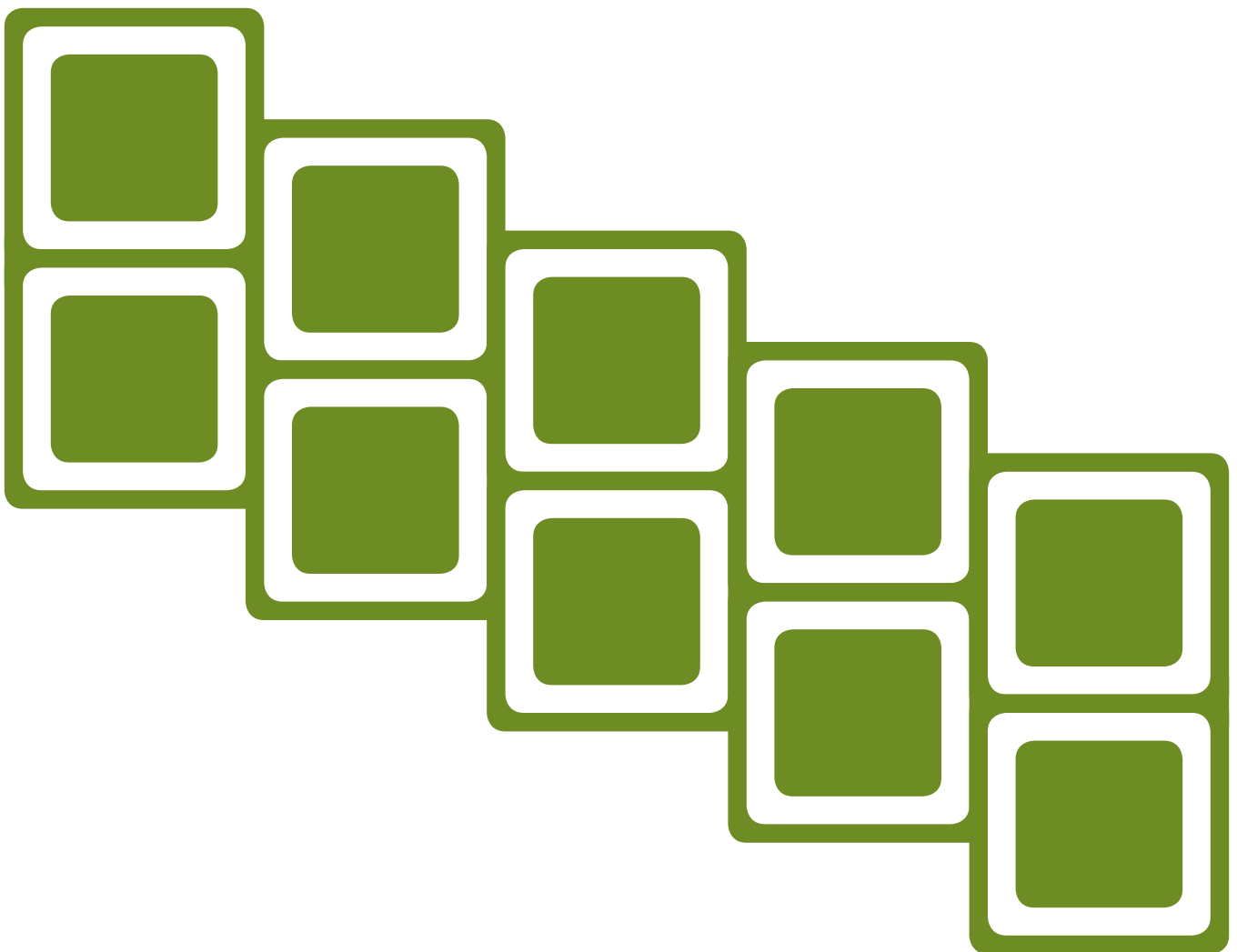


Summer Academe
Research Papers

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An Evaluation of the University of California, Santa Barbara's Freshman Summer Start Program: Impact on Students and Campus

Loy Lytle & Ralph Gallucci
University of California, Santa Barbara

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Abstract

This is an evaluation of the impact of a 13-year-old summer bridge program—the University of California, Santa Barbara's (UCSB) Freshman Summer Start Program (FSSP)—on its students and the home campus. In continuous operation since summer 2002, FSSP was designed to help incoming, first-time students make smooth academic and social transitions to the campus. Its core set of academic experiences includes credit-bearing courses and other academic, social, recreational, and personal enrichment experiences to engage students as they achieve their academic objectives in a timely fashion. The paper summarizes various outcome measures used to assess FSSP's student and campus impact and recommends how lessons learned from our experiences with FSSP might help other summer sessions administrators and/or faculty colleagues design and implement a summer bridge program tailored to benefit and engage students within the context of the home institution's mission and goals.

Of the hundreds of new incoming freshman student-experience programs promoting student engagement and enhancing student success, few are offered outside the traditional fall and/or spring semesters (or their quarter-system equivalents). In a recent survey sent to 1,373 U.S. colleges and universities, Barefoot, Griffin, and Koch (2012) concluded (on the basis of a 38% survey response rate) that perhaps as few as one in seven of their survey-respondent institutions offered “summer bridge” programs (defined operationally as ones offered to students before their “official” first year of college). Most bridge programs were offered by large institutions (with enrollments greater than 5,000 unduplicated headcount) and at public (64%) rather than privately funded colleges and universities. Over half entailed mandatory enrollment for at least some of their students, including those provisionally admitted, classified as federal or state Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) students, and/or categorized as targeted “developmental/remedial” students. Although only 29% of those offering summer bridge programs characterized them as open to “any students,” almost all had clearly stated missions and goals. Unfortunately, however, to our knowledge, little in the way of quantitative outcome data has been published attesting to the effectiveness of these programs, particularly with respect to outcome measures (such as improved student learning and engagement and/or higher retention or graduation rates) traditionally used to assess student success.

