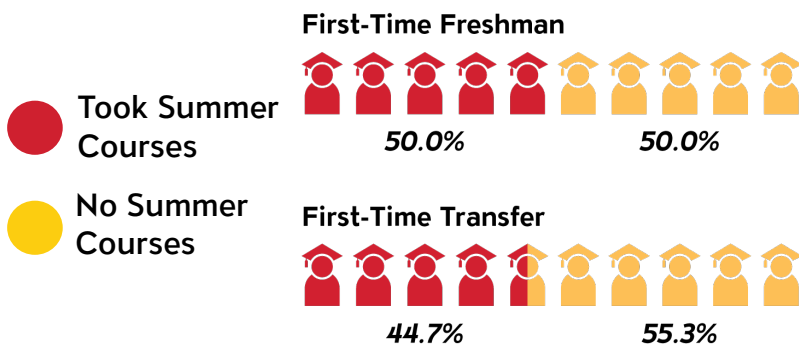


# Summer Course Enrollment and Student Success

Although the academic year is traditionally conceptualized as the Fall and Spring terms, many students take additional courses in the Summer term. Summer coursework is often thought of as either a chance to get ahead or an opportunity to redo coursework that students didn't pass during the traditional academic year. In this report, we examine who takes summer coursework and how much, as well as whether summer coursework is associated with student success outcomes.

## Data:

The analyses focus on data on 70,638 undergraduate students who first matriculated at CSUN between 2006 and 2013 (all Fall entry), including 37,012 first-time freshmen (FTF) and 37,017 first-time transfer (FTT) students. All student data were compiled by the Office of Institutional Research.



## How Many Students Enrolled in Summer Courses?

About half of undergraduate students (both FTF and FTT) population take at least one summer course, either at CSUN or at a community college (or both).

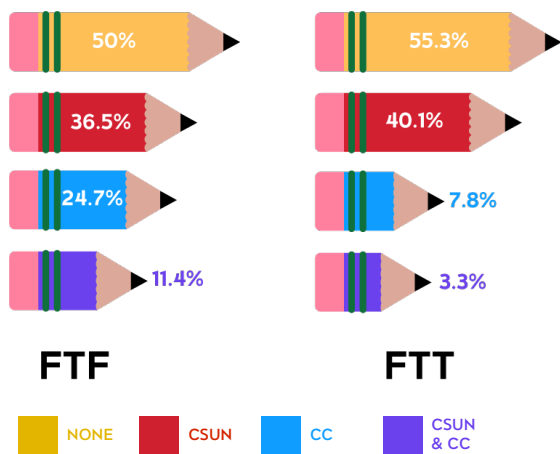
### Where Do Students Take Summer Classes?

Students were more likely to take summer courses at CSUN than at a community college (CC); this was especially true among FTT.

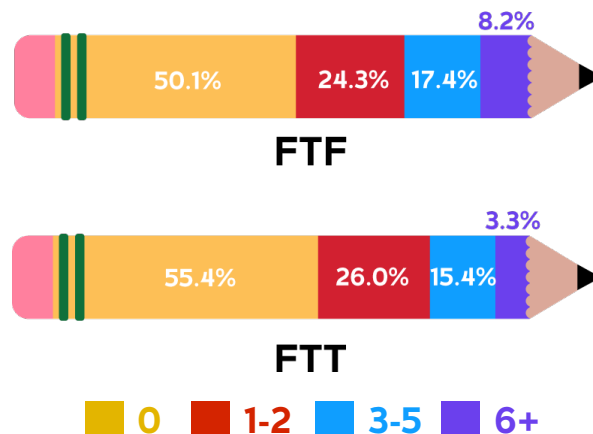
### How Many Summer Classes Did Students Take?

About half of students do not take any summer courses. Students who did take summer classes most commonly took 1 to 2 summer courses in total (either at CSUN or at a CC) throughout their time at CSUN (equally split between taking 1 or 2 courses). A smaller proportion of students took 3 to 5 summer courses, and even fewer students took 6 or more summer courses. This pattern is similar among FTF and FTT students.

