

WHY DIDN'T OUR FIRST-TIME STUDENTS PERSIST?

Executive summary

This examination was provided as a follow-up study using data previously prepared for the Market Assessment and Enrollment Management Analysis Project and investigated the Fall 2006 first-time students' first term experience in relation to their persistence to the next Fall. A total of 5,155 first-time students from Fall 2006 (excluding high school students who were concurrently enrolled) were used as the cohort in this study. Focus was also geared toward traditionally-aged students (e.g., those aged 19 or younger) to get a closer look at this largest and most recruited group of our first-time students in terms of their persistence rates and related academic qualities.

Results of this investigation

Based on the data collected from our Fall 2006 first-time cohort, students who were more likely to persist to the next Fall exhibited distinct academic-related behaviors in comparison to those who did not persist. For example, among all first-time students who persisted, it was found that persisting students were more likely to:

- **Be enrolled full-time**
- **Have earned a GPA of 2.0 or above**
- **Have taken orientation on campus**
- **Have a clear education goal of associate degree or transfer**
- Have participated in learning community
- Have tested and placed in college level courses
- Have taken a mixed level of coursework, if placed at least in one pre-collegiate level.

Similar findings were revealed for persisting vs. non-persisting students aged 19 or under in terms of their first-term academic behaviors. Such results suggest that there are some key indicators from this investigation: first time students who had clear educational goals, took orientation on-campus, were enrolled full-time, and performed well academically were mostly likely to persist. Helping our first-time students come to college prepared and with a goal, keeping them engaged, and having a successful start requires great efforts from the College to strategize and plan collaboratively through a proactive process of using good communication, a dynamic support and tracking system, as well as motivating rapport-building student activities.

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Why didn't our first time students persist? A Follow-up Study Based on Clarus Project Data

Background: Beginning in August 2007, the Research Office worked closely with the Clarus Consultant Company for many months in support of its contracted project on Market Assessment and Enrollment Management analysis for Mt. SAC. A tremendous amount of college data was extracted and prepared by the Research Office to fulfill all the data requests for this project. As recommended by Dr. Audrey Yamagata-Noji, this study was conducted to further explore the data sets. While the marketing project aimed at evaluating and assessing missed opportunities for access, this study looked within our first time students' college experience in relation to persistence.

In this study, the cohort group consisted of all students who enrolled for the first time in Fall 2006, excluding those who were concurrently enrolled in high school. If students from this group did not continue to enroll in Fall 2007, they were deemed as "Non-Returning" Students. Those who returned in Fall 2007 were named as "Returning" students throughout this report.

The purpose of this study is to:

- Establish a profile of the Non-Returning students by comparing their characteristics and first-term college experience to that of Returning students.
- Target the largest age group of the Fall 2006 first time students, aged 19 or under, and explore the possible factors that impacted the persistence of this age group.

Who Did Not Persist?

Close to half (49%, n=2,525) of all Fall 2006 first-time students (n= 5,155) did not return in Fall 2007. Demographic information of the Non-Returning first time students showed that they were more likely from non-Asian or non-Filipino ethnic groups, and of older age groups than Returning students. About half or over half of students within each ethnic group (except Asian and Filipino) did not persist to the next Fall. There were no major differences found with respect to gender. Students in older age groups did not persist as well as the younger age groups. Students aged 19 and under, (which was the largest age group of the cohort), had an over 60% persistence rate which was much higher than the other age groups.

First Time Fall 2006 Students	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
African American/Non-Hispanic	167	55.3%	135	44.7%	302	100.0%	5.9%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	15	50.0%	15	50.0%	30	100.0%	0.6%
Asian	361	40.8%	524	59.2%	885	100.0%	17.2%
Declined to State	76	55.9%	60	44.1%	136	100.0%	2.6%
Filipino	122	39.9%	184	60.1%	306	100.0%	5.9%
Hispanic	1113	50.3%	1099	49.7%	2212	100.0%	42.9%
Other Non-White	66	50.0%	66	50.0%	132	100.0%	2.6%

First Time Fall 2006 Students	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Ethnicity							
Pacific Islander	22	59.5%	15	40.5%	37	100.0%	0.7%
Unknown	45	59.2%	31	40.8%	76	100.0%	1.5%
White	525	50.5%	514	49.5%	1039	100.0%	20.2%
Grand Total	2512	48.7%	2643	51.3%	5155	100.0%	100.0%

