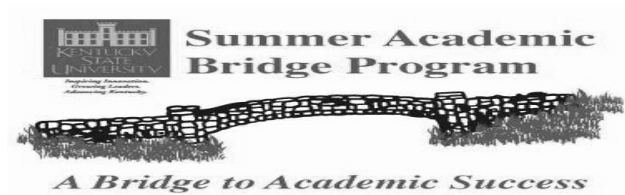




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# *The Summer Academic Bridge Program*

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# The Summer Academic Bridge Program

## 2005-2007 Summary Report and Assessment Findings

### Introduction

Facilitated by the Office of Enrollment Management, the Summer Academic Bridge Program (SABP) at Kentucky State University is a preparatory program for enhancing the academic background and experience of high school graduates, via a selective sequence of courses and experiences during the Summer academic term. Kentucky State University acknowledges the potential of all students, and the program is a supportive, challenging, and learner-centered introductory environment designed to ensure the ease of transition to KSU and eventual academic success. The program targets incoming freshman with demonstrated academic deficiencies that precludes them from enrolling in college-level (General Education) English and math courses. Upon completion of Summer Bridge, students earn up to 9.0 academic credit hours, and face the Fall semester equipped with the successful academic strategies that the Bridge program models.

### A Pathway to Student Success

Kentucky State University has a long and demonstrated record of providing postsecondary access to populations that, otherwise, may have been denied such access and opportunities. Current research indicates that the traditional pathway to earning a baccalaureate degree has become the exception rather than the rule, and while the proportion of high school graduates who continue on to postsecondary education has increased, rates of baccalaureate degree completion have remained steady over the past three decades (Carroll, 1989; Horn & Carroll, 1998; Adelman, 2004).

Certainly there is a wide variety of transitional points inferred by KSU's institutional and academic paradigm, and the most recognizable transition occurs as our students enter KSU. It is at this critical point that our students must decide whether to persist (remain enrolled) at KSU, transfer to a different institution, or leave KSU altogether. It remains imperative, in our efforts to maximize student success, that this transition point be fully integrated into the operational procedures of the institution.

To this end, the SABP environment engages students in the following:

- **9 Academic Credits – 3 classes**  
Students have the opportunity to complete a mathematics, English, and University Orientation class.
- **Tutoring and Academic Support**  
Summer Bridge participants receive extensive tutoring and full academic support to help assure success in students' coursework. These services include: one-on-one and small group tutoring, supplemental instruction, and structured study groups.
- **Student Success Seminars**  
Students receive an introduction to KSU campus resources, academic advising, personal learning styles, critical thinking skills, motivation, social issues, money management, career and majors planning, health and wellness, personal safety and security, and campus involvement.
- **Social and Cultural Activities**  
Students are introduced to a variety of social, service, and leadership opportunities available on campus and in the local community.
- **Learning Community Environment**  
Students will develop self-confidence, responsibility, friendships, and a sense of community by developing supportive relationships between participants, faculty, and staff members; enrolling in the same courses; and living in the residence hall community.

## Motivation and Student Success

Removing impediments to the successful transition of academically at-risk and first-time freshman students to postsecondary education, facilitating effective motivational strategies, and increasing the persistence rate of this student population represent the central goals of the SABP. Inherent in these goals is our conviction that motivational beliefs and self-regulated learning skills (e.g. goal setting, active engagement in own learning, accurate analysis of task demands, selection of appropriate learning strategies) warrant consideration because these variables have been shown to predict the academic achievement of college students (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; Lindner & Harris, 1998; VanZile-Tamsen & Livingston, 1999). For example, the predictive value of aptitude with regard to college achievement varies across studies. Cote and Levine (2000) reported that IQ accounted for only 0 - 4% of the variance in academic achievement among university students, and measures of aptitude were found to be either unrelated or negatively related to achievement in college students, while motivation appeared to be more predictive of achievement. Likewise, Wolfe and Johnson (1995) found that prior performance (high school GPA) accounted for 19% of the variance in GPA among students enrolled in a college introductory psychology course, while SAT scores accounted for only 5% of the variance. Moreover, various studies report low to moderate correlations between measures of aptitude and academic performance. Meeker, Fox, and Whitley

(1994) tested the predictive value of 26 variables, including SAT scores, for college students' GPA in psychology. SAT scores (aptitude) were not significant predictors of GPA, with Math SAT scores accounting for only 3.6% of the variance.

A number of studies have shown that at-risk students exhibit personal characteristics that distinguish them from regular-admission college students. For example, Larose and Roy (1991) examined the role of prior academic performance and affective variables, such as fear of failure and test anxiety, in predicting the success of at-risk college students. Affective variables were more reliable predictors of academic success for at-risk students, but high school GPA more accurately predicted course grades for regularly-admitted students. Also, among freshmen enrolled in a developmental mathematics course, Higbee and Thomas (1999) reported that SAT scores and high school GPA were not significantly correlated with course grades, whereas students' beliefs about their ability (self-efficacy beliefs) were more closely aligned with their achievement.

Lindner and Harris (1998) found a significant correlation between motivation and GPA ( $r = .46$ ) in graduate and undergraduate education majors. Motivational variables may also be a key distinction between at-risk or developmental and regularly-admitted college students. Ley and Young (1998) indicate deficiencies in developmental college students in both motivational beliefs and use of self-regulated learning strategies in relation to their regularly-admitted peers. In addition, VanZile-Tamsen and Livingston

(1999) reported considerably higher correlations between motivational orientation and self-regulated strategy use for lower-achieving students ( $r = .69$ ) as compared to higher-achieving students ( $r = .40$ ). Thus, motivational orientation predicted use of self-regulated learning strategies more for lower-achieving students than for higher-achieving students.

## Educational Transitions and Student Success

Educational transitions research (Mare, 1980; Shavit & Blossfeld, 1993) suggests that the effects of social background are stronger for earlier educational transitions than for later ones, and those students with fewer resources and less access to information may be more likely to follow an “involuntary pathway” through college that will more likely lower their odds for completion (Wagner, 2001). Moreover, students who follow the traditional route to a baccalaureate degree are now in the minority. Generally, such students now comprise only one fourth of the undergraduate population (Choy, 2002). Today, over 50 percent of students who begin at a four-year institution attend more than one college within five years, and 15 percent attend more than two (McCormick, 2003). National studies also reveal that 25 to 35 percent of undergraduates take time off from college and eventually return, a pattern known as “stopout” (Berkner, 2002; Carroll, 1989). One study of first-time freshmen who began their postsecondary education in 1995-96 found that among those students who transferred institutions at least once before 2001-02, 30



percent also stopped out of school for a period of time (Berkner, 2002). Put another way, they began college at one school, took time off, and returned to another school.

## Programmatic Goals and Outcomes

A central tenet of the SABP is our belief that, as students' capacities to perceive, engage, and navigate educational transition points increase, the greater the probability that those students will persist and succeed. Therefore, the program focuses on these transition points, as they regard coordinating and utilizing Kentucky State University's various support services to: (1) remove impediments to the successful transition of academically at-risk and first-time freshman students to postsecondary education, (2) facilitate effective motivational strategies, (3) increase the persistence rate of this student population. These areas of focus have been translated into the following overarching SABP goal:

Students will effectively engage available student and academic support services to successfully navigate educational transition points, resulting in greater persistence and personal success.

Three attendant objectives are associated with this overarching goal:

Objective 1: Students will demonstrate an informed awareness of the various educational transition points that comprise their undergraduate matriculation at KSU.

Objective 2: Students will demonstrate an informed awareness of the various student and academic support systems that are available to them during their undergraduate matriculation at KSU.

