

**Freshmen Views of Their Initial Learning Experiences at CSUN:
An Abbreviated Overview of
Selected Findings From Year One of the Learning Habits Project**

by

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Launched in Fall 2007, the “Learning Habits Project” is designed to track, over a four-to-six-year period, several groups of newly enrolled students likely to succeed at CSUN. Its purpose is to gain insight into the characteristics and practices of the most effective among them – that is, we seek to find out about their *learning habits*. The Project is an integral part of the university’s ongoing efforts to assess the success of its academic programs and related activities in fostering student learning. Thus, it serves as a complement to the many ongoing campus initiatives for at-risk students. This abbreviated version of a fuller summary report describing the survey data collected during the 2007-08 academic year includes virtually all of the text and tables from the full report, but excludes the lengthy appendices summarizing students’ individual responses. The full report is available on request from the Office of Institutional Research.

The first student participants joined the Learning Habits Project early in the Spring 2008 semester; all entered CSUN in Fall 2007. They were recruited from the first time freshmen entering in that term who met the following criteria: a high school GPA of 3.5 or higher and/or full proficiency in mathematics and English at entry. The initial recruitment pool was also limited to those undecided about their majors or planning to pursue majors in Colleges with the highest one-year continuation rates (i.e., Science and Mathematics and Humanities). Of these 526 students, 82 agreed to participate in the Project, though four never completed any of the tasks they had committed to. For all practical purposes, therefore, the Project’s pilot cohort includes 78 freshmen (15% of the eligible students).

In keeping with the Project’s dual structure, the following data were collected during 2007-08:

- Essay assignments prepared by 54 students taking the campus’s required Freshman Composition class (46 in Fall 2007 and 9 in Spring 2008).
- Responses to two end-of-term surveys containing a range of open-ended questions, along with responses to a few questions posed at the time students enrolled in the Project.
- Data on participating students drawn from the CSUN student data files (e.g., background characteristics, courses attempted).
- In-depth interviews with 70 student participants focusing on their study habits and in-class learning during their first year at the university.

The last were undertaken by faculty and staff participating in a seminar focusing on student learning, while collection of the survey and background data was managed by CSUN's Office of Institutional Research.

After briefly describing the characteristics of the Project's initial student participants, the following pages summarize the survey responses provided by them during their first year at CSUN. A set of 8 tables summarizes student responses to individual questions. Given the small number of students involved, no firm conclusions can be drawn from the information summarized. Nonetheless, the discussion below points to the types of insights that the Learning Habits Project may eventually generate and casts important light on the utility of the topics and issues considered.

Student Background

Seven-tenths of the initial Learning Habits participants are women and 44% stem from minority backgrounds, with more than a fifth claiming a Latina/o heritage (see Table 1). At CSUN entry, just over half planned majors in Science and Mathematics or Humanities, while two-fifths were undecided about their majors. Close to half (45%) attempted 15 or more units during their first college term. Over half of the initial participants (56%) had high school GPAs of 3.5 or higher and close to three-quarters were fully proficient in mathematics and English at entry. Of the latter, two-thirds were considered proficient thanks to their relatively high SAT or ACT scores. Among the few students needing remediation, close to three-fifths need extra work in one subject only.

Although these students are not typical of CSUN's first time freshmen, they are typical of the students meeting the Project's entry criteria in most respects. A comparison of the first and third columns of Table 1 indicates that the participants are distinct in three respects: they are more likely than other eligible students to be women (70% vs. 55%), to have high school GPAs of 3.75 or higher (29% vs. 19%), and to have attempted more than 15 units in Fall 2007 (27% vs. 15%).¹

¹ The Learning Habits participants are also disproportionately likely to be planning certain majors (i.e., Humanities, Science and Mathematics, or Undeclared), but this is a function of the limited number of major fields on which initial student recruitment focused.

The additional information provided by Learning Habits participants at the time they joined the Project indicated that more than four in five had attended the CSUN Orientation sessions offered in August 2007. Even though English is the native language of more than three quarters of the participants, close to three-fifths have at least one parent who grew up in another country. In keeping with this, close to half of the participants (48%) grew up in homes in which a language other than English was spoken (see Table 2). Of those who heard non-English languages at home, three-fifths heard one of two languages: Spanish and Armenian.

