

FACULTY RESEARCH EDITION

OF

THE SAVANNAH STATE COLLEGE BULLETIN

Published by

THE SAVANNAH STATE COLLEGE

Volume 11, No. 2

Savannah, Georgia

October, 1957

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The Savannah State College Bulletin is published in October, December, February, March, April, and May by Savannah State College. Entered as second-class matter, December 16, 1947, at the Post Office at Savannah, Georgia under the Act of August 24, 1912.

69902

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A Report of the Persistence of a Group of Entering College Freshmen

by

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Admission officers and other college officials anticipate rapid enrollment increases during the next few years. This prospect of increased enrollment calls for long-range educational planning and careful consideration of student and college characteristics relative to the retention and withdrawal of students. Such deliberations may lead to modifications and revisions of programs pertinent to admissions, recruitment, and instruction.

This report is an examination of the retention and academic progress of a group of entering freshmen over a four-year period at The Fort Valley State College.

The total entering group numbered 227. The group under consideration, however, consists of 215 students who registered as entering-freshmen in September, 1952. Of this freshmen group, 80 were men. All of the students were graduates of Georgia high schools and were residents of the state at the time of admission.

The Academic Quarters Registered

The freshmen of September, 1952 could have been registered twelve full quarters by June, 1956 and could have been graduated by that date. Table I describes the distribution of students according to the total academic quarters registered during this period. Throughout this report summer quarters attended are not included.

However, among the forty-six graduates of June, 1956, 13.1 per cent of the students had attended one or more summer quarters sometime during the four years. Correspondence courses or extension courses were taken by 3.7 per cent of the group.

It is noted from Table I that during this period 43.7 per cent of the students were registered for three quarters or less; 26.0 per cent were registered for all twelve quarters; while 21.1 per cent of the group were graduated at the end of the four years.

TABLE I

DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS ACCORDING TO QUARTERS REGISTERED FROM SEPTEMBER, 1952 TO JUNE, 1956

<i>Quarters Registered</i>	<i>No. of Students Registered</i>	<i>Per Cent of Students Registered</i>	<i>No. of Students Registered Per Qr.</i>
1	19	8.8	215
2	12	6.1	196
3	63	34.2	184
4	6	10.7	121
5	13	11.3	115
6	16	15.6	102
7	4	4.7	86
8	5	6.1	82
9	7	9.1	77
10	6	8.6	70
11	8	12.5	64
12	56	26.04	56
Total 215			
Number of graduates 46			
Per cent of Graduates 21.39			

The mean number of quarters registered was 5.95. Registration loss occurs markedly after the first three quarters. Of the group, 43.7 per cent of this group failed to register for the fourth quarter, 1953-1954; 56.2 per cent of the enter-freshmen registered at that time as compared with 85.5 per cent who registered the previous quarter. This is a loss of 29.3 per cent. The over-all loss after the third quarter of 1952-1953 was 14.4 per cent of the beginning group. Losses occurring thereafter average 4.54 per cent. Only 26.04 per cent of the students were registered twelve quarters.

Table II presents the distribution of students registered by number of consecutive quarters attended.

Of the students who were registered three consecutive quarters, 50.6 failed to register the fourth consecutive quarter. Those registered three consecutive quarters numbered 42.3 per cent of the group. More students failed to register after the third quarter of the freshman year, than any other quarter of any particular year.

Academic Action Taken Against the Group

Table III describes the administrative action taken against the group as a result of poor scholarship, transfers to other colleges, and drop-outs.

TABLE II
DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS BY CONSECUTIVE QUARTERS
REGISTERED FROM SEPTEMBER, 1952 TO JUNE, 1956

No. of Consecutive Quarters	No. of Students Not Registered for Succeeding Quarters	No. Students Registered Per Quarter	Per Cent of Students Enrolled
1	22	215	10.2
2	9	193	4.7
3	78	184	42.3
4	8	106	7.5
5	8	98	8.1
6	16	90	17.7
7	1	74	1.4
8	5	73	6.8
9	6	68	8.8
10	2	62	3.2
11	4	60	6.7
12	56	56	26.04
Total -----		215	

TABLE III
THE ACADEMIC ACTION TAKEN AGAINST THE GROUP
PARTITIONED BY QUARTERS REGISTERED

Qtrs. Reg.	No. Reg.	Probation		Dropped		Dropped Returned		Dropped Not Returned	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	19	7	36.8						
2	12	11	91.6	1	8.3			1	100.0
3	63	50	79.3	30	47.6			30	100.0
4	6	5	83.3	2	33.3	2	100.0		
5	13	11	84.6	4	30.8	4	100.0		
6	16	9	56.2	3	18.8	2	75.0	1	25.0
7	4	2	50.0	1	25.0	1	100.0		
8	5	3	6.0						
9	7	5	71.4	2	28.6	1	50.0	1	50.0
10	6	5	83.3	2	33.3	1	50.0	1	50.0
11	88	5	62.5						
12	56	18	32.1						
Total 215		134	62.3	45	20.9	11	24.4	34	15.3
Number of Graduates		46	18	39.1					
% of entering group		21.4		13.4					

Many of the original group felt some form of academic action during this period. Of the group, 62.3 per cent did run into scholastic difficulties, probation or dropping action. Relative to these categories, it is noted that 20.9 per cent of the students were dropped by the college at some time during the four-year period.