Objective 3: Students will demonstrate their capacity to apply the knowledge, skills, and strategies gained from their interactions with those support services to (1) successfully navigate the various transition points, (2) demonstrate a positive motivational orientation, (3) maintain and demonstrate academic growth and success, and (4) persist in their enrollment at the institution.

## Cohort Profiles

The initial 2005 SABP pilot successfully transitioned 14 students, the Summer 2006 program transitioned 42 students, and the Summer 2007 program transitioned 101 students. Students engaged in the SABP accessed the opportunities to complete a mathematics, English, and University Orientation, course and to significantly remove the various developmental prescriptions that resulted from their admission status.

The individual and collective cohort profiles are delineated below:

Figure 1: Cumulative Course Enrollment Distribution 2005-2007

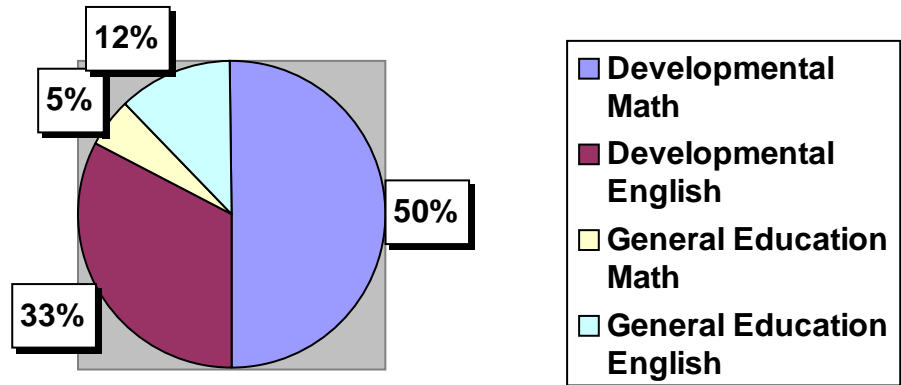


Figure 2: Cumulative Student Enrollment Characteristics by Race 2005-2007

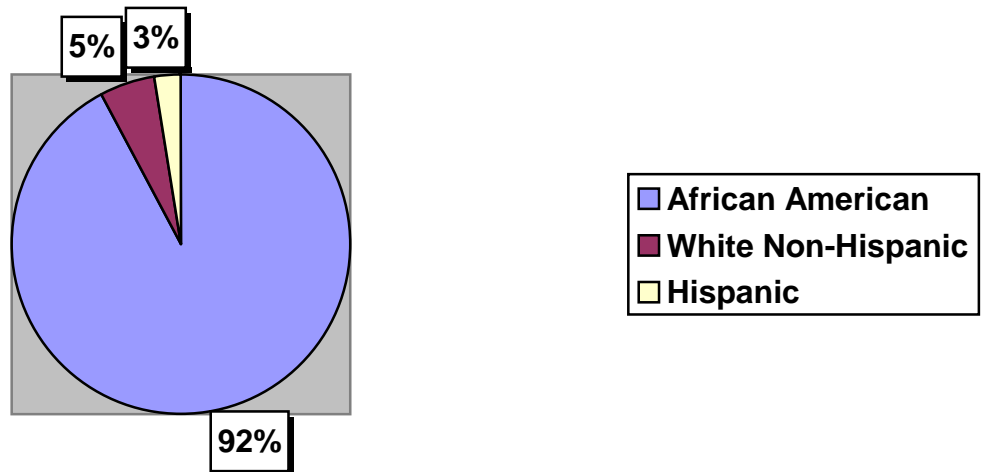


Figure 3: Cumulative Student Enrollment Characteristics by Gender 2005-2007

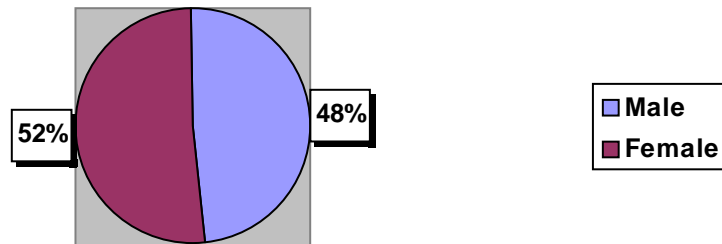


Figure 4: Cumulative Student Enrollment Characteristics by Residence Status 2005-2007

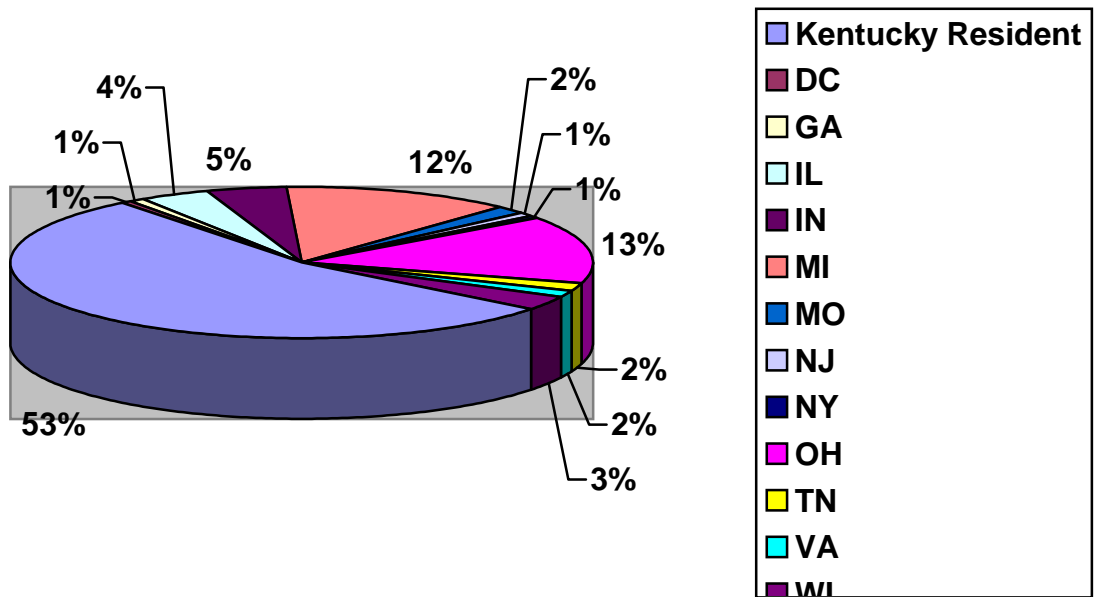


Figure 5: Cumulative Student Enrollment Characteristics by Admissions Criteria 2005-2007

