

Fresno State Students Enrolled in Multiple Higher Education Institutions

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Introduction

According to the national studies, it is quite common for students to attend multiple institutions during the course of their undergraduate education. Moreover, in recent years, the proportions of students involved in “swirling” (back-and-forth enrollment among two or more institutions) and “double-dipping” (concurrent attendance at two institutions) increased (Bahr, 2009; Peter, 2006; McCormick, 2003). We were interested to know if this is happening at Fresno State.

In this study, we examined the extent of concurrent and back-and-forth enrollment, characteristics of students who attended multiple institutions, the type of colleges where they enrolled, and whether “swirling” and “double-dipping” had any impact on the retention and graduation of those students.

This report is based on data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), an entity which maintains nationwide collection of enrollment and degree records, and our IRAP databases. The analysis includes only students who initially enrolled in Fresno State as first-time full-time freshmen (FTFTF) during the fall semesters of 2002-2007.

Extent of Multiple Institution Enrollment

Multiple Enrollment of Undergraduates Awarded a Degree

About 20% (204 students) of the FTFTF who entered Fresno State in fall 2002 and earned a Bachelor’s degree within 6 years attended at least one other college at some point before they graduated from Fresno State (See Table 1). Nine percent of these students attended Fresno State and some other college simultaneously (co-enrolled) during at least one semester over the course of their undergraduate study.

Multiple Enrollment During First Year

Analysis of the multiple college attendance pattern of the fall 2002 – fall 2007 FTFTF cohorts shows that from 2.5% to 3.7% of students were co-enrolled at least one semester during the first year of their education. Of those who enrolled elsewhere during the first year, approximately half did so during the summer semester. Most enrolled consecutively, rather than concurrently. The proportions of FTFTF who enrolled elsewhere during summer ranged from 3.2 to 8.0% and included co-enrolled and consecutively enrolled students (See Table 2).

Increasing Trend

As is the case nationally, the percentage of Fresno State students attending multiple higher education institutions is growing. Of the fall 2002, 2003 and 2004 FTFTF cohorts who graduated in four years, the percentages are 14%, 16%, and 20%, respectively.

The same trend is observed for the FTFTF who continued at Fresno State after the first and second years of their undergraduate education. The proportion of those who stayed after the first year and concurrently or consecutively attended other colleges during that year, increased from 5% of the fall 2002 cohort to 10% of the fall 2007 cohort. For FTFTF retained at Fresno State after their second year, the proportion that attended other colleges during the first two years increased from 10% of the fall 2002 cohort to 18% of the fall 2006 cohort (See Table 1).

Colleges and Courses of Co-Enrollment

Fresno City College, followed at some distance by Reedley College, are at the top of the list of colleges where students co-enrolled or consecutively enrolled. Overall, the majority of the students attended community colleges when co-enrolled or consecutively enrolled.

According to transcript data, the fall 2007 FTFTF who were concurrently enrolled during the first year took mostly courses in the local community colleges. The top five courses included ENGL 1A, POL SCI 2, MATH 5B, HIST 11, and CHEM 3A.

Preparation and Progress of Students Enrolled in Multiple Institutions

Preparation and First-Term GPA

Analysis of the fall 2002 FTFTF who graduated from Fresno State shows that students who attended multiple institutions and graduated within four years or in the fifth year were likely to be less prepared compared to those who attended only Fresno State. The former had lower average first-term GPA and higher English and Math remediation proportions. The difference in preparation didn't exist for students who graduated in the sixth year, with the exception that those who attended multiple colleges were more likely to need Math remediation (See Table 3).

Graduation

Similar to the preparation pattern, at graduation, students who attended multiple colleges and graduated in less than six years had a lower cumulative GPA compared to those who attended only Fresno State. Those who graduated in the sixth year had almost the same cumulative GPA.

The average total number of units at graduation was approximately the same for those who attended multiple institutions and those who attended only Fresno State for all graduation years (See Table 3).

Those students who needed more time to graduate were more likely to attend other institutions. 31% of the fall 2002 FTFTF who graduated in the sixth year were enrolled somewhere else prior to graduation compared to 17% of those who graduated in the fifth year and 14% of those who graduated within four years from Fresno State (See Table 1).

Retention

FTFTF who were enrolled somewhere else besides Fresno State during their first or second year were more likely to leave Fresno State rather than earn a degree here. Of those who dropped out of Fresno State after the first year, 18 to 22% were enrolled during that first year somewhere else. On average, this is 12 percentage points higher than for those who continued at Fresno State. In case of those FTFTF who stayed at Fresno State after the first year, but dropped out after the second year, 22 to 28% were enrolled somewhere else during the first two years. This is about 13 percentage points higher compared to students who continued at Fresno State (See Table 1)

Conclusion

Attending multiple institutions is quite common among Fresno State students. Typically, they co-enroll or consecutively enroll in courses at community colleges. Students who attend multiple institutions are more likely to need English and/ or Math remediation and they have lower average GPAs at graduation. Those students are also more likely to drop-out of Fresno State , as well as to take more time to graduate, but no longer than comparably prepared students who only attended Fresno State. Because the national studies use different student groups, we cannot directly compare Fresno State percentages to national percentages, but the patterns and trends at our university mirror those seen nationally.

