

FIRST-YEAR LEAVERS: MORE STUDENTS TRANSFER THAN DROPOUT

By Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning

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For the past four years, the Student Success Task Force (SSTF) has been working to improve student retention and graduation rates, one of Fresno State’s strategic planning goals. To support these efforts, the Retention Oversight Group (ROG) was formed this year to conduct extensive research on first-year student retention. In one of the studies that tracked students who left Fresno State, a surprising fact surfaced - a larger portion of first-year leavers are transferring out rather than dropping out.

THE FINDINGS

The study¹ showed, of the new freshmen who leave, an average of 57% transfer to another college or university. At the same time, 41% of new undergraduate transfers who leave transfer out². New freshmen who leave are more likely to transfer than to dropout. Conversely, new undergraduate transfers are more likely to drop out than to transfer again.

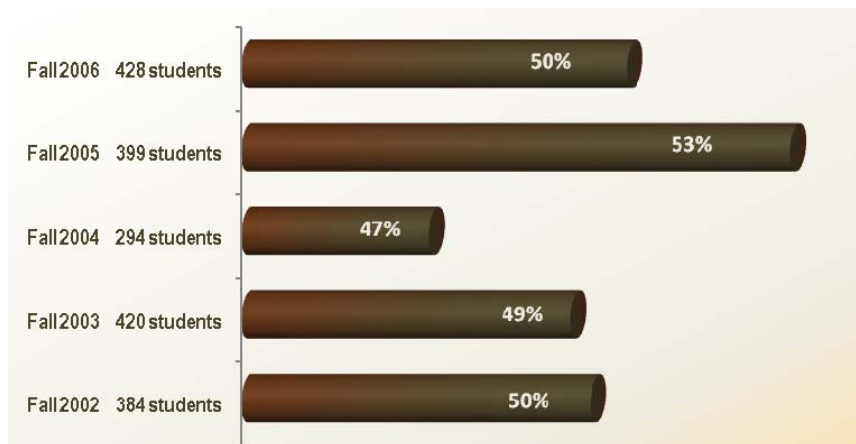


Table 1: Number and percent of students who transferred out.

¹ The student population included fall 2002 – 2006 first-time freshmen and new undergraduate transfers who were not enrolled in the Fall Semester following their first Fall Semester. (N=3,844)

² Transfer-out students were identified as students who were enrolled elsewhere within a year.

“...most new students who transfer out of Fresno State, transfer to a 2-year college...”

“...first-year leavers with higher first term GPA, as well as those with higher dependent income, were more likely to transfer out than to drop out ...”

Interestingly, most new students who transfer out of Fresno State continue their education in a 2-year college: 83-86% of freshmen and, on average, 60% of new undergraduate transfers.

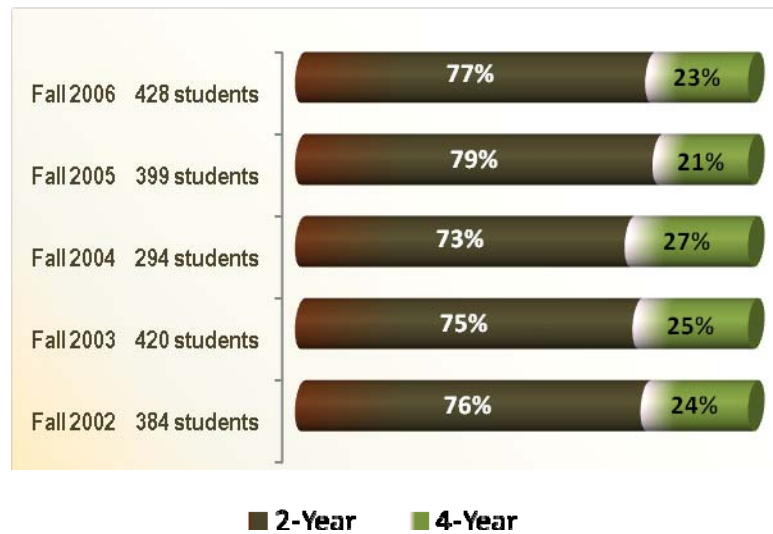


Table 2: Number and percent of new students who transferred out to 2-year and 4-year colleges.

Findings of the study show that first-year leavers with higher first term GPA, as well as those with higher dependent income, were more likely to transfer out than to drop out. Also, students from locales other than Fresno and its neighboring counties were more likely to transfer out than to drop out.

It is interesting to note that students from Tulare County were the least likely to transfer out. Only 28% who leave transfer to another institution compared to an average of 46% of leavers from Fresno, Kings and Madera Counties. Although Tulare County students' first-year retention rate is equivalent to the University rate, students from Tulare County who do leave are likely to drop out.

New transfers with higher income and a first-term GPA above 2.0 who transferred out were more likely to transfer to another 4-year than were lower income students with lower GPA.