

RESEARCH REPORT

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AT FULLERTON COLLEGE



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First-Time Students at Fullerton College

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Defining First-time Students:

For the purpose of this analysis, a “first-time” student means that the student’s first postsecondary institution *after* high school is Fullerton College. To identify whether the student enrolled at Fullerton College before enrolling at any other college or university, the analysis draws upon the California Community College (CCC) Chancellor’s Office Management Information System (MIS) and the FirstFile. In addition, this analysis focuses on students enrolled at Fullerton College in a fall term. Students who start in spring are not included in this analysis.

Primary Questions:

The purpose of this report is to address the following questions:

1. How many first-time students enroll at Fullerton College each fall?
 - a. What is known about first-time students’ demographic and educational backgrounds?
2. What proportion of first-time students enroll full-time in their first semester?
3. What proportion of first-time students enroll in math and English courses in their first semester?

Across all of the questions, this analysis examines the most recent fall term, Fall 2019, as well as how the numbers and percentages have changed in recent years. The data are displayed in graphs that reveal ten-year trends between the Fall 2010 semester and the Fall 2019 semester.

Analysis:

The number of first-time students enrolled at Fullerton College in Fall '19 totaled 3,445 students. This represents a 3.5% yearly increase over the Fall '18 enrollment and is similar to the total first-time enrollments from Fall '16 and Fall '17 (see Figure 1). However, the 3,445 students were a 12.3% decrease from the ten-year high of 3,930 first-time students who enrolled in Fall '13. A significant proportion of first-time students are 19 years old and younger, coming straight from high school. The proportion of first-time students in Fall '19 who are 19 years old and younger was 83%, similar to the percentages from the prior three years.

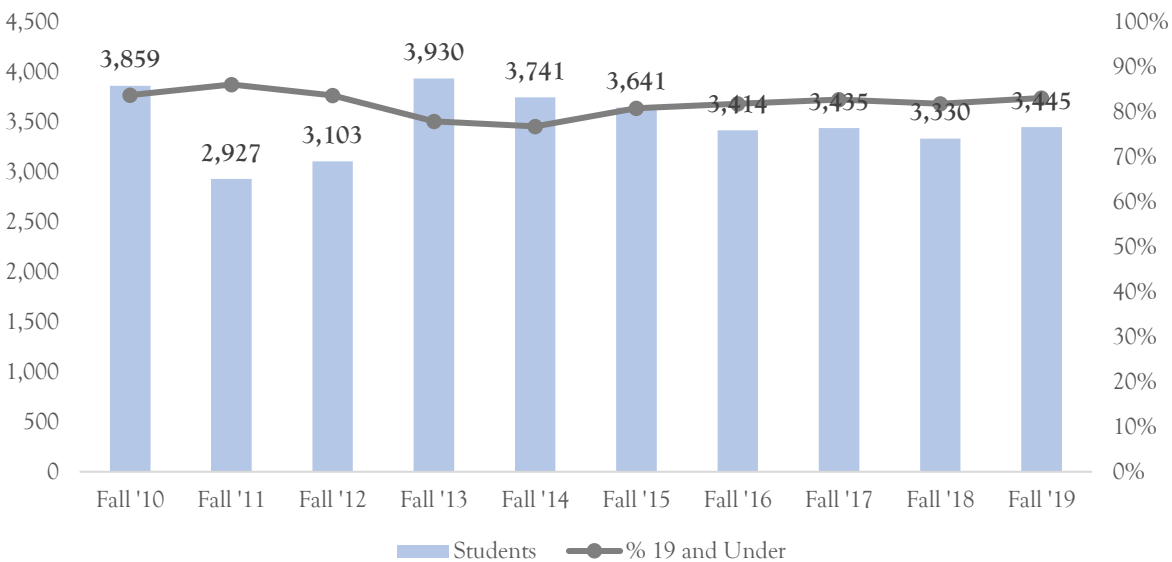


Figure 1. First-time Students and Proportion 19 Years Old and Younger
Source: Fullerton College DataMart and CCCC FirstFile

As students coming directly from high school make up a significant proportion of the first-time student cohort, the following figure focuses on those who are 19 years old and younger (see Figure 2). The data show there were 2,855 first-time students at Fullerton College who were under 20 years old in Fall '19, an increase of 4.8% from Fall '18. In addition, the Fall '19 cohort of students under 20 years old was the largest cohort since Fall '15, although it was still 11.6% below the Fall '10 cohort which included 3,228 students.