## Summer Enrollment During Time At CSUN



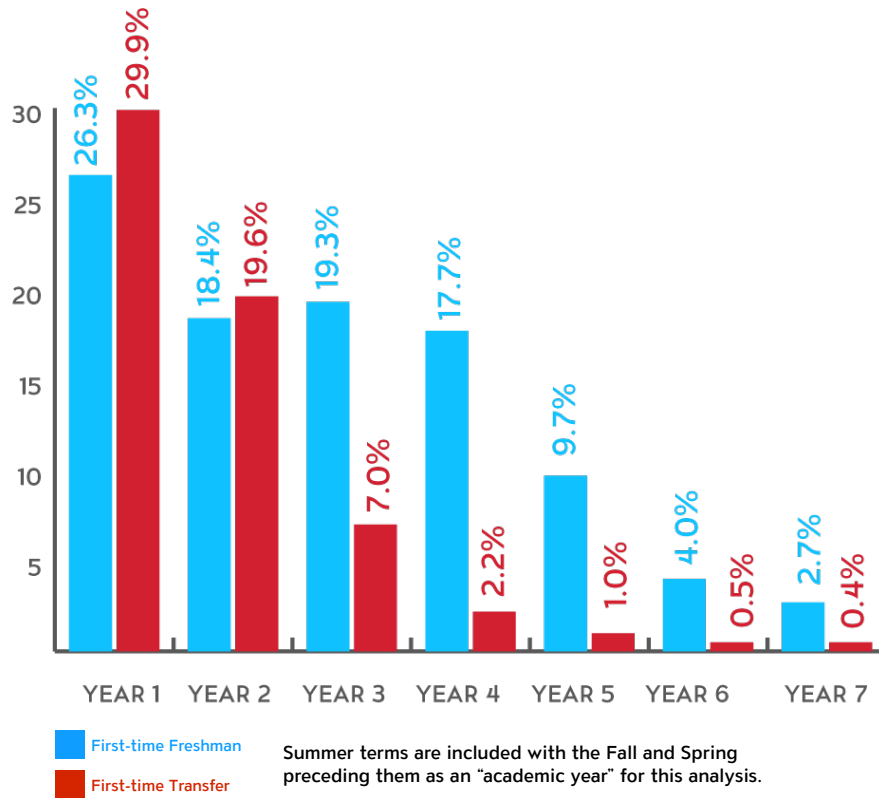
## Number of Summer Courses



Percentage excludes students who took summer school courses before entering CSUN; "Took summer courses at CSUN & CC" represents the overlap between "took summer courses at CSUN" and "took summer courses at a CC", i.e. students who belong in both categories.

## When Do Students Take Summer Classes?

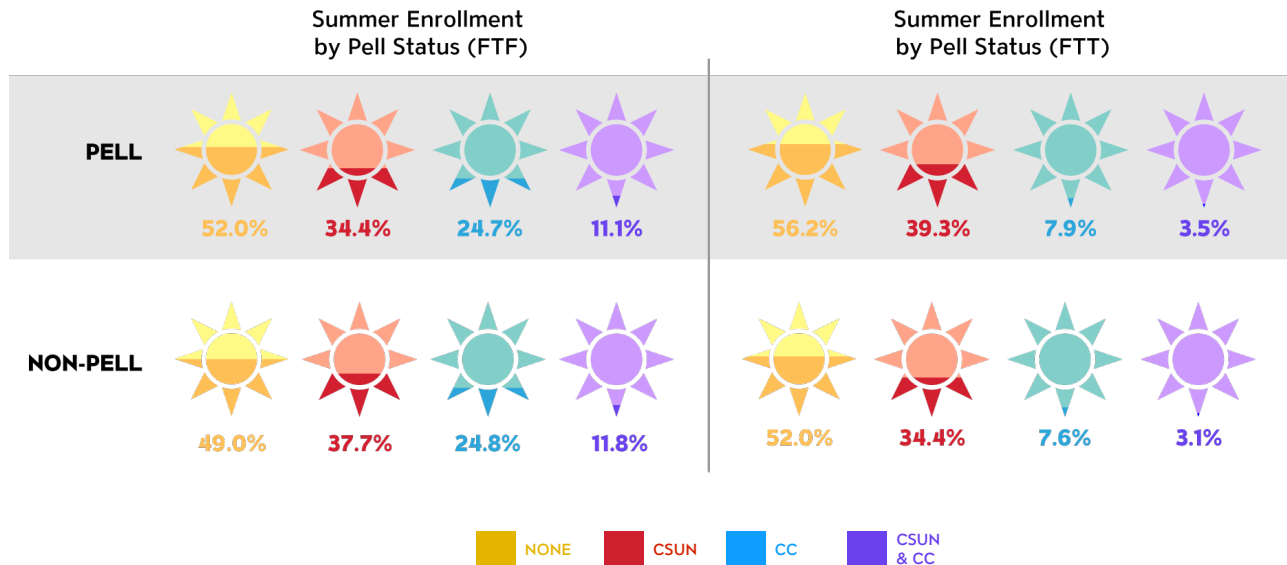
The timing by which students take summer classes varies slightly between FTF and FTT students. Summer enrollment is highest in the first year for both FTF and FTT students. Students who entered as FTF continue to take summer classes at relatively consistent (though slightly lower) rates in years 2 through 4. For FTT, summer enrollment becomes much lower in year 2, and even more drastically in year 3 and after.



