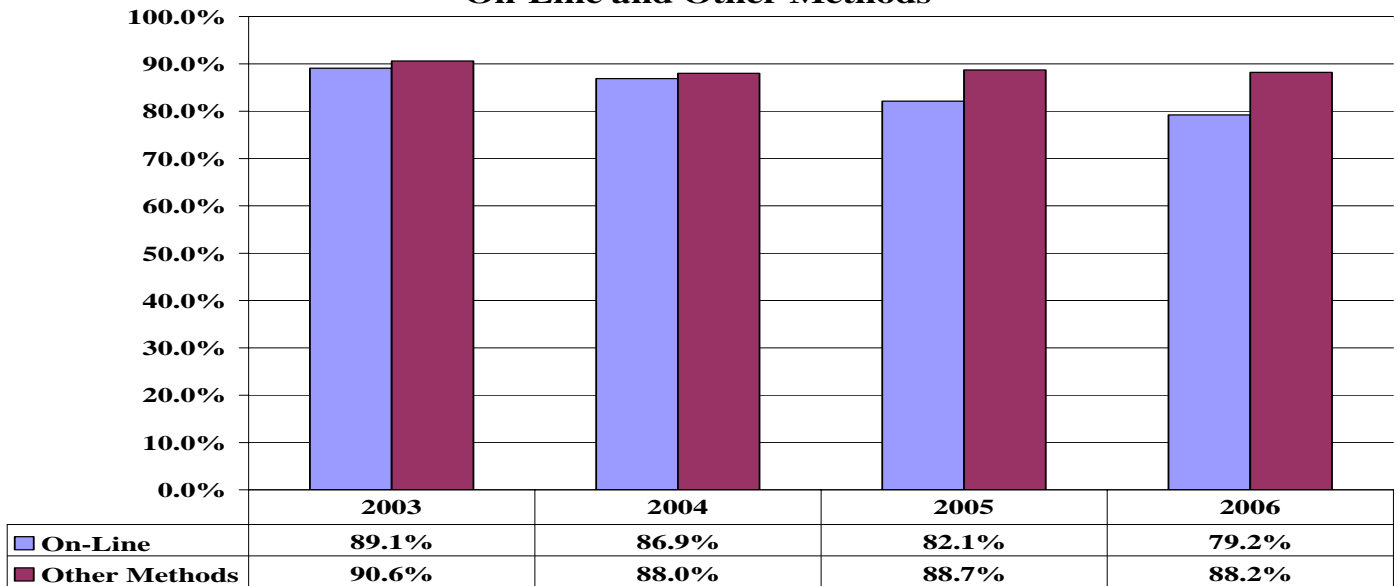
Visual 3

**Communications Pass Rates (A, B, C)  
On-Line and Other Methods**



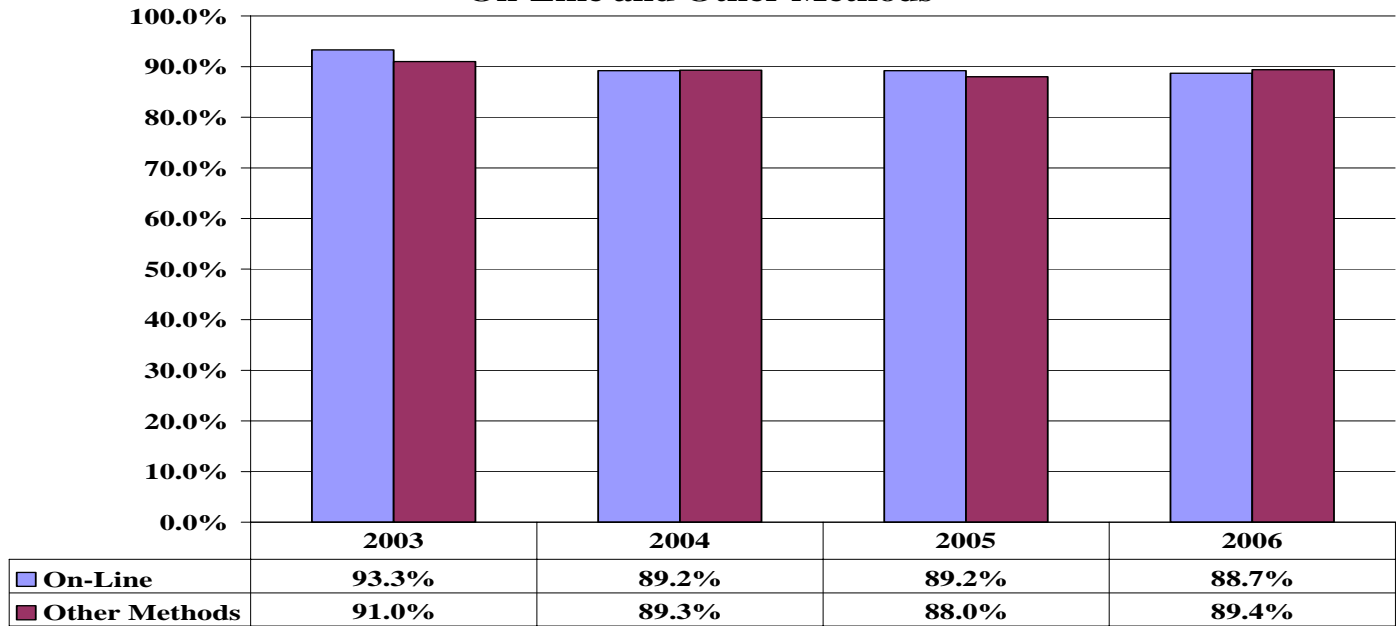
Visual 4

**Computer Pass Rates (A, B, C)  
On-Line and Other Methods**

