Career Center Usage and Freshman Retention Report

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Key Findings

- A total of 399 freshmen from the 2008 cohort made 475 visits to Career Center during fall 2008, spring 2009, summer 2009, and fall 2009 semesters. Sixty-six students, or 16.54% of the visitors from the 2008 cohort, visited the Career Center two or more times by the end of fall 2009 semester. A total of 194 freshmen from the 2009 cohort made 208 visits during summer 2009 and fall 2009 semesters.

- Over 65% of the visitors to the Career Center from the 2008 freshman cohort were female compared to over 63% of 2009 freshman cohort. For the 2008 freshman cohort, over 83% of the visitors identified as Caucasian and 12% as African American. For the 2009 freshman cohort, about 70% of the visitors identified as Caucasian and about 24% were African American. The visitor percentages should not be compared between the two cohorts as data was not calculated for the equal number of semesters for the two freshman cohorts.

- The overall first-year visitor percentage (fall 2008 to end of fall 2009) for the 2008 freshman cohort was 5.70% while the overall summer to fall semester visit percentage for the 2009 freshman cohort was 3.80%. These percentages should not be compared between the two cohorts as data was not calculated for the equal number of semesters for the two freshman cohorts.

- For the 2008 freshman cohort, students enrolled in the College of Communication (CM) and the College of Engineering had the highest first-year visitor percentage with 7.87% and 6.39% respectively. The College of Education (ED, 5.17%) and College of Arts & Sciences (AS, 4.95%) had the lowest percentages for first year visitors (fall 2008 to the end of fall 2009).

- For the 2009 freshman cohort, the College of Human Environmental Sciences (HS) had the highest visitor percentage of 6.65%, followed by the College of Education (ED, 5.05%) while the College of Social Work (SW) had none of its 2009 freshmen visit Career Center from summer 2009 the end of the fall 2009 semester and the College of Engineering (EG) had the second lowest visitor percentage of 2.75%. The percentages by college should not be compared between the two cohorts because data were not calculated for the equal number of semesters.

- For the 2008 freshman cohort, the first-year retention rate for students who visited Career Center in their first-year (fall 2008 to fall 2009) is shown to be about 92% and about 83% for non-visitors.

- For the 2009 freshman cohort, the fall-to-spring semester retention rate is about 98% for visitors and about 94% for non-visitors.

- Difference in the retention rates between visitors and non-visitors were found to be statistically significant for both the 2008 and 2009 freshman cohorts.
For the 2008 freshman cohort, the mean first-year GPA for first-year visitors was found to be 3.13 and 2.82 for non-visitors.

For the 2009 freshman cohort, the mean first-year GPA for summer-to-fall semester visitors was found to be 3.05 and 2.88 for non-visitors.

Difference in mean first-year GPA between visitors and non-visitors were found to be statistically significant for both of the 2008 and 2009 freshman cohorts.
1. Purpose of this Report and Data Collection

The purpose of this report is to provide demographic and academic information for the students in the 2008 and 2009 freshman cohorts who visited Career Center between the fall 2008 and fall 2009 semesters. It is important to note that for the 2008 freshman cohort, the reporting semesters include: fall 2008, spring 2009, summer 2009, and fall 2009 semesters. For the 2009 freshman cohort, the reporting semesters are summer 2009 and the fall 2009 semester. This report answers three general questions: who are the freshmen visiting Career Center, how do they perform academically, and are they retained to the sophomore year for the 2008 freshman cohort or to the next spring semester for the 2009 freshman cohort.

The Career Center and the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) assisted in providing the data for this report. The Career Center recorded a total of 5094 visits from the fall of 2008 to the fall 2009. These visits were made by 3995 students and alumni. A total of 1131 visitors identified in the data set made two or more visits. A total of forty-one cases in the data set were incomplete and these cases were excluded from analysis. A total of 5053 visits were identified in the data set for analysis in this report.