First Time Fall 2006 Students	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Gender							
Female	1248	48.4%	1332	51.6%	2580	100.0%	50.0%
Male	1244	49.1%	1288	50.9%	2532	100.0%	49.1%
Decline to state	20	46.5%	23	53.5%	43	100.0%	0.8%
Grand Total	2512	48.7%	2643	51.3%	5155	100.0%	100.0%

First Time Fall 2006 Students	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Age Group							
19 or Younger	1142	38.3%	1840	61.7%	2982	100.0%	57.8%
20-24	681	59.0%	474	41.0%	1155	100.0%	22.4%
25-34	395	68.3%	183	31.7%	578	100.0%	11.2%
35-44	148	66.7%	74	33.3%	222	100.0%	4.3%
45-60	132	68.0%	62	32.0%	194	100.0%	3.8%
61 or over	14	58.3%	10	41.7%	24	100.0%	0.5%
Grand Total	2512	48.7%	2643	51.3%	5155	100.0%	100.0%

Interestingly, these 2,512 Non-Returning students demonstrated some academic behaviors in their first-enrolled term that set them apart from the Returning students. Of this cohort of students, those who attended full-time in Fall 2006, were more likely to persist (65.7%) one year later than those attended part-time (42.7%).

First Time Fall 2006 Students	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Course Load in Fall 2006							
Part-Time (< 12 units)	1852	57.3%	1381	42.7%	3233	100.0%	62.7%
Full Time (12 or more units)	660	34.3%	1262	65.7%	1922	100.0%	37.3%
Grand Total	2512	48.7%	2643	51.3%	5155	100.0%	100.0%

Students who completed orientation on-campus were more likely to persist one year later. The advantage of on-campus orientation over online orientation in persistence rates continues when

holding Term GPA constant in the comparison. For example, students who had on-campus orientation and with good GPA standing (GPA \geq 2.0) in Fall 2006 have higher persistence rates than those who had online orientation and with good GPA standing (73.4% vs. 59.8%).

First Time Fall 2006 Students	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
On-Campus	667	37.6%	1105	62.4%	1772	100.0%	34.4%
Exempt	145	67.8%	69	32.2%	214	100.0%	4.2%
Online	1416	50.8%	1372	49.2%	2788	100.0%	54.1%
No Record	284	74.5%	97	25.5%	381	100.0%	7.4%
Grand Total	2512	48.7%	2643	51.3%	5155	100.0%	100.0%

First Time Fall 2006 Students		Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
Orientation Type	Fall F06 GPA	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
On-Campus	<2.0	302	59.6%	205	40.4%	507	100.0%	10.6%
	\geq 2.0	315	26.6%	867	73.4%	1182	100.0%	24.8%
	CRNC	50	60.2%	33	39.8%	83	100.0%	1.7%
On-Campus Total		667	37.6%	1105	62.4%	1772	100.0%	37.1%
Exempt	<2.0	36	80.0%	9	20.0%	45	100.0%	0.9%
	\geq 2.0	101	63.9%	57	36.1%	158	100.0%	3.3%
	CRNC	8	72.7%	3	27.3%	11	100.0%	0.2%
Exempt Total		145	67.8%	69	32.2%	214	100.0%	4.5%
Online	<2.0	644	69.2%	287	30.8%	931	100.0%	19.5%
	\geq 2.0	698	40.2%	1038	59.8%	1736	100.0%	36.4%
	CRNC	74	61.2%	47	38.8%	121	100.0%	2.5%
Online Total		1416	50.8%	1372	49.2%	2788	100.0%	58.4%
Grand Total		2228	46.7%	2546	53.3%	4774	100.0%	100.0%

Students who were placed by assessment tests at the college level were more likely to persist into Fall 2007. Those who did not test at Mt. SAC were most likely not to persist one year later.

First Time Fall 2006 Students	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
At Least one Basic Skills	1175	42.4%	1595	57.6%	2770	100.0%	53.7%
All College Level	282	34.3%	539	65.7%	821	100.0%	15.9%
Not Tested (No Test Record)	1055	67.5%	509	32.5%	1564	100.0%	30.3%
Grand Total	2512	48.7%	2643	51.3%	5155	100.0%	100.0%

Students who had clear educational goals of earning an associate degree or transferring to a four year institution when enrolled were more likely to persist than those who did not.