## What Are The Student Demographics in Summer Classes?

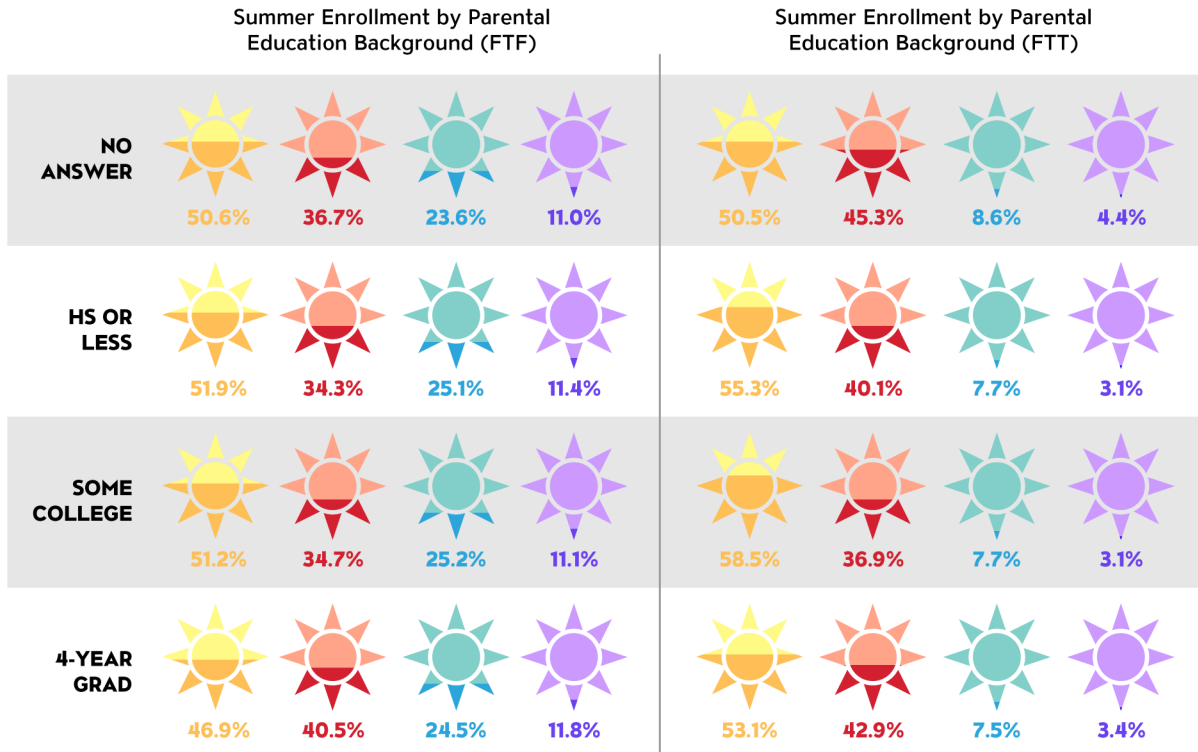
### Summer enrollment by Pell Status

Although non-Pell-recipient FTF were most likely to take summer courses than any other group, the differences in summer enrollment by Pell status were relatively small.



