



American Board of Thoracic Surgery: Fewer Graduates, More Failures

Susan Moffatt-Bruce, MD, PhD

Patrick Ross, MD, PhD

Thomas Williams, MD, PhD

Department of Surgery

The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center





The authors have no conflicts of interest
and nothing to disclose

The facts

- Imminent shortage of cardiothoracic surgeons as early as 2020
- Cardiothoracic surgeons will remain important as cardiovascular and pulmonary diseases are leading causes of mortality and morbidity
- The number of applicants for fellowship training in cardiothoracic surgery are decreasing



Background

- Since 2000, ABTS has noted a yearly decrease in certificates being awarded
- In 2003 ACGME imposed the 80 hour work week
- We hypothesize that not only are we training fewer graduates; potentially ones less capable of becoming successfully certified

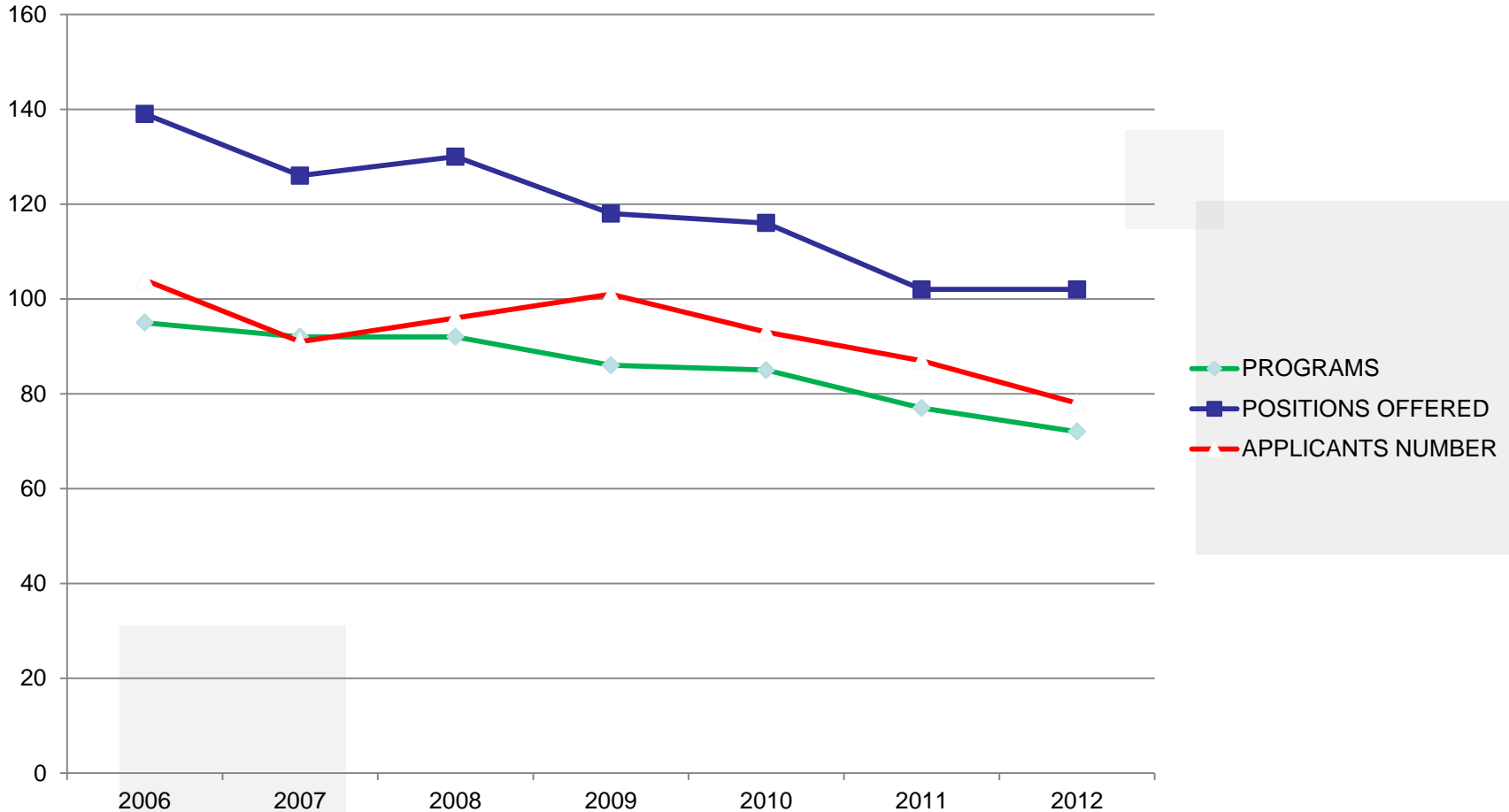


Methods

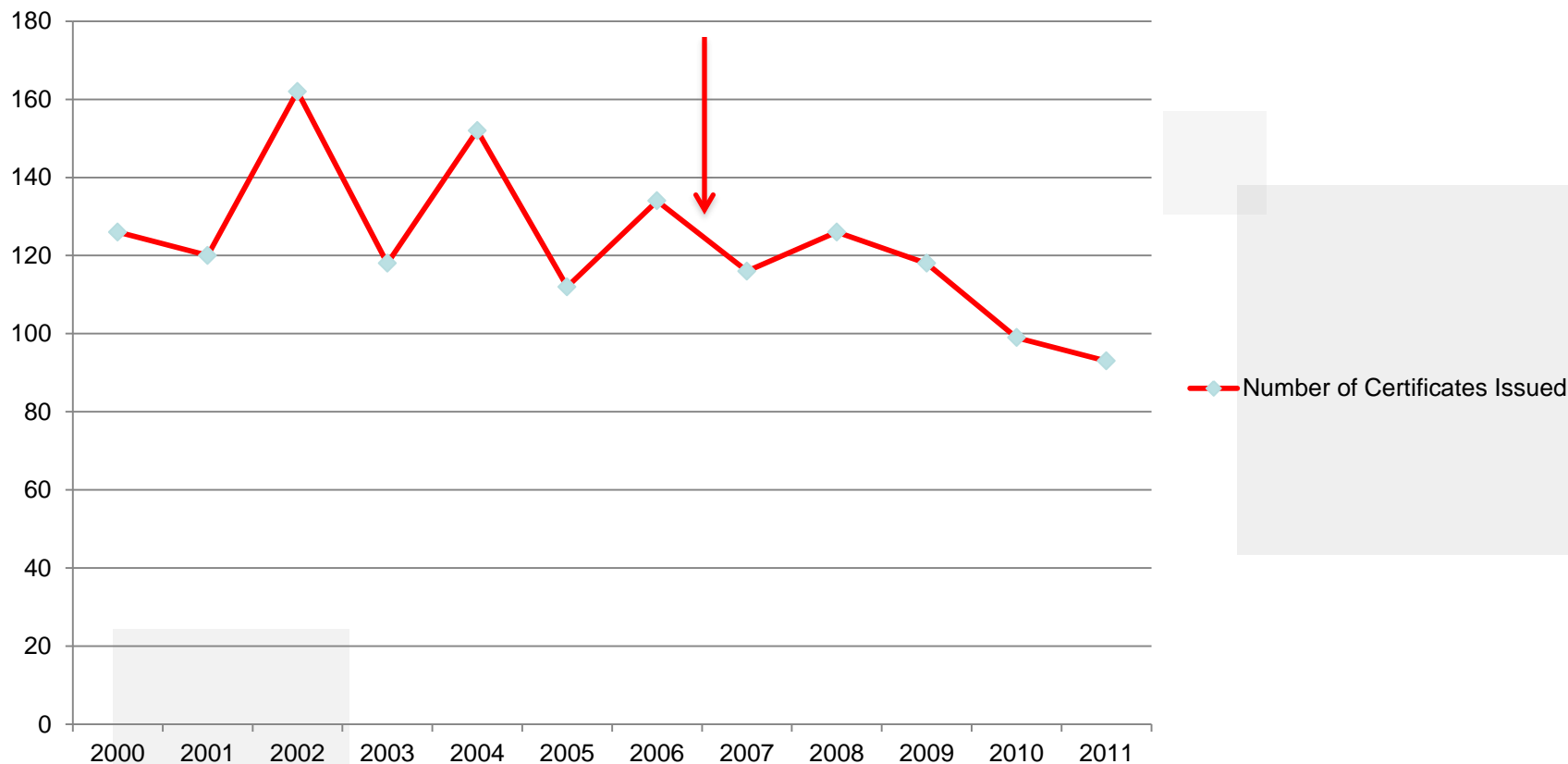
- Examined ABTS board scores 2000-2011
- 2000 to 2005: Pre 80 hour work week
- 2006 to 2011: Post 80 hour work week
- Examined whether there was a difference in written and oral boards