An earlier report (Lytle & Gallucci, 2015) detailed some of the events and conditions shaping the genesis, growth, and development of the Freshman Summer Start Program (FSSP) at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), a summer bridge program administered by UCSB’s Office of Summer Sessions. The current paper focuses on evaluating FSSP’s impact on its students and the home campus. It will also highlight what has been learned from UCSB’s program that might prove useful for college administrators and/or faculty interested in establishing a summer bridge program that promotes student engagement in the context of their home institution’s mission, goals, and resources.

UCSB’s Freshman Summer Start Program: Performance Outcomes

FSSP Student Unduplicated Headcount and Credit Hours

In addition to some of the state-wide events leading to the development of a summer bridge program for freshman students, described previously (Lytle & Gallucci, 2015), another reason for starting such a program rested on analyses carried out by UCSB’s Office of Summer Sessions showing that entering first-year students traditionally had very low summer term participation rates and less than stellar academic performances compared to all other (sophomore, junior, or senior) undergraduates. In the two years preceding the launch of FSSP in summer 2002, UCSB students classified as freshmen constituted only 3% to 4% of the total summer 2000 and 2001 unduplicated headcount and less than 4% of the summer terms’ total enrolled credit units. All students classified as freshmen in summers 2000 and 2001 were categorized as “continuing” (students who had entered UCSB during the preceding fall, winter, or spring quarters but did not complete enough credit units to be classified as sophomores) or “returning” (typically, first-year

students who previously had been placed on academic probation but were allowed to return contingent on successful academic performance in summer coursework). None were “new” students formally admitted to the incoming freshman class.

FSSP enrolled 209 entering freshman students in its first summer of operation (2002). After the appointment of a new FSSP Director in 2004 and the roll-out of a new strategic marketing plan targeting new incoming students, FSSP unduplicated headcount climbed steadily (despite a one-year reversal) to double in size by summer 2012, with subsequent continued growth through the last two years of the case study (Table 1). Average FSSP study loads were typically eight to nine units (Table 1)—not particularly surprising, because FSSP students are encouraged in pre-program academic advising/orientation sessions to enroll in two four-quarter unit courses meeting general education or degree major requirements, in addition to a program-mandated one-quarter unit course (The Modern Research University). What is impressive is that the gain in FSSP unduplicated headcount has been achieved against the backdrop of challenging economic times that necessitated raising student fees to cover costs (Table 2).

Table 1 Freshman Summer Start Program (FSSP) Student Unduplicated Headcount, Credit Units, Average Student Study Load (Quarter Credit Units / Unduplicated Headcount), and Growth Relative to Entering Fall Freshman Class Cohorts (2002–2014)

| Summer Session Year | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Unduplicated Headcount | 209 | 211 | 236 | 285 | 340 | 327 | 349 | 336 | 286 | 358 | 403 | 432 | 462 |
| Credit Units | 1,814 | 1,785 | 1,910 | 2,677 | 3,140 | 3,045 | 3,221 | 3,030 | 2,713 | 3,212 | 3,596 | 4,051 | 4,237 |
| Average Student Study Load | 8.7 | 8.5 | 8.1 | 9.4 | 9.2 | 9.3 | 9.2 | 9.0 | 9.5 | 9.0 | 8.9 | 9.4 | 9.2 |
| FSSP Unduplicated Headcount (percent of fall incoming freshmen unduplicated headcount) | 5.4% | 5.3% | 6.1% | 7.4% | 8.3% | 7.5% | 8.0% | 7.3% | 7.7% | 8.7% | 8.5% | 9.3% | 9.8% |

The all-inclusive fee for an FSSP student enrolled in a nine-unit study load doubled from \$2,800 in summer 2002 to \$5,991 in summer 2014. Most of the escalation in program fees resulted from a University of California system-wide mandated 256% increase in student unit fees (Table 2; second row) to mitigate the consequences of an approximate 50% decline in per-student state support allocations (Johnson, Cook, Murphy, & Weston, 2014).

Table 2 Changes in Freshman Summer Start Program (FSSP) Fees (2002–2014)

| Summer Session Year | Program Fee (based on 9 unit study load) | Unit Based Fee | Technology Unit Based Fee | Campus Based Fee | Food/Housing Fee | Course Material Fee | Service Fee |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| 2002 | \$2,800 | \$76 | | \$55 | \$1,606 | \$380 | \$75 |
| 2003 | \$3,000 | \$103 | | \$50 | \$1,702 | \$246 | \$75 |
| 2004 | \$3,200 | \$111 | | \$124 | \$1,782 | \$145 | \$150 |
| 2005 | \$3,600 | \$136 | Fee Not Charged | \$162 | \$1,869 | \$136 | \$200 |
| 2006 | \$3,800 | \$136 | | \$180 | \$1,993 | \$182 | \$200 |
| 2007 | \$4,100 | \$146 | | \$317 | \$2,164 | \$251 | \$200 |
| 2008 | \$4,250 | \$162 | | \$314 | \$2,274 | \$166 | \$200 |
| 2009 | \$4,525 | \$173 | | \$318 | \$2,296 | Fee Discontinued | \$200 |
| 2010 | \$5,000 | \$229 | \$3 | \$321 | \$2,394 | | \$200 |
| 2011 | \$5,485 | \$247 | \$3 | \$372 | \$2,647 | Fee Discontinued | \$230 |
| 2012 | \$5,670 | \$271 | \$3 | \$372 | \$2,538 | | \$300 |
| 2013 | \$5,856 | \$271 | \$3 | \$367 | \$2,728 | | \$300 |
| 2014 | \$5,991 | \$271 | \$3 | \$388 | \$2,842 | \$300 | |

Campus-based fees (self-imposed fees approved by students for their short- and/or longer-term benefit) and food and lodging costs also increased by 7 and 1.8 times, respectively, between 2002 and 2014 (Table 2; fourth and fifth rows). Some reasons why FSSP enjoyed significant enrollment increases despite the steep rise in fees include the following.