Reasons for Coming To and Planning to Stay at CSUN

In addition to providing the supplementary background information summarized above, freshmen registering for the Learning Habits Project indicated why they decided to attend Cal State Northridge. In the Spring end-of-term survey, a companion question was posed: participants were asked whether they planned to return to CSUN in Fall 2008 and to enumerate “what aspects of your CSUN experience over the past year contributed to your decision about returning...” As the first section of Table 3 indicates, all but one of the 68 participants completing the Spring survey planned to return to CSUN in Fall 2008. This suggests that the one-year continuation rate for this group will be 86% (67 out of 78 participants), well above the equivalent rate for all first time freshmen entering in Fall 2007.

Tables 4 and 5 indicate that the considerations underlying participants’ decisions to enter and return to CSUN are largely distinct. For almost three-fifths of the participants, the convenience of CSUN’s location was a key consideration in their decision to attend the university (see Table 4). While one-fourth of the participants dealt explicitly with CSUN’s modest cost in explaining their decision to attend, many of those who focused on location did so implicitly, since living at home while attending college saves money. Another important consideration in the decisions of two-fifths of the respondents is the availability of training in the career fields they are considering. If one combines these responses, it appears that CSUN’s location, low cost, and broad range of degree programs are the key factors in most participants’ decisions to

attend the university. Campus setting and location also play a role for some students, as do the recommendations of family and friends.

As Table 5 indicates, the key factors inducing Learning Habits participants to attend CSUN played little role in their thinking about whether to return to the university in Fall 2008. Uppermost in their minds appears to be the quality of the faculty they encountered during their first year and the character of the campus community. More specifically, between 27% and 37% identified their caring and knowledgeable professors and the appeal of the campus setting as important considerations in their decisions. As two respondents commented:

The teachers have been very helpful and dedicated; the students are interested and involved; the campus is beautiful and local.

The professors and students are wonderful, and the campus itself provides a great atmosphere overall.

In short, the findings suggest that students decide to attend CSUN because the campus can accommodate both their socio-economic circumstances and academic interests, but stay because of the campus relationships they form during their first year, especially with their instructors. Should these preliminary findings be confirmed by additional data, they will provide important insight into the relative importance of the campus's many strengths at different points in students' careers.

Courses That Provided Exceptional Learning Experiences

In both the Fall 2007 and Spring 2008 end-of-term surveys, Learning Habits participants were asked to identify specific courses in which they learned a great deal, along with the features "that made them such a good learning experience". The second section of Table 3 indicates that half of the participants identified courses in which they learned an exceptional amount in Fall 2007, while more than three-fifths had such courses in Spring 2008. Most students specified only one course, but approximately one in three specified two.

Table 6 lists the 57 courses respondents mentioned at least once. Almost all are lower division sections, as one would expect, and most frequently offered by the College of Humanities or the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. In part, this second reflects the fact that the College of Humanities offers the most lower division course sections.² Only 18 courses were mentioned by more than one participant and only 8 were mentioned by more than two. These last include ENG 155 (n=13), COMS 151 (n=8), PSY 150 (n=6), BIO 106 (n=5), FCS 207 (n=5), ENG 208 (n=3), ENG 275 (n=3), and POLS 155 (n=3).

Table 7 summarizes participants' reasons for considering the courses they enumerated exceptional learning experiences; it distinguishes the factors respondents identified by the degree to which they are in an instructor's control, progressing from most to least control.

Obviously, various aspects of an instructor's approach to a course are almost entirely in her/his control. The percentages in Table 7 indicate that almost all respondents mentioned one or more of the factors enumerated in this broad category, with one fifth mentioning at least one of the following three: instructors' clear desire to foster student learning, their enthusiasm and passion for the subject matter, and their efforts to link the course material to current events or students' daily lives. The three examples below convey the flavor of the responses provided.

When we had to do our papers for the semester, she was always open to questions about them, able to take as many drafts as we wanted to give to her so that we could do better on the paper. She gave the class her phone number so that we could call and ask her questions on what we could better each and every time. She truly was a professor who cared for her students and wanted to see them succeed in her class. She was what kept me wanting to pay attention and learn in her class.