In addition, the proportion of students 19 years old and younger who enrolled full-time in their first term has increased substantially over the last decade. Just a few years ago, in Fall '15, a slight majority of students (56%) enrolled in 12 or more units in that first, fall semester. By Fall '19, the proportion had increased to 73%. In fact, the proportion of first-time students under 20 years old enrolling full-time increased from 64% to 73% in just one year, from Fall '18 to Fall '19. This is a result of the intentional outreach and recruitment efforts, as well as the statewide Promise program that offers first-time students a tuition-free education for those who enroll in 12 or more units.

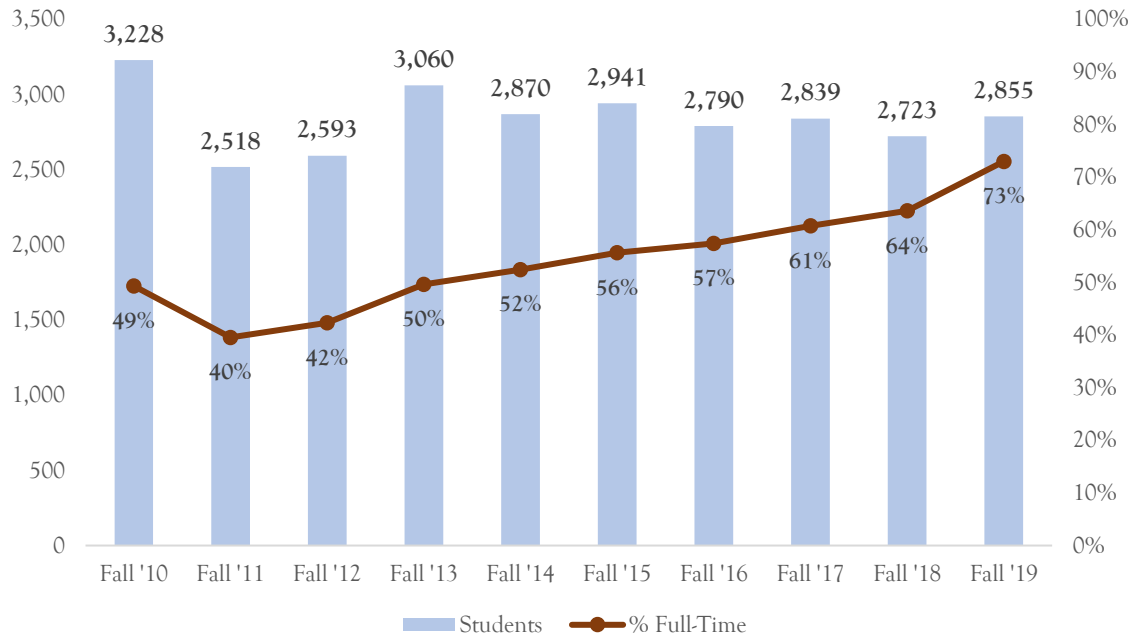


Figure 2. First-time students 19 and Younger and Proportion Full-Time
 Source: Fullerton College DataMart and CCCCO FirstFile

The proportion of first-time students by race / ethnic identity has changed over time, with 60% of first-time students identifying as Hispanic/Latina/o/x in the Fall '19 cohort, up from 50% in Fall '11 (see Figure 3). The proportion of students identifying as White has decreased over the same time frame, decreasing from 22% of first-time students in Fall '11 to 14% of the incoming cohort in Fall '19. The proportion of students identifying as Asian (9%), Black/African American (4%), and Filipino (2%) have been consistent over time, with the Fall '19 proportions within one or two percentage points of their proportion when analyzing the prior decade of entering students.

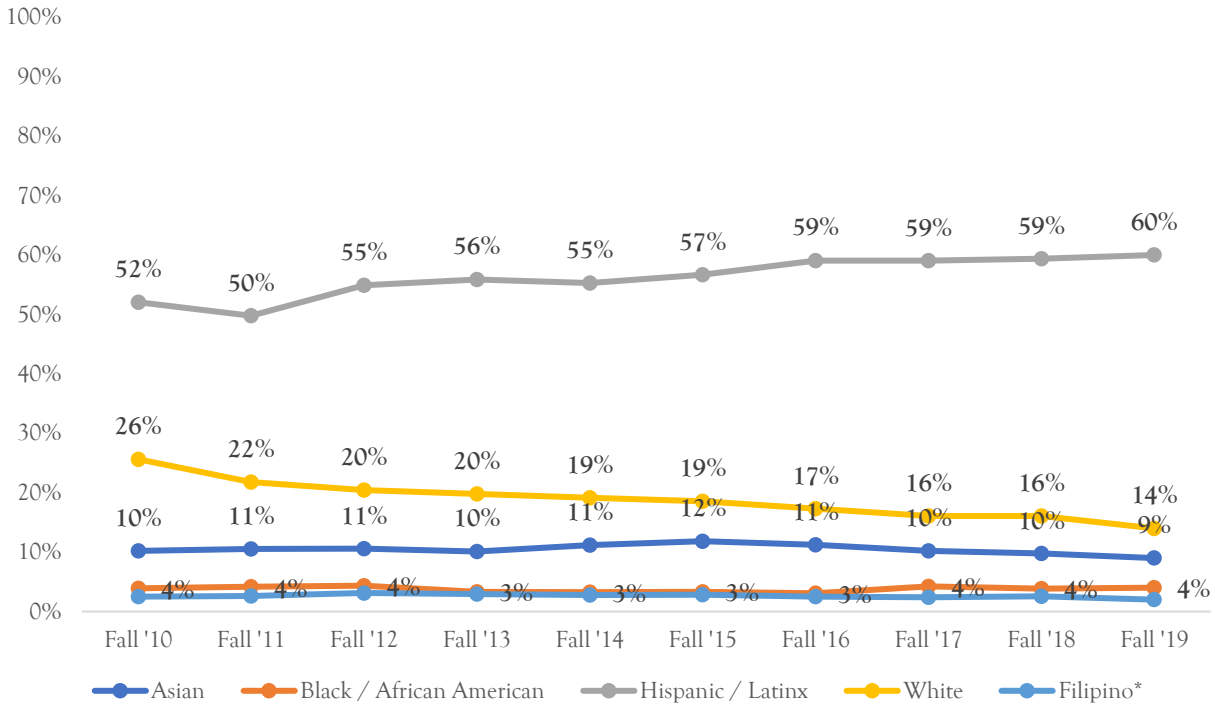


Figure 3. Proportion of First-time Students by Race / Ethnicity
 Source: Fullerton College DataMart and CCCCCO FirstFile

A slight majority of first-time students (53% in Fall '19 cohort) come from one of the four feeder high school districts: Anaheim, Fullerton, Brea, Placentia-Yorba Linda (see Figure 4). Over the last ten years, the proportion of first-time students entering from the Anaheim Unified High School District has increased from 17% of the cohort in Fall '10 to 23% of the cohort in Fall '19. At the same time, the percentage of first-time students from the Fullerton Joint Union High School District declined between Fall '10 (20%) and Fall '13 (14%), only to rebound back to 20% of the Fall '19, first-time cohort. Students from the other two feeder high school districts combined, Brea and Placentia-Yorba Linda, comprised about 10% of first-time students.

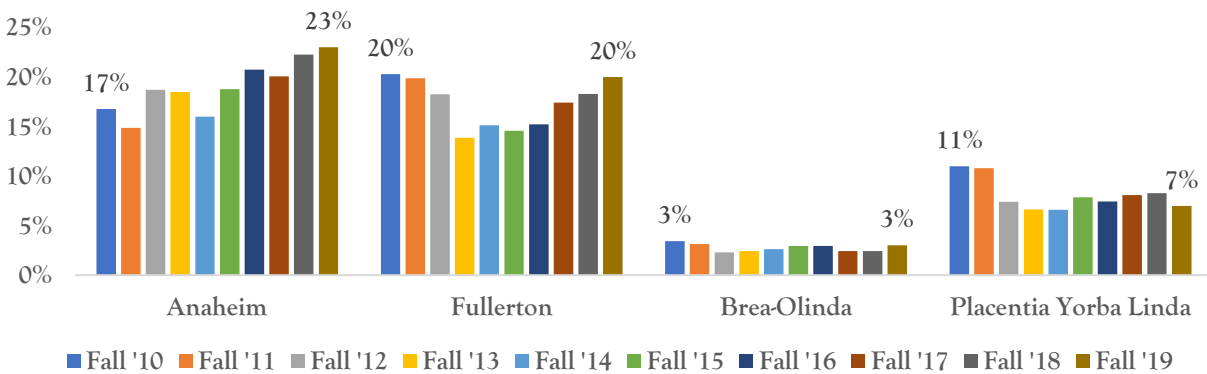


Figure 4. Proportion of First-time Students by High School District by Year
 Source: Fullerton College DataMart and CCCCCO FirstFile

It is not only that the enrollment numbers and demographics of first-time students have changed over time, students' course-taking patterns have also changed. For example, Figure 5 shows the proportion of Fullerton students who enrolled in a math course within the district (at Fullerton or Cypress College) in their first term. The proportion of students doing so has increased from a low of 27% in Fall '11, reaching a high of 55% in Fall '17, before declining to 44% in Fall '19. While there has been a decline in recent years in the proportion of first-time students who enroll in a math class in their first term, there has been a dramatic change in the proportion who are enrolling in a transfer-level math course in their first term. More specifically, in Fall '11 less than 1 in 10 (9%) of first-time students enrolled in a transfer-level math course in their first term, increasing to more than 1 in 3 (36%) with the Fall '19 cohort. In fact, there was a substantial increase between Fall '18 (24%) and Fall '19 (36%) in the proportion enrolling immediately in a transfer-level math course. In a similar way, when examining first-time students who are under 20 years old, the growth has been even more dramatic, increasing from 9% in Fall '11 to 41% in Fall '19, with a dramatic increase between Fall '18 and Fall '19 in the proportion of students enrolling in a transfer-level math course in their first term.

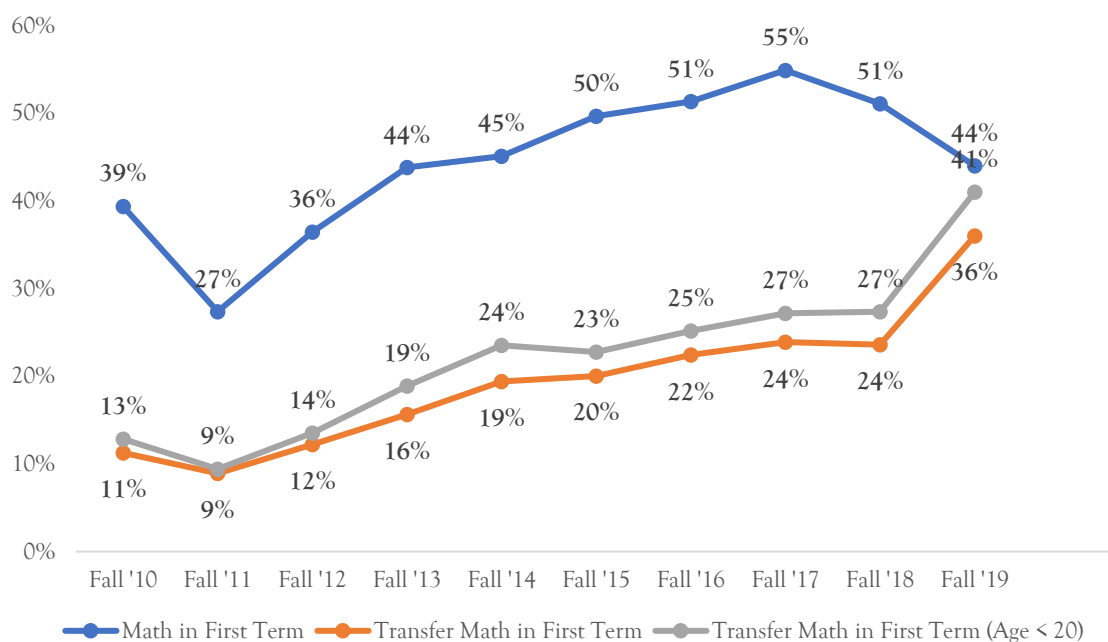


Figure 5. Proportion of First-time Students Enrolling in Math in First Term
 Source: Fullerton College DataMart and CCCC FirstFile