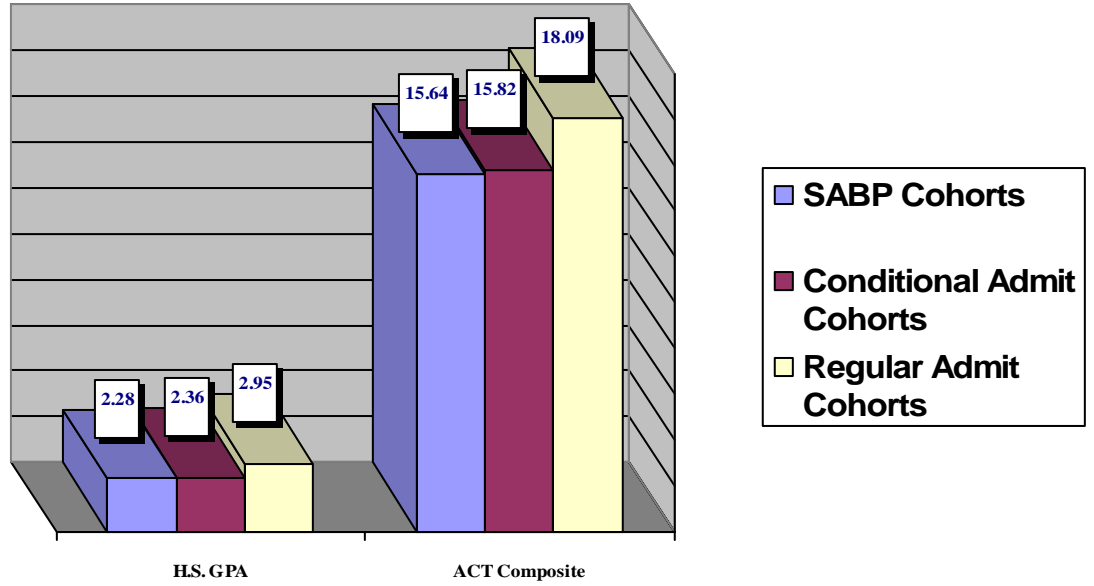


Figure 6: Cumulative Student Enrollment Characteristics by ACT Sub scores 2005-2007

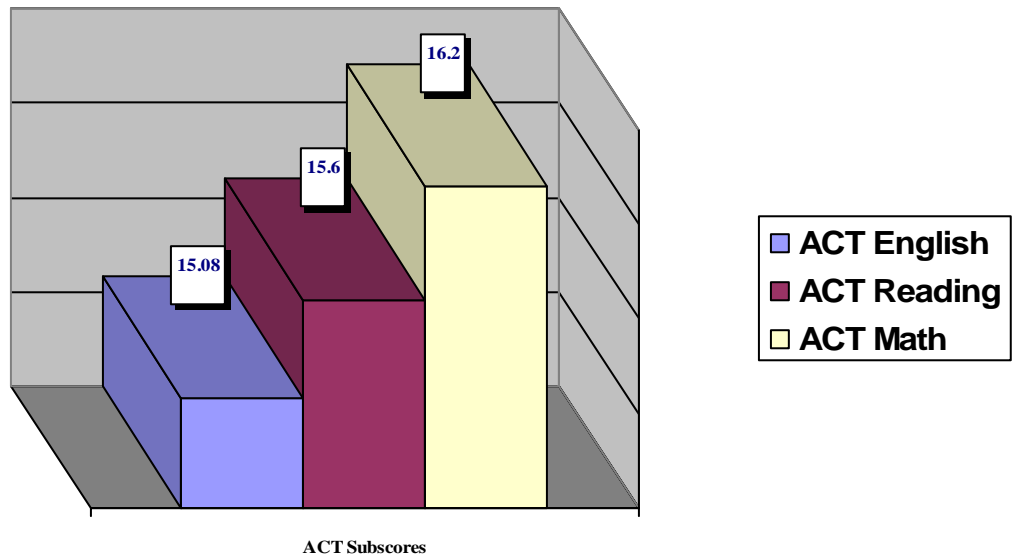


Figure 7: Cumulative Student Enrollment Characteristics by Personality Trait 2005-2007

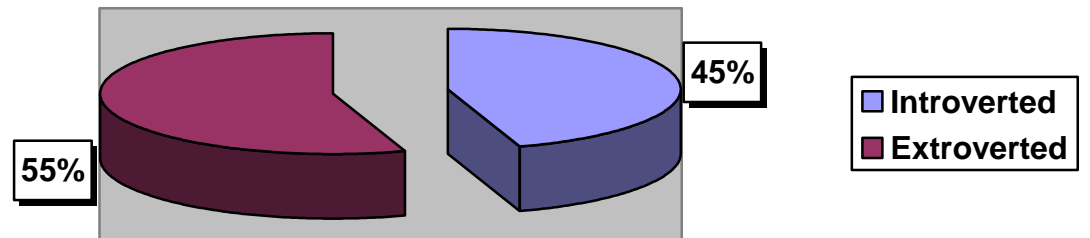


Figure 8: Cumulative Student Enrollment Characteristics by Identified Learning Disability

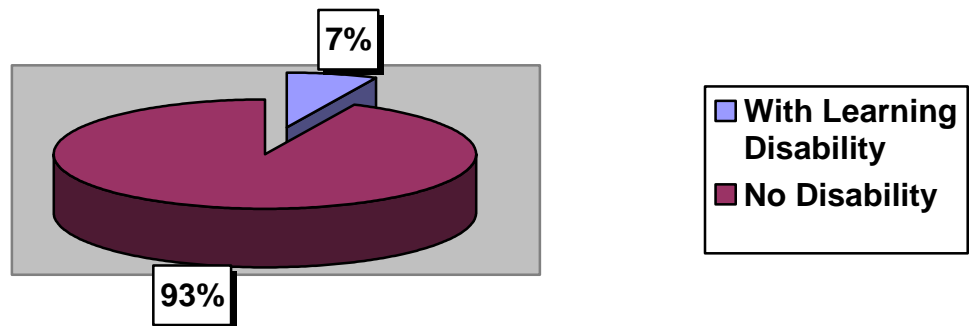
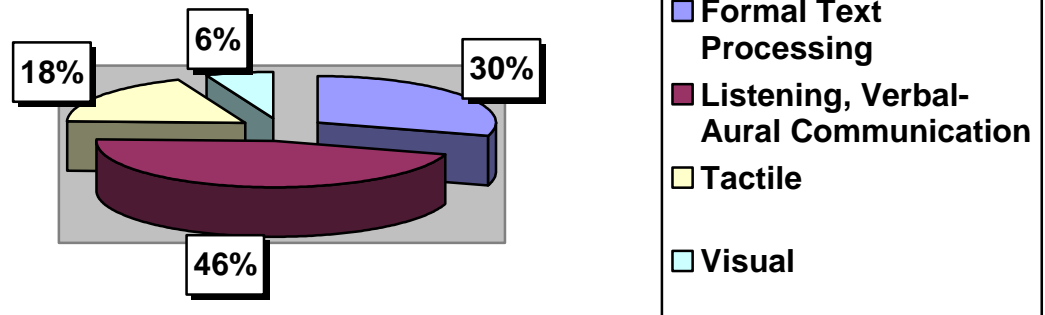


Figure 9: Cumulative Student Enrollment Characteristics by Personal Learning Style Preference



## Assessment Results for the SABP

Assessment of the Summer Academic Bridge Program is directly aligned with the overarching goal and objectives of program. Formative strategies are designed to facilitate a level of continuous feedback that engages program participants (students, instructors, and support staff) in self-reflective processes and results in more immediate improvements of the program. Summative strategies are designed to summarize the efficacy of the program at clearly delineated transitional points including:

Transition Point 2: the first to the second semester.

Transition Point 3: the first to the second year.

Transition Point 4: the fifth semester.

While these strategies are not designed to provide immediate and contextualized feedback, they are useful for determining the long-term efficacy of the SABP and for shaping revisions and improvements to the program.

