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The Difference a Year Makes

Fall 2009 to Fall 2010

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With the long delays in the California legislature's passing of budgets, institutional decisions have been a roller coaster. Without a budget, the university must continue to operate based on best guesses about what the budget will be eventually. Consequently, enrollment management plans often changed course, and were sometimes even reversed. However, planning for 2010-11 involved enrollment reductions.

Enrollment Change		
Fall	Headcount	FTES
2009	21,500	18,679
2010	20,932	18,229

To reduce enrollment for fall 2010, fewer new freshmen were admitted. The total number of new freshman applicants was higher, and the percentage admitted fell from 72% last fall to 56% this fall. Further, to help ensure that potential students had the opportunity to be admitted to at least one CSU campus, admission preference was given to qualified applicants from the local service area. This resulted in a higher percentage of new freshmen admits from local high schools (35% to 48%) and a larger proportion of the new freshman class (64% vs. 72%) from the local area. No such change was evident among undergraduate transfer or graduate students.

The 2010 entering freshman class has a slightly higher average high school GPA and a slightly smaller percentage of students that need English and Math remediation. The average SAT Score is unchanged.

Entering characteristics are the largest predictor of student success, but student support and engagement is a secondary influence that often can help overcome deficits. This year's 6-year graduation rate (for new freshmen entering in fall 2004) is the highest on record, 50.6%. This group was also, on average, the best prepared and it was the first to receive the benefit of newly implemented interventions designed to improve student success. It is difficult to determine a cause-effect relationship, or to parse out the effect of preparation and increased support. But over time monitoring the progress of the fall 2009 new freshmen cohort may provide clues.

The preparation characteristics of the fall 2009 new freshmen cohort were lower than those of the group with the highest graduation rate. The cohort has been the recipient of new student success interventions in addition to those that have been refined

over the years. Their first-year retention rate was the highest in our records (86.6%), even higher than the first-year retention rate of the group that just graduated with the highest 6-year graduation rate. While one could argue that the severe economic crisis and well-publicized limits on enrollment at CA colleges and universities drove these students to stay in college, fall 2004 was also a year in which budget cuts were highly publicized and enrollment was limited. Consequently, whatever the effect of economic downturns may be on student persistence, it may be comparable for both the fall 2004 and fall 2009 cohorts.

Another perhaps telling data point is that the probation and disqualification rate of our fall 2009 new freshmen cohort declined by about 2 percentage points. Fewer of these new freshmen ended up in academic difficulty, an even smaller proportion than the 2004 high-achieving cohort. Assessment of the Academic Success Course that was offered in spring 2010 to all freshmen who were in academic trouble after their first semester clearly showed a positive effect. Students who attended were more likely to be retained (78%) than those that did not participate (33%). Further, the second semester GPA of those who attended was far higher than predicted without intervention, while the second semester GPA for those who did not attend was as predicted. On average, they did not improve. Continuing to monitor the fall 2009 cohort's progress and assessing the effect of the interventions will help us better understand the factors that are facilitating or inhibiting student success.

The demographic composition of the student body changed somewhat since last fall. The percentage of Hispanic students grew while the percentage of White students declined slightly. The proportion of first-generation students increased to 68%, largely due to a rise in students whose parents have no high school education. Among new undergraduates, a smaller proportion entered as freshmen than as transfers, from 64% new freshman last fall to 56% this fall.

Another effect of a declining budget is fewer employees. The total number decreased from 2,195 to 2,118, following a drop from 2,405 in the prior year. Coinciding with layoffs and lack of hiring, the portion of employees age 60 and above has been increasing. Average class size increased slightly a year ago and remains at that level this fall. Fewer online courses were offered in fall 2010.

Fewer undergraduate but more graduate degrees were awarded, including 29 doctorates.