I have always enjoyed [classes in this subject and this class] not disappoint me. First and foremost this class was one in which I learned a great deal because the professor not only knew her stuff, but she always came to class with this incredible enthusiasm that made students want to participate and get in on the discussions and didn't leave time for any dull moments.

² In 2006-07, the College of Humanities offered 867 lower division course sections, while the College of Science and Mathematics offered 849, the College of Arts, Media, and Communication offered 523, the College of Health and Human Development offered 420, and the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences offered 384.

It also helped that the professor threw in the occasional humorous clip from YouTube or The Daily Show that commented on some aspect of the chapter we were learning about. It made each two and half hour long class a bit more enjoyable and showed the relevance of the topic in our daily life.

A quarter of the respondents also considered clarity, either in class presentations and materials or in expectations for student performance, important in fostering learning

In the views of almost half of the respondents (46%), an aspect of course structure contributed to the quality of the courses they singled out, with two features mentioned with equal frequency (15%): the integration of reading assignments into class sections and the utility of the tests and assignments built into the course. A good many respondents (13%) also mentioned the importance of being challenged by the course content or requirements.

The frequency with which participants ascribed their exceptional learning to attitudes that they brought to a course is striking. Close to half of the respondents (45%) pointed to their interest in the subject matter of a course as a reason for valuing it or their satisfaction in learning new things as important features of the courses they were discussing. As one respondent said, in a fairly typical comment, “I love the subject matter itself because I love to write so this class was one of my favorites.” Another noted: “I really enjoyed the instructor. He always made the class so much fun and I always walked away from that class having learned something new.” These preliminary findings suggest that, in many cases, the attitudes students bring to college are as important in their valuable learning experiences as the efforts of instructors and departments to create effective courses.

Instructor Techniques and Approaches That Foster Student Learning

In addition to asking the Learning Habits participants about exceptional courses taken during the preceding term, both of the end-of-term surveys asked them whether there were “any techniques, exercises, or approaches that your instructors used that made a significant contribution to your learning in the course.” As the third section of Table 3 indicates, two thirds of the respondents to the Fall 2007 survey answered the

question in the affirmative, as did seven-tenths of the respondents to the Spring 2008 survey. Those that did were asked to describe the techniques and exercises that proved so helpful.

Table 8 summarizes the responses to this second question and indicates that they tended to be less fulsome than those for the comparable question about the characteristics of exceptional courses. Thus, the number of respondents dealing with multiple topics was more limited. The two most frequently mentioned topics did not figure prominently in students' discussions of exceptional courses. They concern means of helping students approach specific academic tasks and involving them in class discussions or lectures. Several typical responses appear below.

One professor introduced a step-by-step system of writing a paper, which greatly improved my writing skills.

In one course that I took, the professor provided us with multiple worksheets on the subject we were learning. It helped a great deal because it provided us with practice beyond homework problems, and helped to solidify any problems we were having.

My instructors always encouraged students to get involved and participate. We were treated like a community, then did group work, and interacted with each other. My instructors encouraged exercises in which the whole class would have to participate, and describe how he or she felt on the topic.

Our professor had us arrange our desks so we were all in one big circle. This way we could all freely speak and actively listen in class.

Two of the categories shown in Table 8 were mentioned in 17%-18% of the responses: relating course material to students' everyday lives and means of showing students that instructors are committed to fostering their learning. Another 13% mentioned the utility of group work in fostering learning. As might be expected, given the similarity of the questions, these three types of comments also figured in the descriptions of exceptional courses. In only one instance did these topics come up significantly more frequently in one set of responses: the importance of instructors' commitment to student learning was mentioned more frequently in students' discussion of their exceptional courses than in their comments about useful instructor techniques (22% vs. 17%). In addition, the idea that students welcome instructors'

enthusiasm for their subjects was mentioned considerably more frequently in the exceptional courses discussion (21% vs.8% for the useful techniques comments).

The similarity in students' responses to the two open-ended questions dealing with effective teaching techniques suggest that they are tapping into the same broad phenomenon. At the same time, the differences in emphasis suggest that each may be tapping into a different aspect of it.

