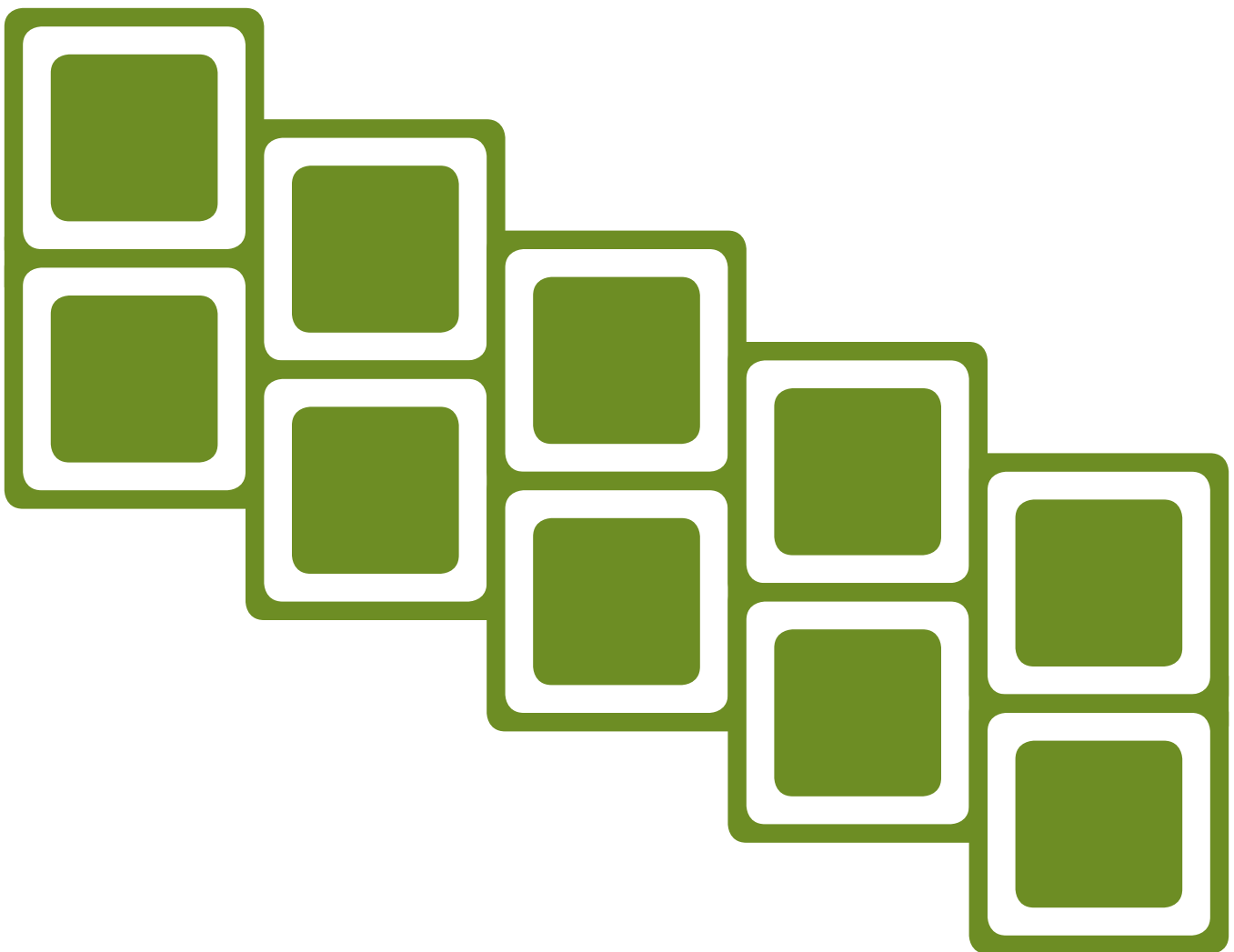


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# *A Case Study of the University of California, Santa Barbara's Freshman Summer Start Program: Its Genesis, Growth, and Development*

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## **Abstract**

This paper reviews the important events and conditions shaping the genesis, growth, and development of a highly successful summer bridge program (an academic program offered to students before their first year of college) in continuous operation since 2002. The University of California, Santa Barbara's (UCSB) Freshman Summer Start Program (FSSP), a financially self-supporting program, was designed to help incoming, first-time students make smooth transitions to UCSB. It provides a core set of academic experiences, including credit-bearing courses, and other academic, social, recreational, and personal enrichment experiences designed to engage students in the life of the mind as they achieve their academic objectives in a timely fashion. The growth and development of some of FSSP's more salient sub-programmatic elements are described.