First Time Fall 2006 Students	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Obtain a Two Year Associate's Degree without Transfer	223	48.8%	234	51.2%	457	100.0%	8.9%
Obtain a Two Year Vocational Degree without Transfer	135	49.5%	138	50.5%	273	100.0%	5.3%
Transfer to a 4-Year Institution without an Associate Degree	501	41.0%	720	59.0%	1221	100.0%	23.7%
Obtain an Associate Degree & Transfer to a 4-Yr Institution	629	42.9%	838	57.1%	1467	100.0%	28.5%
Earn a Vocational Certificate without Transfer	92	60.5%	60	39.5%	152	100.0%	2.9%
Improve Basic Skills in English, Reading, or Math	48	67.6%	23	32.4%	71	100.0%	1.4%
Complete Credits for High School Diploma or GED	32	64.0%	18	36.0%	50	100.0%	1.0%
Advance in Current Job/Career (Update Job Skills)	127	75.6%	41	24.4%	168	100.0%	3.3%
Prepare for a New Career (Acquire Job Skills)	109	56.5%	84	43.5%	193	100.0%	3.7%
Discover/Formulate Career Interests, Plans, Goals	66	62.3%	40	37.7%	106	100.0%	2.1%
Maintain Certificate or License (e.g. Nursing, Real Estate)	31	60.8%	20	39.2%	51	100.0%	1.0%
Personal Development/Interest	193	56.3%	150	43.7%	343	100.0%	6.7%
Develop Social Skills	30	68.2%	14	31.8%	44	100.0%	0.9%
Undecided on Goal	296	53.0%	263	47.0%	559	100.0%	10.8%
Grand Total	2512	48.7%	2643	51.3%	5155	100.0%	100.0%

Students who received financial support in their first term tended to persist slightly better than those who did not.

First Time Fall 2006 Students	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Received	820	45.8%	970	54.2%	1790	100.0%	34.7%
Not Received	1692	50.3%	1673	49.7%	3365	100.0%	65.3%
Grand Total	2512	48.7%	2643	51.3%	5155	100.0%	100.0%

Surprisingly, students who exclusively took same-level course(s) did not persist as well as those who took courses of mixed levels. For example, students who took only pre-collegiate courses or only college level courses in Fall 2006 were less likely to persist one year later. Further, by

cross-examining these students' placement by the course level they took in Fall 2006, it was found that this phenomenon occurred mostly to students who were placed in pre-collegiate level. In other words, cohort students who were placed in pre-collegiate level and took either entirely pre-collegiate level courses or college level courses only tended to be less likely to persist to the next fall.

First Time Fall 2006 Students Course Level taken in Fall 2006	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Pre-collegiate Course ONLY	196	54.3%	165	45.7%	361	100.0%	7.0%
College Level Course ONLY	1717	54.8%	1414	45.2%	3131	100.0%	60.7%
Both but More Pre-collegiate Level	139	39.3%	215	60.7%	354	100.0%	6.9%
Both but More College Level	357	34.0%	693	66.0%	1050	100.0%	20.4%
Both but Balanced	103	39.8%	156	60.2%	259	100.0%	5.0%
Grand Total	2512	48.7%	2643	51.3%	5155	100.0%	100.0%

First Time Fall 2006 Students		Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
Placed Course Level	Fall 06 Course Level taken*	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Not Tested	BS ONLY	10	71.4%	4	28.6%	14	100.0%	0.3%
	CL ONLY	1030	67.6%	494	32.4%	1524	100.0%	29.6%
	HBS	5	55.6%	4	44.4%	9	100.0%	0.2%
	LBS	8	57.1%	6	42.9%	14	100.0%	0.3%
	SAME	2	66.7%	1	33.3%	3	100.0%	0.1%
Not Tested Total		1055	67.5%	509	32.5%	1564	100.0%	30.3%
At least one Basic Skills Level	BS ONLY	186	53.6%	161	46.4%	347	100.0%	6.7%
	CL ONLY	408	50.9%	394	49.1%	802	100.0%	15.6%
	HBS	134	38.8%	211	61.2%	345	100.0%	6.7%
	LBS	346	33.9%	676	66.1%	1022	100.0%	19.8%
	SAME	101	39.8%	153	60.2%	254	100.0%	4.9%
Basic Skills Level Total		1175	42.4%	1595	57.6%	2770	100.0%	53.7%
College Level only	CL ONLY	279	34.7%	526	65.3%	805	100.0%	15.6%
	LBS	3	21.4%	11	78.6%	14	100.0%	0.3%
	SAME		0.0%	2	100.0%	2	100.0%	0.0%
College Level Total		282	34.3%	539	65.7%	821	100.0%	15.9%
Grand Total		2512	48.7%	2643	51.3%	5155	100.0%	100.0%

*BS-Basic Skills, CL-College Level, HBS-both but more BS, LBS-both but less BS, SAME- both but equally.

