

**Office of the Vice Provost for Student Success
University of Kansas**

The Office of the Vice Provost for Student Success values collaborative partnerships that focus resources on initiatives important to the greater University Community and to Student Success. The most important initiatives are those that promote student success in the classroom and foster an environment in which students can learn and grow. These initiatives are most successful when they are developed in collaboration with other departments, focus on issues that clearly merit attention and are achievable in the time designated.

Priority: Determine the Characteristics of Academically Successful Students at KU
Facilitator: Frank DeSalvo
Leader: Tammara Durham

Charge: Conduct research to determine important intellectual, personal, behavioral and spiritual characteristics of successful undergraduate students at KU.

Outcome: Develop a composite picture of successful freshman/sophomore students in various academic programs. Develop models that students may imitate and replicate.

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Successful Student Priority Summary

The charge to the Priority group was to conduct research to determine important intellectual, personal, behavioral and spiritual characteristics of successful undergraduate students at the University of Kansas.

Two of the Priority group members (Matt Gallagher & Shane Lopez) had a similar study: Psychological Factors Predicting Academic Success. These 220 students are participants in an ongoing study. We received approval from Human Subjects Committee Lawrence to use this existing group of students for the Successful Student Priority and to offer incentives for participation.

We were hoping to interview 16 students of the eligible 25, anticipating saturation at eight. Interviews were conducted using the attached interview questions. The criteria for interview selection included a Fall 2006 semester grade point average of 2.5-2.99 with a Spring 2007 grade point average of 3.0 and above. Interviews lasted 15-20 minutes.

Overall summary of responses:

- Most students indicated that college was not a choice. It was the next step, an "expectation" that they had grown up with.
- Students report KU because of the wide range of majors; it was close to home; and the perceived quality professors.
- Students weren't clear about the meaning of the term "campus resources." Very often they had to be prompted with examples, after which a few mentioned UAC but no other offices were mentioned. *That could be leading since the interviewer identified herself as UAC employee.*
- The campus resource students found most useful were the libraries.
- Students had trouble identifying what resources they received from their home/community other than financial assistance.
- Students only made connections with faculty members in order to get help with assignments/tests. They also found it easier to do so in smaller classes.
- Students appeared to not want to spend much time on spirituality. This was demonstrated by the one-word quick responses.
- All but six students were involved with Intramural Sports expressing it was a good way to make friends. Of the remaining students, one talked about getting involved with the "rec center" somehow; the other two mentioned research and Boys and Girls Club.

- In general, students reported they mattered to their friends and some family. Two students indicated they mattered to their professor and one of those also mattered to his on-campus supervisor.
- Students in general perceived the Fall semester was harder because they were getting acclimated. The Spring may not have been easier, but it was perceived that way.
- The number one piece of advice students would give incoming freshmen is to develop time management skills, followed closely by go to class and study. (Students enjoyed responding to this question.)

Overall, students who performed reasonably well indicated there was no real “magic” about their second semester performance.

The parallel study (Gallagher & Lopez), supports the notion that academic hope and academic self-efficacy are the best predictors of academic performance after controlling for high school grade point average and ACT scores. Academic hope also predicts whether students enrolled in the spring semester.

At the conclusion of the qualitative study, we used data gathered by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning to further define/describe the successful student characteristics. The quantitative data supported what we learned from the study participants: Student who start out good, have a greater chance of improving or continuing the academic pattern.

The Fall 2006 entering class, had a 79.95 percent retention rate. Of the students who returned for the Fall 2007 semester, we considered the following: ACT/SAT, high school graduating class, high school grade point average, sex, residency, housing type (on or off campus), and ethnicity.

From the information provided, we could make the following conclusions:

- Students who matched the Admissions Profile ACT of 24 (OIRP data 24-27) were more likely to increase their grade point average from Fall to Spring semester.
- Students with a graduating class of 300-499 (44%) also found greater success in the Fall 2006 class. (33% of students came from smaller and 6% from larger graduating classes.)
- Students who achieved a high school grade point average of 3.00-3.74 found themselves in a similar grade range in the Spring semester of their freshman year compared to their Fall performance of 2.5-2.99.
- Females tend to move from good to great 16% more often their male counterparts, which is mildly significant.**
- Residency did not appear to impact a student’s tendency to show improvement.
- Where on campus living is concerned, students more typically started out great and stayed great, rather than move from good to great. Interestingly,

students who started “bad,” were less likely to experience an academic recovery of 2.5 grade point average or better.**

- Hispanic students were more likely (2%) than any ethnic group including white students to move from good to great.