When examining the enrollment patterns for English, there are also dramatic changes in the proportion of students enrolling immediately in their first term. While the proportion increased from 30% of first-time students in Fall '11 who enrolled in any English course in their first term to 57% of first-time students by Fall '16, the proportion has hovered consistently around 57% over the last four years (see Figure 6). However, the proportion of students who enroll directly into a transfer-level course in their first term has increased dramatically, from 8% of the first-time student cohort in Fall '10 to 57% in Fall '19. When considering first-time students who are 19 years old

and younger, the proportion enrolling in a transfer-level English course in their first term has increased even more significantly, whereby almost two-thirds (64%) of such students enrolled in a transfer-level English course in their first term.

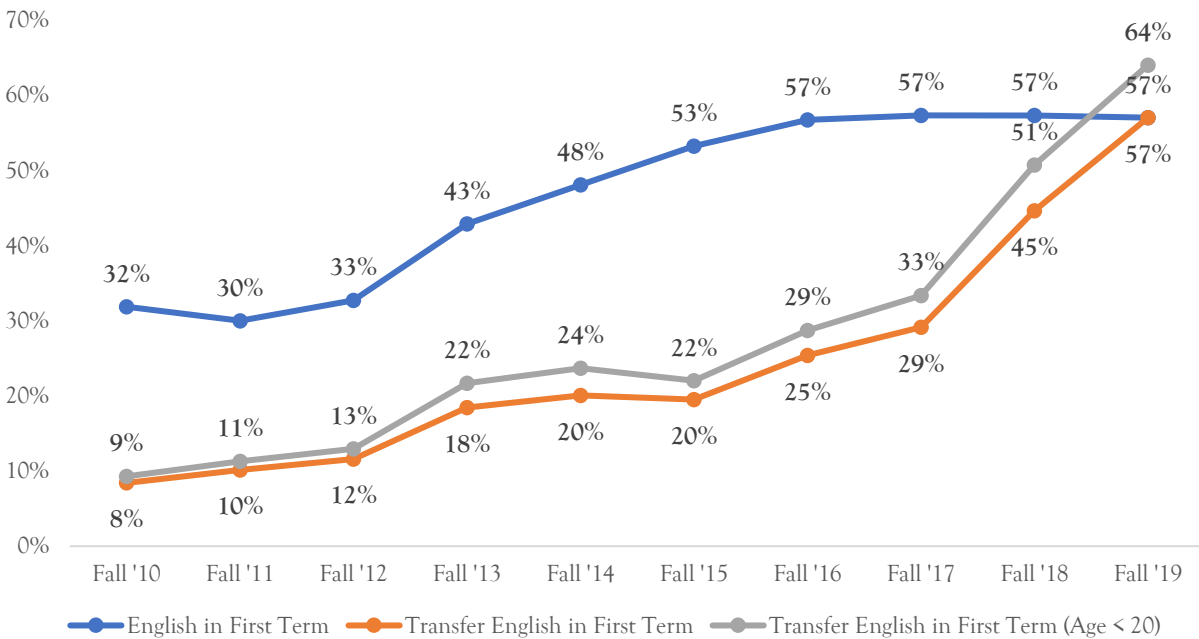


Figure 6. Proportion of First-time Students Enrolling in English in First Term
 Source: Fullerton College DataMart and CCCC FirstFile

When examining the Fall '19 cohort, 28% of first-time students enrolled in both a transfer-level math and transfer-level English course in their first term. For students under 20 years old, one-third (33%) of students enrolled in both a transfer-level math and transfer-level English course in their first term. These changes will continue to be analyzed as new cohorts experience the changed offerings in both subject areas.