

Fall 2008 to Fall 2009 Retention Rates

Introduction

Fall to Fall Retention Rates
First-Time, Full-Time Freshmen

Entering Year	Retention Rate
2004	77%
2005	76%
2006	81%
2007	80%
2008	79%

The strongest predictor of student success at an institution is the interaction between what a student brings to the college and what the college environment has to offer in return. Retention is affected more by the interaction between student characteristics and environmental variables than any other college outcome measure. The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey responses, for the entering class of fall 2009, confirmed that a ‘student transformation’ has taken place that corresponds with the institutional transformation that has occurred over the last four years. The Class of 2013 embodies the attributes of the “promising students” who are prepared to “think critically and creatively” and “engage in active citizenship,” that the College has been positioning itself to attract. The fit between the entering students’ expectations and the College’s mission and values is a positive indication that Keene State will continue to retain 80% or more of its incoming freshmen (a detailed discussion of the CIRP survey results can be found on the Institutional Research website:

<http://www.keene.edu/ir/>).

The National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE) survey results for the fall 2008 freshman class provided further evidence of the student transformation that has taken place in response to the Integrative Studies approach to teaching and learning. The NSSE provides “benchmark” scores for four key areas of engagement: Level of Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, and the Supportiveness of the Campus Environment. In 2006, and prior, Keene State’s freshmen scores were lower on these engagement measures than their COPLAC counterparts. Keene State’s 2008 freshmen surpassed the earlier cohorts on these measures, and were on a par with the COPLAC freshmen (a detailed discussion of the NSSE results can also be found on the Institutional Research website).

The qualities of the students who choose to come to Keene State College, and their engagement with the campus environment are the reasons why KSC’s retention rates are comparable to those of more selective institutions. However, continued vigilance on the part of the College’s faculty and staff is necessary if our students are to continue to stay, not only at the present level, but at level that is even higher. To that end, this report offers a deeper examination of student retention rates, by demographic and programmatic levels. The first section will examine the retention rates of the undergraduate student body by class and degree program. The second section will examine the retention rates of all first-time students by gender, race/ethnicity, age, home state, full/part-time status, first-generation status, residential accommodations, admissions categories, high school grade point average, SAT scores, and their anticipated area of study.

Retention of All Undergraduate Students by Class Level and Program

Undergraduate Retention Rates by Fall 2008 Class Level

Class	Count	Retention Rate
First-Time Freshmen	1298	79.3%
Continuing Freshmen	461	75.7%
Sophomores	1247	85.2%
Juniors (who did not graduate)	914	84.0%
Seniors (who did not graduate)	216	49.1%

The differences in retention rates by class level are statistically significant $\chi^2_4 = 165.6$, $p < .000$

Following federal guidelines, counts exclude 46 students who were studying abroad and not enrolled.

Student retention rates, by class level, follow similar patterns from year to year. Two areas of concern continue to present themselves. The first is the lower retention rates for students who did not earn enough credits to advance to the sophomore level by the beginning of their second academic year. The reasons why these students left is unclear although it can be speculated that these students may have benefited from an early identification system that offered them more academic support. The numbers could also have increased due to the effects of the economic downturn. The second area of concern pertains to those students who began the fall 2008 semester as seniors, and did not graduate. This retention is the lowest it has been in four years, which could also be related to the effects of the economy.

(Note: The percentage of students who officially withdraw or file leaves of absences is too small (<14%) to provide a statistically valid inference for the larger population of students who were not retained).

The retention rates for all KSC programs that had 10 or more students enrolled in fall 2008 are presented in the following table.