Dealing with Academic Challenges

The Spring 2008 end-of-term survey asked respondents whether they performed less well than they would have liked in some of the courses they attempted during their first term at CSUN. Just over a third responded in the affirmative, as the bottom section of Table 3 indicates. For those who attempted these unexpectedly challenging courses, an open-ended follow-up question was posed: "What changes did you make in your study habits or course-taking patterns to strengthen your academic performance during this past Spring term?"

As the bottom of Table 3 indicates, a few students made no changes in their study habits as a result of poor performance, while a number attributed their difficulties to family crises. Of the remainder, all of whom altered their approaches to their studies, some just studied harder, while others, as the following examples indicate, changed their study habits:

More active reading and highlighting really furthered my understanding of the texts I was reading.

I started to study with groups so that if I did not know the answer, there was someone else that I could ask. I forced myself to study because I did not want to receive poor grades again.

In addition, a fair number of students (14%) reported improving the way they managed their time. Taken together, the written-in responses are revealing, but their utility is limited by the relatively small proportion of students encountering difficulties in their courses.

Table 1. Characteristics of Learning Habits Year One Participants Compared to Eligible First Time Freshmen Entering in Fall 2007

Characteristic	Actual Participants	Potential Participants	All Eligible Freshmen
Gender			
Women	69.5	61.3	54.8
Men	30.5	38.7	45.2
Total (Number of students)	100.0 (82)	100.0 (519)	100.0 (1,496)
Racial and Ethnic Background			
Minority Background	43.9	54.1	51.5
<i>African American or Black</i>	12.2	7.1	8.2
<i>American Indian</i>	0.0	0.2	0.5
<i>Asian</i>	9.8	15.0	14.2
<i>Latina/o</i>	22.0	31.8	28.6
White	39.0	33.5	36.6
Unknown	17.1	12.3	11.8
Total (Number of students)	100.0 (82)	100.0 (519)	100.0 (1,496)
High School GPA			
2.0 - 2.49	2.4	3.3	3.2
2.5 - 2.99	7.3	13.0	16.0
3.0 - 3.49	34.2	33.1	32.8
3.5 - 3.74	26.8	33.1	29.1
3.75 or higher	29.3	17.6	18.9
Total (Number of students)	100.0 (82)	100.0 (517)	100.0 (1,492)
College Housing Likely Major			
Arts, Media, & Communication	2.4	0.0	18.9
Business & Economics	0.0	0.0	15.3
Education	0.0	0.0	1.5
Engineering & Computer Science	0.0	0.0	7.6
Health & Human Development	2.4	0.0	9.0
Humanities	19.5	16.8	5.8
Science and Mathematics	33.0	27.7	9.6
Social & Behavioral Sciences	1.2	0.0	13.0
Undeclared	41.5	55.5	19.3
Total (Number of students)	100.0 (82)	100.0 (519)	100.0 (1,496)

Table 1 cont'd.

Characteristic	Actual Participants	Potential Participants	All Eligible Freshmen
Number of Units Attempted in Fall 2007			
11 or fewer units	0.0	2.3	3.4
12 units	19.5	28.1	23.7
13 units	24.4	26.6	23.9
14 units	11.0	14.5	16.1
15 units	18.3	13.7	18.2
16 - 21 units	26.8	14.8	14.7
Total (Number of students)	100.0 (82)	100.0 (517)	100.0 (1,492)
Proficiency at Entry			
Fully proficient at entry	72.0	68.8	72.2
<i>Needs remediation in</i>			
Mathematics only	8.5	5.4	5.7
English only	8.5	11.2	9.7
Needs Remediation in Both	11.0	14.6	12.4
Total (Number of students)	100.0 (82)	100.0 (519)	100.0 (1,496)
Need for Remediation in Mathematics			
Exempt (e.g., ACT, SAT)	47.6	48.7	51.1
Proficient at entry (passed ELM)	32.9	31.2	30.8
Needs remediation	19.5	20.0	18.1
Total (Number of students)	100.0 (82)	100.0 (519)	100.0 (1,496)
Need for Remediation in English			
Exempt (e.g., ACT, SAT)	53.7	49.3	49.1
Proficient at entry (passed EPT)	26.8	24.9	28.7
Needs remediation	19.5	25.8	22.1
Total (Number of students)	100.0 (82)	100.0 (519)	100.0 (1,496)

