

First-to-Second-Year Retention Among the Fall 2021 First-Time Freshmen: Student Characteristics

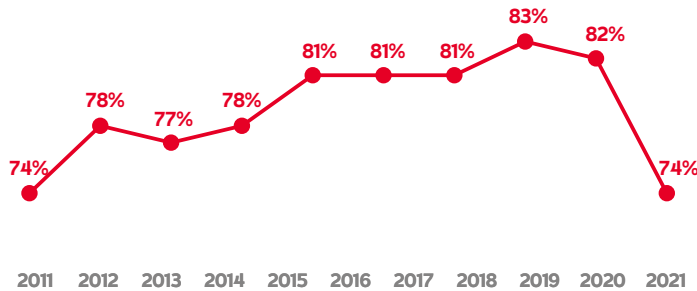
Retention rates at CSUN in Fall 2022 were the lowest recorded in a decade, especially for those students who were entering their second year at the university. This report examines which students from the Fall 2021 incoming first-time freshman (FTF) cohort came back for their second year.

In particular, in this report we examine whether some students were more likely to return for their second year than others. Specifically, we explored retention as related to student characteristics such as race/ethnicity, gender, first-generation status, and Pell grant recipient status.

Data

In Fall of 2021, 4,716 first-time freshmen (FTF) began their undergraduate education at CSUN.

Percent of Cohort Re-Enrolling for their Third Semester Fall 2011 to Fall 2021 Cohorts

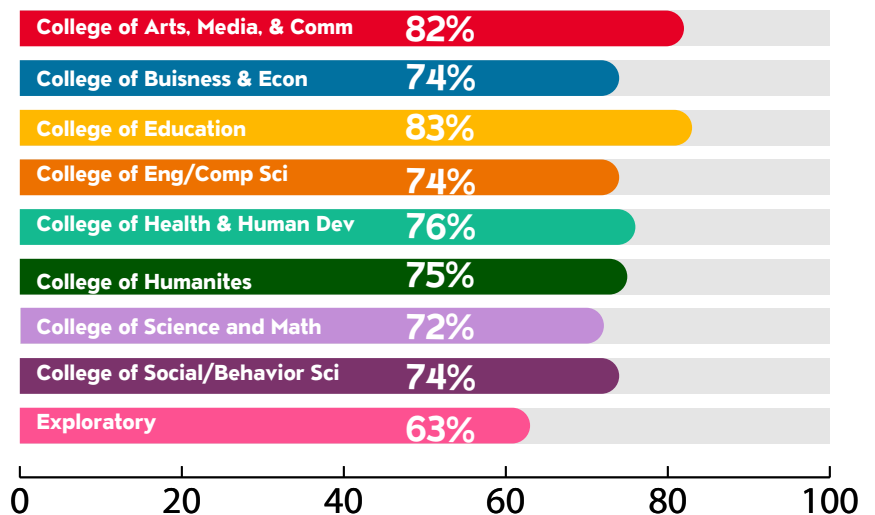


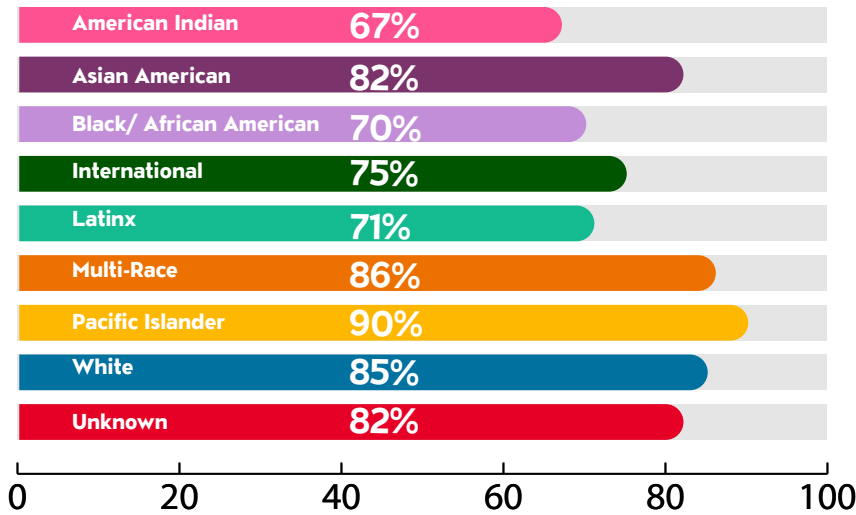
Overall, 74% of the Fall 2021 first-time freshmen (FTF) re-enrolled for their second year, a rate lower than any cohort since the FTF who entered in Fall 2011. By comparison, more than 80% of FTF who began their education between Fall 2016 and Fall 2020 came back for their second year.

Retention rates by college

FTF students who had not yet selected a major (Exploratory) were least likely to return and those from the Colleges of Arts, Media, & Communications and Education (Deaf Studies majors) were most likely to return.

One-year retention rates for Fall 2021 FTF were at historic lows for almost every college. Every college retained fewer students from the Fall 2021 FTF cohort than the previous cohort.



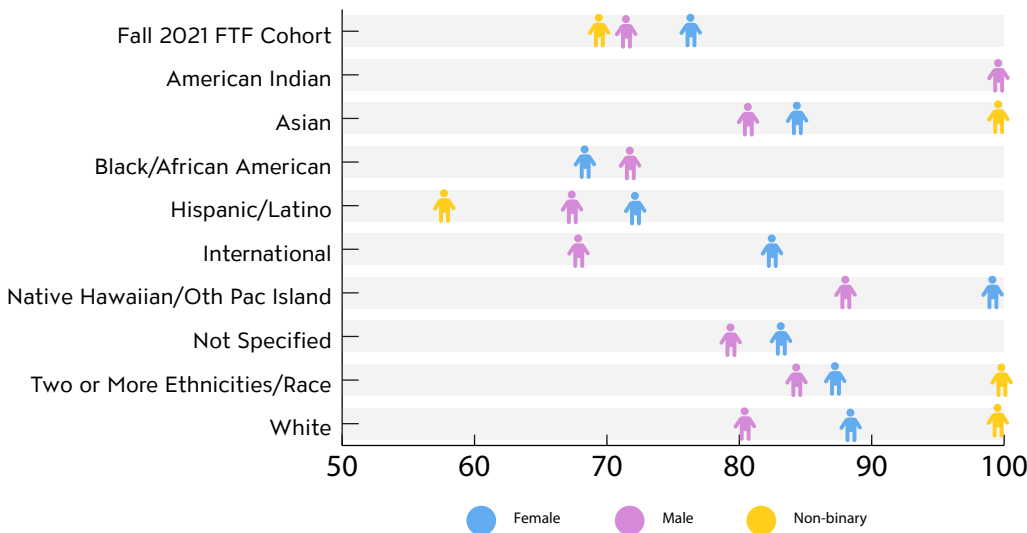
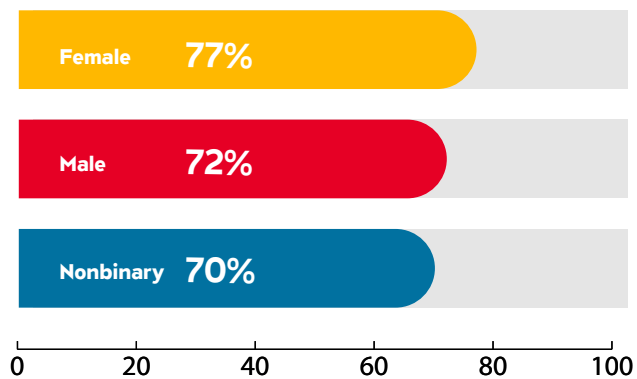


Retention rates by race/ethnicity

Among the Fall 2021 FTF, students who identify as White and Asian American returned at rates at least 10 percentage points higher, on average, than students who identified as Black/African American or Latinx.

Retention rates by gender

Across the nation, females are attending and completing college at higher rates than males (Field, 2022; Parker, 2021). Among CSUN's Fall 2021 FTF, retention was 5 percentage points higher for females than males, and retention was even lower for students who identified as nonbinary.

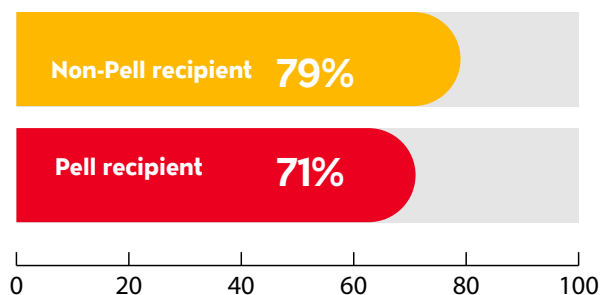


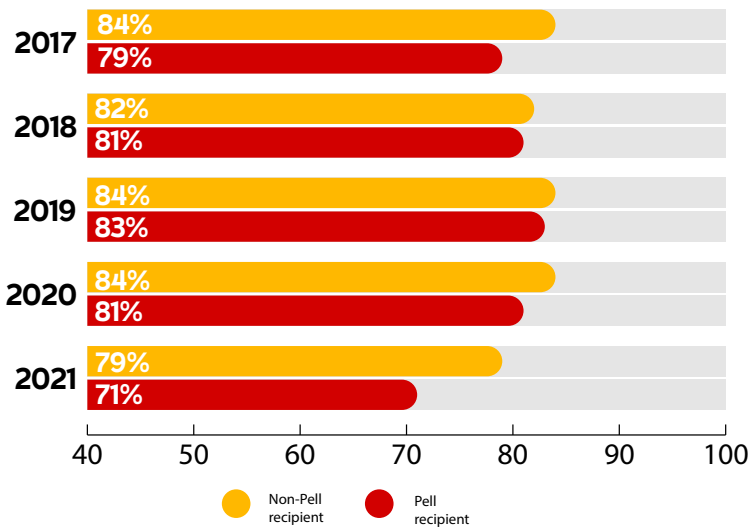
Not All Female Students are Returning

Although retention rates for females overall were higher than for males, Black females were among the least likely to return of any group. Similarly, among males, those who identified as Latino returned at rates lower than males from many other racial/ethnic groups. Latinx students who identified as nonbinary returned at particularly low levels (57% re-enrollment of the 7 total in the cohort).

Retention rates by Pell grant recipient status

Students who did not receive Pell grants returned at a rate 8 percentage points higher than students who were Pell recipients.

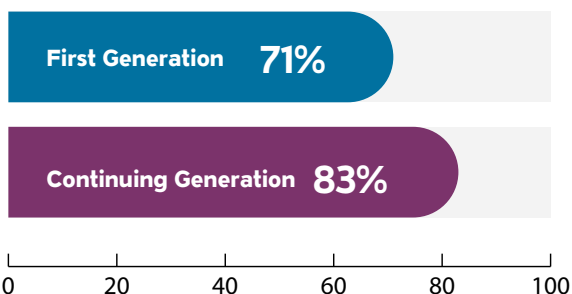
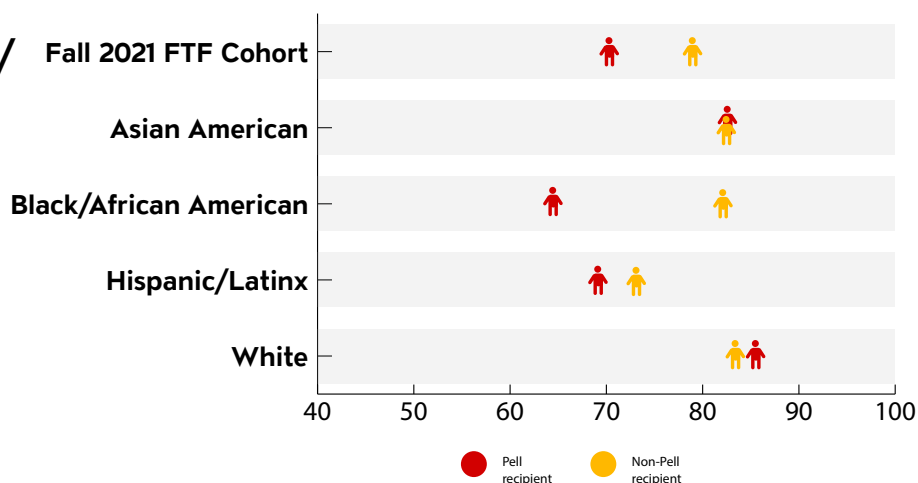




The gap between Pell recipient and non-recipient students from the Fall 2021 FTF cohort is the largest it has been for the past five cohorts of FTF. Prior to the Fall 2021 FTF cohort, CSUN had been making progress to narrow the Pell-based equity gap.

Equity gaps by Pell recipient status were wider for some racial/ethnic groups than others

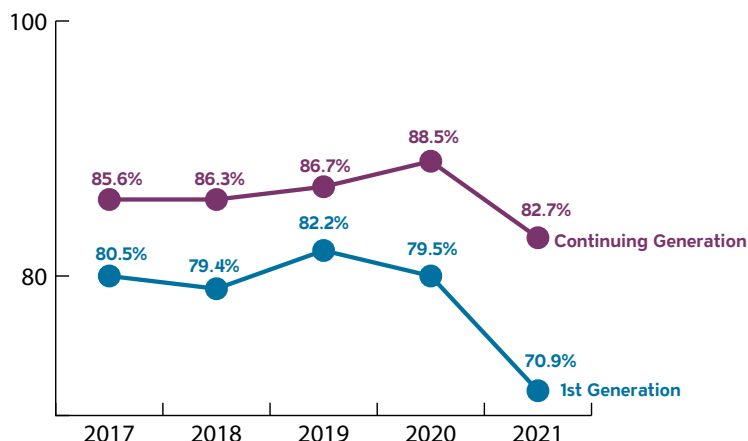
Students who identify as Black/African American or Latinx and received Pell grants had the lowest rates of returning of all groups. Black/African American students who did not receive Pell grants returned at a rate 20 percentage points higher than those who did. By contrast, for students who identified as White, Pell recipients returned at a rate 2 percentage points higher than those who were not Pell recipients.



Retention rates by generational status

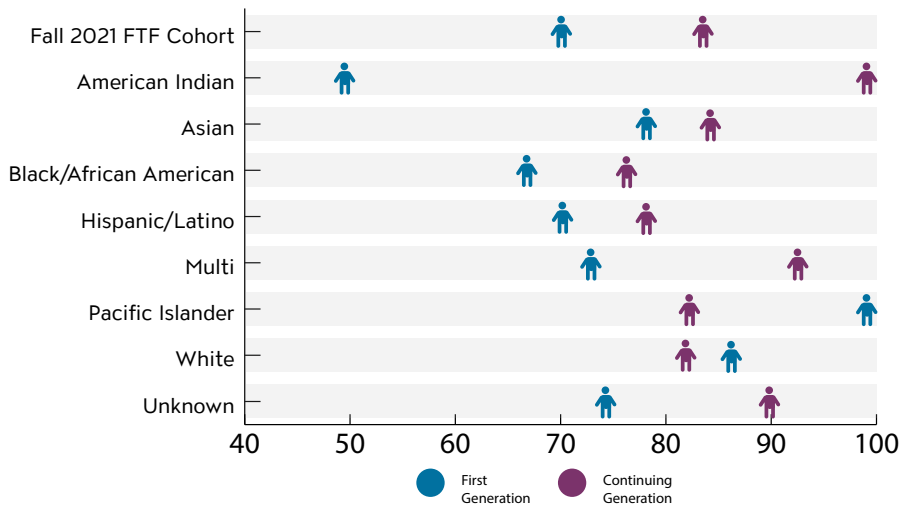
Among the Fall 2021 FTF, students whose parents had earned a four-year degree – continuing generation – were over 10 percentage points more likely to re-enroll than students whose parents did not earn a four-year degree – first generation.

The gap between continuing- and first-generation students from the Fall 2021 FTF cohort reverses a narrowing of the generation equity gap from prior cohorts. One-year retention for first-generation FTF had been relatively stable around 80% and the gap between first- and continuing-generation students had been shrinking. The one-year retention rate for first-generation students in the Fall 2021 FTF cohort was lower than any seen in the prior five cohorts. The decline in one-year retention for continuing-generation students was not as sharp.



First-generation students who identify as American Indian, Black, or Latina/o/x returned at lower rates

For most ethnic groups, first-generation students returned at lower rates than continuing generation students. Retention rates were lowest for first-generation students who identified as American Indian (50%, cohort size 3), Black/African-American (67%, cohort size 270), and Latinx (70%, cohort size 3,045). Retention rates were highest for continuing generation students who identified as American Indian (100%, cohort size 3) or having multiple ethnicities (93%, cohort size 153). First-generation students who identified as White returned at higher rates (87%, cohort size 664) than their continuing generation peers (84%), as did first-generation students who identified as Pacific Islander (100%, cohort size 10) compared with their continuing generation peers (83%).



Takeaways

Looking at the characteristics of the students from the Fall 2021 FTF cohort who did not return points to groups of students who could be better served. Among the groups with the lowest rates of retention were:

- Black/African American, Latinx, Pacific Islander, and Asian American students, who returned at rates 10 percentage points or more lower than White students.
- Males, particularly males who were first-generation and who identified as Black/African American or Latinx, as compared with females and peers whose parents had earned a 4-year degree.
- Students who identified as non-binary as compared with those who identified as males.
- Students whose families face financial hardships (Pell recipients), particularly those who identified as Black/African American and Latino/a.
- Students who were first-generation as compared with students whose parents had earned a 4-year degree, particularly when they identified as Black/African American, Latino/a, or American Indian.

This report is the first in a two-part series that examines the drop in retention rates among the Fall 2021 FTF cohort. The second report in this series examines academic predictors of retention in this cohort.

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