

COURSE SUCCESS DURING COVID-19

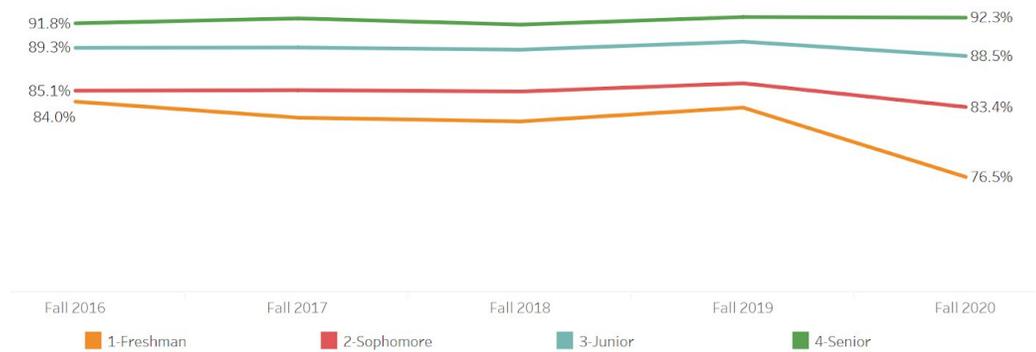
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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of courses in fall 2020 were taught virtually. Most students did not have a physical interaction with Fresno State faculty or campus. Additionally, new students were introduced virtually to the entire college experience, ranging from faculty expectations to university support services. This unprecedented and unexpected shift in instructional and support modality poses potential challenges for student success. According to surveys conducted by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) during fall 2020, around 60% of students reported some difficulty in learning the material taught in their classes or keeping up with their assignments, 85% reported not being able to concentrate as well as usual, and 36% reported to have “poor” or “terrible” access to a suitable learning environment. These changes in mode of instruction and student survey responses lead to the question, “have these changes and challenges impacted students’ ability to pass their courses?”

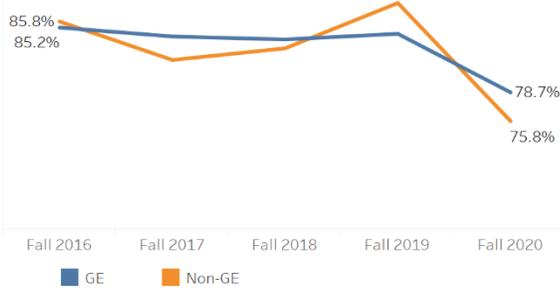
While course-pass rates for undergraduates have declined moderately as a whole in fall 2020 (86.4% compared with 88.2%, an average of pass rates over the previous four fall semesters), this decrease was most extreme for Freshmen.

Focusing on freshmen who are first-time students, these decreases in course pass rates were not accounted for by course type, as pass rates decreased for both GE and Non-GE courses, nor were they accounted for by the size of the course.

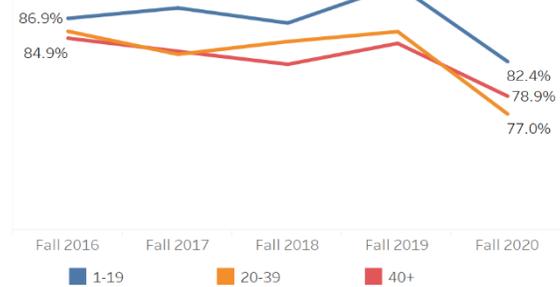
Course Passing Rate



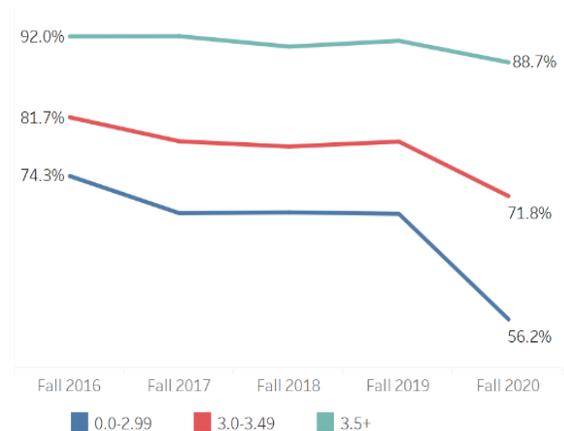
Course Passing Rate by GE Course



Course Passing Rate by Class Size



Course Passing Rate by HS GPA



The strongest predictor OIE has identified of whether first-time freshmen struggled during virtual instruction was their academic preparation. Compared to an average pass rate of the previous four years, students entering Fresno State with a HS GPA 3.5 or above had a decline in their course pass rate of 2.8 percentage points (pp), students entering with a HS GPA of 3.0 – 3.49 had a decline of 7.5 pp, and students entering with a HS GPA below 3 had a decline of 14.7 pp.

In conclusion, during virtual instruction, continuing students performed similarly to previous years when students were primarily learning face-to-face. First-time freshmen, however, had a substantial decrease in course pass rates and this decrease was largest among students with the least academic preparation. This suggests that courses that largely serve first-time students and their affiliated support services should be given preference when repopulating it is safe to increase the number of students, faculty, and staff present on campus.