Based on the data provided by OIRA, there were a total of 5018 freshmen identified in the 2008 cohort and 5096 freshmen identified in the 2009 cohort. As the focus of this report is on use by freshmen in the fall 2008 and fall 2009 cohorts from fall 2008 to the end of fall 2009, the two data sets were merged to create one data set.
2. Usage Analysis of Career Center

Figure 1 illustrates the number of visits to the Career Center based on semester the visit occurred by freshman cohort. It shows that for the 2008 freshman cohort, a total of 475 visits were made during the first four semesters, with spring 2009 semester seeing the largest number of visits (165), followed by fall 2009 semester with 158 visits. The 2009 freshman cohort made 208 visits by the end of fall 2009 semester.

Figure 1. Number of Visits to Career Center by Freshman Cohort and Semester
Figure 2 reports that 7.95% of the 2008 freshman cohort (399 students) and 3.81% (194 students) of the 2009 freshman cohort visited the Career Center by the end of fall 2009 semester. It should be noted that the 2008 freshman cohort has higher visitor percentage because data was reported over four semesters while only two semesters of data were reported for the 2009 freshman cohort, as shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 2. Percent of Freshmen by Visiting Status and Cohort](image-url)
Figure 3 shows that of the 399 freshmen from the 2008 cohort who visited the Career Center between fall 2008 and the end of fall 2009, 16.54% (66 students) made more than one visit by the end of fall 2009. Of the 194 students from the 2009 freshman cohort who visited the Career Center, 7.22% (14 students) made more than one visit by the end of the fall 2009.

**Figure 3. Percent of Visitors Who Made Two or More Visits to Career Center by Cohort**
Figure 4 reports the number and percent of visitors by freshman cohort and semester when the visit occurred. For the 2008 freshman cohort, it shows that over 70% of the 399 visitors, or 279 students, visited Career Center at least once prior to fall 2009.

**Figure 4. Number of Students Visiting Career Center by Cohort and Semester**
Figure 5 presents the gender composition of visitors to the Career Center based on their freshman cohort identity. Of the 399 visitors from the 2008 freshman cohort, 65.66%, or 262 students, were female. Similarly, of the 194 visitors from the 2009 freshman cohort, 63.40%, or 123 students, were female.

Figure 5. Percent of Visitors by Cohort and Gender

**Freshman Cohort**

- **2008**
  - 65.66% (262 F)
  - 34.34% (137 M)

- **2009**
  - 63.40% (123 F)
  - 36.60% (71 M)
Figure 6 reports the race and ethnic composition of visitors to the Career Center based on their freshman cohort identity. For the 399 visitors from the 2008 freshman cohort, 83.46% or 333 students were Caucasian, 12.28% or 49 students were African American, and 2.51% or 10 students were Hispanic. Asian and Pacific Islander, Indian and Alaska Native, and non-resident alien demographic groups each composed less than 1% of the total visitor population.

For the 194 visitors from the 2009 freshman cohort, 69.59% or 135 students were Caucasian, 23.71% or 46 students are African American, and 3.61% or seven students were Hispanic. Two visitors came from each of the other three race/ethnic groups. It should be noted that the visitor percentage is not comparable across the two cohorts because the 2008 freshman cohort includes four semesters of data while the 2009 freshman cohort has only two semesters of recorded data.

Figure 6. Percent of Visitors by Freshman Cohort and Race/Ethnicity

Freshman Cohort

2008

- 83.46% Caucasian (333)
- 12.28% African American (49)
- 2.51% Hispanic (10)
- 0.75% Non-resident Alien (3)
- 0.75% Asian/Pacific Islander (3)

2009

- 69.59% Caucasian (135)
- 23.71% African American (46)
- 3.61% Hispanic (7)
- 1.03% Indian/Alaska Native (2)
- 1.03% Non-resident Alien (2)
To calculate the first-year retention rate for the 2008 freshman cohort based on visiting status, the cutoff date of first-year visit was set on September 3, 2009, the date when the University froze student registration for fall 2009. Figure 7 shows that of the 399 freshmen from the 2008 freshman cohort who visited Career Center by the end of fall 2009, 71.68% of the visitors, or 286 students, had done so during their first year.