Students who had satisfactory progress academically (e.g., had a GPA of 2.0 or better) in Fall 2006 were more likely to persist one year later than those who did not illustrate such academic progress.

First Time Fall 2006 Students	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Fall 2006 GPA >=2.0	1340	39.5%	2049	60.5%	3389	100.0%	65.7%
Fall 2006 GPA <2.0	1027	66.9%	507	33.1%	1534	100.0%	29.8%
Credit Noncredit only	145	62.5%	87	37.5%	232	100.0%	4.5%
Grand Total	2512	48.7%	2643	51.3%	5155	100.0%	100.0%

Although very low in number overall (n =61), students who participated in Learning Communities (Math Bridge, English Bridge, and Pre-Nursing) in their first semester tended to persist more frequently (n= 40) than those who did not (n= 21).

First Time Fall 2006 Students	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Learning Communities in Fall 2006							
Participated	21	34.4%	40	65.6%	61	100.0%	1.2%
Not Participated	2491	48.9%	2603	51.1%	5094	100.0%	98.8%
Grand Total	2512	48.7%	2643	51.3%	5155	100.0%	100.0%

Students who did not take any online courses tended to persist slightly more often than those who took online courses.

First Time Fall 2006 Students	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Online Course in Fall 2006							
Taken at least one	75	54.0%	64	46.0%	139	100.0%	2.7%
None	2437	48.6%	2579	51.4%	5016	100.0%	97.3%
Grand Total	2512	48.7%	2643	51.3%	5155	100.0%	100.0%

TARGET GROUP STUDY – Focusing on Students Aged 19 and Younger

Out of the Fall 2006 first time cohort of students, 58% of them were aged 19 or younger at the time of enrollment. These students represent traditionally-aged college students who are fresh out of high school and need extra assistance and guidance to make the transition of adapting to college life easier. This age group is of particular interest to us because it comprises the largest proportion of our first-time degree-seeking students which is the priority marketing recruit target for the college. Although 61.7% of this age group persisted in Fall 2007, some 1,142 students failed to. How to help this particular group of students with persisting has become an ultimate task for the college. The following section examines the academic experience of this age group in their first term at Mt. SAC, with the purpose of gaining some insights into why students did not persist and to find indicators for planning appropriate intervention strategies to increase student persistence.

For students aged 19 or younger, course load played a factor in whether students persisted to the next Fall. Seventy percent of those who attended with full-time course work in their first term persisted one year later.

First Time Fall 2006 Students of Age 19 & younger	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Course Load in Fall 2006							
Part-Time (< 12 units)	719	46.8%	818	53.2%	1537	100.0%	51.5%
Full Time (12 or more units)	423	29.3%	1022	70.7%	1445	100.0%	48.5%
Grand Total	1142	38.3%	1840	61.7%	2982	100.0%	100.0%

GPA standing was an important factor as well. Those who progressed well academically in Fall 2006 were much more likely to persist. Interestingly, students who took courses with a credit or no credit grading option only did not have as high of persistence rates.

First Time Fall 2006 Students of Age 19 & younger	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Fall 2006 GPA Standing							
<2.0	601	59.4%	411	40.6%	1012	100.0%	33.9%
>=2.0	478	25.9%	1370	74.1%	1848	100.0%	62.0%
Credit or Noncredit grade only	63	51.6%	59	48.4%	122	100.0%	4.1%
Grand Total	1142	38.3%	1840	61.7%	2982	100.0%	100.0%

Effective orientation is particularly important for students of this age group, who need extensive guidance and support. The data showed that students who engaged in orientation on campus tended to persist better than those who did their orientation online or were exempt from orientation. Notably, students of this age group who completed orientation online also had higher persistence rates (56.5%) than that of the overall first-time cohort who did online orientation (49.2 %).

First Time Fall 2006 Students of Age 19 & younger	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Orientation Type							
Campus	433	31.9%	923	68.1%	1356	100.0%	45.5%
Exempt	21	45.7%	25	54.3%	46	100.0%	1.5%
Online	685	43.5%	889	56.5%	1574	100.0%	52.8%
No Record	3	50.0%	3	50.0%	6	100.0%	0.2%
Grand Total	1142	38.3%	1840	61.7%	2982	100.0%	100.0%

Students in this age group who had a clear educational goal to earn an associate degree or to transfer to a four-year institution upon their entrance were just slightly more likely to persist one year later.

First Time Fall 2006 Students of Age 19 & younger	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Obtain a Two Year Associate's Degree without Transfer	104	39.1%	162	60.9%	266	100.0%	8.9%
Obtain a Two Year Vocational Degree without Transfer	56	40.0%	84	60.0%	140	100.0%	4.7%
Transfer to a 4-Year Institution without an Associate Degree	293	34.5%	557	65.5%	850	100.0%	28.5%
Obtain an Associate Degree & Transfer to a 4-Yr Institution	375	37.5%	624	62.5%	999	100.0%	33.5%
Earn a Vocational Certificate without Transfer	21	44.7%	26	55.3%	47	100.0%	1.6%
Improve Basic Skills in English, Reading, or Math	9	45.0%	11	55.0%	20	100.0%	0.7%
Complete Credits for High School Diploma or GED	9	42.9%	12	57.1%	21	100.0%	0.7%
Advance in Current Job/Career (Update Job Skills)	8	53.3%	7	46.7%	15	100.0%	0.5%
Prepare for a New Career (Acquire Job Skills)	20	41.7%	28	58.3%	48	100.0%	1.6%
Discover/Formulate Career Interests, Plans, Goals	18	46.2%	21	53.8%	39	100.0%	1.3%
Maintain Certificate or License (e.g. Nursing, Real Estate)	4	44.4%	5	55.6%	9	100.0%	0.3%
Personal Development/Interest	74	39.8%	112	60.2%	186	100.0%	6.2%
Develop Social Skills	8	42.1%	11	57.9%	19	100.0%	0.6%
Undecided on Goal	143	44.3%	180	55.7%	323	100.0%	10.8%
Grand Total	1142	38.3%	1840	61.7%	2982	100.0%	100.0%

Two-thirds of first-time students in this age group received at least one pre-collegiate placement from assessment tests. Students who were tested and placed into only college level courses were more likely to persist one year later.

First Time Fall 2006 Students of Age 19 & younger	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
At Least one Basic Skills	777	38.4%	1244	61.6%	2021	100.0%	67.8%
All College Level	211	30.5%	480	69.5%	691	100.0%	23.2%
Not Tested (No Test Record)	154	57.0%	116	43.0%	270	100.0%	9.1%
Grand Total	1142	38.3%	1840	61.7%	2982	100.0%	100.0%

As long as the students were making the grade, they were more likely to persist, regardless of the course level they were placed into. For example, students who placed into basic skills level courses with satisfactory GPA in Fall 2006 had comparably high persistence rates to students who placed in college level courses with a good GPA standing (75.9% vs. 78.1%).

First Time Fall 2006 Students of Age 19 & younger		Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
Assessment Test Placement	Fall 2006 GPA Standing	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
No Test Record	<2.0	67	73.3%	26	26.7%	93	100.0%	3.3%
	>=2.0	84	49.4%	86	50.6%	170	100.0%	5.9%
No Test Record Total		151	57.4%	112	42.6%	263	100.0%	9.2%
At Least one Basic Skills	<2.0	434	59.9%	299	40.1%	733	100.0%	25.6%
	>=2.0	284	24.1%	892	75.9%	1176	100.0%	41.1%
At Least one Basic Skills Total		718	37.7%	1191	62.3%	1909	100.0%	66.7%
At College Level only	<2.0	100	53.6%	86	46.4%	186	100.0%	6.5%
	>=2.0	110	21.9%	392	78.1%	502	100.0%	17.6%
At College Level only Total		210	30.4%	487	69.6%	688	100.0%	24.1%
Grand Total		1079	37.7%	1781	62.3%	2860	100.0%	100.0%

Students with "credit/noncredit" courses only were not included in this table.

Students who took a course load combination of pre-collegiate and college levels in their first term tended to persist better than those who took a single level course load.

First Time Fall 2006 Students of Age 19 & younger	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
Fall 2006 Course Taken Level	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Pre-collegiate Course ONLY	79	44.4%	99	55.6%	178	100.0%	6.0%
College Level Course ONLY	600	40.8%	870	59.2%	1470	100.0%	49.3%
Both but More Pre-collegiate Level	108	40.0%	162	60.0%	270	100.0%	9.1%
Both but More College Level	280	32.2%	589	67.8%	869	100.0%	29.1%
Both but Balanced	75	38.5%	120	61.5%	195	100.0%	6.5%
Grand Total	1142	38.3%	1840	61.7%	2982	100.0%	100.0%

Among this age group of students, no difference was found in persistence rates by comparing whether the courses they enrolled were online or not.