Of those dropped, 91.0 were registered for three quarters or less. Of those dropped and returned, 45.5 were registered six quarters or more.

Once again attention is drawn to the third quarter. A group of noticeable size were recipients of academic action at this point. Of the students registered for a total of three quarters, 79.3 per cent were on probation.

Of those students who were probation-bound sometimes during their stay at the college, 13.4 per cent were graduated within the expected time. The graduating group numbered 37.6 per cent against whom no academic action had ever been taken during their stay.

Relationship of Selected Variables to Quarters Registered

Generally relationships, or the making of comparisons, are interpreted by correlation coefficients or other statistical techniques. Far too often these tools are readily understood only to the specially initiated. Under these circumstances much of the effectiveness of the data is lost because of a lack of statistical sophistication. The expectancy table, on the other hand, is a simple, easy to construct, and easier to understand tool which presents the relationships in a language readily understood by the sophisticated and layman alike. The relationship between the number of quarters registered and the three variables taken separately, (1) cumulative average of high school performance, (2) percentile rank score on the American Council on Education Psychological Examination, 1952 edition, and (3) the first quarter grade-point average are graphically described in Table IV.

How long these freshmen remained in college as partitioned by these variables is indicated in the tables which follow.

Cumulative High-School Grade-Point Average

High-school cumulative averages were available for 201 students of this entering group of the Fall, 1952. Table IV presents these data. There is little progression of high-school grade-point averages in any group from one persistence group to another.

The mean of high-school averages is 1.32. Averages range from .30 to 3.0.

Of those students entering college with high-school averages of "C" (1.0) or higher, 47, or 27.01 per cent, were registered twelve quarters. The twenty-seven entering the college with averages less than 1.0 dwindled to 29.6 per cent (8) who were registered twelve quarters.

There, seemingly, is no point in high-school averages at which we can expect a student not to persist for quite a few quarters or graduate. Perseverance and determination seem to have their own rewards. However, the chances of twelve quarter registration and graduation are considerably reduced by a low high-school grade-point average.

Percentile Rank Score on the Psychological Examination and the Number of Quarters Registered

Table V describes group persistence according to the percentile rank scores on the A.C.E. Psychological Examination (Edition 1952).

The students earning percentile rank scores of fifty and higher and who were registered for twelve quarters number 32.3 per cent (32). Of the total group, 20.95 per cent (22 students) entered college with an earned score of forty-ninth percentile or less and were registered twelve quarters. Once again, although at every percentile level a greater per cent of the group were registered for twelve quarters, there is little indication that psychological examination scores predict those who **will** persist. Generally, however, the higher the score, the better are the chances of persistence.

It seems likely that some students regardless of intelligence (as measured by this examination) will remain in college a considerable number of quarters. Caution should be exercised. A low score does not rule out a successful college career, in terms of graduation and twelve quarter registration **nor** does a high score assure twelve quarter registration or graduation.

First Quarter Grade-Point Average and the Number of Quarters Registered

College success is commonly measured in terms of how good is the first quarter grade-point average.

First quarter scholastic averages were obtained for 209 students as shown in Table VI.

The 2.0-3.0 group (12 students) accounted for 6, or 50.0 per cent of its members registered for twelve quarters. In contrast, the .70-.79 group, admittedly small (7 students), indicates that 33.3 per cent of its group registered for twelve quarters.

Once again, there is a disorderly progression of first-quarter averages from one group to another.

TABLE V

EXPECTANCY TABLE SHOWING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EXAMINATION SCORES AND NUMBER OF QUARTERS REGISTERED