The initial 2005 SABP pilot successfully transitioned 14 students, the Summer 2006 program transitioned 42 students, and the Summer 2007 program transitioned 101 students. Individual and collective cohort assessment data are presented below:

Figure 10: Student Enrollment Characteristics by 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester Grade Point Average

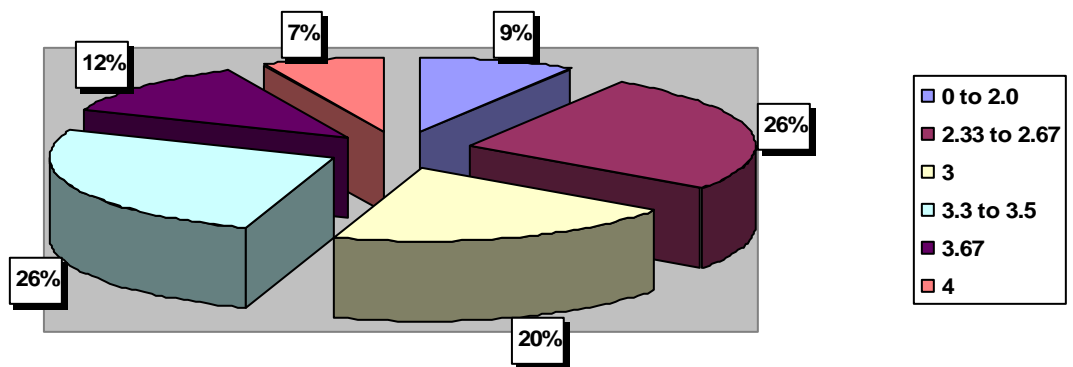




Figure 11: Cumulative Student Grade Distribution: University Orientation

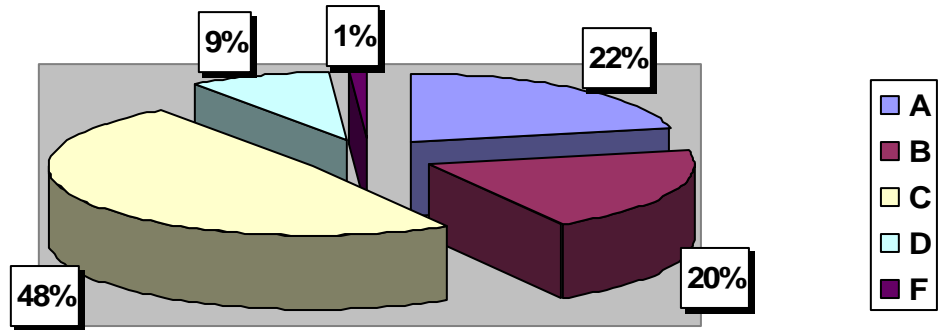


Figure 12: Cumulative Student Grade Distribution: Developmental Mathematics

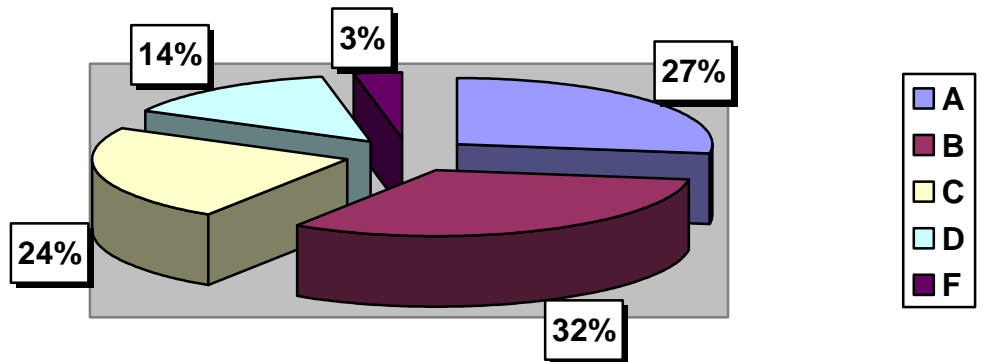


Figure 13: Cumulative Student Grade Distribution: General Education Mathematics