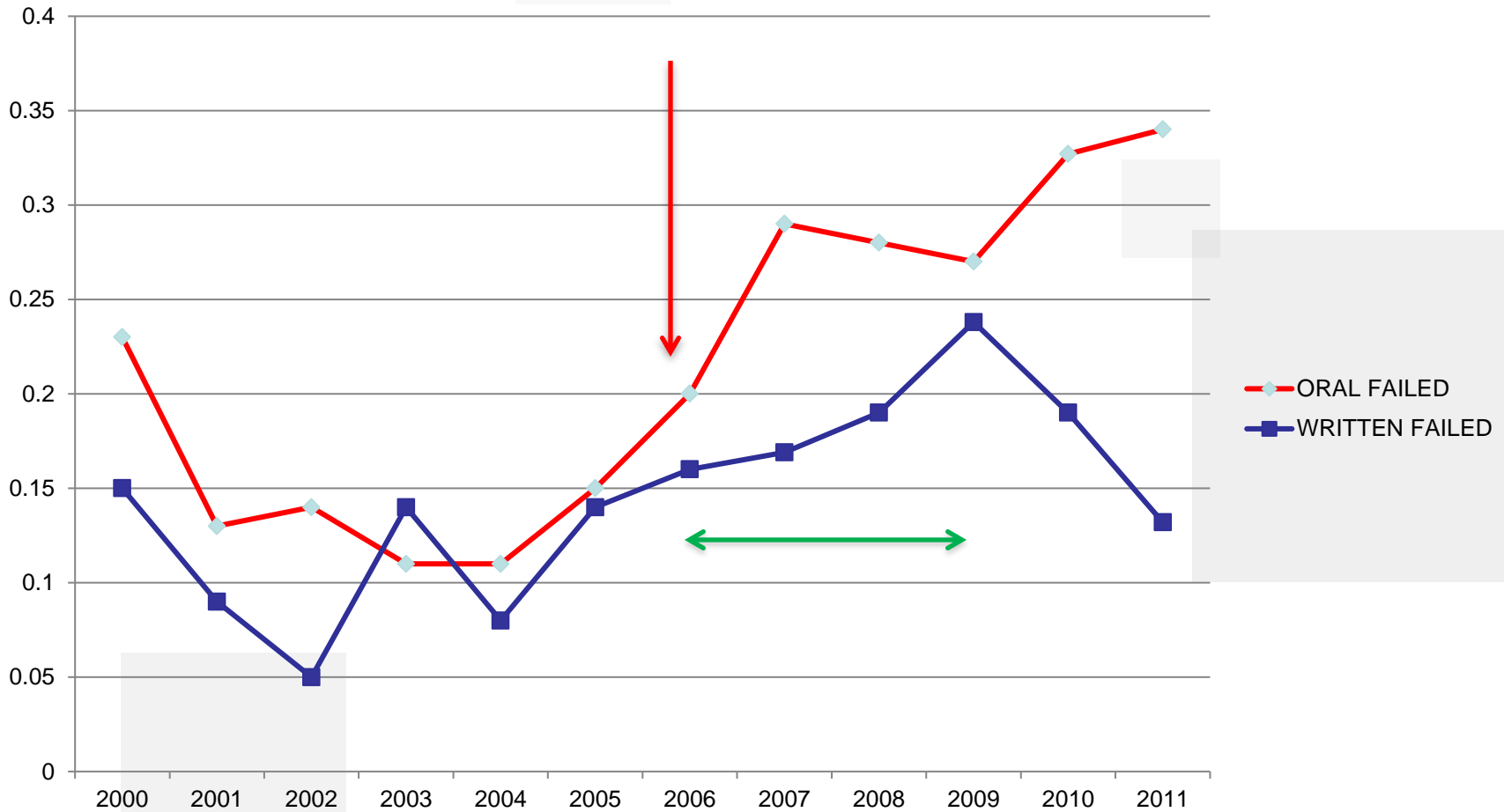
Reduction in resident applications; reduction in cardiothoracic surgery programs



