



UK Institutional Research Brief:

Evaluation of Freshman Summer Program Outcomes

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The University of Kentucky has offered the Freshman Summer Program (FSP) as a way to improve the retention rates of African American students since 1985. Three years ago, UK expanded the target population for this program to include Hispanic, American Indian, first-generation and low income students. Students admitted to the program have the opportunity to earn up to six college credits. In addition, FSP students attend information sessions and workshops that familiarize them with campus resources and skills critical to their academic success. FSP students also have the opportunity to meet other students and faculty that hold the promise of making the campus a smaller, tighter community when the fall semester begins and thousands of students return to UK. FSP is sponsored by the Center for Academic Resources and Enrichment Services (CARES), a division of Multicultural and Academic Affairs.

The Institutional Research Office recently compared students who participated in FSP over the past decade with cohorts of African American students who did not go through the program. Both groups of students had identical high school grade point averages (3.14), although FSP students had slightly lower ACT scores (19.8 vs. 20.7). Table 1 presents the retention rates for the last 10 cohorts of FSP and non-participating students.¹

Table 1
**Comparison of Retention and Graduation Rates of
 FSP and Non-FSP African American Students
 1995 - 2004 Cohorts**

Freshman Cohort Year	FSP Number	Non-FSP Number	FSP Retention Rate	Non-FSP Retention Rate	FSP Graduation Rate	Non-FSP Graduation Rate
1995	30	139	83.3%	70.5%	50.0%	36.0%
1996	57	126	86.0%	68.3%	52.6%	38.9%
1997	64	140	82.8%	77.1%	56.3%	45.7%
1998	47	144	87.2%	77.8%	46.8%	50.7%
1999	30	139	90.0%	74.1%	43.3%	46.8%
2000	37	174	78.4%	77.6%		
2001	45	106	91.1%	71.7%		
2002	45	119	88.9%	73.9%		
2003	35	167	62.9%	74.9%		
2004	23	238	78.3%	68.1%		

¹ The FSP students' retention and graduation rates appearing in Table 1 should be viewed with caution, given the small numbers appearing in each cohort. Percentages based on small numbers can fluctuate widely when several students leave, return or graduate from the institution.

Retention rates refer to the percentage of first-time, full-time degree-seeking students who returned one year later to resume their studies. Graduation rates refer to the percentage of such students who earn a bachelor's degree within six years. Table 1 shows that over the last 10 years FSP students earned higher retention rates than non-FSP students in every year except one. FSP students' retention rates ranged from 62.9 percent to 91.1 percent, while non-FSP students' retention rates varied from 68.1 percent to 77.8 percent. Graduation rates for the two groups present a mixed picture. FSP students achieved higher graduation rates for three of the five cohorts in which graduation rates were computed. FSP students' graduation rates ranged from 43.3 percent to 56.3 percent, while non-FSP students' achieved six-year rates that varied from 36.0 percent to 50.7 percent.

Additional Analyses

In an effort to understand how the FSP program contributes to students' success, the Institutional Research Office developed statistical models to explain the variance in fall and spring semester grades. IR staff included gender, high school grade point average, ACT Composite score, cohort year, and membership in the FSP as variables in the regression models. The findings related to this area of research revealed:

- The FSP program was positively associated with fall semester GPA. On average, after holding all other variables constants, FSP students achieved a 0.21 higher fall semester GPA than African American students who did not participate in the program.
- The FSP program was not a significant predictor of spring GPA or the second fall term GPA, suggesting that the effects of the program may begin to dissipate late in freshman year.
- Relative to students who did not go through the program, FSP students had higher first-year grades, which—in turn—were found to be the best predictor of fall-to-fall retention. Controlling for all other variables in the model, a one point increase in first-year GPA was associated with a student being nine times more likely to be retained in his or her second year at UK.