

## Are College Success Saturday Students More Successful than Other First-Time Students?

Based on Strategic Plan Performance Indicators: 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> Term Persistence and First-Year Unit Load

In our initial analysis dated 3/15/16, we compared CSS students participating in the May 2015 College Success Saturday (CSS) to all other Fall 2015 first-time students to see whether first-to-second-term persistence and average unit load during the first two terms differed among the two groups. This initial analysis showed that CSS students had a much higher persistence rate and unit load than other first-time students (Table 1). CSS students were also more likely to select an educational goal of “Associate degree” or “BA/BS Transfer”, and less likely to choose “Career Development,” than other first-time students (Table 1).

**Table 1. Persistence and Average Units Attempted by Educational Goal, Fall 2015-Spring 2016**

### COM Students Participating in College Success Saturday (May 2015) and All Other First-Time Students

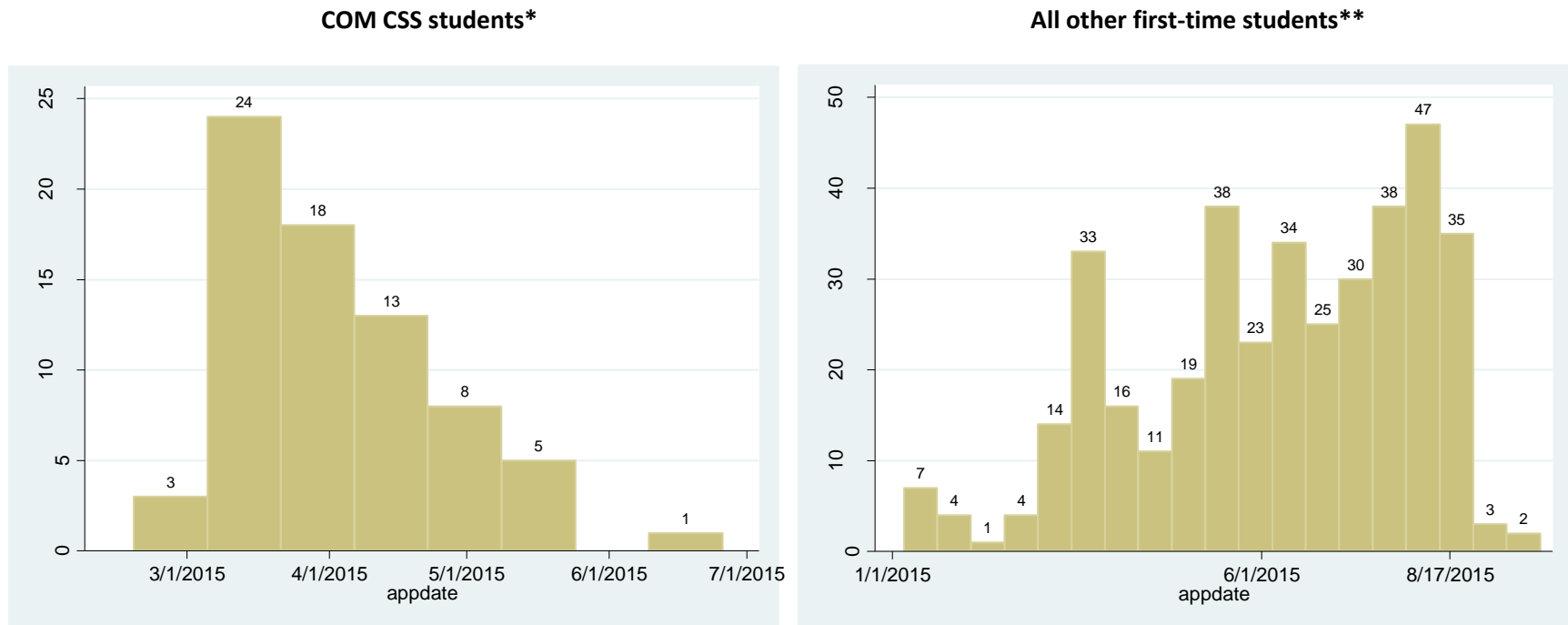
Educational Goal	College Success Saturday Students (May 2015)						All Other First-Time Students (Fall 2015)					
	N Fall 2015	% of total	Avg. Units Fall 2015	N Spring 2016	% persisted	Avg. Units Spring 2016	N Fall 2015	% of total	Avg. Units Fall 2015	N Spring 2016	% persisted	Avg. Units Spring 2016
<b>Associate Degree (AA, AA-T, AS, AS-T)</b>	74	51.4	12.8	66	89.2	12.0	191	43.0	9.9	132	69.1	10.8
<b>BA/BS Transfer</b>	23	16.0	13.6	18	78.3	10.7	54	12.2	11.1	33	61.1	11.9
<b>Certificate of Achievement</b>	3	2.1	13.3	3	100.0	10.2	12	2.7	7.7	7	58.3	8.4
<b>Career Development</b>	7	4.9	13.6	6	85.7	12.2	52	11.7	5.9	24	46.2	8.2
<b>Basic Skills/High School Diploma</b>	8	5.6	15.6	7	87.5	13.1	33	7.4	6.6	16	48.5	8.1
<b>Educational Development</b>	3	2.1	10.7	2	66.7	11.8	20	4.5	6.6	4	20.0	12.0
<b>Meeting 4-year College Requirement</b>	2	1.4	13.3	2	100.0	14.5	8	1.8	9.8	4	50.0	10.5
<b>Unspecified/Undeclared</b>	24	16.7	15.9	20	83.3	12.2	74	16.7	7.0	38	51.4	7.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>86.0</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>58.0</b>	<b>10.0</b>

Source: COM MIS files, March 2016; COM’s enterprise data management system, enrollment as of first census, Spring 2016

Given the large differences in persistence and first-term units attempted between CSS students and all other first-time students, and discussions with managers responsible for CSS, we wondered whether CSS or students’ applying early for college was the reason for impact. Did non-CSS students who applied within the same time frame persist at equivalent rates and enroll in a comparable number of units as students in the CSS group?

To answer this, we examined the application date for CSS students whose first term was in Fall 2015 (excluding special admit students who attended COM prior to Fall 2015) and all other first-time students attending in Fall 2015. All but one of the CSS students applied prior to June 1, with most applying by May. Of the non-CSS students, 158, or 41% applied prior to June 1. The remaining applied much closer to the start of the term, and a few after the term began (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. COM Students Participating in May 2015 College Success Saturday and All Other First Time Students by Application Date for Fall 2015 Term**



\*CSS students with application date on or after 1/1/15 and enrollment status of "first-time student" (n=72). Excludes special-admit students who attended COM prior to Fall 2015 while still in high school.

\*\*Non-CSS students with application date on or after 1/1/15 and enrollment status of "first-time student" in Fall 2015 (n=384).

We then compared Fall 2015 to Spring 2016 persistence and Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 unit load among the following groups: CSS students who had previously attended COM as special admit students; CSS students whose first term was Summer or Fall 2015; and non-CSS students by application date. In order to view the patterns among non-CSS students throughout the application period, and compare them to CSS students who enrolled during the same time period, we divided them into those applying before May; those applying by month in May, June and July; those applying in August prior to the term start date of August 17; and those applying after the term start date.

CSS students carried a full-time unit load on average during their first term, with special admit students averaging one course more than other CSS first-timers (Table 2). Non-CSS students who applied within the same timeframe as CSS students (prior to June 1) carried an average unit load between 10.1 and 10.5. The unit load decreased as the application date became later (for non-CSS students applying in June, July, August prior to the term start date (August 17), and after the start of the term). See Table 2.

CSS students had the highest persistence rates, 84-88%, substantially higher than non-CSS students who applied within the same timeframe (Table 2). The persistence rate among non-CSS students is about two-thirds, and remains at that rate for students applying through June. The percentage drops to less than half for those applying on July 1 or later (Table 2). CSS students who were previously concurrently enrolled high school students persist at the highest rate and take more units.

The unit load pattern by CSS status and application date for Spring 2016, students' second semester, shows that students taking more units during the first term averaged fewer or similar number of units during the second term, while average unit load increased among groups taking fewer units. Students who had applied in August enrolled in a lower combined average unit load in Spring, as did the non-CSS students who had applied prior to May 2015 (Table 2). All the other groups enrolled in a similar number of units, on average. Because second-term unit load is related to persistence—those who did not persist are not included in the second term numbers--we might expect the difference in unit load to be narrowing by the second term, though the average does not tell us whether students who did not persist were those taking fewer units in the first term, or whether those who persisted increased their unit load.

**Table 2. Persistence and Average Units, Fall 2015-Spring 2016**

**COM Students Participating in College Success Saturday (May 2015) and All Other First-Time Students by Application Date**

<b>Student Status and COM Application Date</b>	<b>N Fall 2015</b>	<b>Avg. Units Fall 2015</b>	<b>N Spring 2016</b>	<b>% persisted</b>	<b>Avg. Units Spring 2016</b>	<b>Avg. Diff. in Unit Load Fall-Spring</b>
<b>CSS, special admit prior to Fall 2015</b>	49	15.3	43	87.8	11.7	-3.6
<b>CSS, first term Fall 2015</b>	88	12.5	74	84.1	12.1	-0.4
<b>Non-CSS, applied before May</b>	98	10.1	67	68.4	9.9	-0.2
<b>Non-CSS, applied May 1-31</b>	60	10.5	40	66.7	11.2	0.7
<b>Non-CSS, applied June 1-30</b>	65	9.6	43	66.2	11.8	2.2
<b>Non-CSS, applied July 1-31</b>	78	8.8	36	46.2	11.0	2.2
<b>Non-CSS, applied Aug 1-16</b>	59	7.3	29	49.2	9.9	2.6
<b>Non-CSS, applied Aug 17-first census</b>	24	5.5	10	41.7	8.5	3.0

*Six CSS students had an enrollment status other than “first-time student” or “continuing student” and had not previously been a special admit student, so were excluded. Sixty non-CSS, first-time students did not have an application date on record or applied for a term prior to Fall 2015, so were excluded.*

PRIE’s [recent analysis](#) found that among COM students, being older, Hispanic, and male all decrease the odds of completion. Therefore we compared CSS and non-CSS groups to see whether they differed in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, and age. Both groups are equivalent in terms of gender (Table 3). The CSS group was proportionally more Hispanic and fewer African American students than the non-CSS, first time student group. In terms of age, CSS students, being recent high school graduates, were all under age 24, as were a majority of other first-time students. However, there are older students in the non-CSS group. When age is averaged by application date, a clear pattern emerges (Table 4). Older students are applying later. Therefore, we wondered whether the difference between the CSS and non-CSS groups’ persistence and unit load is due to age and application date rather than the CSS program. Additional analyses (not shown) indicated that age and application date both impact persistence and first term unit load, but CSS has the largest effect. Being Hispanic did not influence the outcomes.

**Table 3. COM Students Participating in College Success Saturday (May 2015) and All Other First-Time Students by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Age Group**

	CSS		Non-CSS	
	N	%	N	%
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	59	43.4	192	45.1
Male	77	56.6	234	54.9
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
Hispanic/Latino	56	40.3	104	24.4
Asian	6	4.3	25	5.6
Black/African American	1	0.7	45	10.5
American Indian/Alaska Native	0	0.0	2	0.5
Pacific Islander	0	0.7	4	0.9
White	45	32.4	160	37.5
Multi race	30	21.6	87	20.4
<b>Age group</b>				
16-19	264	97.8	264	59.6
20-24	3	2.2	80	18.1
25-29	0	0.0	26	5.9
30-39	0	0.0	24	5.4
40-49	0	0.0	26	5.9
50-59	0	0.0	10	2.3
60 and older	0	0.0	13	2.9

**Table 4. COM Students Participating in College Success Saturday (May 2015) and All Other First-Time Students by Application Date and Average Age**

Student Status and COM Application Date	N	Avg, Age Fall 2015
CSS, special admit prior to Fall 2015	49	18.4
CSS, first term Fall 2015	88	18.2
Non-CSS, applied before May	98	20.2
Non-CSS, applied May 1-31	60	22.0
Non-CSS, applied June 1-30	65	24.2
Non-CSS, applied July 1-31	78	24.7
Non-CSS, applied Aug 1-16	59	26.3
Non-CSS, applied Aug 17-first census	24	31.1

**Conclusion:** Both applying to COM early and participation in College Success Saturday positively affect students' first-to-second-term persistence and average first-term unit load. The results suggest that participation in College Success Saturday has a more substantial effect than just applying early. Given the large and positive difference in persistence and first term units we see among the CSS students compared to non-CSS students, we conclude that the program is making a positive difference for the students it serves.