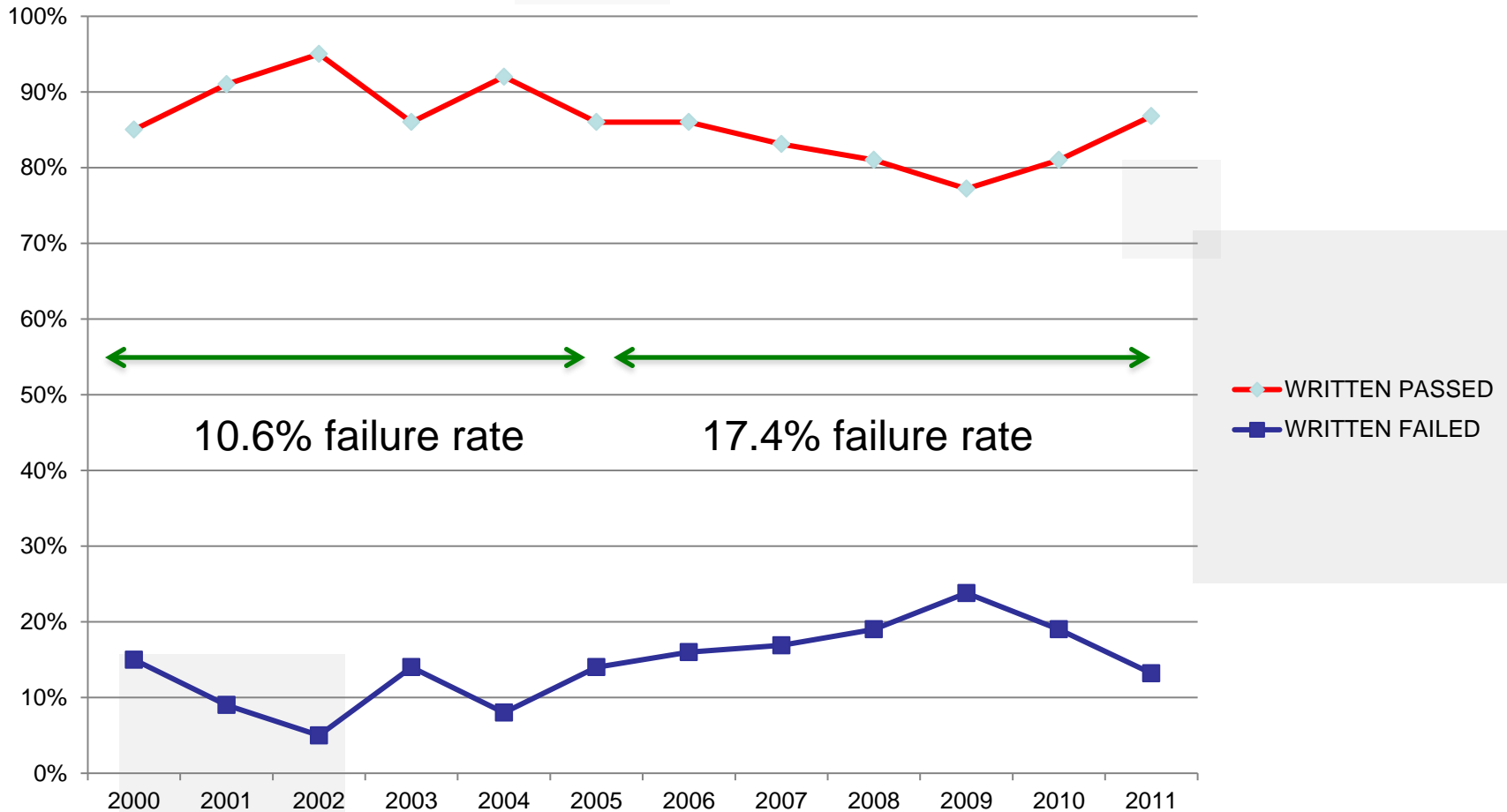
Number of Certificates Issued



Written and Oral Exam Success



Success of written exam

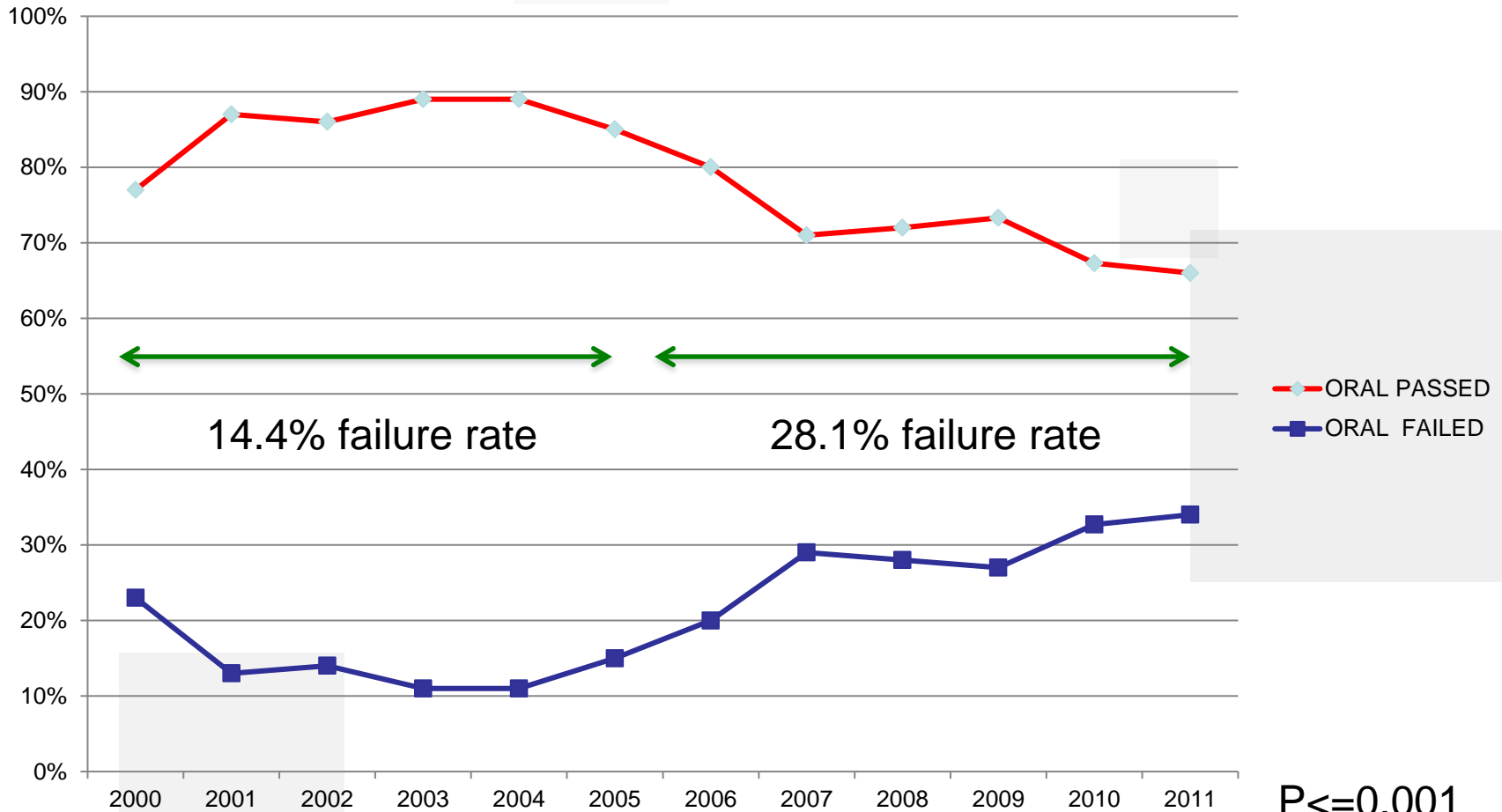


$P \leq 0.01$

www.aats.org



Success of Oral Exam



$P <= 0.001$



Conclusions:

- Decreasing number of trainees will not meet the need of the growing American population
- Decreasing number of successful examinees
- Oral exam failure rate higher than the written



Suggested rationale:

- Decrease in critical cardiac case volume
- Tension exists between training and outcomes
- Decreased first responder scenarios
- Value based healthcare delivery unfamiliar



Recommendations:

- Realize that shortfall of certified cardiothoracic surgeons may be as early as 2020
- Improve experiential education required: I-6 programs
- Training to competency rather than time should prevail
- Continued implementation of the New Thoracic Surgery Curriculum is timely and appreciated