

**ANALYSIS OF KSU'S FIRST-YEAR  
STUDENT POPULATION FOR  
THE CPI REPORT OF  
THE FOUNDATIONS OF EXCELLENCE  
PILOT PROJECT**

**Prepared by the  
Center for Institutional Effectiveness**

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## **Part II: Defining First-Year Student Subgroups**

**Kennesaw State University's Foundations Task Force has defined the first college year as a twelve-month period that includes the summer term before the first fall semester (e.g., Summer 2003), the first fall semester (e.g., Fall 2003), and the following spring semester (e.g., Spring 2004). Consistent with the standardized definition of the Foundations of Excellence pilot project, first-year students at KSU are defined as degree-seeking undergraduates who are preparing for, starting, or continuing college study at the first-year, typically freshman level (i.e., less than 30 semester credit earned). This definition includes new KSU Joint Enrollment Honors students, new beginning freshmen, new freshmen with learning support (developmental) requirements (typically nontraditionals at KSU), and new transfer freshmen. It also includes KSU's previous Joint Enrollment Honors students who are readmitted following their high school graduation. For a given first college year, the definition of first-year students in the fall semester also includes returning first-year students who started at KSU in the previous summer term. For the spring semester, the first-year student population includes returning first-year students who started at KSU in the previous summer or fall terms. First-year students who were quickly elevated to sophomore status because of their AP course credits and/or earned hours as previous joint enrollment students were counted as first-year students for the purpose of this review and report. First-year students at KSU may be: any age, enrolled full-time or part-time, traditional or nontraditional, first-time college students or transfer freshmen, and enrolled in day, evening, weekend and/or on-line courses.**

### **Entry Points Into the First Year**

**There are three entry points during the twelve-month period of the first year during which new first-year students may enroll at KSU. A current snapshot of the number of new first-year students who entered KSU for Summer Term 2003 (actual), Fall Semester 2003 (actual), and Spring Semester 2004 (estimated) is presented in Table 1. Four categories of new first-year students are reported in Table 1 as follows: 1) beginning freshmen with full admission, 2) beginning freshmen with learning support - developmental requirements (largely nontraditionals), 3) transfer freshmen, and 4) joint enrollment honors students (typically also enrolled in high school as seniors). On-campus residence life at KSU first became available only a year ago in Fall 2002. Consequently, the size and demography of the first-year student population have changed substantially as has first-year programming. Thus, KSU elected to report its current first-year student population statistics for 2003-2004 rather than a past year's or 3-year averages since the current year's enrollment figures best characterize the nature of KSU's first-year program at this time.**

**TABLE 1**

**CURRENT SNAPSHOT OF NEW FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS AT  
KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY**

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<b>New First-Year Student Subgroup</b>	<b>First-Year Entry Points</b>			<b>Annual Totals</b>
	<b>Summer Term 2003*</b>	<b>Fall Semester 2003*</b>	<b>Spring Semester 2004*</b>	
<b>Beginning Freshmen (Full Admission)</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>1822</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1928</b>
<b>Beginning Freshmen (Learning Support - Developmental)</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>706</b>
<b>Transfer Freshmen</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>821</b>
<b>Joint Enrollment Honors (Not H.S. Grad)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>189</b>
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Total of New First-Year Students</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>2,746</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>3644</b>

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**\*Actual enrollments of new students in Summer 2003 and Fall 2003 are reported; enrollments are estimated for Spring 2004 based upon actual Spring 2003 data.**

### **Enrollment Highlights for the Entry Points**

The data on new first-year student enrollments that are presented in Table 1 suggest a variety of informative observations and interpretations, highlighted as follows:

- A very large cohort of over 3600 new first-year students enrolled at KSU this year; clearly the subsequent success and retention of these first-year students will have major implications for the university's overall enrollment and continued growth as well as the effectiveness of first-year programming.
- New first-year students break out into several key subgroups, and these subgroups enter KSU at different points; the subgroups are not equally represented at all three entry points of the first college year.
- Most (75% or 2,746) of KSU's new first-year students started the first college year in the fall semester, although a sizable number (25% or 890 students) began in the summer or spring terms.
- Nearly all (95%) of KSU's new beginning freshmen with full admission started the first college year in the fall term; most of those were traditional college students. That entry pattern was also true for the traditionally-oriented Joint Enrollment Honors students.
- Since traditional college applicants with Regents-defined developmental deficiencies are generally not eligible for admission to KSU as beginning freshmen, most of the 706 new first-year students with learning support requirements were nontraditional students, many of whom had been out of a school environment for five years or more.
- Unlike the traditional freshmen who typically begin the first year in the fall, sizable numbers of new nontraditional freshmen enrolled at all three entry points; nearly half (48%) of the largely nontraditional freshmen with learning support requirements began the first year in the summer or spring terms.
- Sizeable numbers of new transfer freshmen also entered at all three of the first-year entry points; transfer freshmen were the largest sub-group of first-year students in the summer and spring terms, comprising nearly half of the new first-year students in those terms.
- The total population of new first-year students for all three terms combined comprised about half of the new students who enrolled at KSU for the year; an equally large number of new undergraduate transfers, many of whom are nontraditional, and new graduate students also enrolled during the year.