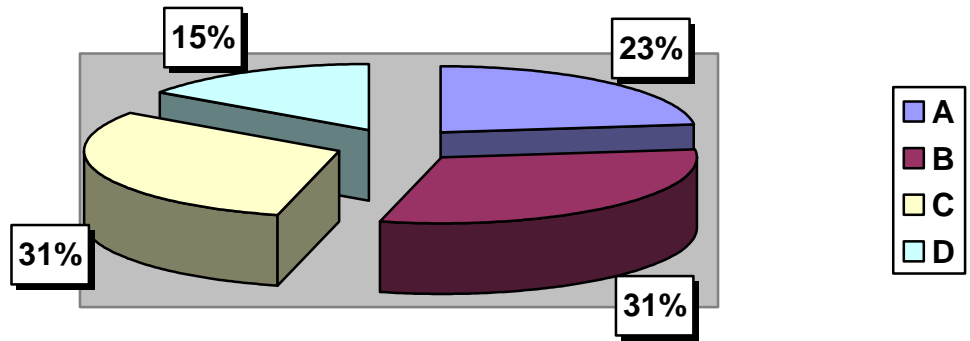


Figure 14: Cumulative Student Grade Distribution: Developmental English

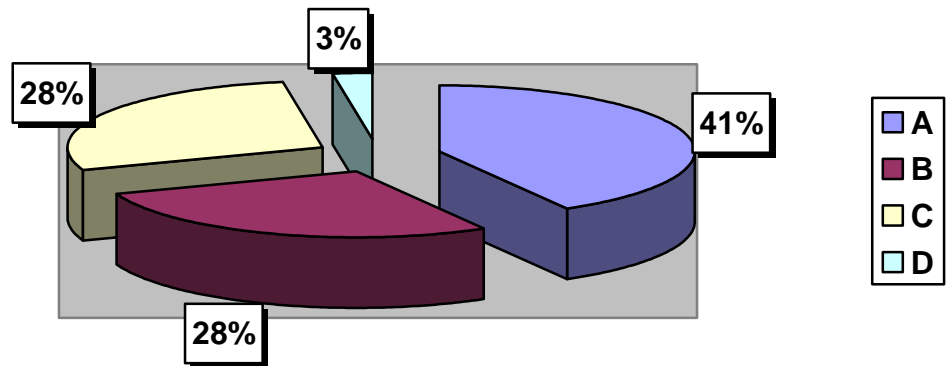


Figure 15: Cumulative Student Grade Distribution: General Education English

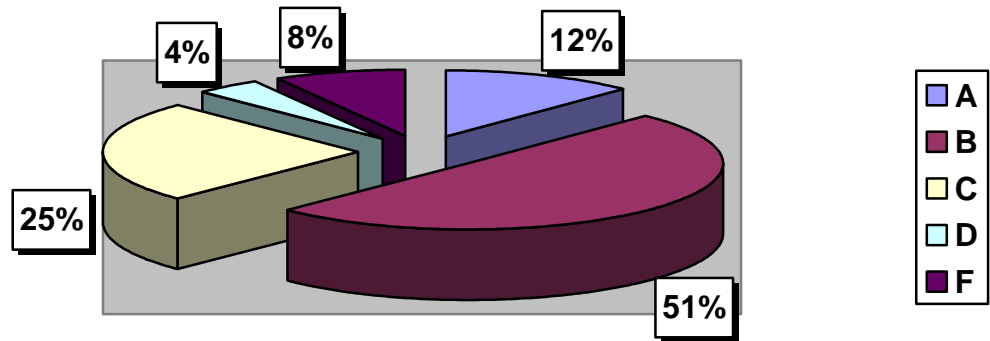


Figure 16: Comparative Grade Distributions for All SABP Courses

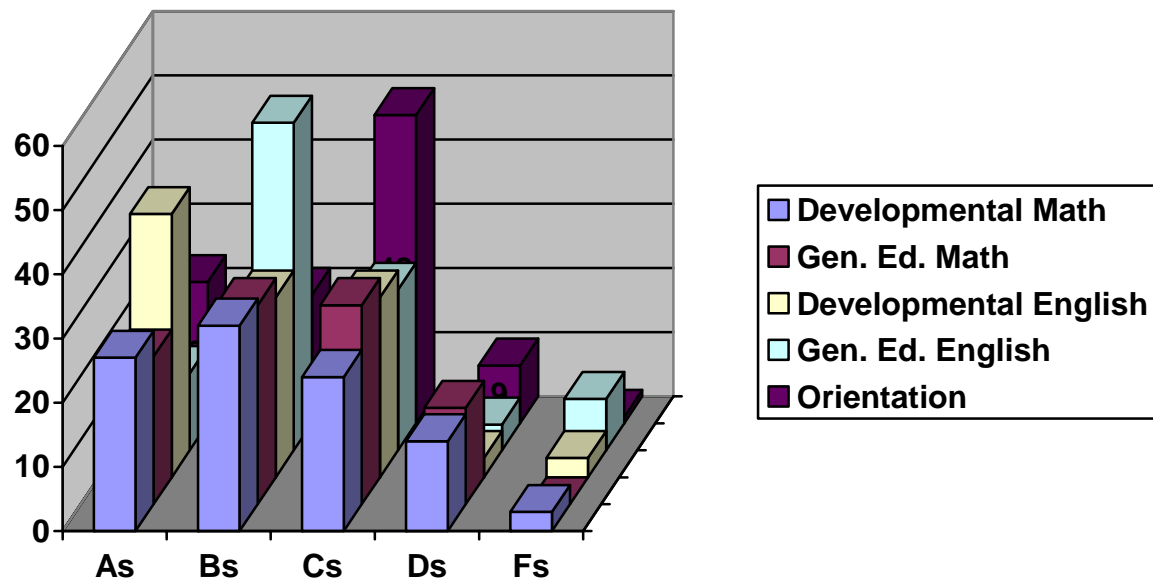


Figure 17: Cumulative Participant Rating of Program Content

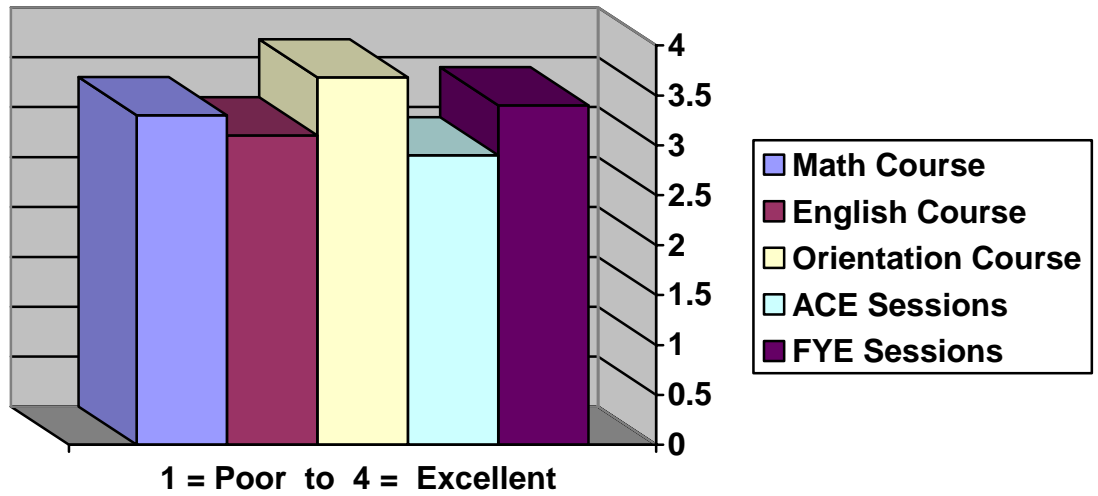


Figure 18: Cumulative Participant Rating of Instructional/Support Staff Effectiveness

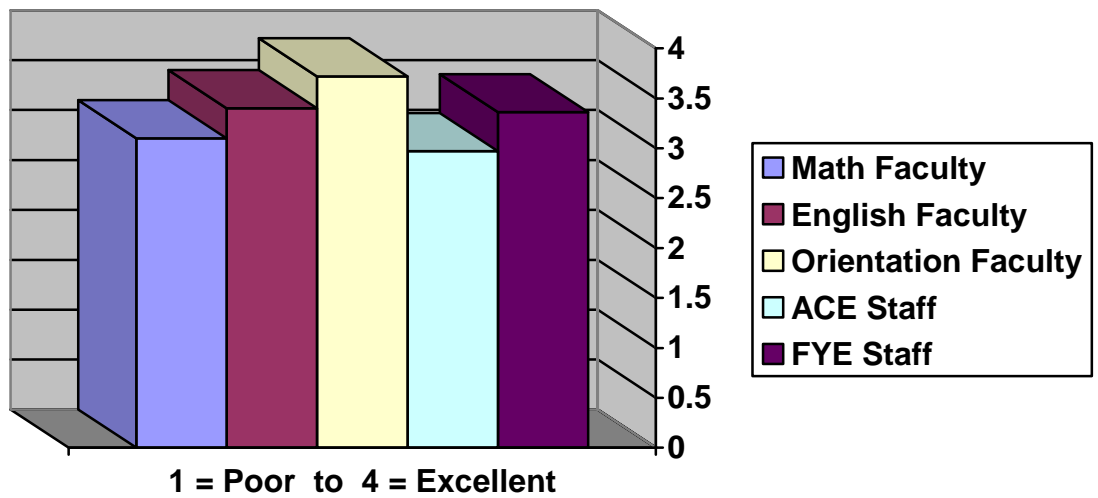


Figure 19: Cumulative Participant Rating of Instructional/Support Staff Demonstrated Knowledge

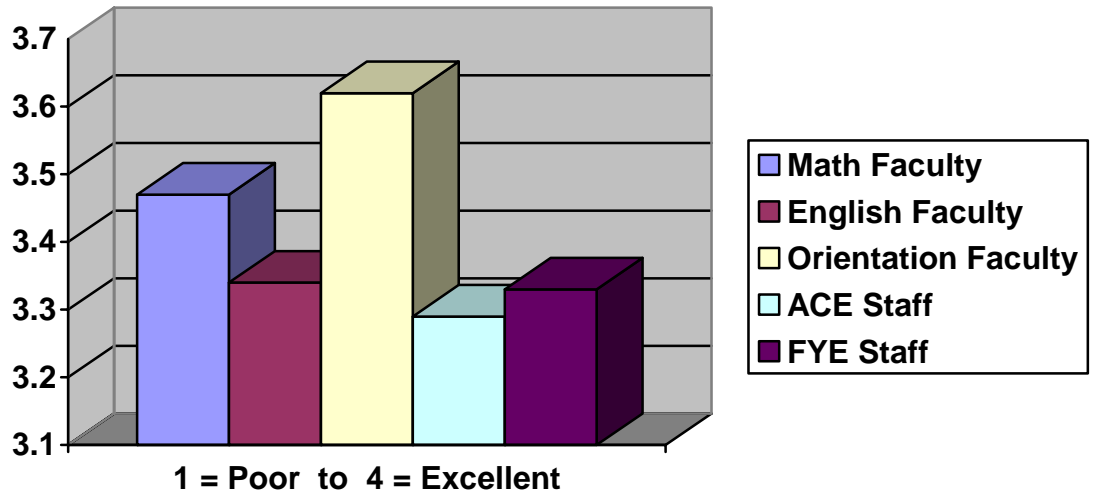


Figure 20: Cumulative Participant Self-Rating of Personal Behaviors: Punctuality

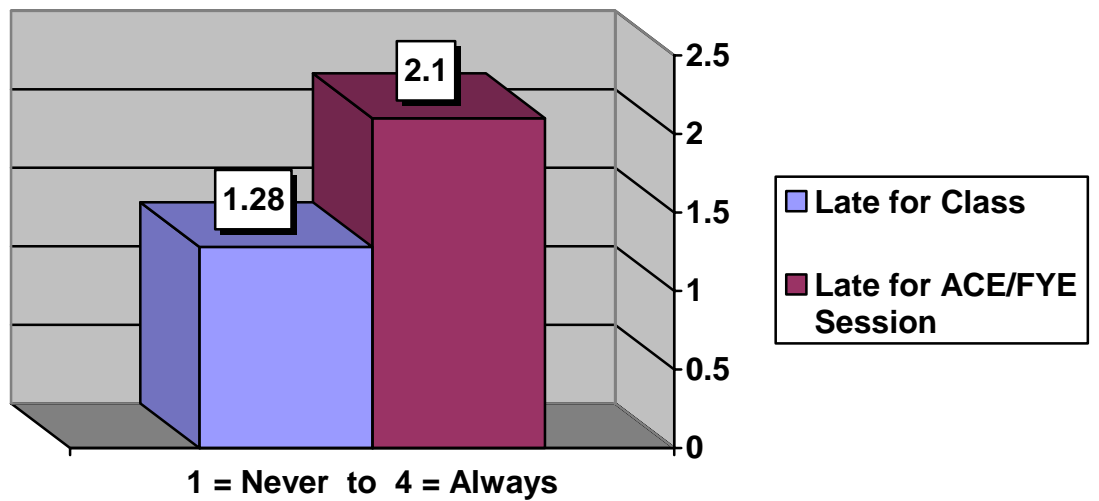


Figure 21: Cumulative Participant Self-Rating of Personal Behaviors: Attendance and Homework

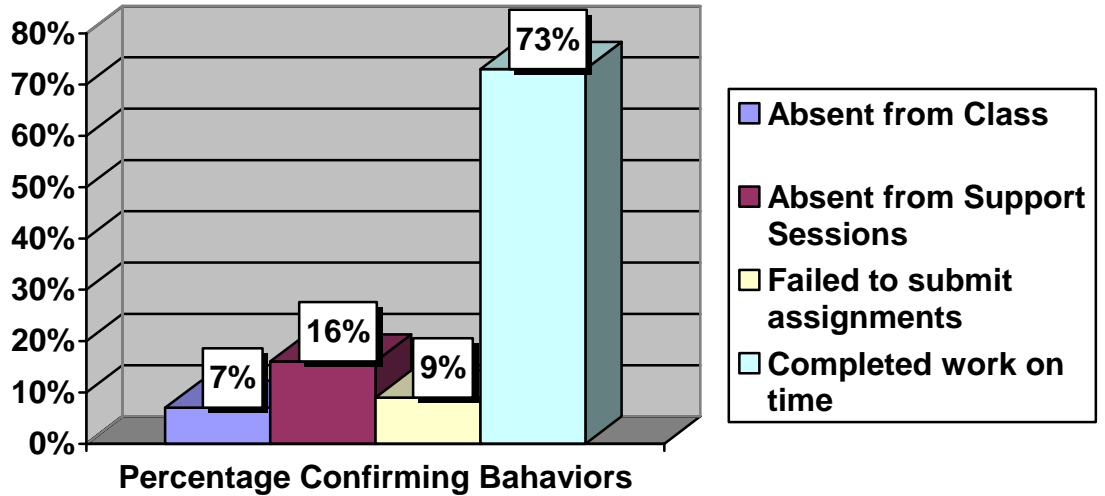


Figure 22: Cumulative Participant Self-Rating of Personal Behaviors: Interpersonal