The KU student profile boasts:

- 55 percent of the freshmen class graduated in the top 25 percent of their graduating class, the good to great students make up 52 percent of that population.
- 47 percent of the freshman class was in the 25-36 ACT range, the good to great make up 56 percent of the population.

Interestingly, students with lower grade point averages tended to overestimate their future term and graduation grade point averages more than students with higher grade point averages. In essence, students had a clearer and more accurate perception of the academic performance when their grade point average was in the “good” range (2.5-2.99). This can be explained by the students’ responses to their improved performance the second semester. They stated it seemed easier given their experience and familiarity with higher education expectations the spring semester.

***Grade point average categories:*

Great to Great = 3.00-4.00 to 3.00-4.00

Great to Good = 3.00-4.00 to 2.50-2.99

Great to Bad = 3.00-4.00 to Below 2.5

Good to Great = 2.5-2.99 to 3.00-4.00

Good to Good = 2.5-2.99 to 2.5-2.99

Good to Bad = 2.5-2.99 to Below 2.5

Bad to Great = Below 2.5 to 3.00-4.00

Bad to Good = Below 2.5 to 2.5-2.99

Bad to Bad = Below 2.5 to Below 2.5

Pseudo	HS	State	H.S. GPA	Rank	Size	Percent
Mike	Wilton	CT	2.35	DNR	~262	NA
Steve	Blue Valley North	KS	3.51	145	408	36
Den	Rockhurst	MO	3.06	DNR	~233	
Ernie	St. Mary's	KS	3.32	16	47	34
Andrea	Free State	KS	3.72	104	430	24
Kate	Rose Hill	KS	3.82	11	127	9
Bill	Shawnee Mission NW	KS	3.5	149	438	34
October	Baldwin	KS	3.15	44	102	43
Elizabeth	JFK	MO	3.26	46	123	37

6 IS 88% above 3.0
 30OS
 two-thirds or 66%

All in top half
 Two with no rank

Success Priority Results by Category

Total Respondents: 9

College Experience

1. Did you feel prepared for college?

- Yes (total): 7
 - Because of high school experiences: 4
 - Because of other higher education experiences (FSI, community college): 2
 - Because of other experiences: 1
- Partially: 1
- No: 1

2.1. Why did you decide to attend college?

- Parental influence/expectations (“it wasn’t a choice”): 4
- Because it’s what one does after high school: 1
- Career-oriented reasons: 6

2.2. Why did you choose KU?

- Scenery/campus aesthetics: 2
- Family legacy: 1
- Location (close to family/home): 6
- Location (in-state): 2
- Location (close to metro area as opposed to rural): 1
- Location (out-of-state): 1
- Location (far from family/home): 3
- Quality of Academic Programs: 1
- Sports fan (basketball and/or football): 3
- Cost (not as expensive as area institutions): 1

3. How would you describe your experience at KU?

- Overall Positive: 6
- Overall Negative: 1
- Stressful (difficult to distinguish whether student meant positively or negatively): 1
- First semester negative, second semester positive: 1

4. Is KU meeting your needs?

- Yes: 8
- No: 0
- “Yes and No”: 1

5. Do you intend to be at KU next semester?

- Yes: 9
- No: 0

6.1. Did you feel support/pressure from your home/community to do well in college?

- Yes Support: 7
- No Support: 0
- Yes Pressure: 8
- No Pressure: 1
- More Pressure than Support: 3
- More Support than Pressure: 1

6.2. How would you describe that support/pressure?

- Pressure to meet standards set by community so can live same lifestyle in future: 3
- Self-motivated pressure: 4
- Public pressure to succeed (from community): 2
- Understanding/caring support from family: 3

Resources

7. What campus resources did you use?

- University Advising Center (UAC): 3
- University Career Center (UCC): 1
- Math Help Room: 2
- Libraries: 8
- Professors/Instructors: 1
- Fraternity tutor: 1
- Academic Resource Center in Residence Hall (ARC): 1
- Computer Labs: 2
- Busses: 1
- Residence Halls: 1
- Student Recreation Center: 1

8. What resources would have been helpful or are there any resources that KU doesn't offer

- that would be useful?
- No additional resources needed: 5
- "I don't know": 3
- More review sessions/help rooms led by instructors: 2

9.1. Did you receive resources from your home/community that contributed to your success?

- Yes: 4
- No: 5

9.2. What were the resources that contributed to your success?

- Financial Assistance: 2
- Siblings who are also attending KU: 1
- Friends attending KU: 1

