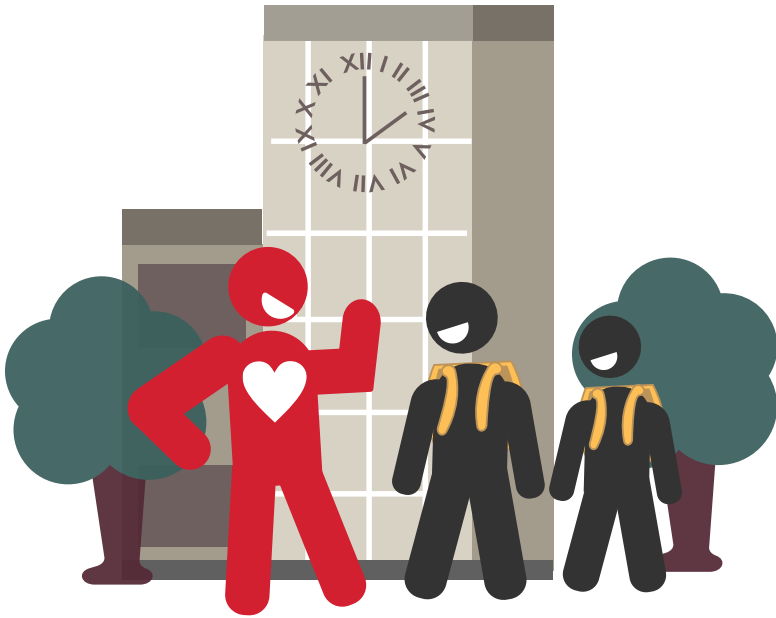


The CSUN Mentorship Program and Retention

In this report, we examine student outcomes associated with participation in the [CSUN Mentorship Program](#), specifically continuation at CSUN after the first year.

The CSUN Mentorship Program

The CSUN Mentorship Program is designed to help first-time freshmen navigate university life and explore the available resources offered at CSUN. Students are connected with a peer mentor who guides them toward university-sponsored events and organizations, such as athletic events, concerts, and volunteer programs, while serving as a personal support. Peer mentors are successful, continuing students who represent a variety of majors and student organizations at CSUN. Ultimately, the program aims to empower students to fully experience the opportunities that CSUN has to offer, cultivate a sense of belonging with CSUN's community, and build a successful path towards graduation through improved student retention. The CSUN Mentorship Program is funded by GI2025 and is a cross-divisional collaboration between Academic and Student Affairs.



Data

The findings reported here represent data from first-time freshmen who were in their first year during the 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2019-20 academic years. The CSUN Mentorship Program office provided participant lists, and these lists were combined with student outcome and background data from the Office of Institutional Research. We employed propensity score matching to compare CSUN Mentorship Program participants with a matched sample of non-participants. Because the program is voluntary, it is possible that students who choose to participate are different in meaningful ways from those who do not. Propensity score matching allows us to statistically match participants with non-participants on background characteristics that may account for student outcomes under study. For the purposes of this report, we matched on:

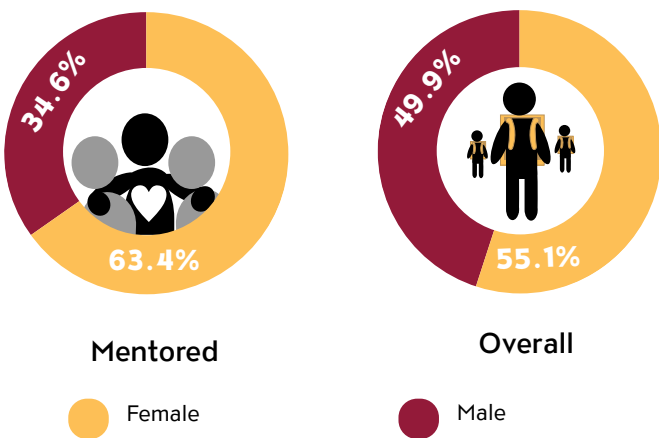
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- High School GPA
- Cohort Year
- Pell Status
- First-generation Status

Who Participated in the CSUN Mentorship Program?

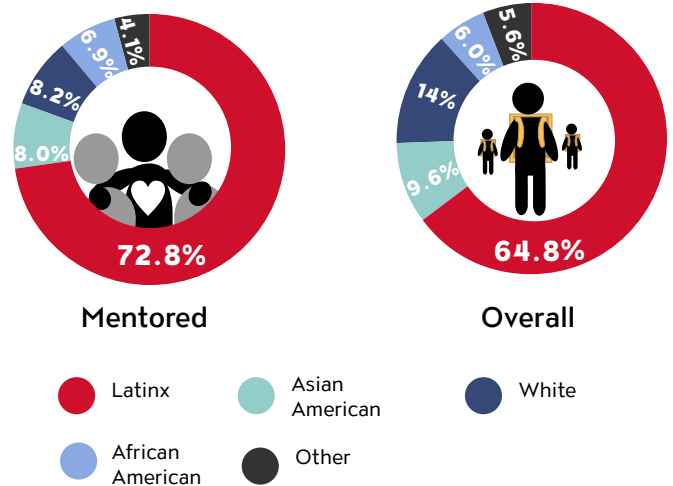
Of the 14,795 students in the freshman cohorts in question, 511 participated in the CSUN Mentorship Program. The demographic profile of students enrolled in the program is generally similar to the demographic profile of CSUN students overall. However, program participants are somewhat more likely to identify as Latinx, female, and first-generation than the cohorts overall.

Demographic Comparison between Mentored Students and Cohorts Overall

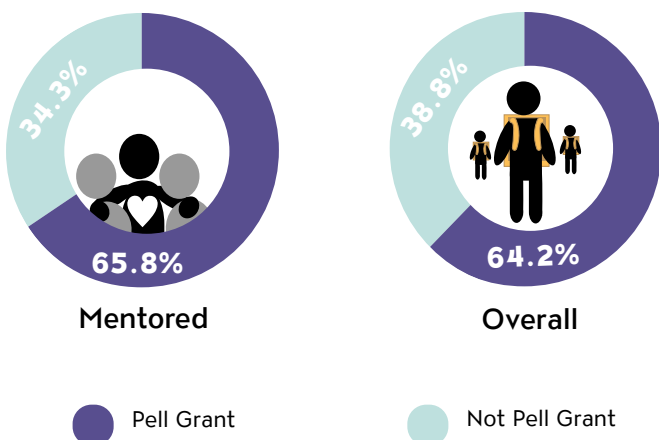
...by Gender



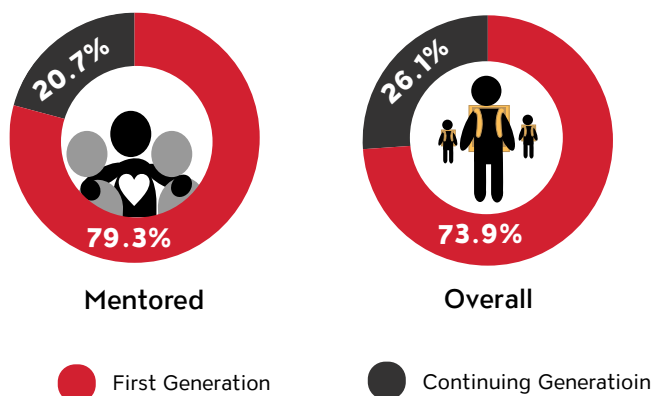
...by Ethnicity/Race



...by Pell Grant Status



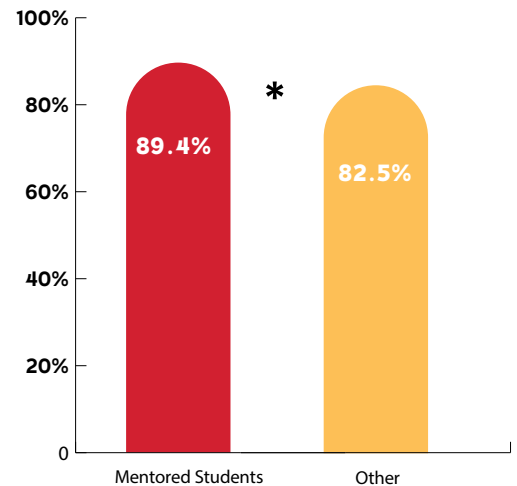
...by First Generation Status



How are student success outcomes associated with participation in the CSUN Mentorship Program?

Overall, students who participated in the CSUN Mentorship Program were more likely to persist into their third semester, compared to the matched sample of non-participants (statistically reliable, $p < .05$). Because retention is the key focus of the program, this report focuses on this student success outcome. We also examined participants' first-year GPA and academic standing after the first year ([see Addendum.](#))

One Year Continuation by Program Participation

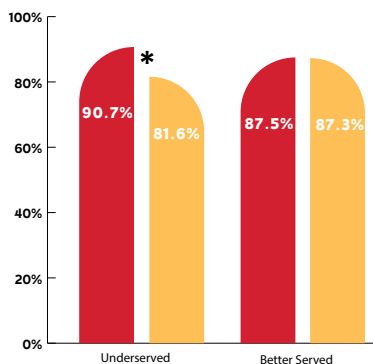


How do these findings vary by student demographics?

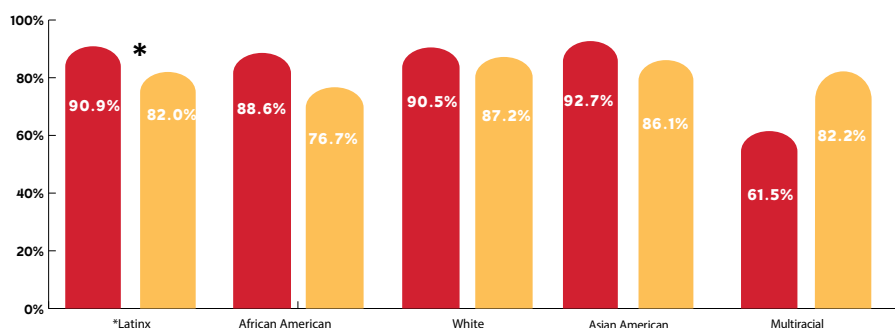
We also examined whether the association between program participation and improved retention varied by students' demographic backgrounds. We first compared participants from traditionally underserved (Latinx and Black) backgrounds to a matched sample of traditionally underserved non-participants. We also did a similar comparison of participants and matched non-participants from better served (White, Asian-American, and multiracial) backgrounds. Participants from traditionally underserved backgrounds were much more likely than their non-participant peers from similar racial backgrounds to continue into their second year, and this difference was statistically reliable ($p < .05$). On the other hand, there was virtually no difference in retention between participants and non-participants from better served backgrounds.



One Year Continuation by Program Participation and Race Groups

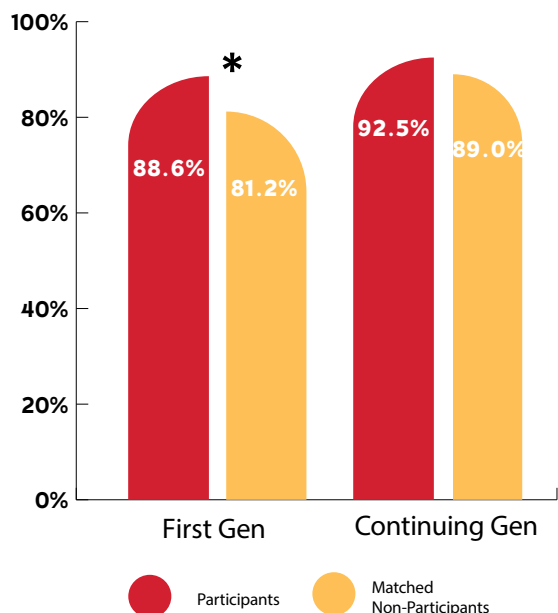


One Year Continuation by Program Participation and Race/Ethnicity



* Statistically reliable difference ($p < .05$)

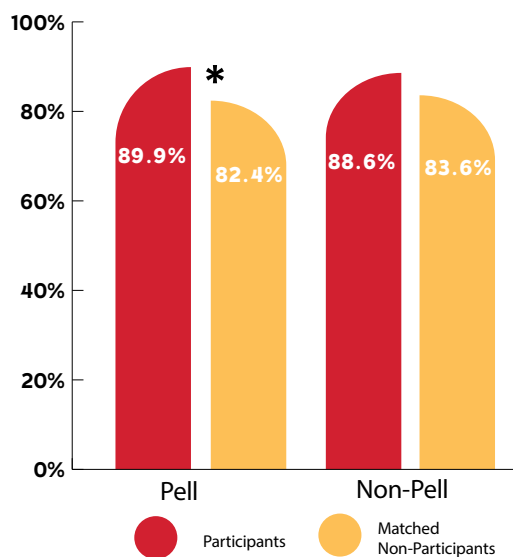
Probability for One Year Retention for Matched Students by Generational Status



Similarly, there was a statistically reliable higher probability of retention among first-generation participants as compared with their matched non-participant first-generation peers, but this difference was smaller and not statistically reliable among continuing generation participants.

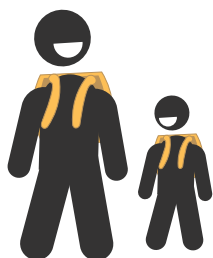
Pell-recipient participants also saw a statistically reliable higher probability of retention than the matched sample of non-participant Pell-recipients, but this difference was also smaller and not statistically reliable among non-Pell recipients.

Probability for One Year Retention for Matched Students by Pell Status



* Statistically reliable difference (p < .05)

Takeaway



Overall, participation in the CSUN Mentorship Program is associated with an increased likelihood of third-term retention among first-year freshmen.



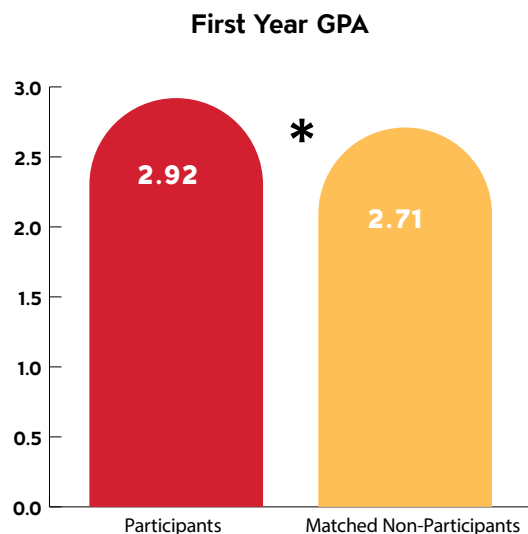
These findings reinforce previous mentee testimonials post participation, past IR studies on [faculty-peer mentorship](#), and prior academic scholarship that finds participation in peer mentorship programs to promote academic success among students in their first year (e.g., Rodger & Tremblay 2003; Asgari & Carter, 2016). **Moreover, the CSUN Mentorship Program appears to most positively impact students from traditionally underserved racial backgrounds (Latinx and Black), first-generation college students, and Pell recipient.** Though peer mentorship may appear to improve retention, more research needs to be conducted to understand the long-term effects of peer mentorship programs beyond the first year. Peer mentorship provides new students with the chance to develop student support networks and improve their knowledge of opportunities and services offered by the institution early on, which could provide lasting benefits to student success over the course of their time attending the university.

Addendum: The CSUN Mentorship Program and Retention

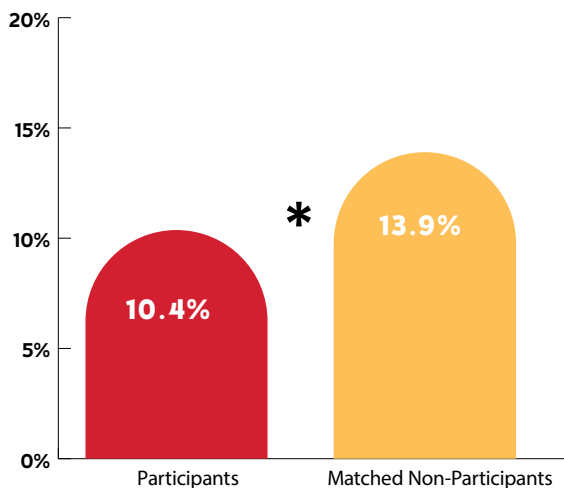
Because the focus of the CSUN Mentorship Program is freshman retention, the primary focus of our analyses were on that outcome. We also examined other outcomes, which are presented here; namely, first-year GPA and academic probation rates.

How are other student success outcomes associated with participation in the CSUN Mentorship Program?

Overall, students who participated in the CSUN Mentorship Program had better academic outcomes after their first year at CSUN than their matched non-participating peers. Participants had an average GPA of 2.92 after their first year, whereas the matched group of non-participants had an average GPA of 2.71 after their first year.



Academic Probation Probability



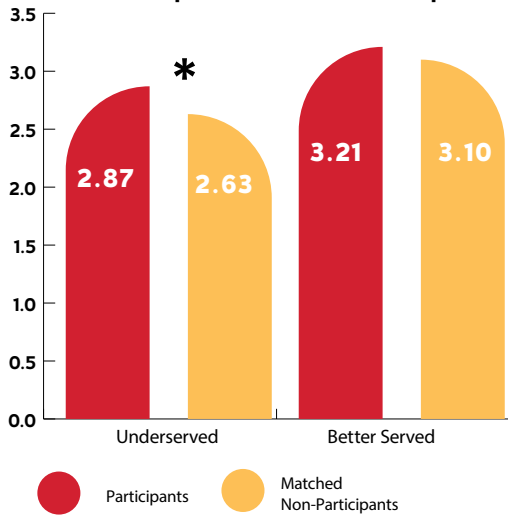
Additionally, the proportion of students on academic probation at the end of the first year was lower for students who participated in the CSUN Mentorship Program compared to the matched group of non-participants.

How do these findings differ by student demographics?

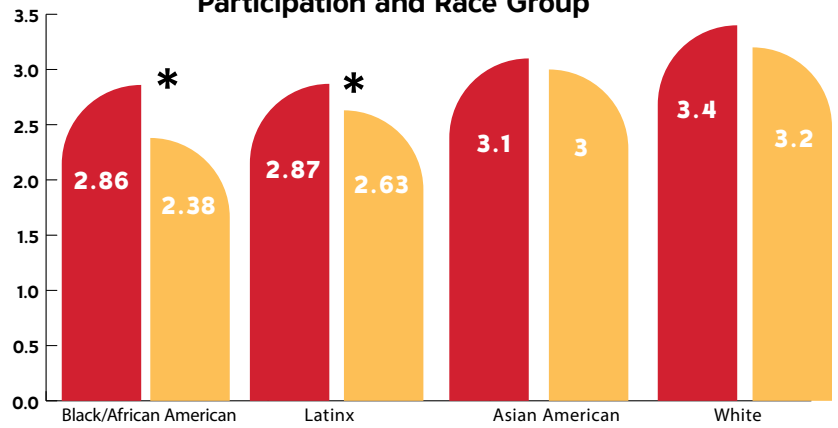
In order to examine how the CSUN Mentorship Program might differentially impact students from different backgrounds, we used propensity score matching to create a matched sample of non-participants by race.

* Statistically reliable difference ($p < .05$)

First-Year GPA by Program Participation and Race Group



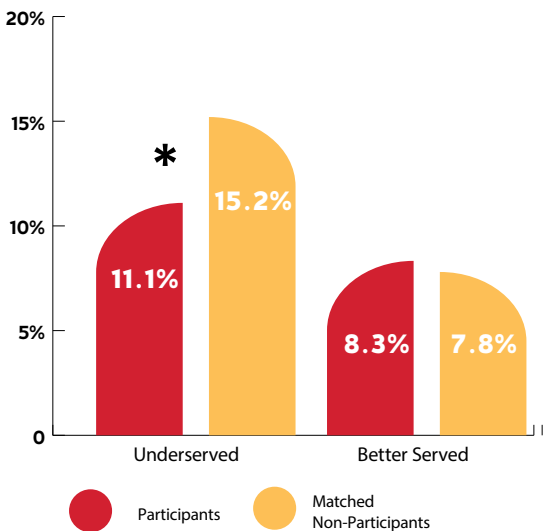
First-Year GPA by Program Participation and Race Group



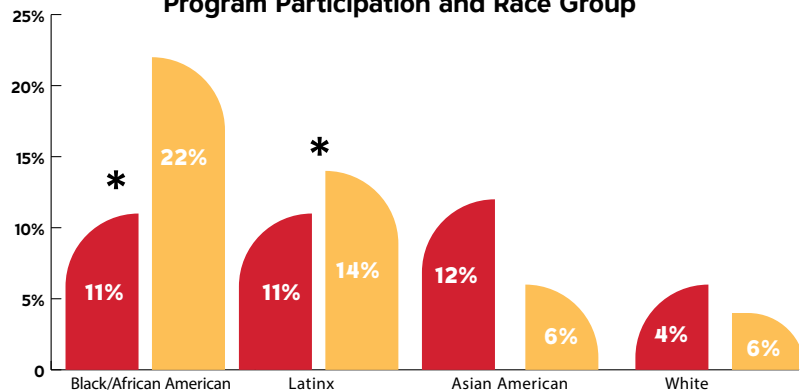
Comparisons by Race

First-year GPA among CSUN Mentorship Program participants was higher than for matched non-participants for both students from traditionally underserved and better served groups, but this difference was larger and only statistically reliable for those from traditionally underserved groups. In other words, only Black/ African American and Latinx students showed a statistically reliable improvement in GPA associated with participation in the CSUN Mentorship Programs.

Academic Probation Rates by Program Participation and Race Group

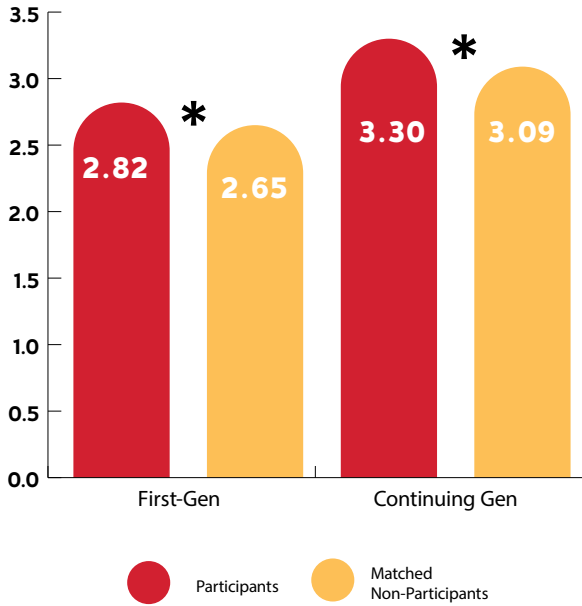


Academic Probation Rates by Program Participation and Race Group



Traditionally underserved students who participated in the CSUN Mentorship Program were also less likely to be on academic probation at the end of their first year than nonparticipating students from traditionally underserved groups. Most notably, participating Black/African American students had half the rate of being in probationary status compared to their matched peers. In contrast, there was virtually no difference in probation rates among participants and matched non-participants from better served groups.

First-Year GPA by Program Participation and Generational Status

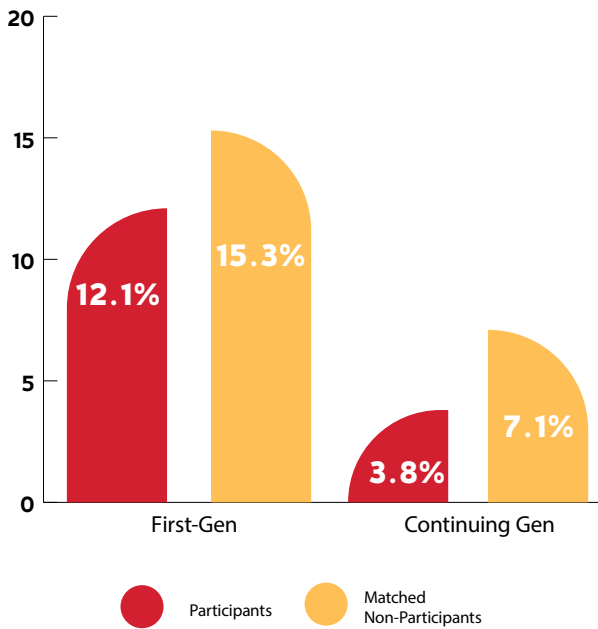


Comparisons by Generational Status

With regard to generational status, both students from first-generation and continuing-generation college backgrounds who participated in the program showed improved first-year GPA.

* Statistically reliable difference ($p < .05$)

Academic Probation Rates by Program Participation and by Generational Status

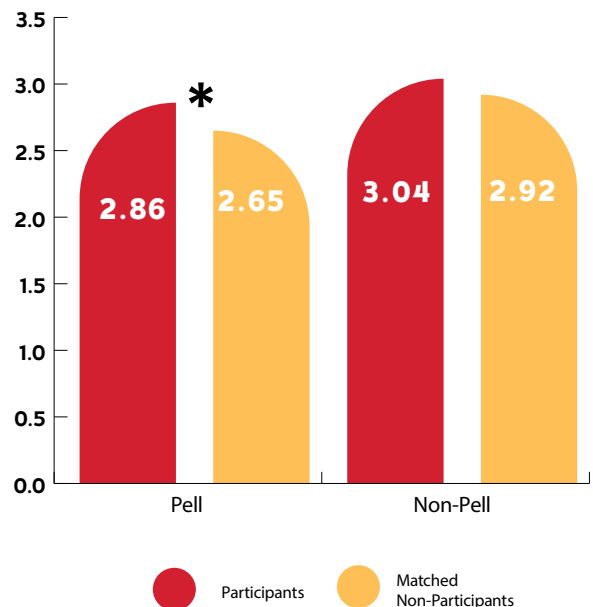


However, differences in probation rates among participants and matched non-participants by generational status were not statistically reliable.

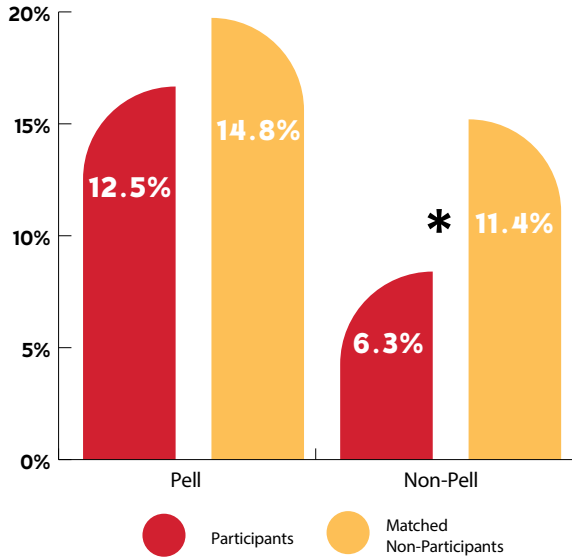
Comparisons by Pell Status

With regard to Pell status, among those who received Pell grants, first-year GPAs were higher for those who participated in the program than those who did not. Differences for non-Pell students were not statistically reliable.

First-Year GPA for by Program Participation and by Pell Status



Academic Probation Rates by Program Participation and by Pell Status



On the other hand, program participation was only associated with a lower rate of academic probation for non-Pell recipients.

* Statistically reliable difference ($p < .05$)