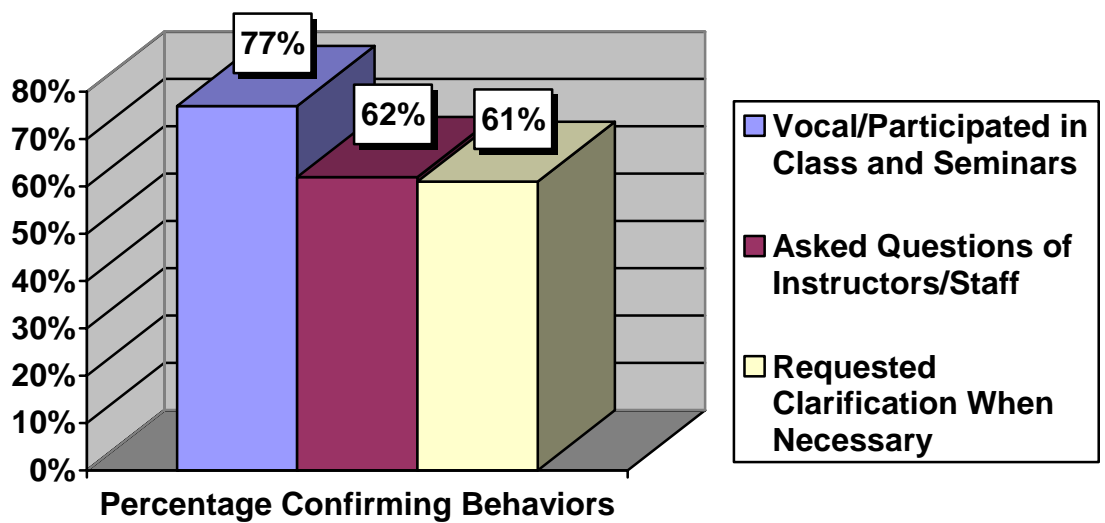


Figure 23: Cumulative Participant Self-Rating of Content Mastery

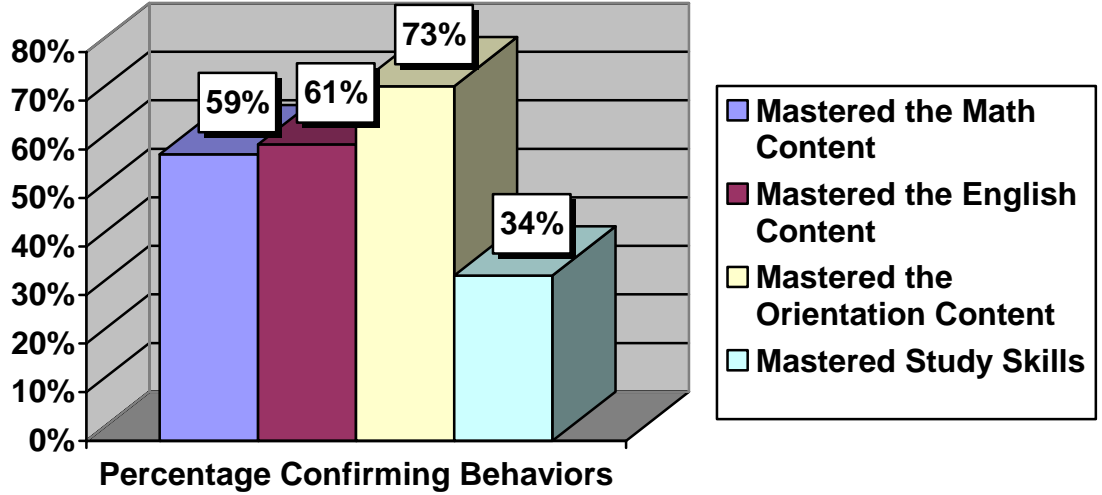


Figure 24: Cumulative Participant Self-Rating of Program Outcomes

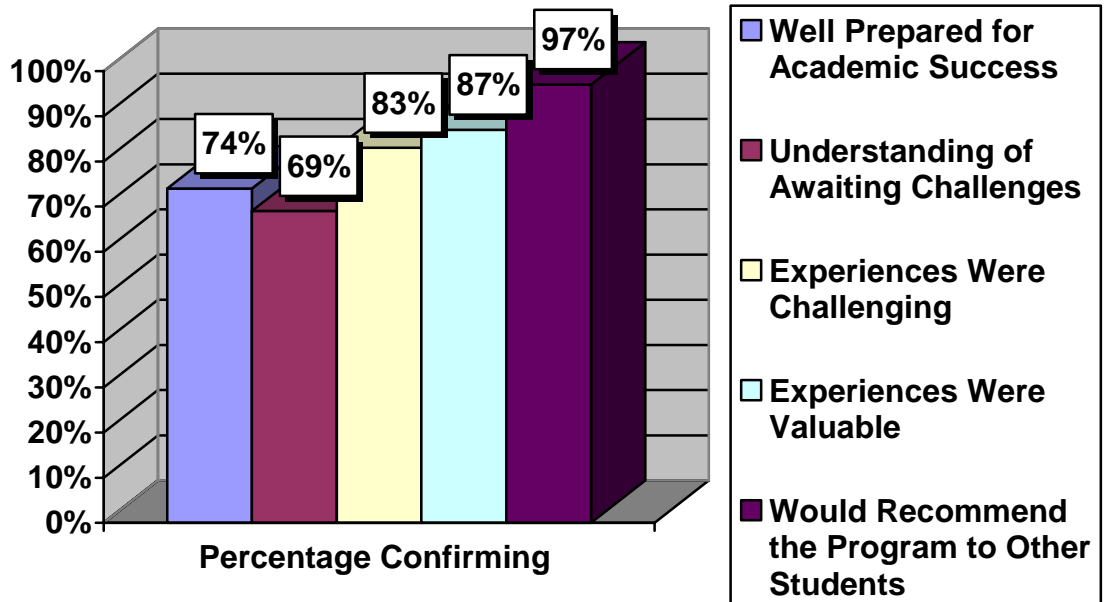


Figure 25: First to Second Semester Persistence Rates by SABP Cohort

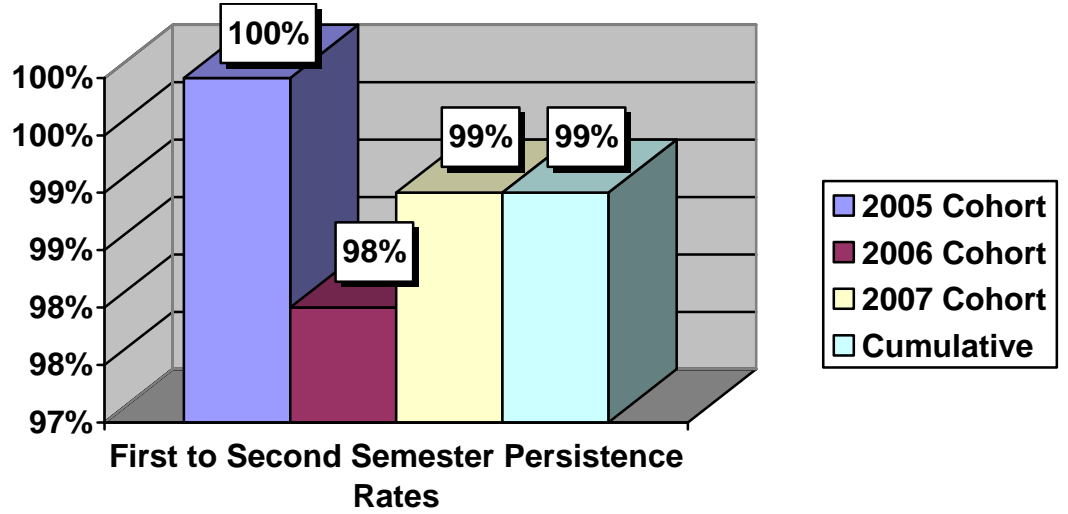


Figure 26: First to Second Year Persistence Rates by SABP Cohort

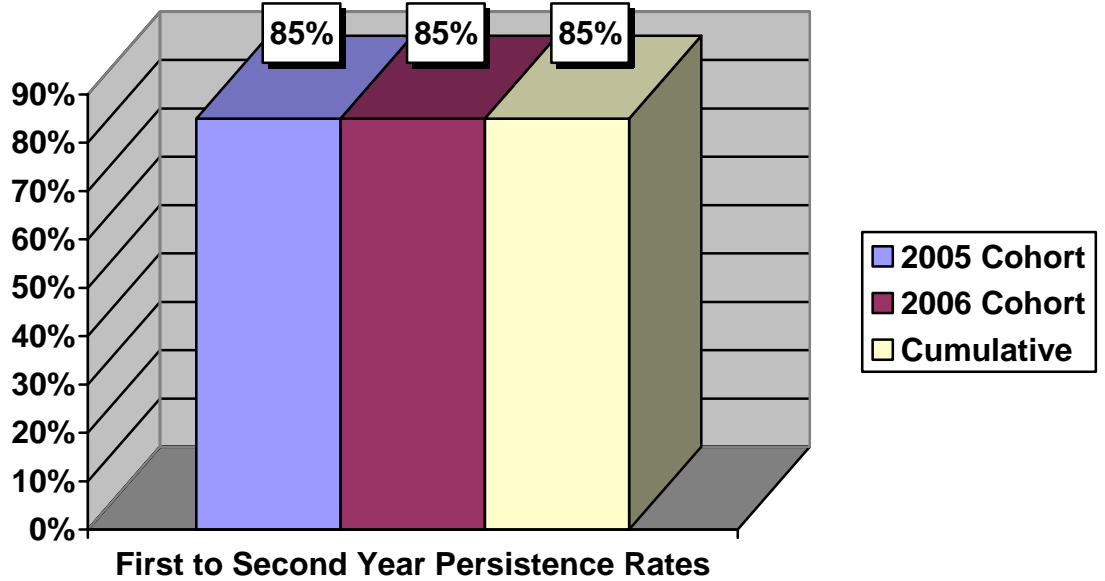




Figure 27: Fifth Semester Persistence Rates by SABP Cohort

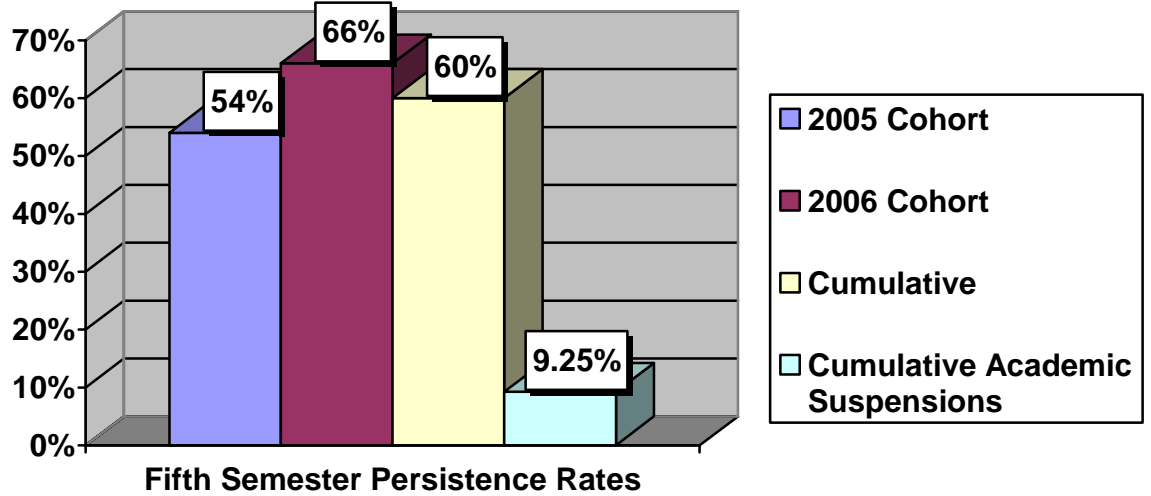
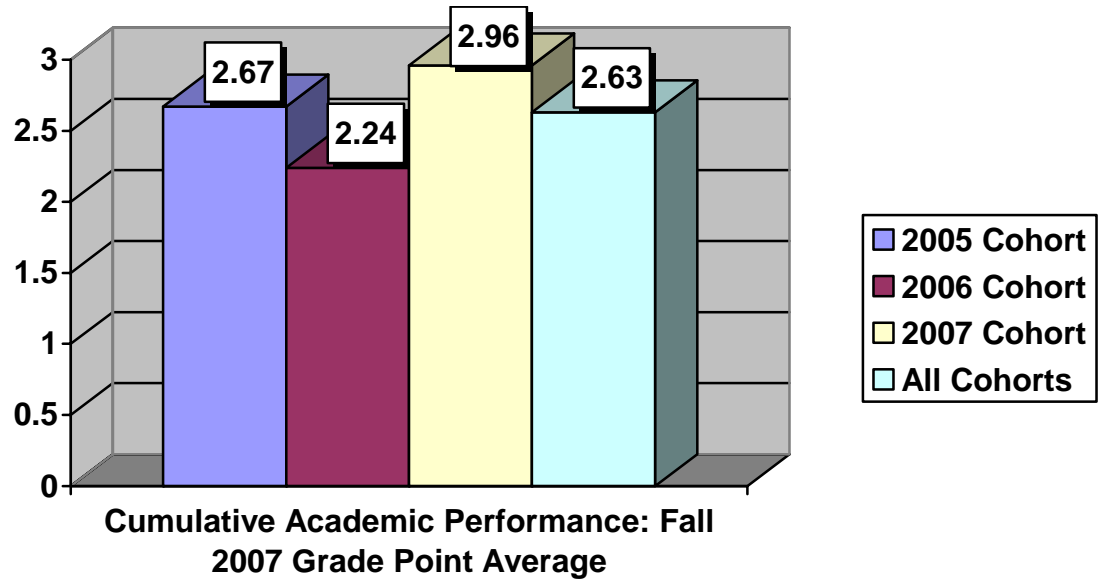


Figure 28: Fall 2007 Cumulative Grade Point Averages



## Implications and Summary Discussion

The Summer Academic Bridge Program, summarized and stated in its simplest form, represents an intrusive system of prescribed engagements and motivational strategies. It is primarily designed to remove various impediments to the successful transition of academically at-risk and first-time freshman students to postsecondary education.

The efficacy of the program is assessed in terms of (1) the level and frequency of individual **student engagement**, as indicated by attendance patterns within the prescribed activities of the program (2) student **attitudinal data**, regarding students' perceived value of the program's precepts and strategies (3) **student persistence** at clearly delineated transition points, and (4) **student academic success**, as indicated by cumulative grade point averages and the fulfillment of developmental prescriptions.

In the near future, this discussion will be better informed by comparisons of the above data to similar data on regularly-admitted students from the same cohort periods. While those data are pending from the Office of Institutional Research, it is possible to draw the following general conclusions, regarding the efficacy of the SABP.

### *Implications for Student Engagement*

*Inherent in the SABP model is the firm belief that engagement of this at-risk student population is most effectively facilitated when it is directly prescribed, as opposed to being open to the individual choices of the respective students.*

**Figures 20-22** above provide data that resulted from students' individual self-ratings, and focus on several behaviors that imply active engagement in the SABP learning environment. Again, motivational beliefs and self-regulated learning skills warranted consideration because these variables have been shown to predict the academic achievement of college students. Generally speaking, those assessment results indicate that:

*Students attended class and other activities in a punctual and consistent manner.*

*Students remained actively engaged within their educational environment.*

*Prescriptive focus on these behaviors engendered an environment through which **self-regulated learning** strategies were developed and practiced.*

### *Implications for Affective Motivation*

*The program acknowledges the evasive nature of affective change, as it can only be documented through extended observation. Nevertheless, self-motivation arises from values, and evidence of those values can only be found in these students' continuous behaviors.*

**Figures 23-24** above provide attitudinal data regarding individual successes and the value of the program to their future and continued success. It is our assumption that those experiences assigned the greatest value will be replicated by individual students in their future efforts to academically succeed. Generally speaking, those assessment results indicate that:

*While the majority of the cohorts felt that academic content had been mastered, only approximately one-third of the cohorts felt that prescribed study skills had been fully mastered.*