- Family members/friends at home (study help, support, info, etc.): 1
- Informational materials sent by KU to student: 1

10. Describe connections you made with faculty?

- Easy-to-approach: 4
- Available to help: 6
- No connection: 1
- Friendly: 4
- Inspiring: 1
- Understanding: 1

11. How did you make connections with faculty?

- Email (professor initiated contact): 1
- Email (student initiated contact): 3
- Attended Office Hours: 4
- Approach Teacher After Class: 2
- Talk during Class Discussion: 3
- Did not make connection because “teachers seemed too busy”: 1

Involvement

12.1. Does your spirituality or religious practice help you in your academic pursuits?

- Yes: 3
- No: 6

12.2. How would you describe your success?

- No Response: 6
- Religion/church drives me/helps me keep going/helped focus: 3

13. What activities are you involved in (on and/or off campus)?

- None: 2
- Fraternity/Sorority: 1
- Intramural sports: 5
- Community service: 2
- Attend football/basketball games: 1
- Student organizations/clubs: 2
- Worked on campus: 2
- Worked off campus: 1
- Used the rec center: 1
- None now but plans to join clubs in future: 2

14. Why did you choose those organizations/activities?

- Fitness-related reasons: 3
- To make friends: 4
- To become a part of the university/school spirit: 1
- Personal enjoyment/interests/fun/stress-relief: 5
- Needed money: 1
- Get to know KU better: 1
- To gain leadership experience: 1
- Something to do/"out of sheer boredom": 1
- Interest in serving the community: 2
- Group pertained to academic interests: 1

15. Who or what makes you feel you matter on campus?

- Friends: 6
- Family: 2
- Nobody: 3
- Fraternity/sorority: 1
- RA: 1
- Professors/Instructors: 2
- Supervisor at campus job: 1

Academics

16. Do you think this semester was easy compared to last semester?

- Yes, adjustment/familiarity issues first semester made first semester more difficult: 7
- No, second semester harder: 1
- No, they were the same: 1

17. What are your academic goals (17.1) and have they challenged you (17.2)?

17.1:

- To earn high grades (3.0 and above): 9
- To be admitted to professional school: 3
- To graduate on-time: 2
- To graduate early (less than 4 years): 1
- To earn a graduate degree: 3

17.2:

- Yes: 9
- No: 0

18. What are your career goals (18.1) and are they achievable (18.2)?

18.1:

- Psychiatrist/counselor: 1
- Speech therapy position: 1
- To graduate: 1
- Go to Graduate School: 2

- Corporate position: 4
- Get a job (non-specific): 3
- Work outside the US: 2
- Make a lot of money: 1

18.2:

- Yes: 9
- No: 0

19.1. Have you ever changed your major?

- Yes: 5
- No: 2
- No, but added additional major: 1
- No, still undecided: 1

19.2. What prompted your major change?

- Found out what is needed for desired career/initial misconception of original major: 2
- Found pre-med too competitive/stressful but wanted to be in health-related field: 2
- Found something more interesting: 1

20. What critical (or important or life-changing) events affected your success?

- Change in outside time commitments (drop fraternity, student org, work, etc.): 2
- Disappointment in own initial academic performance/self-motivation: 3
- Change of advisor: 1
- Change in living situation (new roommate): 1
- Being adjusted/familiar with campus: 2
- Nothing: 2

21. What would you tell an incoming freshman about succeeding at KU?

- Learn test-taking strategies: 1
- Keep up with homework/studying: 5
- Take advantage of extra credit opportunities: 1
- Time management: 3
- “You will get used to it”, “Don’t be overwhelmed”: 1
- Keep in contact with friends and family: 1
- Figure out priorities/focus on school: 3
- Get to know a lot of people: 2
- Don’t live with someone you know from home: 1
- Keep in touch with advisors: 1
- Balance school and fun: 1
- Go to class: 1

Psychological Factors Predicting Academic Success
Matt Gallagher & Shane Lopez

Sample:

129 Males, 100 Females
Age range of 18 – 21, mean age = 18.44
152 Kansas Residents, 77 from elsewhere

First Semester GPA Categorized:

GPA Range	Frequency	Percent
0 - .99	10	4.3
1.0 - 1.99	33	14.3
2.0 - 2.49	54	23.5
2.5 - 2.99	58	25.2
3.0 - 3.49	50	21.7
3.5 - 4.0	25	10.9
Total	229	100.0

- The mean GPA for the sample last semester was 2.54,
- The median was 2.6
- The mode was 3.0.
- The range of the GPA's was from 0.33 to 4.0.