## First-Year Student Populations Each Term

The preceding analysis of entry points provides a snapshot of new student enrollment throughout the first year. The analysis presented in Table 2 combines new and returning students for the purpose of describing the total population of first-year students in each of the three terms of the first college year. The first-year student was operationally defined above in the introductory paragraph of the report for Part II. First-year students are initially enrolled at KSU at the freshman level and have earned fewer than 30 semester hours of transfer credit. Once undergraduates at KSU earn 30 or more semester hours of credit from KSU coursework, transfer and/or advanced placement, they are classified as sophomores. KSU's statistics on its first-year student population include students who initially qualified as first-year students and who rose to sophomore status during the first college year as well as those who did not.

## Enrollment Highlights for First-Year Student Populations

The data on first-year student enrollments that are presented in Table 2 suggest a variety of informative observations and interpretations, highlighted as follows:

- The numbers of first-year students were highest in the fall and spring semesters where those totals were nearly ten times greater than the first-year student population in the preceding summer term.
- Most of the students in the summer and fall populations were new to KSU (100% in the summer and 91% in the fall); by the spring semester, however, most of the students in the first-year student population (estimated to be 84%) had enrolled previously for one or two terms at KSU.
- Fall Semester provides the best opportunity to facilitate the success of "first-time college" students; a total of 2,347 new beginning freshmen or joint enrollment honors students enrolled in the fall which was the largest number of "first-time college" students for any of the three terms (compared to 196 for summer and 280 for spring); 78% of the students in the first-year population for the fall semester were in one of the three subgroups which comprised "first-time college" students (i.e., new beginning freshmen - full admission, new beginning freshmen - learning support, and new joint enrollment honors).
- The actual retention rates from Summer 2003 to Fall 2003 ranged from a high of 88% for beginning freshmen with full admission to a low of 64% for transfer freshmen; once actual spring statistics are available, observations about this year's actual fall to spring retention rates may be made.
- Only 60% (3,021) of KSU's 5,024 freshmen who were enrolled in Fall 2003 were classified as first-year students; four out of every 10 KSU freshmen were enrolled in their second year (or more) of college.

**TABLE 2**

**FIRST-YEAR STUDENT POPULATIONS IN EACH TERM  
OF THE FIRST YEAR AT KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY**

<b>First-Year Student Subgroup</b>	<b><u>Term of the First Year of College</u></b>		
	<b>Summer 2003*</b>	<b>Fall 2003*</b>	<b>Spring 2004*</b>
<b><u>Beginning Freshmen - Full Admission</u></b>			
New This Term	76	1822	30
Returning in First Year	N.A.	67	1740
<b><u>Beginning Freshmen - Learning Support</u></b>			
New This Term	118	368	220
Returning in First Year	N.A.	97	420
<b><u>Transfer Freshmen</u></b>			
New This Term	172	399	250
Returning in First Year	N.A.	111	460
<b><u>Joint Enrollment Honors (Not H.S. Grad)</u></b>			
New This Term	2	157	30
Returning in First Year	N.A.	0	140
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<b><u>Totals</u></b>			
New This Term	368	2746	530
Returning in First Year	N.A.	275	2760
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First-Year Population	368	3021	3290

\*Actual enrollments of new students in Summer 2003 and Fall 2003 are reported; enrollments are estimated for Spring 2004 based upon actual Spring 2003 data.

## Demographic Characteristics of First-Year Students

The Current Practices Inventory of the Foundations pilot project calls for a breakout of the approximate proportions of the first-year student population on a variety of prescribed demographic characteristics. KSU's Task Force elected to add to the prescribed list of ten factors, three others, including a second indicator of nontraditional student status, joint enrollment and regular honors program membership, and international student status. The identification and support of nontraditional, honors, and international students are of long-standing interest at KSU.

In that regard, while a student's age may be one way to distinguish between traditional and nontraditional undergraduates, there are significant numbers of nontraditional first-year students who did not enter college immediately after high school graduation, but are younger than 25 years of age. Identifying the proportion of the first-year student population for Fall 2003 who graduated from high school two years earlier (before 2002 and could be as young as 20), seemed to be an alternative way to identify more precisely the number of first-year students who pursued a nontraditional route to the first college year.