Availability of Financial Aid

The summer term at UCSB is considered the “trailer” (or last term) in the academic year for campus financial aid planning purposes. Since it straddles the closing and opening of each new fiscal year, however, it is considered the first, or “header,” term for campus calendar scheduling and budgetary purposes. First-year students seeking financial aid and electing to begin their studies as UCSB summer students are uniquely eligible to complete two Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) qualifying forms—one for the previous fiscal year (which can be applied to the costs associated with FSSP), and a second one for the year to come (which can be applied to educational expenses in fall, winter, spring, and summer terms following their initial FSSP summer experience). Hence, many students eligible for financial aid can receive some financial support for studies carried out in the summer without affecting their eligibility for support over the remainder (fall, winter, and spring quarters) of their first year at UCSB.

Institution of a Year-Round FSSP Marketing Campaign

One major challenge in recruiting new, incoming freshman students to summer bridge programs is the relatively short time (typically three to five months) between when students receive their acceptance letters inviting them to be members of the incoming freshman class and when FSSP

begins in the last half of the summer. (UCSB students learn about their admission status around mid-March; FSSP's six-week summer program begins approximately four and a half months later.) Many students make summer plans before receiving their acceptance letters. For others, the time is awfully short to plan, budget, save, borrow, and/or make other financial arrangements to deal with the unanticipated extra costs of a summer bridge program. Consequently, the FSSP marketing effort begins much earlier than when students receive their acceptance letters and is sustained on a year-round basis. The program's website, print media, and other informational mailings are coordinated with and disseminated by other campus agencies that showcase the campus to visitors or are involved in new student recruitment, admissions, and orientation.

Encouragement by Interested Parents and Caregivers

Students taking pre-program FSSP surveys identify parents and caregivers as the single most important influence in the decision-making process leading to their enrollment in the program. For the past several years, it has been clear that "Millennial" and "Y-Generation" parents—also derisively called "helicopter parents" (Cline and Fay, 1990)—play exceedingly pro- and reactive roles in the lives of their children, to such an extent that some (e.g., Deresiewicz, 2014; Lythcott-Haims, 2015) have questioned whether these students have the skills to become fully functioning, independent-minded adults.

Impact on Students

An influential report by the Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education (1984) stimulated many colleges and universities to explore ways in which first-year program experiences might affect the degree of engagement of their incoming freshman classes (see also the discussion in the preceding paper, Lytle & Gallucci, 2015), as well as their subsequent retention and graduation rates. Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot (2005) and many others (see, for example, Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2010) advanced the view that student experiences are most successful when they help first-year students develop academic and intellectual competence, establish and maintain interpersonal relationships, explore identity development, decide on a career and lifestyle, maintain personal health and wellness, develop civic responsibility, consider the spiritual dimensions of life, and deal with diversity. Although in practice it can be technically difficult to operationalize and measure how institutions of higher education affect some of the proposed benchmarks defining "student success," there is general consensus that assessments of institutional impact on student learning, retention, and graduation rates constitute important variables that should be included in these analyses. Therefore, comparisons of FSSP and non-FSSP grade point averages and other academic indicators of academic progress—such as measures of retention (e.g., percentage of first-year students who continue their studies into subsequent years following their admission) and graduation rates (e.g., percentage of students who graduate in four or six calendar years following their admission)—have been analyzed to gauge how the FSSP experience might have impacted the lives of its students at UCSB.

Academic Performance Indicators

FSSP was designed from the very beginning to be an option for all interested first-year incoming students wishing to begin their UCSB studies during the summer. Its only requirement was that its students be admitted to the university and have officially informed UCSB of their intent to enroll as a member of the incoming freshman class. It is difficult, if not impossible, to track academic progress relating to student learning without doing in-depth analyses at course and department levels. The relatively crude academic indicators available at the institutional level include grade point averages and the extent to which students meet minimum academic standards, but these indicators have significant limitations (see, for example, Rojstaczer & Healy, 2012) when used to determine whether academic programs such as FSSP affect student learning outcomes over time. Nonetheless, it is clear that the overall performance of FSSP students, based on differences in summer term grade point averages, consistently exceeds that of all other summer term students (Table 3).

Table 3 Freshman Summer Start Program (FSSP) and Non-FSSP Student Grade Point Averages (2002–2014)

| Summer Session Year | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| FSSP Undergraduate Student Grade Point Average in Summer | 3.2 | 3.3 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.3 | 3.2 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 |
| Non-FSSP Undergraduate Student Grade Point Average in Summer | 2.9 | 2.9 | 2.9 | 2.9 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 2.9 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 |

These differences disappear when the grade point averages of FSSP students and their non-FSSP cohorts are tracked over the subsequent four calendar years (defined as normative time-to-degree at UCSB) (Table 4). Interestingly, FSSP students had higher participation rates (Table 8) and enrolled in slightly more units of course work during subsequent summers compared to non-FSSP students (Table 4), but they also carried slightly smaller average study loads during the fall, winter, and spring quarters. There were no significant differences in grade point averages or study load for four-calendar-year periods (Table 4), except that those FSSP students graduating within this time frame did so with an average of eight more units (approximately the average units completed by these students during their initial FSSP experience) than non-FSSP four-year graduates.