References

- Bahr, P. (2009). College Hopping: Exploring the Occurrence, Frequency, and Consequences of Lateral Transfer. *Community College Review*, 36(4), 271-298.
- McCormick, A. (2003). Swirling and Double-Dipping: New Patterns of Student Attendance and Their Implications for Higher Education. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 13-24.
- Peter, K. , & Cataldi, E. (2006). The Road Less Traveled? Students Who Enroll in Multiple Institutions. *Education Statistics Quarterly*, 7(1/2), 1.

Table 1:

Counts and percentages of FTFTF who co-enrolled or consecutively enrolled in other colleges.

		Fall 2002	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Overall
Cohort FTFTF (as NSC Match Sample)		2157	2457	2200	2300	2448	2475	14037
Retained at FS after 1st Year	N	1764	2059	1884	1887	1981	2028	11603
Enrolled elsewhere during 1st Year (F, Sp, Sum)	N	86	150	171	151	203	209	970
	%	4.9%	7.3%	9.1%	8.0%	10.2%	10.3%	8.4%
Left FS by 1st Year End	N	393	398	316	413	467	447	2434
Enrolled elsewhere during 1st Year (F, Sp, Sum)	N	72	90	70	82	89	90	493
	%	18.3%	22.6%	22.2%	19.9%	19.1%	20.1%	20.3%
% of Total cohort enrolled elsewhere during 1st Yr.	%	7.3%	9.8%	11.0%	10.1%	11.9%	12.1%	10.4%
Retained at FS after 2nd Year	N	1544	1794	1627	1672	1707	NA	8344
Enrolled elsewhere during first 2 Years	N	149	199	221	231	309		1109
	%	9.7%	11.1%	13.6%	13.8%	18.1%		13.3%
Retained after 1st Yr but Left FS by 2nd Year End	N	241	285	274	238	295	NA	1333
Enrolled elsewhere during first 2 Years	N	54	74	72	62	84		346
	%	22.4%	26.0%	26.3%	26.1%	28.5%		26.0%
Earned Bachelor's Degree at FS within 4 Years	N	344	343	374	NA	NA	NA	
Enrolled elsewhere prior to graduating	N	49	54	73				
	%	14.2%	15.7%	19.5%				
Earned Bachelor's Degree at FS on Year 5	N	453	559	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Enrolled elsewhere prior to graduating	N	79	102					
	%	17.4%	18.2%					
Earned Bachelor's Degree at FS on Year 6	N	247	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Enrolled elsewhere prior to graduating	N	76						
	%	30.8%						

Note: "Enrolled Elsewhere" includes co-enrollment, swirling or consecutive back-and-forth enrollment, and transferring-out

Table 2:
Co-enrollment and summer semester* enrollment in other colleges

	Fall 2002	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005	Fall 2006	Fall 2007
Cohort FTFTF (as NSC Match)	2157	2457	2200	2300	2448	2475
Co-enrolled during the first year	54	77	56	84	79	82
% co-enrolled	2.5%	3.1%	2.5%	3.7%	3.2%	3.3%
Summer semester* enrolled elsewhere	69	133	164	132	184	197
% Summer enrolled elsewhere	3.2%	5.4%	7.5%	5.7%	7.5%	8.0%

*Includes only summer semester of the first year enrollment

Table 3:
Comparison between 2002 FTFTF who graduated from Fresno State within 6 years and were enrolled somewhere else prior to graduation vs. those who attended only Fresno State.

Years to Degree	College Performance	Enrolled Elsewhere	
		No	Yes
Four or less	Headcount	295	49
	1st Term GPA	3.44	3.11
	English Remedial %	31%	53%
	Math Remedial %	33%	55%
	Avg. Cum. GPA at Graduation	3.43	3.18
	Avg. Cum. Units at Graduation	134	132
Five	Headcount	374	79
	1st Term GPA	3.20	3.11
	English Remedial %	48%	56%
	Math Remedial %	52%	62%
	Avg. Cum. GPA at Graduation	3.11	2.95
	Avg. Cum. Units at Graduation	138	140
Six	Headcount	171	76
	1st Term GPA	3.06	3.09
	English Remedial %	59%	57%
	Math Remedial %	63%	70%
	Avg. Cum. GPA at Graduation	2.87	2.85
	Avg. Cum. Units at Graduation	142	145