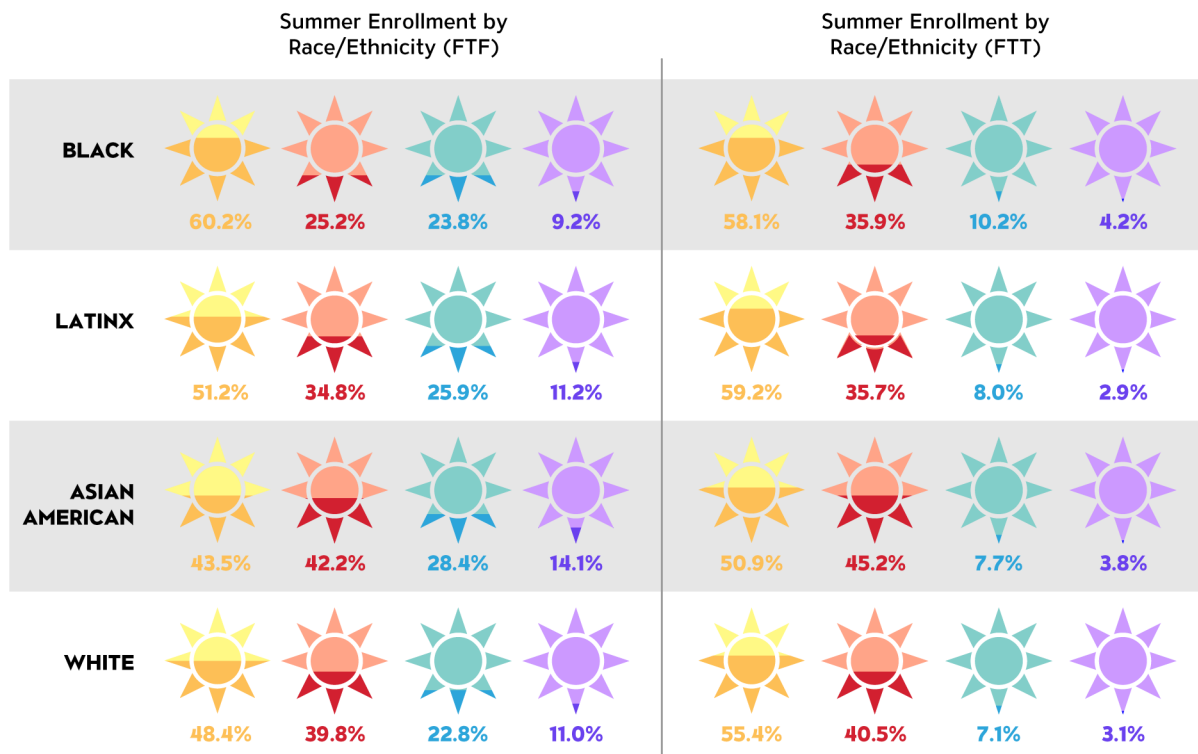
### Summer enrollment by parent educational background

FTF with parents who had 4-year college degrees were most likely to take summer courses and FTT with parents with some college (but no 4-year degree) and high school or less were least likely to take summer courses, but the differences were again relatively small.



### Summer enrollment by race/ethnicity

The largest differences seem to be by race: White and Asian American students are more likely to take summer courses than Black or Latinx students, with the largest differences among FTF.