First Time Fall 2006 Students of Age 19 & younger	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
Online Course in Fall 2006	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Taken at least one	20	38.5%	32	61.5%	52	100.0%	1.7%
None	1122	38.3%	1808	61.7%	2930	100.0%	98.3%
Grand Total	1142	38.3%	1840	61.7%	2982	100.0%	100.0%

There were no major discrepancies found when comparing in persistence rates based upon whether a student had received financial aid or not.

First Time Fall 2006 Students of Age 19 & younger	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Received	437	39.4%	671	60.6%	1108	100.0%	37.2%
Not Received	705	37.6%	1169	62.4%	1874	100.0%	62.8%
Grand Total	1142	38.3%	1840	61.7%	2982	100.0%	100.0%

First Time Fall 2006 Students of Age 19 & younger		Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
Financial Aid	Fall 2006 Course Load	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Received	Full Time	174	30.5%	397	69.5%	571	100.0%	19.1%
	Part Time	263	49.0%	274	51.0%	537	100.0%	18.0%
Received Total		437	39.4%	671	60.6%	1108	100.0%	37.2%
Not Received	Full Time	249	28.5%	625	71.5%	874	100.0%	29.3%
	Part Time	456	45.6%	544	54.4%	1000	100.0%	33.5%
Not Received Total		705	37.6%	1169	62.4%	1874	100.0%	62.8%
Grand Total		1142	38.3%	1840	61.7%	2982	100.0%	100.0%

Similar to the overall cohort examined, students in this age group who had participated in Learning Communities persisted slightly better than those who did not.

First Time Fall 2006 Students of Age 19 & younger	Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Participated in Learning Communities (Math Bridge, English Bridge, Pre-Nursing) in Fall 2006							
Participated	20	34.5%	38	65.5%	58	100.0%	1.9%
Not Participated	1122	38.4%	1802	61.6%	2924	100.0%	98.1%
Grand Total	1142	38.3%	1840	61.7%	2982	100.0%	100.0%

When comparing those who participated in Learning Communities to those with similar academic preparation levels (e.g., Basic Skills level placement), it appears that there are higher persistence rates from students in Learning Communities of this age group.

First Time Fall 2006 Students of Age 19 & younger		Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
Learning Communities	Placed Course Level	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Bridge	BS Level	18	32.7%	37	67.3%	55	100.0%	1.8%
Non-Bridge	BS Level	759	38.6%	1207	61.4%	1966	100.0%	65.9%

The data below indicates that when under-prepared students are guided and assisted in their first term and performed well academically, they were very highly likely to persist a year later.

First Time Fall 2006 Students of Age 19 & younger			Not Returned in Fall 2007		Returned in Fall 2007		Total		
Fall 06 Learning Communities	Placed Course Level	Fall 06 GPA	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Within Group Percent	Overall Percent
Bridge	BS Level	<2.0	xx	70.6%	xx	29.4%	17	100.0%	0.6%
		>=2.0	xx	15.8%	xx	84.2%	38	100.0%	1.3%
Non-Bridge	BS Level	<2.0	422	58.9%	294	41.1%	716	100.0%	25.0%
		>=2.0	278	24.4%	860	75.6%	1138	100.0%	39.8%

For confidentiality, cells with very small number were blocked to show the count.

Conclusion

The examined data supports the assertion that helping students with a successful start in college will increase their likelihood of persistence. Based on the data collected from our Fall 2006 first-time cohort, Returning students who persisted to the next Fall were, in their first enrolled term, more likely to:

- **Be enrolled full-time**
- **Have earned a GPA of 2.0 or above**
- **Have taken an orientation on campus**
- **Have had clear education goal of associate degree or transfer**
- Have participated in learning community
- Have tested and placed in college level courses
- Have taken mixed level of courses, if placed at least in one pre-collegiate level.

Students aged 19 or under had similar results from this same set of investigations on their first term academic experience in relation to their persistence. Therefore, there are some key indicators from the results of this investigation: first time students who had clear educational goals, took orientation on-campus, were enrolled full-time, and performed well academically were mostly likely to persist.

To encourage these positive academic behaviors in our first-time students, strategies need to be planned to connect students to essential college resources and support services and to instill knowledge, skills, and responsibility necessary to ensure their academic success. Many traditionally-aged students frequently come to college unprepared. The College needs to actively engage these students with long-term support to help them achieve successful learning outcomes.