Fall 2008 Undergraduate Retention Rates by Program

Program	Count	Retention Rate	Program	Count	Retention Rate
Architecture	53	83.0%	History	32	84.4%
Art	33	78.8%	Honors	35	91.4%
Athletic Training	20	85.0%	Journalism	24	66.7%
Biology	51	90.2%	Management	99	74.7%
Communications	36	66.7%	Mathematics	24	95.8%
Computer Science	29	86.2%	Music	61	85.2%
Economics	19	73.7%	Physical Education	31	90.3%
Education	140	85.7%	Physical Science	52	76.9%
English	90	78.9%	Safety Studies	146	79.5%
Environmental Studies	29	82.8%	Social Science	24	75.0%
Film	66	81.8%	Sociology	58	79.3%
General Science	11	72.7%	Technical Studies	13	92.3%
Geography	24	79.2%	Theatre & Dance	24	79.2%
Health Science	168	81.0%	Undecided	2671	79.6%

Retention of First-Time, First-Year Freshmen

This section will examine the demographic characteristics and academic preparation of first-time, first-year students who are not retained to their second year. Over the last several years, there have not been any statistically different percentages of students who left KSC based on their gender, race/ethnicity or first-generation status. However, for the fall 2008 entering class, while the trend held for gender and first-generation status, it did not hold up for race/ethnicity. Minority students were retained at a lower rate than majority students (66.7% compared to 79.8%, $\chi^2 = 4.015, p \leq .045$). The differences between retention rates for more specific categories of minority students cannot be examined because the numbers of students are too small. Additionally, all of the students in the entering class of 2008 were full-time, and there were too few students over the age of twenty to make a meaningful comparison based on age.

Fall 2008 Undergraduate Retention Rates by State

Home State	Count	Retention Rate
New Hampshire	583	80.6%
Connecticut	232	80.6%
Massachusetts	263	76.8%
Maine	31	67.7%
New Jersey	15	80.0%
New York	66	84.8%
Outside of the Northeast	11	72.7%
Rhode Island	40	67.5%
Vermont	57	80.7%

Statistically significant differences cannot be identified due to low counts for some state cells

The retention rates for the fall 2008 first-time, first-year students show differences based on their home state. Students from Rhode Island and Maine had the lowest retention rates of the students from the Northeast.

Status

Admissions Status	Count	Retention Rate
Straight Admit	478	77.6%
Awarded Merit	177	89.8%
Awarded Merit, no \$ left	103	80.6%
At Risk	540	77.0%

Differences are statistically significant:
 $\chi^2_3 = 14.56, p \leq .002$

Fall 2008 Undergraduate Retention Rates by Admissions

The fall 2008 first-time, first-year freshmen who qualified for academic merit awards, whether they received money or not, were retained at significantly higher rates than students who were either typical admits or were admitted at risk. Retention rates were also examined to determine if there were any differences for students by high school gpa and SAT categories. These tests did not show any statistically significant differences

Fall 2008 Undergraduate Retention Rates by On/Off-Campus

Residency Status

Residency Status	Count	Retention Rate
Off-Campus	64	59.4%
Carle	349	79.7%
Holloway	320	80.0%
Huntress	53	67.9%
Monadnock	129	87.6%
Randall	365	79.5%
Other on-campus	18	100.0%

Statistically significant differences cannot be identified due to low counts for some state cells

First-time, first-year freshmen who live off-campus have historically had lower retention rates than students who live on campus. This trend continued for the fall 2008 entering class. Students who lived in Huntress Hall also had lower retention rates than students who lived on-campus, elsewhere.

The following table summarizes the retention rates for the fall 2008 first-time, first-year entering freshman class by their intended discipline (disciplines with less than 10 entering freshmen have been excluded from the table).

Discipline	Count	Retention Rate
Architecture	44	84.1%
Art	55	80.0%
Biology	24	79.2%
Chemistry	10	70.0%
Communications	39	79.5%
Computer Science	17	82.4%
Education	245	80.8%
English	35	77.1%
Environmental Studies	25	88.0%
Film	45	84.4%
Health Science	48	87.5%

Discipline	Count	Retention Rate
History	29	75.9%
Journalism	19	42.1%
Management	83	66.3%
Mathematics	15	86.7%
Music	20	90.0%
Physical Education	60	85.0%
Psychology	95	82.1%
Safety Studies	12	91.7%
Social Science	19	94.7%
Spanish	10	80.0%
Theatre & Dance	25	88.0%
Undecided	282	76.2%