KSU's snapshot of the demographic characteristics of its first-year students was derived from its population statistics for Fall 2003. For the three terms in the first college year at KSU, the fall semester's first-year student population is probably the most representative of the first college year and was chosen for that reason. The statistics presented in Table 3 are actual figures for Fall 2003 with one exception. The number and percentage of first-generation college students was estimated since such information is not routinely collected or maintained at KSU.

## Enrollment Highlights on First-Year Student Characteristics

The data on first-year student enrollments for Fall 2003 that are presented in Table 3 suggest a variety of informative observations and interpretations, highlighted as follows:

- The proportion of KSU's first-year student population with one or more learning support (developmental) course requirements is low and much smaller than it was prior to 2001; effective that year, admission standards were raised by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia under which most traditional freshman applicants with developmental course requirements were no longer eligible for admission to a public four-year university in the state; nontraditional student applications could continue to be served in learning support programs, however.
- As an NCAA Division II institution, KSU makes a significant, but modest, investment in intercollegiate athletics; consequently, the proportion of the first-year population represented by student-athletes is small.

**TABLE 3**

**FALL 2003 SNAPSHOT OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS  
OF THE FIRST-YEAR STUDENT POPULATION AT  
KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY**

<b>Demographic Characteristics</b>	<b>Fall 2003 First-Year Students</b>	
	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of Population*</b>
1. <b>One Learning Support (Developmental) Course Requirement</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>12%</b>
2. <b>Two or More L.S. (Developmental) Course Requirements</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>3%</b>
3. <b>Athlete on an Intercollegiate Team</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>1%</b>
4. <b>On-Campus Residential Student</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>13%</b>
5. <b>Gender - Male</b>	<b>1217</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Gender - Female</b>	<b>1804</b>	<b>60%</b>
6. <b>Ethnicity - Asian</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Ethnicity - Black</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Ethnicity - Hispanic</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Ethnicity - Native American</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Ethnicity - White</b>	<b>2564</b>	<b>85%</b>
<b>Ethnicity - Multiracial</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>1%</b>
7. <b>Receiving Financial Aid</b>	<b>1810</b>	<b>60%</b>
8. <b>Enrolled Full-Time</b>	<b>2381</b>	<b>79%</b>
<b>Enrolled Part-Time</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>21%</b>
9. <b>First-Generation College Student**</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>20%</b>
10. <b>Nontraditional - Over 25 in Age</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Nontraditional - H.S. Grad Before 2002</b>	<b>531</b>	<b>18%</b>
11. <b>Honors - Joint Enrollment</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Honors - Undergraduate</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>1%</b>
12. <b>International Student</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>6%</b>

\* The total first-year student population for Fall 2003 was 3021.

\*\*These data were estimated since KSU does not routinely collect information on first-generation college student status.

- **Two years ago, the proportion of first-year students who resided in on-campus housing was nil since a residential option was not available at KSU at that time; although the current percentage of first-year students who are residential is modest, new construction of campus housing specifically designed for freshmen is underway, and several additional phases of campus housing expansion are also planned for completion in the next few years; the proportion of first-year students who are residential should rise significantly as early as Fall 2004.**
- **The breakout of first-year females (60%) to first-year males (40%) matches rather closely the gender differences for the student body as a whole.**
- **The distribution of first-year students by racial/ethnic groups matches the distribution for the KSU student body with two notable exceptions; whereas 11% of KSU's student body is Black and 80% is white, only 7% of the first-year student population is Black and 85% is white; although growth rates in the numbers of Black students have consistently been much greater than the rates for white students over the past decade, the number of first-year Black students remains relatively small (11% of the black student population at KSU).**
- **Georgia's HOPE scholarship program and the relative ease of securing guaranteed student loans are largely responsible for the sizable percentage of first-year students receiving financial aid.**
- **A substantially higher proportion of first-year students enrolled at KSU on a full-time basis (79%) than was the case for the rest of the undergraduate student body (61%).**
- **KSU is located in an affluent, well-educated, and densely populated region of Greater Metropolitan Atlanta and no longer attracts as many first-generation college students as it once did when it was founded 40 years ago as an open admissions junior college in a rural location.**
- **One out of every 10 first-year students was 25 or older and about two in 10 could be considered nontraditional based upon their graduation date from high school.**
- **About eight years ago, KSU established a strategic initiative to serve honors students in a newly designed Joint Enrollment Honors Program and a Nontraditional Undergraduate Honors Program; although the percentage of the first-year population in either of these honors programs was small this year, the success of these programs and the benefits received have been notable.**
- **Institutionally committed to global perspectives and internationalizing the curriculum for the past 20 years, KSU enrolled nearly 1,500 international students in Fall 2003 (9% of the student body); nearly 200 of those were first-year students.**

### **Closing Observations About Institutional Change**

**KSU is an exceptionally dynamic and constantly changing institution that continues to grow rapidly in size, sophistication, mission, and influence. Its attractiveness to first-year students as their college of choice has mushroomed in recent years.**