# Analysis

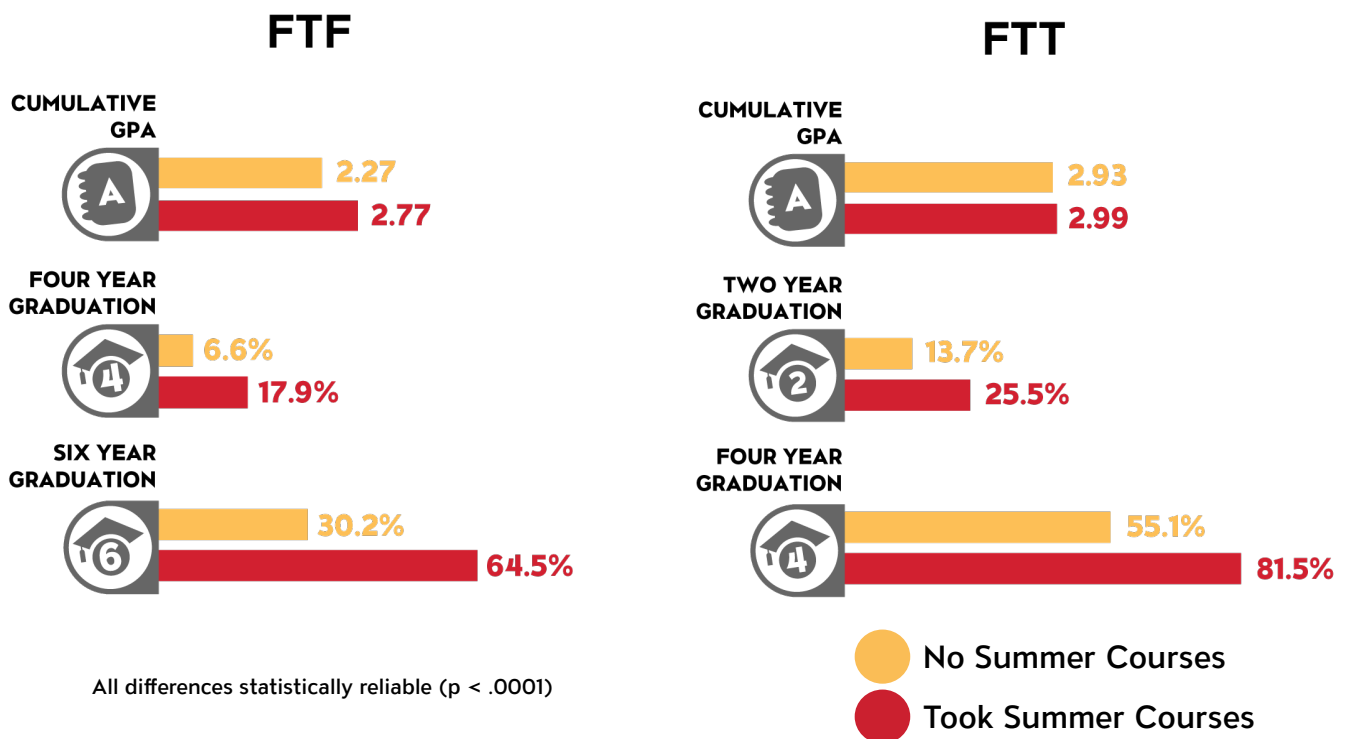
In order to assess the relationship between summer course enrollment and academic success, we compared students who have taken at least one summer class with students who did not take any summer classes during their time at CSUN on the following outcomes: overall grades (*cumulative GPA*) and graduation rates.

We analyzed freshman (*FTF*) and transfer (*FTT*) students separately as they may have different academic plans or needs when it comes to summer classes. As individual characteristics may also affect academic outcomes, we matched participants and non-participants for student demographics (gender, ethnicity, Pell status, generation status, whether they come from the local service area) and academic characteristics (cohort, college of major, high school GPA for FTF, transfer GPA for FTT) in all of the analyses.

## Findings

### Summer Course Enrollment and Academic Outcomes

Across all academic outcome metrics, students who took at least one summer course during their time at CSUN earned higher cumulative GPAs and were more likely to graduate on time (2 and 4 year graduation rates for FTT, 4 and 6 year graduation rates for FTF) as compared to the matched group of students who did not take any summer courses. These findings apply to both FTF and FTT students. (additional findings with regard to disaggregated outcomes are available in the [addendum](#)).



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## Takeaway

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Summer coursework can serve to help students stay on track toward their graduation goals. The current analyses support this strategy: we found that summer coursework is reliably associated with better cumulative grades and have a higher likelihood to graduate on time.

Overall, our results suggest that taking summer courses is robustly associated with better academic outcomes across a large, multi-cohort student population, controlling for student demographic characteristics. It is likely that self-selection also played a role; for example, students who have access to more guidance on how to navigate their college trajectories may be more likely to take summer classes. These results may also provide evidence that summer courses can serve a facilitating role (e.g., early graduation) in addition to a remedial one (e.g., repeating a failed class). On the other hand, since not all subjects or formats in regular courses are offered over the summer, future analyses could look further into course-specific outcomes associated with summer enrollment (e.g., outcomes in lower/ upper division courses or courses from specific majors/subjects).

A recent effort at CSUN that explicitly focuses on summer enrollment to help with student success outcomes is the **CSUN SPRINT grant, which has been shown to have a positive impact on unit accumulation**. Ongoing evaluations of outcomes associated with this program, along with summer coursework more generally, will be important for better understanding how best to support student success via summer enrollment.