Table 4 Freshman Summer Start Program (FSSP) and Non-FSSP Student Study Loads and Grade Point Averages in Subsequent Academic Quarters Following the Initial FSSP Experience (Freshmen Cohorts 2002–2005)

| Composite for Freshman Cohorts 2002–2005 | | | Mean FSSP Student Units Completed | Mean Non-FSSP Student Units Completed | Mean FSSP Student Grade Point Average | Mean Non-FSSP Student Grade Point Average |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Academic Quarters after Initial FSSP Summer Experience | Year 1 | Fall | 14.0 | 13.9 | 3.1 | 3.3 |
| | | Winter | 14.7 | 14.9 | 2.9 | 2.9 |
| | | Spring | 14.4 | 14.7 | 2.9 | 3.0 |
| | | Summer | 10.0 | 9.0 | 2.9 | 2.9 |
| | Year 2 | Fall | 14.3 | 14.8 | 3.0 | 3.0 |
| | | Winter | 14.6 | 14.8 | 3.0 | 3.0 |
| | | Spring | 14.5 | 14.4 | 3.0 | 3.0 |
| | | Summer | 11.3 | 10.2 | 2.9 | 3.0 |
| | Year 3 | Fall | 14.3 | 14.7 | 3.0 | 3.1 |
| | | Winter | 14.4 | 14.7 | 3.0 | 3.1 |
| | | Spring | 14.9 | 15.1 | 3.0 | 3.1 |
| | | Summer | 11.2 | 10.9 | 3.0 | 3.0 |
| | Year 4 | Fall | 14.6 | 14.7 | 3.0 | 3.1 |
| | | Winter | 14.5 | 14.6 | 3.1 | 3.1 |
| | | Spring | 13.8 | 13.9 | 3.0 | 3.1 |
| | | Summer | 11.9 | 11.2 | 2.8 | 2.8 |

Approximately 92% of the incoming freshman cohorts between 2007 and 2014 met UCSB’s minimum academic standards. These standards entailed maintaining an overall cumulative and quarterly grade point average of 2.0 (a grade of “C” or higher). Failure to meet either of these conditions resulted in students automatically being placed on academic probation; two consecutive quarters of being on academic probation led to other sanctions, including possible disqualification and/or dismissal. Although 8% of each incoming freshman cohort failed to meet the minimum academic performance standard in one or more quarters during their first year, the proportion declined to approximately 3% of the class during their third and fourth years of study (Table 5). FSSP and non-FSSP students had similar overall academic standard success/failure rates (Table 5).

Table 5 Freshman Summer Start Program (FSSP) and Non-FSSP Students Failing to Meet Academic Standards (2007–2013)

| Composite for Cohorts 2007–2013 | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|--------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Freshman Summer Start Program (FSSP) | 7% | 6% | 5% | 4% |
| Non-FSSP | 8% | 5% | 3% | 3% |

UCSB’s most recently reported (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014) institution-wide 92% retention rate for first- to second-year full-time students pursuing bachelor’s degrees is rela-

tively high and is in the range predicted (Shaw, 2015) by the cumulative SAT scores of the entering freshman cohorts admitted between 2007 and 2013 (Figure 1, group of six histogram pairs on the left). Retention rates for FSSP and non-FSSP students were 90% and 91%, respectively, when all 2002–2013 cohorts were taken into account. It should be borne in mind that retention rates after three years are heavily influenced by the proportion of each freshman cohort that graduates; there are no significant differences between FSSP and non-FSSP student retention rates over the six years of the study when graduation rates are taken into account (Figure 1).

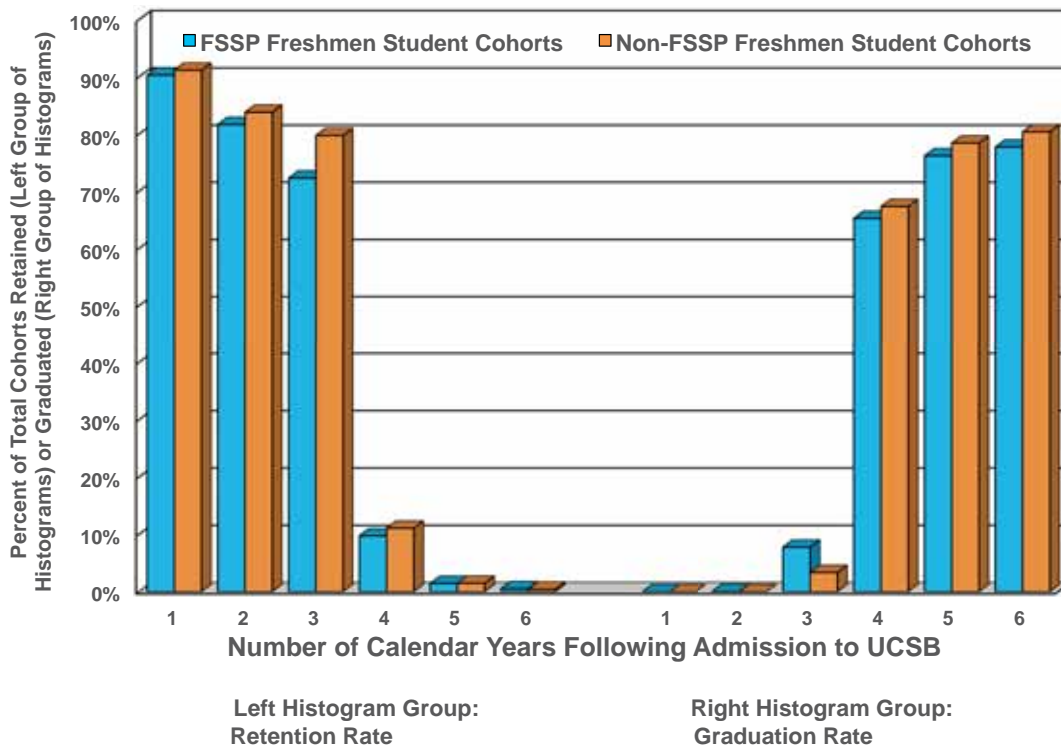


Figure 1
 Freshman Summer Start Program (FSSP) Impact on Student Retention and Graduation Rates 2002–2014

UCSB’s four- and six-year overall graduation rates of 67% and 81%, respectively, are based on its fall 2007 freshmen cohort (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). These rates compare favorably with the composite four- and six-year graduation rates compiled for FSSP (65% and 76%, respectively) and non-FSSP (67% and 78%, respectively) students between summers 2002–2013 (Figure 1, group of six histogram pairs on the right). Although the four- and six-year graduation rates for FSSP students relative to non-FSSP institutional norms were not statistically significantly lower, there was a clear and significant increase in the three-calendar-year graduation rates of FSSP students (8%) compared to non-FSSP students (3%) (Figure 1). The earlier (three-calendar year) graduation rate of FSSP students probably reflects the joint outcome of the FSSP experience itself and the fact that, through its marketing efforts, FSSP attracts a proportionately larger number of students with more clearly defined university plans who are willing to use the summer term to accelerate their normative time-to-degree (see, for example, Taylor & Doane, 2003).

Student Survey Data

Pre- and post-FSSP student surveys—administered in print early on and via online mechanisms in recent years—have been used to tap student attitudes about their expectations coming into the program, as well as the degree to which the program met these expectations upon its completion. Space does not allow a full discussion of the interesting results gleaned from intake and exit surveys (but we encourage interested readers to contact R.G. for copies of the surveys and their results). The survey results have been instrumental in shaping the program’s evolution over its last 13 years, as well as improving or jettisoning weak-performing courses, workshops, activities, and other enrichment experiences, or adding new ones to address changing student needs. Some of the more salient survey items pertinent to FSSP as a summer bridge program are summarized in the composite pre- and post-program survey responses gathered from students in summers 2009–2012 (Table 6).

As but one example of the program’s impact, FSSP student views about graduating in fewer than four years, participating in freshman seminars, understanding the concept of a research university, and learning about the availability of various campus social support services changed significantly after the program (Table 6). It is clear also that students have been consistently satisfied with their FSSP experiences, as evidenced by the fact that 91% to 94% of those responding to each annual post-program survey reported they were highly satisfied overall and considered it to be a “wonderful experience.”

Table 6 Composite (2009–2012 Freshman Summer Start Program (FSSP) Cohorts) Pre- and Post-FSSP Student Survey Goals and the Extent to Which Each Was Influenced by the FSSP Experience

| Survey Response Item | Number of Survey Responses | Importance | | | | | No Opinion | Mean Rating |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----------------------|------------|-------------|
| | | Very Important 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | Very Unimportant 1 | | |
| Pre-FSSP Survey | | | | | | | | |
| Currently, how important to you are the following goals? | | | | | | | | |
| Get an early start on my academic career. | 789 | 60% | 28% | 8% | 1% | 2% | 1% | 4.4 |
| Graduate in less than four years. | 748 | 28% | 22% | 26% | 11% | 12% | 7% | 3.4 |
| Graduate in four years. | 787 | 64% | 22% | 8% | 3% | 2% | 1% | 4.4 |
| Have classes with small enrollments. | 754 | 27% | 35% | 27% | 8% | 3% | 6% | 3.7 |
| Participate in specially organized Freshman courses (Freshman seminars). | 777 | 21% | 30% | 30% | 13% | 5% | 3% | 3.5 |
| Have opportunities to interact with faculty outside of class. | 788 | 36% | 39% | 19% | 4% | 2% | 1% | 4.0 |
| Gain confidence that I can succeed at UCSB academically. | 782 | 69% | 23% | 5% | 2% | 2% | 1% | 4.5 |
| Understand the concept of a research university. | 780 | 32% | 33% | 23% | 8% | 3% | 2% | 3.8 |

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| Survey Response Item | Number of Survey Responses | Importance | | | | | No Opinion | Mean Rating |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|-----|-----|----|-----------------------|------------|-------------|
| | | Very Important 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | Very Unimportant 1 | | |
| Pre-FSSP Survey | | | | | | | | |
| Currently, how important to you are the following goals? | | | | | | | | |
| Learn about undergraduate research opportunities. | 783 | 40% | 31% | 20% | 5% | 3% | 2% | 4.0 |
| Learn about the various academic support services available on campus to help me. | 790 | 43% | 32% | 19% | 5% | 2% | 1% | 4.1 |
| Learn about the various social support services available on campus to help me. | 779 | 33% | 33% | 23% | 8% | 3% | 2% | 3.9 |
| Connect to other students and make friends. | 792 | 69% | 23% | 4% | 2% | 2% | 0% | 4.6 |
| Learn how to "fit into university life." | 785 | 47% | 32% | 14% | 4% | 3% | 2% | 4.2 |
| Post-FSSP Survey | | | | | | | | |
| Below are some goals of the FSSP. Please rate how effective you think the university was in accomplishing these goals. | | | | | | | | |
| Get an early start on my academic career. | 824 | 61% | 29% | 7% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 4.5 |
| Graduate in less than four years. | 765 | 29% | 35% | 26% | 6% | 4% | 9% | 3.8 |
| Graduate in four years. | 792 | 56% | 33% | 9% | 1% | 1% | 5% | 4.4 |
| Have classes with small enrollments. | 814 | 38% | 33% | 21% | 6% | 2% | 2% | 4.0 |
| Participate in specially organized Freshman courses (Freshman seminars). | 804 | 45% | 36% | 15% | 2% | 2% | 3% | 4.2 |
| Have opportunities to interact with faculty outside of class. | 811 | 42% | 39% | 15% | 2% | 1% | 3% | 4.2 |
| Gain confidence that I can succeed at UCSB academically. | 823 | 51% | 36% | 10% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 4.4 |
| Understand the concept of a research university. | 824 | 46% | 39% | 12% | 2% | 1% | 1% | 4.3 |
| Learn about undergraduate research opportunities. | 822 | 38% | 35% | 20% | 5% | 1% | 1% | 4.0 |
| Learn about the various academic support services available on campus to help me. | 819 | 48% | 39% | 10% | 2% | 1% | 2% | 4.3 |
| Learn about the various social support services available on campus to help me. | 820 | 44% | 39% | 14% | 2% | 1% | 1% | 4.2 |
| Connect to other students and make friends. | 792 | 64% | 26% | 7% | 2% | 1% | 1% | 4.5 |
| Learn how to "fit into university life." | 816 | 52% | 34% | 11% | 1% | 1% | 2% | 4.4 |

Impact on the Campus

The financial outcomes for FSSP have been consistently robust, and the surplus yields from the program have been outstanding (Figure 2). Total FSSP-generated revenue (based on student fees and estimates of state allocations to the campus as a result of FSSP student study loads) climbed such that each year's exceeded the preceding one's in all but two summers (2007 and 2010) and reached a peak of almost \$3.5 million in summer 2014 (Figure 2). The steady revenue stream is impressive considering how much its principal determinants (e.g., student headcount and credit units; program-related fees; state allocations based on student FTE) changed during the 13 years. Student expenses have also changed during this time, since they are directly influenced by shifts in student headcount and average study loads, as well as the evolutionary costs of adding, eliminating, and/or modifying FSSP program elements. Over its first four years, FSSP generated surpluses ranging between \$335,000 and \$394,000; during the next four years, the surplus fluctuated at slightly higher levels (between \$370,000 and \$686,000), in the last five years, it was never less than \$600,000, and for the past two years, the surplus exceeded \$1,000,000 (Figure 2). With but one exception (summer 2009), annual surpluses ranged between 27% and 37% of the program revenue generated. FSSP surpluses have been used to meet various campus academic needs, many of which were not tied to FFSP or, indeed, the summer term in general.

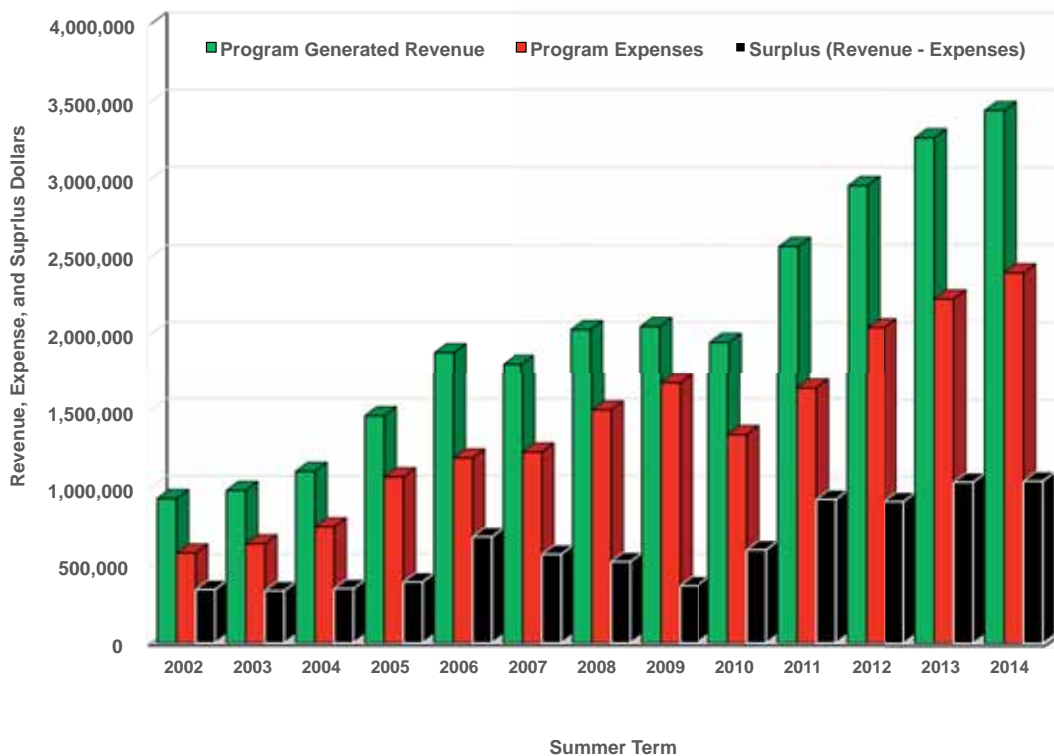


Figure 2
 Freshman Summer Start Program (FSSP) Revenue, Expenses, and Surplus (2002–2014)

Applying the same campus practices in place during the other quarters, approximately one-third of each summer's projected student unit fee revenue paid by FSSP students has been used for financial aid grants that supplement federal, state, and campus grants to help economically disadvantaged students by paying a portion of the program's costs. In like fashion, additional smaller grants have been disbursed from the FSSP summer surplus to provide further help for Pell grant-eligible, low-income FSSP students (Table 7). Students eligible for financial aid accounted for 45% of FSSP's total student unduplicated headcount between summers 2002–2014. The total grant-based financial aid, including federal Pell grant funds, averaged 53% of the total financial aid funds awarded annually. These grants covered approximately 46% percent of the program fee in any given year (Table 7). Grant-type financial aid awards are exceedingly important in making the program accessible to all students eligible for financial aid, many of whom are also classified as EOP and/or first-generation students (Lytle & Gallucci, 2015). Grant-based financial aid also holds down the overall debt burden of FSSP student participants, an important consideration in today's economically challenging climate (Fry, 2014).

Table 7 Freshman Summer Start Program (FSSP) Financial Aid (2002–2014).

| | Grants (no obligation to repay the funds) | Loans (obligation to repay the principal + interest) | Number of FSSP Student Recipients (Unduplicated Headcount) | Average Grant Award per Student |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2002 | \$76,004 | \$128,918 | 74 | \$1,027 |
| 2003 | \$78,775 | \$102,613 | 58 | \$1,358 |
| 2004 | \$147,406 | \$195,590 | 97 | \$1,520 |
| 2005 | \$148,973 | \$153,380 | 90 | \$1,655 |
| 2006 | \$249,645 | \$185,054 | 114 | \$2,190 |
| 2007 | \$204,805 | \$198,138 | 101 | \$2,028 |
| 2008 | \$220,406 | \$269,486 | 152 | \$1,450 |
| 2009 | \$270,967 | \$324,239 | 133 | \$2,037 |
| 2010 | \$275,555 | \$290,734 | 117 | \$2,355 |
| 2011 | \$582,187 | \$464,688 | 193 | \$3,017 |
| 2012 | \$651,383 | \$532,784 | 219 | \$2,974 |
| 2013 | \$730,246 | \$484,880 | 276 | \$2,646 |
| 2014 | \$553,355 | \$459,997 | 277 | \$1,998 |

One unexpected benefit of FSSP, mentioned earlier, is that a proportionately greater number of its students subsequently enrolled in future summer session classes than their non-FSSP freshmen counterparts (Table 8). Over the first 13 years of the program, more than half of each summer's FSSP cohort chose to enroll in additional summer term courses at the beginning of their sophomore years, double the proportion (25%) of the non-FSSP students who enrolled in at least one

summer course at the beginning of the sophomore year. In addition, FSSP students enrolled in approximately 12% more summer term course credits compared to the non-FSSP students (Table 8). FSSP/non-FSSP differences in participation rates and study loads dissipated in the summers defining the beginning of the junior and senior years. However, the overall differences, observed in every 2002–2014 FSSP/non-FSSP cohort, were significant enough to produce an additional \$1.8 million in summer term FSSP-generated student fee revenue over the 13 years (Table 8). In the absence of hard evidence, we think it imprudent to speculate about why FSSP students embraced subsequent summer term academic experiences with greater alacrity relative to their non-FSSP cohorts. Nonetheless, the pattern of these findings, and the unexpected financial rewards that flowed from them, have been unfailingly consistent.

Table 8 Freshman Summer Start Program (FSSP) Participation in Subsequent Summer Student Enrollments (2002–2014)

| | Size of Cohort | Number Enrolled | Participation Rate | Average Study Load | Extra Student Fee Revenue Generated |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Summer 2002 (Sophomore Year) | | | | | |
| FSSP students | 3,763 | 1,952 | 52% | 10.3 | \$1,252,493 |
| Non-FSSP students | 46,398 | 11,531 | 25% | 9.1 | |
| All freshmen (2002–2014) | 50,161 | 13,483 | 27% | | |
| Summer 2003 (Junior Year) | | | | | |
| FSSP students | 3,763 | 1,825 | 48% | 11.1 | \$420,424 |
| Non-FSSP students | 46,398 | 19,461 | 42% | 10.8 | |
| All freshmen (2002–2014) | 50,161 | 21,286 | 42% | | |
| Summer 2004 (Senior Year) | | | | | |
| FSSP students | 3,763 | 1,355 | 36% | 11.5 | \$130,856 |
| Non-FSSP students | 46,398 | 16,517 | 36% | 10.9 | |
| All freshmen (2002–2014) | 50,161 | 17,872 | 36% | | |
| Total additional revenue generated by higher summer enrollment rates of FSSP students | | | | | \$1,803,773 |

In summary, FSSP’s overwhelmingly positive student survey evaluations make it clear that the program has successfully met the needs of its students and provided a supportive, welcoming environment to ease their transitions to UCSB. While FSSP students’ satisfactory academic performance indices and relatively high retention and graduation rates are comparable to, but do not exceed, those of their non-FSSP cohorts, it is also clear that the program has consistently been an important vehicle for encouraging a small subset of its students to graduate earlier than the norm by completing their baccalaureate degree requirements within three calendar years following their initial FSSP summer term experiences. Finally, FSSP students showed higher participation rates in subsequent summer term coursework compared to their non-FSSP counterparts.

In addition to positively impacting its students, FSSP has also been recognized as an important campus asset. In recent years, the program’s well-deserved, supportive, student-centered reputa-

tion has often become a tipping point in helping to seal the successful, competitive recruitment of many academically high-caliber first-year students. Most important, the FSSP's consistent, robust financial performance and its surpluses have been reinvested annually to the benefit and enhancement of the summer bridge program as well as many other campus academic programs, including augmenting the campus' financial aid pool used to support the undergraduate studies of economically disadvantaged students while they pursue their degree objectives.

Lessons Learned

Generalizing from case-study outcomes based on a single program offered by a specific university has many risks and may have limited applicability elsewhere (see, for example, Yin, 2014). It is important to remember in this context that the specific outcomes described for the UCSB Freshman Summer Start Program may not be obtained in whole or in part at other institutions, particularly those with different missions, administrative expectations, faculty responsibilities, and student needs than exist at UCSB. Regardless of these differences, however, most institutions are required—for political, social, humanitarian, and/or economic reasons—to serve the needs of undergraduates drawn from an increasingly diverse pool of students differentially prepared for the rigors of college and university-level studies (Kuh et al., 2010). These institutions must do more, work harder, and invest dwindling resources to promote student success. Done well, we believe that summer bridge programs can be cost-effective mechanisms to create the kinds of engaging environments necessary to achieve this goal. Planning, developing, and implementing a summer bridge program entails learning how to use available resources, organizing the curricula to best advantage, and providing experiences that fully engage students in the learning process. It is toward this end that we offer the following considerations based on our 13 years of experience with UCSB's Freshman Summer Start Program:

- 1. Clarify the role of summer sessions in planning and developing the program.** Summer bridge programs might logically be considered the rightful administrative property of the campus summer sessions' office, but if the program has much scope and breadth, and seeks longevity, it will require campus-wide input and ongoing support that generally exceed the expertise, experience, and resources of a single person or office. Summer sessions can and should serve as a catalyst in helping spark interest in the value of a summer bridge program, provide advice and support during the planning process for the program, and help flesh out the details needed for its implementation. With appropriate staffing, summer sessions can even play a long-term role in budgetary oversight, program coordination, marketing, and/or the provision of other types of specialized staffing support. However, long-term success will be achieved only when the program is embraced as a *campus-wide* rather than *summer-only* asset, worthy of continued administrative, faculty, student, and staff support.
- 2. Recognize it takes a village to build a successful program.** If the goal is to build a summer bridge program with scope and breadth, and the potential for long-term survivability, it will require campus-wide input that can be best achieved through an administratively sanctioned advisory committee charged with the responsibility of shepherding the program's birth, development, and implementation. Future stakeholders in the program (student support personnel, business services administrators, faculty, and staff) need to be

included as full members from the very first planning meeting of the committee through to its last one (“from takeoff to landing”). Each committee stakeholder needs to be treated as a fully invested colleague who helps shape program goals and elements, rather than as a limited partnership service provider who will be carried to do the long-term “heavy lifting” of the program by carrying out the dicta of others. Successful advisory committees require a singularity of purpose in program design and implementation that must be insular to the hidden or not-so-hidden personal agendas of its members.