## Overview

The collective approach taken in this paper and the one that follows (Lytle & Gallucci, 2015) is an example of a research methodology categorized as an “embedded single case study” (Yin, 2011; 2014). An embedded single case study focuses on a single entity (in this case, a summer bridge program offered by UCSB) and how it has evolved (over the last 13 years, as detailed in this paper), and also includes a quantitative evaluation of its impact on its students and home campus (detailed in Lytle & Gallucci, 2015), using multiple sources of information (enrollment data, student surveys, and financial performance data).

First offered during the last six weeks of summer 2002, UCSB’s FSSP was designed to meet the needs of all its incoming freshman students wanting to get a head start on their studies by enrolling in summer-term courses. FSSP—a financially self-supporting program funded solely by student fees—is focused on providing a welcoming and supportive climate to help incoming students make smooth academic and social transitions to UCSB. It exposes students to a comprehensive, well-paced orientation to the campus and its community, provides them with academic skill enrichment and other support workshops and tutorials, and engages them in social and recreational activities designed to complement and enhance their academic and personal lives.

## FSSP’s Genesis, Growth, and Development

FSSP’s basic elements were developed and originally proposed (by Lytle, one of the authors of this paper) in 1997 as a freshman summer bridge program (Barefoot, Griffin, & Koch, 2012) to be administered by the Office of Summer Sessions. Circumstances delayed its launch until 2002, when it became part of the campus’s plan to accommodate a projected, decade-long surge in additional UC-eligible students expected at the beginning of the new millennium (University of California, Berkeley, Office of Public Affairs, 2000). As part of that accommodation, increased state funds were allocated beginning in 2001 to expand summer enrollments so as to reduce student time-to-degree by increasing student “throughput.” The additional state funds generated by the summer program were reinvested to expand its curriculum, enhance its quality by engaging more ladder-rank faculty in teaching its courses, and increase summer-term student diversity by providing campus-based financial aid for economically qualified continuing UCSB undergraduate summer students. Given the state mandate for increasing summer student enrollments, UCSB senior-level administrative support was secured in 2001 and an advisory committee was assembled to develop and implement a new summer bridge program for incoming freshmen. Many changes have occurred in FSSP’s administration, focus, curriculum, faculty involvement, enrichment activities, and student diversity over its first 13 years. Most of the changes, made in response to student feedback, participating faculty input, and campus advisory committee suggestions, were made to help FSSP better reflect UCSB’s emergence as a world-class research and teaching institution.

## Administration and Oversight

The Office of Summer Sessions has provided administrative coordination and oversight of FSSP since its inception, using a hybridized organizational structure (Kops & Lytle, 2013; Lytle, Kops,

& Seaman, 2014) in which some summer functions and services have been administered centrally, while others have been devolved to other campus units and departments. The office continues to work in consort with the advisory committee to establish the curricula, support activities, student fees, budget, and marketing plan for FSSP; provide direction over its administrative academic affairs; coordinate intra- and inter-office staff support for its operations; and authorize financial transactions associated with the collection of its fees, expenditures, and surplus.

Although the office's role in FSSP continues to be as extensive as when the program was founded, an academically oriented director (Gallucci, the other author of this paper) was appointed in 2004 after a campus-wide search to provide direction, energy, and vision to shepherd the program's subsequent growth and evolution. The director's salary and FSSP's operational expenses are paid out of the program's student fee budget, but the appointment, location for one of the director's offices, marketing, and student advisory expenses are overseen by the Office of Summer Sessions. FSSP's director and advisory committee work together to ensure the continued success of the program. The director oversees administrative development and implementation of FSSP's core curriculum and student behavior, and assists in the selection and training of student residence hall assistants, who are available to students on a 24/7 basis. He, too, is available on a 24/7 basis during FSSP's six weeks of operation; participates in its scheduled academic activities and other functions, including workshops and guest lectures; resolves all unanticipated problems; and collaborates with other Office of Summer Sessions staff and other faculty in designing, implementing, and offering the program each summer. The director is also the instructor of record for FSSP's one-unit, mandatory core course (see below) and teaches another research-based seminar for honors students, as well as a popular large-enrollment lecture course offered as an elective to FSSP students.

FSSP's director is the key liaison between FSSP students, administrators, faculty, and staff; provides FSSP with direction, ethos, and energy; is the watchdog responsible for listening to students, staff, and members of FSSP's advisory committee about what is working well and what needs to be modified; and is the "change agent" who generates the action plan for programmatic modifications. It is in these capacities that the director has brought several other important changes to the program over the last decade.

## Programmatic Focus

Working consultatively with Summer Sessions and the advisory committee, the director refocused FSSP's direction and mission, putting greater emphasis on introducing students to undergraduate research activities and promoting their interactions with faculty. A mandatory one-unit interdisciplinary course (The Modern Research University), created and moderated by FSSP's director, brings in renowned UCSB faculty to speak about their academic careers, current research interests, and how undergraduates are involved in their research and other creative scholarly activities. Students are required to attend weekly small discussion sections led by graduate teaching assistants to review the week's faculty lecture, explore university services and programs aimed at promoting student well-being, grapple with issues of academic honesty and integrity, explore volunteerism and internship opportunities, and discuss what life might be like after the attainment of a bachelor's degree.

## Curricular Changes

Students, assisted by staff academic advisors, enroll in a total of 7 to 13 quarter-units selected from a list of over 80 lower-division courses (ranging from one to four quarter-units) that have no prerequisites. Many of these courses fulfill general education, pre-major, and/or major requirements, but students are also encouraged to enroll in introductory writing, mathematics, and other specialty topics that are key to student academic success (such as Introduction to the Library; Major and Career Exploration; Introduction to the University).

The portfolio of one-unit small-enrollment seminars and course offerings expanded with burgeoning FSSP enrollments. In summer 2014, a total of 16 small-enrollment freshman seminars—some focused on introductory undergraduate research or library research opportunities, others exploring academic majors and career choices—were offered to stimulate student interest and engagement in the discovery of new knowledge and other research and creative scholarly endeavors.

## Faculty Involvement

A broad smorgasbord of enrichment activities, many of which foster reducing barriers in faculty–student and student–peer interactions, are offered to address student reluctance in meeting with their instructors during regularly scheduled office hours. In addition to four mid-week faculty–student lunches in the university dining commons, weekly residence hall “Fireside Chats” have become popular events where faculty speak to small groups of students about their own personal lives and interests, as well as their research and other scholarly pursuits. Several faculty-led field trips take students on and off campus to visit museums, research centers, and other scholarly and artistic collections. A faculty mentors program—in which faculty spend time with their students talking, dining, exploring, hiking, and sharing other activities not related to the classroom—has proven successful in fostering faculty–student interactions. FSSP’s director is also important in this regard. His teaching responsibilities allow him greater student contact than would be achieved if he served solely as a program administrator. His daily presence in the residence hall and at many other FSSP activities helps promote one-on-one interactions with his students, break down barriers, and challenge students’ perceptions that faculty are “remote.”

## Enrichment and Student Service Activities

At FSSP’s beginning, approximately 25 different non-credit, specialized academic “success” workshops, as well as social, recreational, and personal-enrichment lectures, special-interest group discussions, and peer- and faculty-led on- and off-campus hikes, tours, museum visits, and other cultural events, were offered as part of the six-week program. Their number and breadth increased linearly with FSSP’s enrollment growth, such that 45 different workshops were offered in summer 2014.

FSSP was designed to be a residential program. The residence hall provides students with a place to sleep, relax, interact with their peers, chat or study in the lounges, and prepare snacks in kitchenettes scattered on each floor of the multi-story facility. Residence hall (student) assistants sponsor floor and hall activities that encourage social bonding and stimulate social interactions.

Beyond the FSSP students, resident assistants, and hall director, another important student-life support program—called the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)—has a visible presence in the residence hall. EOP counselors, with a special focus on so-called “first-generation” students (those whose parents did not earn an undergraduate degree from a four-year college or university) and other students from low-income backgrounds, are available 40 hours per week to answer questions and help all FSSP students, regardless of background or ethnicity, with academic or personal problems. The FSSP and EOP directors and staff have formed a productive, cooperative partnership in which each program has continued to thrive, all the while borrowing from each other’s experiences and expertise to the mutual benefit of their students. For example, FSSP borrowed and incorporated the EOP’s residence hall-based model of offering some of its resources, workshops, seminars, counseling services, and other enrichment activities in the residence hall facilities where the students live, thereby creating and supporting true living–learning environments. It also succeeded in integrating some of its programming to create a holistically supportive environment that helps students focus on their academics and invest themselves in the joys of learning, while also making better social, physical, recreational, and lifestyle choices. Similarly, EOP student participants in FSSP have all the advantages of being able to select from a broad array of credit-bearing courses, interact with the faculty, engage in research and other scholarly activities, and, at the same time, benefit from the esprit-building, community-based support services that EOP provides. EOP counselors and student peers have expanded their residence hall-based counseling services to meet the needs of all FSSP students. The success of these joint efforts is evident in the fact that individuals identified as first-generation or EOP students comprised only 25% or 16% of FSSP enrollments in summer 2002, respectively, but by 2014, first-generation and EOP student participation had increased to 37% and 28%, respectively, of the total FSSP unduplicated headcount (see Tables 1 and 2).

**Table 1** Freshman Summer Start Program (FSSP) Compared to Non-FSSP Student Personal Demographics

Personal Characteristics	2002 Student Cohort				2014 Student Cohort			
	FSSP		Non-FSSP		FSSP		Non-FSSP	
	A Number	B Percent	C Number	D Percent	E Number	F Percent	G Number	H Percent
<b>Freshmen Enrolled</b>	209	5%	3,633	95%	462	10%	4,276	90%
<b>Residency</b>								
California	187	89%	3,365	93%	389	84%	3,800	89%
Non-California U.S. resident	17	8%	222	6%	33	7%	198	5%
International (non-U.S.) Resident	5	2%	46	1%	40	9%	278	7%
<b>Sex (Gender)</b>								
Female	119	57%	2,100	58%	243	53%	2,399	56%
Male	90	43%	1,533	42%	219	47%	1,877	44%
<b>Age</b>								
17 years or less	24	11%	441	12%	64	14%	518	12%
18 years	168	80%	2,955	81%	363	79%	3,485	82%
19 years	17	8%	225	6%	32	7%	249	6%
20 years or older	0	0%	12	0%	3	1%	24	1%
<b>Ethnicity</b>								
American Indian/Alaska Native	1	0%	29	1%	10	2%	43	1%
African American	8	4%	107	3%	23	5%	165	4%
Chicano/Chicana	32	15%	430	12%	71	17%	878	22%
Latino/Latina	19	9%	152	4%	26	6%	255	6%
Filipino	2	1%	96	3%	13	3%	123	3%
Total underrepresented minority	62	30%	814	22%	130	28%	1,341	31%
Asian, Pacific Islander, East Indian, Pakistani	34	16%	516	14%	104	25%	1,054	26%
Caucasian	85	41%	1,942	53%	170	40%	1,396	35%
Other	7	3%	60	2%				
Ethnicity not reported	16	8%	247	7%	4	1%	55	1%
Domestic (U.S.) students	188	90%	3,332	92%	421	91%	3,969	93%
International (non-U.S.) students	5	2%	54	1%	41	9%	307	7%
<b>Language First Learned to Speak</b>								
English only	131	63%	2,601	72%	262	57%	2,011	47%
English and another language	50	24%	618	17%	103	22%	1,181	28%
Another language	28	13%	414	11%	97	21%	1,084	25%
<b>Parent Education</b>								
No high school	4	2%	54	1%	15	3%	350	8%
Some high school	3	1%	81	2%	26	6%	281	7%
High school graduate	19	9%	1,182	33%	44	10%	584	14%
Some college	16	8%	432	12%	50	11%	455	11%
2-year college graduate	11	5%	210	6%	34	7%	220	5%
4-year college graduate	43	21%	863	24%	115	25%	1,046	25%
Post-graduate studies	98	47%	1,492	41%	170	37%	1,287	30%
Total provided parent education	194	93%	3,414	94%	454	100%	4,223	100%
Did not provide parent education	15	7%	219	6%	8	2%	53	1%
% first generation (no 4-year college)	53	25%	1,959	54%	169	37%	1,890	44%
<b>Parent Income</b> (Reported by Students on UC Admissions)								
Mean reported parent income		\$95,128		\$99,587		\$126,466		\$110,934
Median reported parent income		\$72,236		\$78,333		\$84,400		\$70,000

**Table 2** FSSP Compared to Non-FSSP Student Academic Demographics

Personal Characteristics	2002 Student Cohort				2014 Student Cohort			
	FSSP		Non-FSSP		FSSP		Non-FSSP	
	A Number	B Percent	C Number	D Percent	E Number	F Percent	G Number	H Percent
<b>Type of Prior School</b>								
Public high school	172	82%	3,034	84%	359	78%	3,627	85%
Private high school	29	14%	559	15%	59	13%	376	9%
Foreign high school	8	4%	31	1%	41	9%	241	6%
Unclassified high school	0	0%	9	0%	3	1%	32	1%
<b>High School Grade Point Average (GPA)</b>								
Mean high school GPA	3.64		3.71		3.98		3.98	
Median high school GPA	3.62		3.72		4.00		4.00	
A or A+ (4.00 or above)	30	14%	849	24%	229	52%	2,172	52%
A- (3.70–3.99)	60	29%	1,084	30%	160	37%	1,422	34%
B+ (3.30–3.69)	89	43%	1,315	36%	39	9%	484	12%
B (3.0–3.29)	28	13%	303	8%	5	1%	51	1%
B- (2.70–2.99)	1	0%	51	1%	3	1%	11	0%
C or C+ (2.00–2.69)	1	0%	8	0%	1	0%	10	0%
Lower than C (<2.00)	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Scholastic Aptitude (Assessment) Test (SAT®) Scores</b>								
Mean Verbal (SAT® II in 2002) or Critical Reading (2014)	560		567		622		607	
Mean Mathematics	589		597		647		638	
Mean Writing	567		577		631		621	
<b>ADM Scores</b>								
Mean	6,513		6,612		7,046		7,016	
Median	6,507		6,621		7,139		7,077	
<b>Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) Students</b>								
Regular EOP students	34	16%	614	17%	130	28%	1,465	34%
Non-EOP students	175	84%	3,019	83%	332	72%	2,811	66%
<b>UCSB College Chosen</b>								
Letters and science								
Division of humanities and fine arts	22	11%	377	10%	39	8%	300	7%
Division of mathematics, life, and physical sciences	46	22%	738	20%	237	51%	1,992	47%
Division of social sciences	44	21%	811	22%	82	18%	913	21%
Interdisciplinary/undecided	73	35%	1,238	34%	66	14%	692	16%
Creative studies	4	2%	55	2%	6	1%	76	2%
Engineering	20	10%	414	11%	32	7%	303	7%
<b>UCSB Majors Chosen</b>								
Biological sciences	26	12%	404	11%	107	23%	959	22%
Communications	8	4%	162	4%	13	3%	184	4%
Economics	16	8%	337	9%	41	9%	460	11%
Engineering/computer science	14	7%	325	9%	32	7%	303	7%
Fine arts	3	1%	73	2%	19	4%	135	3%
History	3	1%	36	1%	6	1%	25	1%
Interdisciplinary	15	7%	234	6%	40	9%	318	7%
Language and letters	16	8%	269	7%	14	3%	137	3%
Physical sciences and math	6	3%	98	3%	77	17%	591	14%
Psychology	12	6%	189	5%	22	5%	247	6%
Other social sciences	20	10%	320	9%	28	6%	258	6%
Undecided	70	33%	1,186	33%	63	14%	659	15%



## Student Diversity

Most of the demographic (Table 1) and academic (Table 2) characteristics of the 2002 and 2014 student snapshots of FSSP students are generally (but not exactly) concordant with their non-FSSP incoming class cohorts. It is particularly noteworthy that the program has grown considerably over its first 13 years. The number of student participants, expressed in absolute terms or as a proportion of each year's incoming freshman cohort, has doubled. Meaningful differences in the ethnic diversity, socioeconomic backgrounds, academic preparedness, and academic programs of students have undoubtedly resulted from external forces experienced elsewhere, but they are also the planned, sought-after end products of successful, 20-year, campus-wide outreach and recruitment campaigns aimed at increasing UCSB's global stature, student quality, and diversity. The important point is that external and internal changes relating to institutional growth and mission, when combined with changing student demographics and academic preparedness, have been important drivers underlying many aspects of FSSP's evolutionary development over its years of operation.

## Conclusions

Colleges and universities are challenged to find better ways to support students in their quests for undergraduate degrees, while also helping them acquire the skills and competencies needed for the 21st century (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Following an extensive survey-based analysis of what four-year colleges and universities were doing to improve student success, Barefoot, Griffin, and Koch (2012) reported that only 45% of their institutional respondents offered summer bridge programs. Diverse goals and outcomes for those offering summer bridge programs included "improving academic readiness for the first year," exposing students to the expectations of college-level courses, developing camaraderie and a sense of connection to the institution, improving social/personal readiness for the first year, enhancing retention and graduation rates, and providing an opportunity for meaningful interaction with faculty. The extent to which UCSB's Freshman Summer Start Program has been successful in achieving these and other goals is explored in a subsequent paper (Lytle & Gallucci, 2015). That paper assesses the impact of the program on its students and the campus and how lessons learned from the case study of this 13-year-old program might prove useful in helping others interested in establishing a summer bridge program on their own campuses.

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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 Honors Program at the University of California, Santa Barbara, mentors numerous undergraduate research projects, and is the current director of the Freshman Summer Start Program.