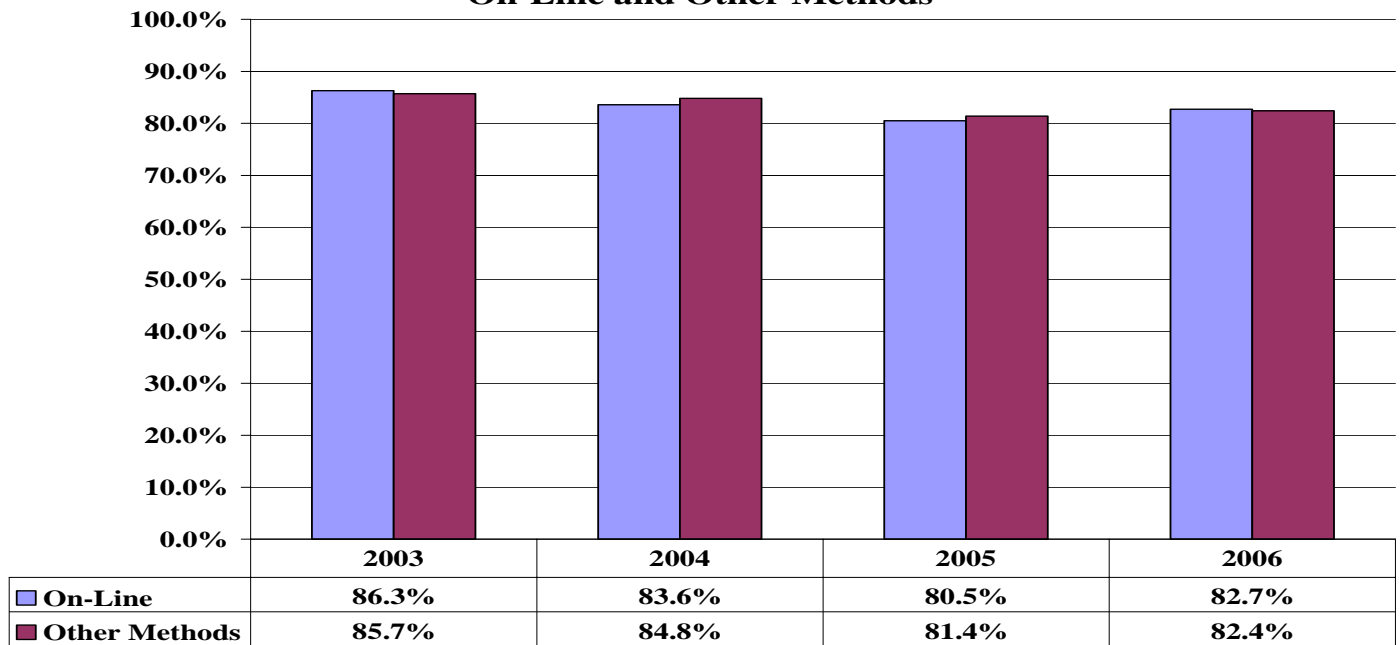




Visual 5  
**Ethics Pass Rates (A, B, C)  
 On-Line and Other Methods**

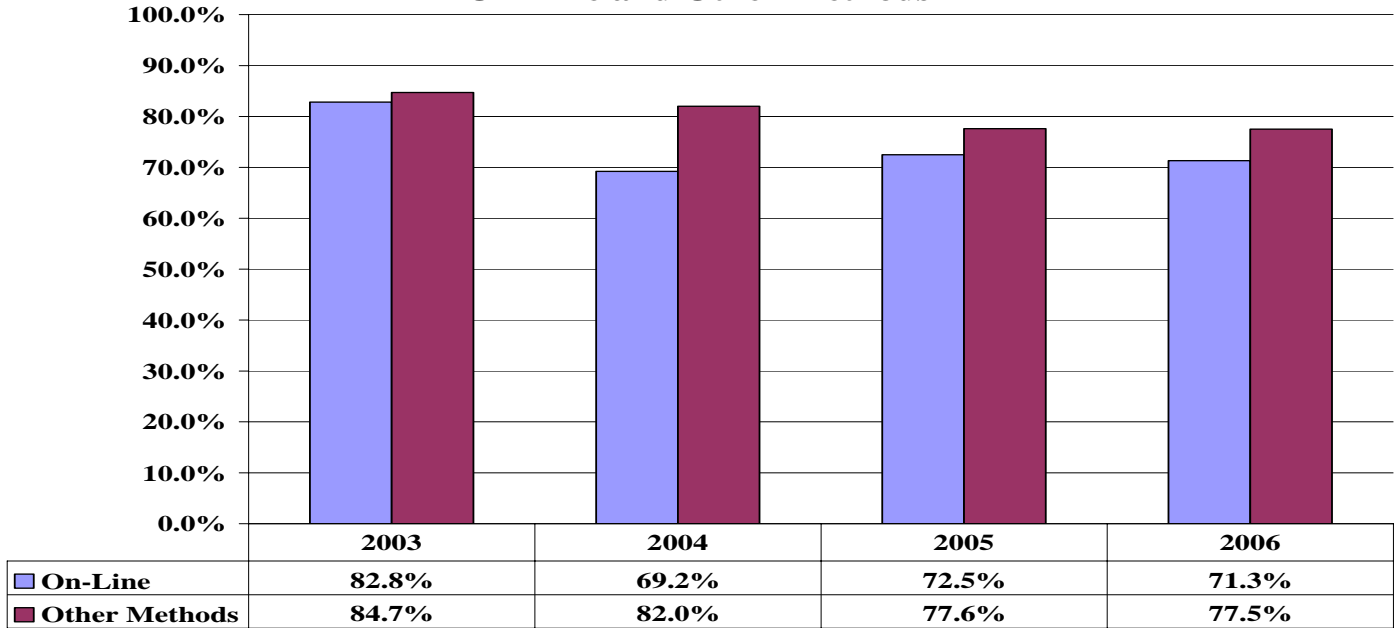


Visual 6  
**Humanities Pass Rates (A, B, C)  
 On-Line and Other Methods**





Visual 7  
**Mathematics Pass Rates (A, B, C)  
 On-Line and Other Methods**



Visual 9  
**Social and Behavioral Sciences Pass Rates (A, B, C)  
 On-Line and Other Methods**