Table 2. Additional Background Information Provided by First Time Freshmen Entering CSUN in Fall 2007 and Participating in the Learning Habits Project (Percentages)

Characteristic	Percentage
Attended Summer Orientation Program for New Students	
Yes	85.4
No	14.6
Total (Number of respondents)	100.0 (82)
Native Language	
English	78.0
Another language	22.0
Total (Number of respondents)	100.0 (82)
One or Both Parents Were Born and Raised	
in the United States	42.0
in another country	58.0
Total (Number of respondents)	98.8 (81)
Languages Spoken in Home While Growing Up	
English only	52.5
Languages other than English	47.5
<i>Spanish</i>	16.3
<i>Armenian</i>	13.8
<i>Tagalog or Filipino</i>	3.8
<i>Farsi</i>	2.5
<i>Other (listed by one student only) *</i>	10.0
<i>None specified</i>	1.3
Total (Number of respondents)	100.0 (80)

* The following languages are included in the "Other" group: Afghan, Arabic, German, Gujarati, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Malay, Malayalam, Nepalese, Persian, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Urdu.

Table 3. Views of Initial College Learning Experiences Articulated by First Time Freshmen Entering CSUN in Fall 2007 and Participating in the Learning Habits Project by Term (Percentages)

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	Fall 2007	Spring 2008
Plans for Fall 2008		
Planning to return to CSUN		98.5
Not planning to return to CSUN		1.5
Total (Number of respondents)		100.0 (68)
Courses in Which Learned a Great Deal More Than in Others		
Yes, one or more courses stand out	50.7	64.7
<i>one specified</i>	34.7	45.6
<i>more than one specified</i>	16.0	19.1
None stand out	49.3	35.3
Total (Number of respondents)	100.0 (75)	100.0 (68)
Instructor Techniques That Made a Significant Contribution to My Learning in a Course		
Yes	67.1	70.6
No	32.9	29.4
Total (Number of respondents)	100.0 (76)	100.0 (68)
<hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/>		
Were There Courses in Which You Performed Less Well Than You Would Have Liked in Preceding Term?		
Yes		35.3
No		64.7
Total (Number of respondents)		100.0 (68)
Changes in Study Habits Designed to Improve Performance		
I. Changes in learning or study habits		72.7
<i>A. Studied harder</i>		31.8
<i>B. Approached my studies in a different manner</i>		27.3
<i>C. Improved time management</i>		13.6
II. Reasons why study habits remained unchanged		22.7
<i>A. Family difficulties undermined my performance during Fall term</i>		13.6
<i>B. Did not improve my grades because did not change study habits</i>		9.1
V. Other comments		9.1
(Number of respondents on which the percentages are based)		(22)

Table 4. Fall 2007 Freshman Entrants' Reasons for Choosing to Attend Cal State Northridge (Year 1 Learning Habits Participants)

Reason	Percentage
I. Location of the university fits my needs.	58.0
<i>A. Being so close to home is convenient.</i>	53.1
<i>B. The university is far from home, but not too far.</i>	4.9
II. CSUN provides good training in my likely career field(s)	43.2
<i>A. Interested in a career in teaching</i>	9.9
<i>B. Interested in a career in the sciences</i>	7.4
<i>C. Interested in a career in the arts</i>	3.7
<i>D. CSUN offers another specific major that I wish to pursue</i>	14.8
<i>E. Attending CSUN allows me to consider several career options</i>	7.4
III. CSUN's geographic location and campus setting is appealing	25.9
<i>A. Liked the feel of the campus in general/valued a specific feature</i>	18.5
<i>B. The university and its location appealed to me</i>	7.4
IV. The university is inexpensive and affordable	24.7
<i>A. The university has low fees, but provides a quality education</i>	4.9
<i>B. Proximity to home cuts down on expenses</i>	4.9
<i>C. Received sufficient financial aid and/or did not need loans</i>	6.2
<i>D. Other aspects of affordability</i>	8.6
V. Friends and family attended CSUN or recommended that I attend	22.2
<i>A. Family members attended or recommended CSUN</i>	12.3
<i>B. Friends attended CSUN or recommended that I attend</i>	9.9
VI. Other comments	7.4
<i>A. CSUN was my second choice</i>	3.7
<i>B. Other</i>	3.7
(Number of respondents on which the percentages are based)	(81)