Figure 7. Percent of Visitors from the 2008 Freshman Cohort by First-Year Visiting Status
Figure 8 further reports the first-year visitor percentage by college with the reference line for the overall first-year visitor percentage of 5.70. It shows that the College of Communication (CM) has the highest visitor percentage of students visiting the Career Center in their first year (7.87%), followed by the College of Engineering (EG, 6.39%), the College of Nursing (NU, 6.33%), the College of Social Work (SW, 6.25%), and the College of Human Environmental Sciences (HS, 5.88%). The College of Arts & Sciences (AS) has the lowest visitor percentage (4.95%), followed by the College of Education (ED, 5.17%), and the College of Commerce and Business Administration (CB, 5.64%).

![Bar graph showing the percentage of 2008 freshmen who visited the Career Center by college. The College of Communication (CM) has the highest percentage (7.87%), followed by the College of Engineering (EG, 6.39%), College of Nursing (NU, 6.33%), College of Social Work (SW, 6.25%), College of Human Environmental Sciences (HS, 5.88%), College of Arts & Sciences (AS, 4.95%), College of Education (ED, 5.17%), and College of Commerce and Business Administration (CB, 5.64%).]
Similarly, Figure 9 reports for the 2009 freshman cohort the summer-to-fall semester visitor percentage by college with the reference line for the overall visitor percentage of 3.80. It shows that the College of Human Environmental Sciences (HS) has the highest visitor percentage of 6.65%, followed by the College of Education (ED, 5.05%), the College of Nursing (NU, 4.48%), and the College of Communication (CM, 4.05%). The other four colleges have below-the-average visitor percentage: the College of Social Work (SW) had none of its 2009 freshmen visit Career Center, the College of Engineering (EG, 2.75%), the College of Commerce and Business Administration (CB, 3.30%), and The College of Arts & Sciences (AS, 3.56%). It also should be noted that the visitor percentage for the 2009 freshman cohort is for the summer 2009 to fall 2009 semester period, while the visitor percentage for the 2008 freshman cohort is for the whole first-year period and they should not be compared.

Figure 9: Percent of Visitors by College for 2009 Freshman Cohort
3. Visit to Career Center, Retention, and Student Academic Performance

Figure 10 reports the first-year retention rate for the 2008 freshman cohort based on their first-year visitor status. The reference line shows that the overall first-year retention rate is 83.34% for the 2008 freshman cohort. Of the 286 students who visited Career Center in their first year, 91.96% or 263 students were retained to the second year. In comparison, only 82.82% of the non-visitors were retained. The z-test for proportion difference shows that the difference in the first-year retention percentage between first-year visitors and non-visitors is statistically significant (p<0.001). It can thus be concluded that first-year visit to Career Center is significantly and positively associated with freshmen’s likelihood of persisting into the second year at the University.

**Figure 10. First-year Retention Rate for the 2008 Freshmen Cohort by Visiting Status**
To calculate the summer 2009-to-spring 2010 semester retention rate for the 2009 freshman cohort, the cutoff date was set as February 9, 2010, the deadline for students to register for the spring 2010 semester. The overall fall-to-spring semester retention rate for the 2009 freshman cohort is 94.00%. Figure 11 shows that of the 194 visitors to the Career Center by the end of fall 2009, 97.94%, or 190 students, were retained to the spring 2010 semester. In comparison, only 93.88% of the non-visitors were retained. The z-test for proportion difference shows the difference in the retention percentage between visitors and non-visitors is statistically significant (p<0.05). Thus, visiting Career Center is significantly and positively associated with freshmen’s likelihood of persisting from fall 2009 to spring 2010 at the University.

Figure 11. Retention Rate by Visitor Status for the 2009 Freshman Cohort
Figure 12 compares only first-fall semester visitors and non-visitors in terms of their retention status. That is, fall visitors are those students visiting the Career Center in fall 2008 for the 2008 freshman cohort and the students visiting Career Center for in fall 2009 for the 2009 freshman cohort. Compared with Figure 11, the fall 2009 visitors from the 2009 freshman cohort exclude the 23 students who visited in summer 2009. Please note that for the 2008 freshman cohort, retention means first-year retention status (fall 2008 to fall 2009) while it mean fall 2009-to-spring 2010 semester retention status for the 2009 freshman cohort. Compared with Figure 10 and Figure 11, the corresponding retention percentage for visitors and non-visitors changes little for both freshman cohorts.

Figure 12. Retention Percent of Freshmen by Cohort and First Fall Visiting Status
Figure 13 compares the mean first-year grade point average (GPA) for the 2008 freshman cohort based on whether they visited the Career Center during their first year. The end point of counting a first-year visit is September 3, 2009, the date the University froze fall registration. The purpose of defining the first-year this way is to compare the first-year retention status, as defined by the University OIRA, based on first-year visiting status. The purpose of defining the first-year this way is to compare the first-year retention status, as defined by the University OIRA, based on first-year visiting status. The reference line shows the overall mean GPA of 2.84 for the 2008 freshman cohort. The mean GPA for the 286 freshmen in the 2008 freshman cohort who visited Career Center during their first year, was found to be 3.13. In comparison, for all the 4,732 non-visitors in the 2008 freshman cohort, the mean GPA was found to be 2.82, somewhat lower than the overall mean. The t-test statistics shows that the mean GPA for the first-year visitors is significantly higher than that for non-visitors (p<0.001). Thus, visiting the Career Center is significantly associated with higher mean first-year GPA for the 2008 freshman cohort.

Figure 13. Mean First-Year GPA of the 2008 Freshmen by First-Year Visitor Status
Similarly, Figure 14 compares the mean first-semester grade point average (GPA) for the 2009 freshman cohort based on whether they visited the Career Center by the end of fall 2009. Students who visited Career Center during summer 2009 were also counted. The reference line shows the overall mean first-semester GPA of 2.89 for the 2009 freshman cohort. For the 194 freshmen who visited Career Center by February 9, 2010, their mean first-semester GPA was found to be 3.05. In comparison, for all the 4,902 non-visitors, the mean GPA was found to be 2.88. The t-test statistics shows that the mean first-semester GPA for visitors is significantly higher than that for non-visitors (p<0.01). Thus, visit to Career Center is significantly associated with higher mean first-semester GPA for the 2009 freshman cohort.

**Figure 14. Mean First-Semester GPA of the 2009 Freshmen by Visitor Status**
Figure 15 compares the mean GPA for first-fall-semester visitors and non-visitors for both freshman cohorts. The reference line is the overall mean first-semester GPA for both cohorts. Compared with Figure 13 and 14, the corresponding mean first-year GPA for visitors and non-visitors does not change or change very little for both cohorts.

Figure 15. Mean GPA based on First-Fall-Semester Visiting Status and Cohort
Recommendations

- Findings from this report may be used as baselines in the future to compare:
  
  A. Second-year retention rate between visitors and non-visitors;
  
  B. Four- and six-year graduation rate between visitors and non-visitors;
  
  C. The change in the visitor percentage before and after the implementation of a new program; and
  
  D. The retention and graduation rate before and after the implementation of a new program.

- The data indicates that students who engage in Career Center programs and services within the first year of enrollment are retained at a higher rate than students who do not.

- The data indicates that students who engage in Career Center programs and services within the first year of enrollment have higher grade point averages than students who do not.

- The Career Center may consider sharing the results of this report with the appropriate campus partners.