Correlations between Fall GPA and Psychological Factors

	<i>r</i> with Fall 06 GPA	<i>r</i> with Fall GPA – controlling for academic history++
Academic Hope	.384***	.369***
Academic Self-Efficacy	.421***	.314***
Gallup Student College Engagement Scale	.204**	.199**
General Hope	.249***	.194**
General Self-Efficacy	.10	.04
Curiosity	.08	-.04
High School GPA	.451***	--
ACT-Composite	.484***	--

*** $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$

++ academic history = high school gpa and ACT composite score

Mean levels of psychological factors by GPA category:

GPA Range	Academic Hope *	Academic Self-Efficacy*	Engagement	Curiosity
	1-8 scale	1-7 scale	1 – 5 scale	1-7 scale
0 - .99	5.0	4.4	3.5	4.8
1.0 - 1.99	5.7	4.7	3.6	4.4
2.0 - 2.49	6.4	4.9	3.8	4.9
2.5 - 2.99	6.2	5.1	3.8	4.7
3.0 - 3.49	6.5	5.4	3.8	4.8
3.5 - 4.0	6.9	6.0	3.9	5.0

* significant differences at $p < .001$

ANOVA – hope: $F(5,223) = 7.3, p < .001$

ANOVA – academic self-efficacy: $F(5,223) = 10.4, p < .001$

Correlations between GPA Goals and Expectations, psychological factors and Fall GPA

	Academic Self-Efficacy	Academic Hope	Fall 06 GPA
Graduation GPA goal	.204**	.257***	.338***
Graduation GPA expectation	.365***	.381***	.426***
Current Semester GPA goal	.417***	.415***	.647***
Current Semester GPA expectation	.532***	.458***	.713***

*** $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$.

Mean Overall and Semester GPA Goals and Expectations by Fall 06 GPA Category

GPA Range	Graduation GPA goal*	Graduation GPA expectation*	Current Semester GPA goal*	Current Semester GPA expectation*
0 - .99	3.11	2.94	2.61	2.40
1.0 - 1.99	3.31	3.11	2.68	2.48
2.0 - 2.49	3.28	3.22	2.89	2.70
2.5 - 2.99	3.41	3.30	3.16	3.00
3.0 - 3.49	3.48	3.42	3.35	3.24
3.5 - 4.0	3.64	3.60	3.72	3.60
Total	3.40	3.30	3.11	2.95

* significant differences at $p < .001$

ANOVA – Graduation GPA Goal –

$F(5,222) = 6.76, p < .001$

ANOVA – Graduation GPA Expectation –

$F(5,222) = 10.55, p < .001$

ANOVA – Semester GPA Goal –

$F(5,221) = 34.95, p < .001$

ANOVA – Semester GPA Expectation–

$F(5,221) = 47.94, p < .001$

Recommendations

Students who are successful know what it takes to be successful, hard work. There are no short cuts to success. Study participants had the opportunity to provide advice, recommendations on academic success to new students. What we learned is nothing new for those who work in higher education.

The themes included: studying, time management, getting involved, attending class, using resources. Perhaps the message would best received from their peers in a less-structured setting.

Interview Questions:

COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

1. Did you feel prepared for college?
2. Why did you decide to attend college? Why did you choose KU?
3. How would you describe your experience at KU? <May need prompting.>
4. Is KU meeting your needs? In what ways?
5. Do you intend to be at KU next semester?
6. Did you feel support/pressure from your home/community to do well in college?
How would you describe that support/pressure?

RESOURCES

7. What campus resources did you use?
8. What resources would have been helpful?
9. Did you receive resources from your home/community that contributed to your success?
What were the resources that contributed to your success?
10. Describe connections you made with faculty?
11. How did you make connections with faculty?

INVOLVEMENT

12. Does your spirituality or religious practice help you in your academic pursuits?
How would you describe your success?
13. What activities are you involved in (on and/or off campus)?
14. Why did you choose those organizations?
15. Who or what makes you feel you matter on campus?

ACADEMICS

16. Do you think this semester was easy compared to last semester? What made it easier?
17. What are your academic goals and have they challenged you?
18. What are your career goals and are they achievable?
19. If there was a change in academic major... What prompted your major change?

20. What critical (important life changing) events affected your success?
21. What would you tell an incoming freshman about succeeding at KU?