Table 5. Fall 2007 Freshman Entrants' Reasons for Planning to Return to Cal State Northridge in Spring 2008 (Year 1 Learning Habits Participants)

Table 5. Fall 2007 Freshman Entrants' Reasons for Planning to Return to Cal State Northridge in Spring 2008 (Year 1 Learning Habits Participants)

Reason	Percentage
I. The quality of the faculty	47.1
<i>A. Caring and knowledgeable professors</i>	36.8
<i>B. The supportiveness of faculty and staff in my major</i>	10.3
II. Value of the campus community	45.6
<i>A. The campus setting is appealing</i>	26.5
<i>B. Student activities, clubs, and support services</i>	11.8
<i>C. Have developed a network of friends</i>	4.4
<i>D. Other specific campus features draw me back</i>	2.9
III. The location of the university fits my needs	8.8
IV. Dedicated to completing my education	7.4
V. Have no particular reason for returning	7.4
VI. Other comments about returning	4.4
VII. Not planning to return	2.9
(Number of respondents on which the percentages are based)	(68)

Table 7. Fall 2007 Freshman Entrants' Reasons Why Specific Courses Provided Exceptional Learning Experiences (Year 1 Learning Habits Participants)

Table 6. Courses Identified by Freshman Entrants as the Ones in Which They Learned the Most During Their First Year at CSUN by Term and College (Year 1 Learning Habits Participants)

Course Abbreviation	Course Name	Fall	Spring	Total
Humanities				
Eng 155 (& 155H)	Freshman Composition	11	2	13
ENG 275	Major American Writers	1	2	3
ENG 208	Creative Writing		3	3
AAS 155	Approaches to University Writing	1	1	2
ENG 258	Major English Writers I	1	1	2
RS 100	Introduction to Religious Studies		2	2
ARM 101	Elementary Armenian I		1	1
CHS 111	The Chicano/a and the Arts		1	1
CHS 151	Freshman Speech Communication		1	1
CHS 260	Constitutional Issues and the Chicano/a		1	1
FRSI 101C	Elementary Farsi I and Lab	1		1
HUM 101	Forms and Ideas in Humanities	1		1
LRS 150/F	Liberal Studies & Anthropology & Field Study		1	1
RS 150	World Religions	1		1
WS 200	Introduction to Gender & Women Studies		1	1
Social and Behavioral Science				
PSY 150	Principles of Human Behavior	3	3	6
POLS 155	American Political Institutions	3		3
ANTH 150	Human Origin and Culture	2		2
SOC 150	Introductory Sociology	2		2
ANTH 152	Culture and Human Behavior	1		1
GEOG 101	The Physical Environment	1		1
GEOG 150	World Geography	1		1
HIST 151	Western Civilization II		1	1
HIST 185	Civilization of the Middle East		1	1
HIST 271	The United States Since 1865		1	1
PAS 151	Freshman Speech Communication		1	1
PAS 155	Freshman Composition	1		1
PAS 204	Race and Critical Thinking		1	1
PAS 220	Psychological Envir of the Afrcn-Amrcn	1		1
SOC 150	Introductory Sociology		1	1
SOC 200	Social Crises of Today	1		1
Arts, Media & Communication				
COMS 151 (& 151H)	Fundamentals of Public Speaking & Lab	1	7	8
ART 151	Photography as Art	2		2
JOUR 100	Mass Communication	2		2
MUS 107	Music Today	1	1	2
CADV 150	Foundations of Child and Adolescent Develop.	1		1
COMS 225	Argumentation and Lab		1	1
CTVA 210	Television-Film Aesthetics		1	1
TH 262	Fundamentals of Costume Technology		1	1

Table 6 cont'd.

