

**One-Year Continuation Among First Time Freshmen Entering in Fall 2005 and
Participating in First Year Experience Programs**

by
Bettina J. Huber
Director of Institutional Research

November 2006

One-Year Continuation Among First Time Freshmen Entering in Fall 2005 and Participating in First Year Experience Programs

In Fall 1999, Cal State Northridge began offering a new course; known as University 100: The Freshman Seminar, the course is designed to help newly arriving freshmen make the transition to college more successfully. Aimed, in part, at students entering the university needing remedial work in mathematics or English, the course introduces freshmen to various aspects of university life, giving special attention to use of the range of library resources available at CSUN. Another focus is strengthening students' critical thinking skills and their facility in both oral and written expression.¹

Although University 100 has been part of the EOP program for several years, it was coupled with two new initiatives in Fall 2005: a small living-learning community for selected students living on-campus; and the Freshman Connection, a program in which students take one or more courses in common, along with University 100. In addition, some sections of the latter were restricted to students planning majors in particular disciplines (i.e., mathematics and science, deaf studies) or uncertain about their majors.

A year has now passed since the new initiatives were launched; thus, it makes sense to take a preliminary look at their success in fostering student retention. This brief report begins the assessment process by examining one-year continuation rates for students who were and were not involved in various aspects of the freshmen experience program during 2005-06.

In brief, the four tables presented here suggest that students enrolling in University 100 have modestly higher one-year continuation rates than students who do not enroll, while students participating in the Freshmen Connection or the EOP program in addition have significantly higher short-term retention rates than everyone else. The data also suggest that students needing remediation in English at entry are particularly likely to benefit from these two programs, as are the relatively small numbers of

¹ Effective study strategies are explicitly considered as well, as is efficient time management

Asian students involved in them. At the other end of the spectrum, two groups of students are less likely than others to persist into the second year: African American students and students needing remediation in mathematics who do not attempt University 100 during their first term at CSUN.²

Continuation Rates and Student Characteristics

Table 1 shows the one-year of continuation rates for selected groups of first time freshmen entering CSUN in Fall 2005. Overall, approximately three-quarters of them returned for their third term of study. The table's second set of figures suggests that participation in University 100 during students' first term on campus (Fall 1995) led to a modest increase in the one-year continuation rate for these freshmen. The other figures shown indicate that completion of University 100, along with participation in one of two specialized programs – Summer Bridge and Freshmen Connection – enhanced the one-year continuation rate even further (80%-82% vs. 75.5% for students not attempting University 100).³

Given that freshmen with certain entry characteristics (e.g., racial and ethnic background, need for remediation at entry) are more likely than others to persist into their second year of study, it seemed advisable to investigate whether students with such characteristics derived differential benefits from participating in selected first year experience programs. The first step in doing so involved examining whether students in these programs differed in terms of the characteristics under study. Table 2 indicates that freshmen enrolled in the EOP program are disproportionately likely to stem from minority backgrounds. The backgrounds of students enrolled in University 100 or participating in the Freshmen Connection, however, are not significantly different from those of all freshmen in the Fall 2005 entry

² The living-learning community in Heather Hall also does not appear to have enhanced persistence, but it may be premature to draw conclusions because the number of students involved is small and there was some difficulty in getting this program off the ground.

³ Even higher continuation rates are evident for two additional groups: EOP students enrolled in University 100 in Fall 2005 (84%) and students enrolled in the University 100 section with a math/science emphasis (83%). Both groups are quite small, however, thereby making the reliability of these continuation rates difficult to assess.

cohort. In contrast, students in all three freshmen experience subgroups are disproportionately likely to need remediation at entry, especially in English.

Subgroup Differences in Continuation Rates

Table 3 summarizes the continuation rates for students in different racial and ethnic groups who participated in the first-year experience programs under consideration. The bottom row of the table indicates that, overall, white and Asian freshmen are most likely to persist into the beginning of their second year of study, while African American students are least likely to do so. Although participation in the first year experience programs, including EOP, does not seem to foster retention of African American students, it does foster retention of freshmen belonging to the other three racial and ethnic groups shown. Retention of students from Asian and Latino backgrounds is particularly high for those participating in the EOP program (94% and 82%). In addition, enrollment in University 100 appears to be of particular benefit to Asian American students, 87% of whom were enrolled in their third term after entry. Asian, along with white, students also appear to gain disproportionately from participation in the Freshmen Connection, with more than 85% continuing into the second year of study. The numbers of Asian and white students involved in these initiatives are small, however, so some caution must be exercised in assessing the high continuation rates.

The bottom row of Table 4 indicates that freshmen who are fully proficient at entry are most likely to persist into the second year, while those needing remediation in mathematics are least likely to persist. Participation in University 100 appears to have the most positive effect on the persistence of the few students enrolled in the course who were fully proficient at entry, though those needing remediation also benefit, albeit more modestly. Among students needing remediation at entry, those participating in the Freshmen Connection and the EOP program are considerably more likely to persist into the second year than those not participating in these programs. During 2005-06, participation in the Freshmen Connection was of particular benefit to students needing remediation in English, pushing their continuation rate up to 80%.

Table 1. One-Year Continuation Rates for Newly Admitted First Time Freshmen Attempting Differing Versions of University 100 in Fall 2005

Freshman grouping	Enrolled in		One-Year Continuation Rate
	Fall 2005	Fall 2006	
All first time freshmen	3,720	2,835	76.2
Students attempting UNIV 100 in Fall 2005	600	463	77.2
Students <i>not</i> attempting Univ 100 in Fall 2005	2,847	2,149	75.5
<i>First time freshmen who</i>			
Enrolled in Freshmen Connection ¹	220	177	80.5
<i>Special section for Business Majors</i>	109	87	79.8
<i>Special section for students Undecided about major</i>	111	90	81.1
Enrolled in Univ 100 section with Math/Science emphasis	23	19	82.6
Enrolled in NCOD Univ 100 section	20	14	70.0
Students enrolled in Univ 100 and living in Heather Hall ¹ (site of living-learning community)	91	63	69.2
Enrolled in another Univ 100 section in Fall 2005	251	195	77.7
Students enrolled in EOP program	512	404	78.9
<i>Involved 2005 Summer Bridge program</i>	248	202	81.5
<i>Enrolled in Univ 100 in Fall 2005</i>	25	21	84.0
<i>Other</i>	239	181	75.7

¹ Five of the students living in Heather Hall are taking Univ 100 as part of the Freshmen Connection Program. Thus, they are double-counted.

Source: databases maintained by the Office of Institutional Research; CSUN

Table 2. Percent of First Time Freshmen Enrolled in Selected Programs or Courses During Their First Term at CSUN by Racial and Ethnic Background and Proficiency at Entry (Fall 2005 entrants)

	Attempting Univ 100	Enrolled in Freshmen Connection	Enrolled in EOP Prog.	All Freshmen
Racial and Ethnic Background				
Minorities	68.0	68.6	85.2	64.9
<i>African American</i>	13.6	14.5	23.4	13.3
<i>Asian (includes Pacific Islanders)</i>	12.5	16.4	6.6	14.2
<i>Latino/a</i>	41.8	37.7	55.1	37.0
<i>Native American</i>	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.3
White	21.1	17.3	6.3	24.0
Unknown (includes Other)	10.9	14.1	8.6	11.2
Total (Number of students)	100.0 (625)	100.0 (220)	100.0 (512)	100.0 (3,720)
Proficiency at Entry				
Fully proficient at entry	14.2	0.0	10.0	27.9
Needs remediation in English only	25.3	42.7	15.0	19.6
Needs remediation in mathematics only	7.5	0.5	7.2	10.5
Needs remediation in both	53.0	56.8	67.8	42.0
Needs remediation in English	78.2	99.5	82.8	61.6
Needs remediation in mathematics	60.5	57.3	75.0	52.5
Total (Number of students)	100.0 (625)	100.0 (220)	100.0 (512)	100.0 (3,720)

Source: databases maintained by the Office of Institutional Research; CSUN

Table 3. One-Year Continuation Rates for Newly Admitted First Time Freshmen Attempting Differing Versions of University 100 in Fall 2005 by Racial and Ethnic Identity

Freshman grouping	<u>African American</u>		<u>Latino/a</u>		<u>Asian</u>		<u>Whites</u>	
	Contin. Rate	Entry Cohort	Contin. Rate	Entry Cohort	Contin. Rate	Entry Cohort	Contin. Rate	Entry Cohort
Students attempting UNIV 100 in Fall 2005	62.4	85	76.6	261	87.2	78	82.6	132
Students not attempting Univ 100 in Fall 2005	68.4	411	73.8	1,116	77.3	449	78.7	760
Students enrolled in Freshmen Connection	68.8	32	75.9	83	86.1	36	89.5	38
Students enrolled in EOP program	65.0	120	81.6	282	94.1	34	78.1	32
Students attempting UNIV 100 in Fall 2005	62.4	85	76.6	261	87.2	78	82.6	132
All first time freshmen	67.3	496	74.4	1,377	78.7	527	79.3	892

Source: databases maintained by the Office of Institutional Research; CSUN

Table 4. One-Year Continuation Rates for Newly Admitted First Time Freshmen Attempting Differing Versions of University 100 in Fall 2005 by Proficiency Status at Entry

Freshman grouping	<u>Fully Proficient at Entry</u>		<u>Needed Remediation in English</u>		<u>Needed Remediation in Math</u>	
	Contin. Rate	Entry Cohort	Contin. Rate	Entry Cohort	Contin. Rate	Entry Cohort
Students attempting UNIV 100 in Fall 2005	85.4	89	76.9	489	72.2	378
Students not attempting Univ 100 in Fall 2005	80.3	950	73.8	1,570	69.8	1,432
Students enrolled in Freshmen Connection	--	0	80.4	219	76.2	126
Students enrolled in EOP program	84.3	51	79.0	424	76.3	384
Students attempting UNIV 100 in Fall 2005	85.4	89	76.9	489	72.2	378
All first time freshmen	80.8	1,039	75.2	2,292	71.0	1,952

Source: databases maintained by the Office of Institutional Research; CSUN