*Students clearly felt that the program was challenging, rewarding, and prepared them for future academic success.*

It seems clear the apparent value assigned to the program by student cohorts. It is our assumption that that value (affect) will greatly contribute to the students' future ability to remain self-motivated. However, the mastery of specific strategies is less obvious. Those strategies include study skills, and it is reasonable to assume that their eventual mastery is highly dependent upon continued exposure to and experience using those strategies. A significant implication of this finding is the need for continued reinforcement of such skills and strategies during the subsequent semesters of matriculation and curricular experiences.

### *Implications for Student Persistence*

*The most recognizable transition point occurs as our students enter KSU. It is at this critical point that our students must decide whether to persist (remain enrolled) at KSU, transfer to a different institution, or leave KSU altogether.*

**Figures 25-27** above provide data regarding both individual cohort and cumulative student persistence rates at each transition point. Those results indicate that:

*Persistence rates for all SABP cohorts far exceed those that are associated with regularly-admitted students.*

*Those persistence rates are consistent over all key transition points.*

*The actual size of the cohort does not appear to negatively impact the ability to generate a robust persistence rate at any of the transition points.*

Various factors equally contribute to these exemplary rates, which we believe would significantly diminish if those factors were isolated from each other. In short, those factors are the precepts, strategies, and structured experiences of the SABP. Past data indicate that the third transition point (the 5<sup>th</sup> Semester) is most crucially related to eventual degree completion, because this has been the point of greatest student attrition over the past three years. Therefore, generally speaking, those students who successfully transition through that point are very likely to continue toward degree completion. Countless other factors also impact attrition at that point, e.g. unsuccessfully attempting an unreasonable number of hours, thus jeopardizing financial aid eligibility; other financial issues; academic dismissal; “three-strikes-and-you-are-out,” type policies, especially regarding course repeats; etc. The level of engagement facilitated by the SABP appears to be an effective mechanism for navigating such transitional points, and may serve as a model for other institutional efforts to positively impact persistence and graduation rates.

### *Implications for Student Success*

*In many ways, student success encompasses much more than simply maintaining an acceptable or exemplary grade point average. For far too many students it is simply surviving, persisting, and remaining enrolled.*

**Figure 28** above provides data regarding both individual cohort and cumulative student grade point averages at the most current transition point. Those results indicate that the predictive value of our current admissions criteria on student academic achievement in college may be, at best, questionable.

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