Course Abbreviation	Course Name	Fall	Spring	Total
Science & Mathematics				
BIO 106 & 106L	Biological Principles I		5	5
CHEM 100	Principles of Chemistry	2		2
CHEM 101	General Chemistry I		2	2
ASTR 152	Elementary Astronomy		1	1
BIO 101	General Biology		1	1
BIOL 107	Biological Principles II		1	1
BIOL 212L	Laboratory Studies in Human Anatomy		1	1
MATH 102	College Algebra	1		1
MATH 150A	Calculus I		1	1
Math 255A	Calculus for the Life Sciences I	1		1
Health and Human Development				
FCS 207	Nutrition for Life	3	2	5
FCS 321/L	Contemporary Issues in Food & Nutrition/ Lab		1	1
Education				
ELPS 203	Urban Education in American Society		1	1
SPED 400	Introduction to Special Education		1	1
Remedial Courses				
CHS 098	Basic Communication Skills	1		1
ENG 097	Developmental Reading	1		1
ENG 098	Developmental Writing	1		1
Other				
University 100	Freshman Seminar	1		1

Table 7. Fall 2007 Freshman Entrants' Reasons Why Specific Courses Provided Exceptional Learning Experiences (Year 1 Learning Habits Participants)

Reason	Percentage
I. Instructor's approach to course	116.9
A. Focus on student learning	30.1
1. Conveyed the desire to foster student learning	21.7
2. Articulated clear expectations for student performance	8.4
B. Expressed enthusiasm and passion for subject	20.5
C. Instructor related course material to current events & students' daily lives	20.5
D. Clear well-organized class presentations and materials	15.7
E. Instructor displayed impressive knowledge of subject	6.0
F. Balance between lecture and discussion during class sessions	4.8
G. Instructor's style of presentation	19.3
1. Instructor made the course interesting	15.7
2. Other aspects of instructor's style	3.6
II. Course structure	45.8
A. Integration of reading assignments into class sessions	14.5
B. Utility of tests, papers, and assignments	14.5
C. Value of small group activities during class	12.0
1. Peer evaluation	7.2
2. Group work	4.8
D. Emphasis on ideas and concepts	4.8
III. Nature of class content	16.9
A. Challenged by subject matter and/or course requirements	13.3
B. In-depth examination of subject matter	3.6
IV. Contributions of other students to learning experience	14.5
A. Getting to know other students facilitated learning	8.4
B. Interest and motivation of other students increased learning	6.0
V. What respondent brought to class	44.6
A. An interest in the subject area	27.7
B. Desire for new knowledge and perspectives	16.9
VI. Other comments	7.2
(Number of respondents on which the percentages are based) *	(83)

* In the Fall 2007 end-of-term survey, 39 respondents enumerated characteristics of the courses in which they learned the most. In the Spring 2008 survey, 44 respondents made similar comments.

Table 8. Fall 2007 Freshman Entrants' Views of Instructor Techniques and Approaches That Fostered Their Learning (Year 1 Learning Habits Participants)

Table 8. Fall 2007 Freshman Entrants' Views of Instructor Techniques and Approaches That Fostered Their Learning (Year 1 Learning Habits Participants)

Reason	Percentage
I. Explicitly teach students how to approach academic tasks	21.1
<i>A. Preparation for examinations and assignments</i>	12.6
<i>B. Other academic tasks</i>	8.4
II. Draw students into class discussion or lecture	20.0
<i>A. Specific techniques for doing so</i>	11.6
<i>B. General recommendation</i>	8.4
III. Relate course material to ongoing events & students' daily lives	17.9
<i>A. With the help of visual aids</i>	8.4
<i>B. By other means</i>	9.5
IV. Convey the desire to foster student learning	16.8
<i>A. Make students comfortable in class</i>	4.2
<i>B. Availability to answer questions</i>	6.3
<i>C. Other strategies</i>	6.3
V. Small group activities during class	12.6
<i>A. Group work</i>	8.4
<i>B. Peer evaluation</i>	4.2
VI. Instructor's enthusiasm and passion for subject of course	8.4
VII. Other measures to facilitate student learning	24.2
<i>A. In-class quizzes and exercises designed to strengthen skills</i>	9.5
<i>B. Make lecture notes available to students</i>	6.3
<i>C. Well-organized class sessions and materials</i>	5.3
<i>D. Integrating reading assignments into class sessions</i>	3.2
VIII. Other suggestions	13.7
(Number of respondents on which the percentages are based) *	(95)

* In the Fall 2007 end-of-term survey, 51 respondents described instructor techniques or approaches that helped them learn. In the Spring 2008 survey, 44 students provided similar responses.

Table 9. Fall 2007 Entrants' Familiarity With and Views of the Freshman Common Reading (*The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien)