

# Summary Report of Honors Program Assessment

## Introduction

Purpose: To compare characteristics and success of Honors and Non-Honors students.

Sample analyzed: 10 cohorts of new freshmen entering each fall semester from 1999 to 2008 separated into Honors students (N=573) and Non-Honors students (N=600) by entering cohort. The Honors program began with the fall 1999 cohort.

Brief methodology: Comparability between the Honors and Non-Honors groups was established based on mean high school gpa. Because previous IRAP research showed HS GPA to be the most influential factor on first-term GPA, and it was not possible to select a comparably qualified non-honors group using multiple entering characteristics, the comparison sample was selected using the single criterion, i.e., HS GPA. Descriptive statistics show the demographic and academic preparation characteristics of these two groups (See Chart 3.1-3.6) as well as consistent trends or patterns across time. T-tests and Chi-square tests were used to determine differences in first-term gpa, first-term units enrolled, first-year retention, change of major, graduation rates, time to degree, graduation gpa and continuing education between the two groups. Descriptive data shows the schools graduates enrolled in after receiving their degree from Fresno State. The final analysis compares three groups: Honors students that completed the Honors Program, those that did not complete the program, and the Non-Honors group. The appendix file includes all charts and tables supporting this summary report.

## Honors Students' Demographics and Academic Preparation

### Gender

Majority of honor students are female (all cohorts) (See Chart 2.1).

### Ethnicity

Majority of honor students are White. The percentage of Asian students is increasing but the percentage of Hispanic students is decreasing (See Chart 2.2).

### Dependent family income

For honor students, the percentage with high family income (\$60,000 or above) is increasing (See Chart 2.3).

### Parents' education

First-generation (FGS) is defined as neither parent having earned a 4-year degree. The percentage of FGS Honors students has decreased slightly (See Chart 2.4).

### High school GPA

Honor's students' high school GPA is increasing. For all cohorts except 1999, the average HS GPA is 4.00 or above. The average HS GPA is 4.10 (See Chart 2.5).

### SAT scores

Honor students' SAT Verb and Math scores are consistently high with a slight increase over the years. SAT Math scores are slightly higher than SAT Verb scores for most cohorts (See Chart 2.6). SAT Composite scores are the sum of SAT Verb and SAT Math scores. For honor students, SAT Composite scores are slightly increasing over years but large variations exist in the fall 2002 and 2006 cohorts (See Chart 2.7).

### English and Math remediation

Across the 10 cohorts, 6 Honors students were required to take remedial English courses and 19 were required to take remedial Math.

### College and Major distribution in first term

Overall, 63% of honor students are in CSM, CAH, CSB and COE. The college with the largest percentage is CSM, about 24% (See Table 2.1). Honors students are distributed into 9 colleges, 40 departments and 82 majors, suggesting considerable diversity in their academic interests.

## **Findings of Honors and Non-Honors Comparisons**

### First-Year Retention

First-year (fall to fall) retention rate refers to the percentage of students enrolled in fall semester who return in the next fall semester. Honor students consistently have higher retention rates than the non-honors sample (See Chart 4.1).

### Graduation Rates and Time to Degree

For both groups of students, only a few graduated in 3 years. However, honors students have much higher 4-year and 5-year graduation rates than non-honors students (See Chart 5.1-5.4).

Honors students consistently earn their first bachelor's degree in fewer semesters than the non-honors group. The difference is about one main semester (fall or spring term) (See Chart 5.5). Note: Time to degree refers to the number of terms enrolled from the entry term through graduation term. The summer session is counted as 0.5 and the fall/spring term is counted as 1.

### Continuing education

Honors students consistently have higher percentage of continuing their education after their graduation from Fresno State than non-honors students (See Chart 6.1). Honor students are consistently less likely to continue their postbaccalaureate education at Fresno State than non-honors students (See Chart 6.2). More honors students entered UC or other research universities (See Table 6.1).

### Course load and GPA

Honors students consistently took more units in the first term than non-honors students (See Chart 7.1).

Honors students have higher first-term GPA than non-honors students over the years. The overall difference is about 0.2 (See Chart 7.2).

Honors students consistently have higher graduation GPA than non-honors students (See Chart 7.3). Note: graduation GPA refers to the cumulative GPA at graduation.

### Changes in majors and colleges

Honors students have lower percentages of undeclared major students at their entry (See Chart 8.1).

There are no significant differences in percentages of students who changed their majors (academic plans) between honors students and non-honors students. For both groups, at least 58% of students changed their majors over the years (See Chart 8.2).

Overall speaking, there are no significant differences in percentages of students who changed their colleges. However, honor students' percentages of changing colleges are less variable than those of non-honors students (See Chart 8.3).

## **Findings of Three Group Comparisons**

Note: Due to the limited number of non-completion honor students, the comparisons are made based on the combined cohorts from fall 1999 to fall 2005.

### First-Year Retention

Overall speaking, non-completion honor students have lower retention rate than completion honor students but still have higher retention rates than sampled non-honor students (See Chart 9.1).

### Graduation Rates and Time to Degree

Only a few students graduated in 3 years for all three groups. However, non-completion honors students have much lower graduation rates than completion honors students and non-honors students. Completion honors students have highest graduation rates (See Chart 9.2-9.5).

Non-completion honors students took longer to get their bachelor's degree than completion honors students and sampled non-honors students. Completion honors student spent the shortest time to receive the bachelor's degree (See Chart 9.6).

### Course load and GPA

Non-completion honors students took as similar number of units in the first term as completion honors students. Both groups of students took more units than sampled non-honors students (See Chart 9.7).

Non-completion honors students have the lowest first term GPA and completion honors students have the highest first term GPA (See Chart 9.8).

Non-completion honors students have the lowest cumulative GPA at graduation and completion honors students have the highest (See Chart 9.9).

### Changes in majors or colleges

Completion honors students have the lowest percentage of undeclared major students and sampled non-honors students have the highest (See Chart 9.10). There are no significant differences in changing majors among three groups of students (See Chart 9.11).

Non-completion honors students have the highest percentage of changing colleges and completion honors students have the lowest percentage. Completion honors students change their majors mainly within the same college and non-completion and non-honors students change their majors mainly across colleges (See Chart 9.12).

### Continuing education

Completion and non-completion honors students continue their postbaccalaureate education after graduation from Fresno State. Both groups of honors students continue at higher rates than the sampled non-honors students (See Chart 9.13).