NUMBER OF QUARTERS REGISTERED

Examination Scores	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10		11		12		Total		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
90-100	1	4.8	1	4.8	4	19.0																					
80-99	1	4.8	2	9.5	5	23.7	2	9.5	1	4.8	3	14.3	2	9.5	3	14.3	1	4.8	1	4.8	1	4.8	9	42.8	21	100.0	
70-79	2	10.4	4	21.1	4	21.1	1	5.3	1	5.3	2	10.4	1	5.3	1	5.3	1	5.3	2	9.5	1	5.3	4	19.1	21	100.0	
60-69	2	11.7			4	23.5	1	5.9	1	5.9	2	10.4	1	5.3	1	5.9	1	5.9	1	5.3	1	5.3	6	31.6	19	100.0	
50-59			2	9.5	8	38.1	1	5.9	1	5.9	1	5.9	1	5.9	1	5.9	1	5.9	1	5.3	2	9.5	8	47.1	17	100.0	
40-49	1	5.6	2	11.1	7	38.7	2	11.1	1	4.8	1	4.8	1	4.8	1	4.8	1	4.8	1	5.6	2	9.5	5	23.7	21	100.0	
30-39	1	4.8	1	4.8	10	47.5	1	4.8	1	4.8	1	4.8	1	4.8	1	4.8	1	4.8	1	5.6	1	5.6	2	11.1	18	100.0	
20-29	3	14.3			5	23.7			3	14.3			4	19.0									5	23.7	21	100.0	
10-19	2	9.1	2	9.1	6	27.2	1	4.6	1	4.6	4	19.0											6	28.6	21	100.0	
0-9	5	21.6	1	4.4	4	17.4	1	4.4	2	8.7	2	8.7											3	13.6	22	100.0	
Total	18	8.9	11	5.2	57	27.9	6	2.9	13	6.4	15	7.4	4	1.9	5	2.6	7	3.4	6	2.9	8	3.9	54	26.5	204	100.0	

TABLE VI

EXPECTANCY TABLE SHOWING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FIRST QUARTER GRADE-POINT AVERAGE AND THE NUMBER OF QUARTERS REGISTERED

NUMBER OF QUARTERS REGISTERED

First Qtr. Average	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10		11		12		Total		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
2.0-3.0			1	8.3	3	25.0																					
1.0-1.9	5	6.3	1	1.3	14	17.7	2	2.5	5	6.3	1	8.3	2	2.5	4	5.1	2	2.5	1	8.3	3	3.8	6	50.0	12	100.0	
.90-.89			1	9.1	2	18.2	1	9.1			3	6.3	1	11.1	2	2.5	1	2.5	1	1.3	1	1.3	35	44.3	79	100.0	
.80-.79					2	22.2	1	11.1			3	27.2	1	11.1	1	4.3	1	4.3	1	11.1	1	11.1	4	36.4	11	100.0	
.70-.69	1	4.3	1	4.3	10	43.5	4	44.5			3	33.3	1	11.1	1	4.3	1	4.3	1	4.3	3	13.04	3	33.3	9	100.0	
.60-.59			1	11.1	4	44.5			8	12.4	4	6.3	1	11.1	1	1.6	4	6.2	1	1.6	2	3.1	6	26.1	23	100.0	
.50-.49	6	9.4	7	10.9	28	43.8	2	3.1	8	12.4	4	6.3	1	11.1	1	1.6	4	6.2	1	1.6	2	3.1	1	1.6	64	100.0	
4.9 & Less									13	6.2	16	7.7	4	1.9	5	2.4	7	3.4	6	2.9	8	3.8	56	26.8	209		
Total	13	6.2	12	5.7	63	30.1	6	2.9	13	6.2	16	7.7	4	1.9	5	2.4	7	3.4	6	2.9	8	3.8	56	26.8	209		

Summary

Under inspection was a group of 215 students who entered The Fort Valley State College as new freshmen in September, 1952. All were graduates of Georgia high-schools and were residents of the state at the time of admission.

1. Of the original group 26 per cent, or 56 students, were registered twelve quarters; 46, or 21.4 per cent, were graduated.
2. Although a loss in registration occurred throughout the twelve quarters, the greatest loss was after the third quarter (13.9 per cent).
3. A large number of the original group has some scholastic action taken against them sometime during their stay in the college (62.3 per cent). Of those students graduated in four years, 39.1 per cent (18) had experienced academic action.
4. During the four-year period 43.7 per cent of all freshmen were registered three quarters or less as compared with 26.04 per cent who were registered twelve quarters.
5. The three variables, high-school grade-point average, percentile rank score of the psychological examination, and the first quarter average, do little to indicate which student or group of students will persist. Student persistence is enhanced, however, by performance, high-school or first quarter (college), or test performance.

The first quarter grade-point average is the earliest definition of the worth of a student. This initial encounter between the student and college affords a measure of actual college performance that is readily available. This measure seems to be the better measure of prediction of persistence. The higher the measure of attainment in any one of the selected variables, the greater are the chances of persistence in terms of quarters registered. It seems that we are better able to identify the student who will probably persist than the one who will not. But after he has been identified, we can not be too certain that he will persist. Perhaps it would be well if attention turned to identifying those who can not and will not persist. Identification without doubt is needed.

Individual predictions are not warranted on the basis of the criteria presented in this report. We have all heard the faculty yelp when an "untouchable" does remain in college for twelve quarters and does graduate. The criteria discussed in this report are, in the main, merely a part of the growth pattern of the student. This pattern is a growing and dynamic one, not characteristically absolute or static.