It should also be recognized that advisory committees are generally less adroit at dealing with the details and immediacy of needs that arise once a program is fully operational. At some point, successful programs need to be directed or overseen by an experienced academic administrator who has passion for the program and deep concern for its success, and is willing to take care of the program’s daily details and resolve any problems as they arise. The individual vested with these responsibilities must also be willing to consult periodically with the committee involved in birthing the program. It is equally important that the committee’s members be willing to continue to maintain involvement in the program in a consultative fashion as a reliable sounding board resource and go-between for the program’s director and for campus interests.

3. Design the program in the context of campus goals, aspirations, and available resources.

Programs in need of outside experts, or new or single-purpose, idiosyncratic resources and / or other exotic services have a vastly reduced chance of implementation and survival. Once the program’s core is defined, a variety of resources can be tapped to streamline the process of adding elements (e.g., student academic success seminars and workshops; personal/career counseling; health and wellness programming; social–recreational activities, etc.) that enhance, complement, and enrich the program’s core. Most contemporary campuses have existing programs, services, and activities offered in the other terms that can be adapted and incorporated into a shorter-term summer program. Consider gleaning program enrichment ideas from the “best practices” of more experienced colleagues (e.g., Kuh et al., 2010; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2014; Taylor & Parsons, 2011)—it is easier and more cost-effective to retrofit these practices and incorporate them into a nascent summer bridge program than it is to create them anew.

4. Understand all programs are not equal. Summer bridge remedial programs or programs designed to meet the special needs of a subset of incoming freshman students have, by their very nature, narrower foci and a smaller base from which to recruit students. If ongoing operating costs are high, they may have to pass these costs on to student participants, or find extramural or campus funding sources to keep student fees affordable. Furthermore, special interest or remedial programs may limit campus interest, thereby jeopardizing survivability unless the program offers solutions to a pressing campus need not fulfilled elsewhere. Any program requiring long-term externally funded sources and / or internally funded campus subsidies becomes vulnerable to swings in interest, resource availability, and/or increased competition for limited or dwindling resources. Self-supporting student fee programs designed to meet the needs of a broad student constituency hold the possibility for larger enrollments, thus allowing greater distribution of operating and overhead costs that are key to making program fees lower and affordable for a greater number of students.

5. **Establish an on-campus residential living-based summer bridge program.** On-campus residential summer bridge programs have several advantages for furthering student peer-to-peer, as well as student–faculty, staff–faculty, and student–institutional engagement. Indeed, residence hall-based programming may be one of the most important reasons underlying any summer bridge program’s success. It is the place where students make new friendships, build community, have fun, share the experience of being away from home for the first time—all within an academic setting of enrolling in college courses and taking classes, and beginning the next stage of their lives *together*.
6. **Establish a financial aid mechanism to promote student access.** The logistical challenges of encouraging enrollment in a student-fee-based summer bridge program at a time when parents, caregivers, and their newly admitted students are grappling with the realities of paying the escalating costs of an undergraduate degree are daunting. Those realities, coupled with growing concerns about the escalation in undergraduate student indebtedness (see, for example, Fry, 2014) make it important that summer bridge programs have a built-in mechanism for underwriting some or all of the costs of the programs for low-income students. Assuming the institution does not have a willing donor or endowment from which grant-based awards can be drawn to underwrite some or all of the program’s costs for economically needy students, it is imperative that the student fee structure be designed so that a portion of its revenue can be used for financial aid purposes. Summer bridge programs that meet student and institutional needs will only be successful if or when they are open and accessible to all potential student participants, independent of their financial circumstances.
7. **Embrace change—implement proactive mechanisms for assessing and addressing programmatic strengths and weaknesses on an ongoing basis.** Successful programs must have the flexibility to evolve as students, times, and institutional needs change. The starting point in this evolutionary process is to build in mechanisms and processes for sensing change during the design and planning phases of program development. When properly designed and implemented, ongoing “360-degree” surveys periodically tapping the views of end-user students, faculty advisors and instructors, staff service providers, and administrators are cost-effective, efficient barometers for determining when previously fresh program elements turn stale. Note well, however, that collecting survey data is only the first step in program evolution. Effecting change in light of the data requires the deft touch of an experienced manager who also knows when and how to lead. Surveys conducted without the intent of making adjustments and changes in the light of feedback are a shameful waste of time and resources. Use surveys, of course, but also be prepared to do something about what they tell you.

Those readers hoping to develop and implement a new summer bridge program, or who might be interested in improving an existing one, are encouraged to contact the authors for additional information based on our positive experiences with UCSB’s Freshman Summer Start Program.

Concluding Comments

An old and most likely apocryphal story often told at several different institutions over the last century says that a dean once began his (her) convocation speech for first-year incoming students with the admonition: “Look to your left, look to your right—one of you will not be here next year!” Lytle distinctly remembers hearing that exact phrase when Dean of Men Major Robert N. Evans “welcomed” him as a member of the incoming freshman class in the Little Theater at the University of California, Santa Barbara, 54 years ago. Others—John Jay Osborn (1971) and Scott Turow (1977)—recount similar versions of the old story at their Harvard Law School orientation. Regardless of the veracity and accuracy of the storied recollections, we feel blessed to have played roles in making certain that future UCSB incoming students will never hear that phrase again.

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Biographies

Loy Lytle, Dean Emeritus of Extended Learning Services and Summer Sessions and a Research Professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, although retired from his administrative duties, still conducts research, consults, presents, and writes on issues related to summer session administration, data collection and analysis, and program development.

Ralph Gallucci teaches a wide variety of courses in classical humanities, languages, and ancient history in the Department of Classics and the Honors Program at the University of California, Santa Barbara, mentors numerous undergraduate research projects, and is the current and only Director of the UCSB Freshman Summer Start Program.