EVALUATION OF THE
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES (SSS) PROGRAM
Academic Year 2009-2010

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Executive Summary

This report provides an evaluation of the Student Support Services (SSS) program at SFSU for academic year 2009-2010. It is based primarily on an analysis of students’ academic records, supplemented with reports of student participation in SSS required activities and other services and a survey administered to SSS participants at the end of the academic year. The formative evaluation found that the 91 SSS first-year students who were selected into the program this year, by and large, took advantage of benefits provided by the program, such as priority registration, financial aid, and the use of office equipment. Most are also complying with requirements with respect to advising, tutoring and attendance at workshops, although there is quite a bit of variation with respect to the extent of their compliance. While advising and workshops were shown to be positively related to academic achievement, tutoring was not. This has consistently been the case, although this year was also marked by particularly low levels of student involvement in this activity.

SSS objectives with respect to the proportion of students retained and in good standing at the end of the year were easily met. Moreover, the proportion of SSS students in good standing exceeded the proportion of students who received only those services offered by the EOP program, the comparison group. SSS students also earned, on average, higher GPAs and earned a higher number of units than the EOP students.

Recommendations speak to the need to ensure greater compliance with the advising and workshop-participation requirements, given their long track record of contributing to student achievement. It is also suggested that program staff look at what may have led to reduced interest in tutoring this year. More detailed recordkeeping would further facilitate the assessment of compliance and that activity’s role in improving academic performance. Minor recommendations included re-assessing the value of the study space provided by the program and modifications to the survey instrument.
Introduction

This report provides an evaluation of the Student Support Services (SSS) program at San Francisco State University (SFSU) for academic year 2009-2010. This represents the interim year between a four-year cycle ending in Spring 2009, and a new five-year cycle, which began in Fall 2010. This evaluator, a Professor of Public Administration at SFSU, conducted the evaluations for the first two four-year cycles under the auspices of SFSU’s Public Research Institute. That organization was disbanded in Spring 2009, and she is now providing the service independently through a contract with the SSS program.

The purpose of the evaluation is to measure the impact of the SSS program on freshmen in their first year of the program. The SSS program is designed to increase the academic performance of students who are at high risk for dropping out of the university. The program is primarily funded by the U.S. Department of Education (DoE) which has established criteria for the composition of the first-year class. These are that two-thirds of participants are disabled or first generation and from low-income families. “First generation” is defined as having no parent who has a four-year degree from an academic institution in the U.S. At SFSU, all program participants are low-income and at least two-thirds are first-generation. Some students may also be disabled, but disabled students are not specifically targeted for recruitment by the program.

While DoE has been the principle funder since the program started at SFSU in 1997, support also comes from some other sources, as follows:

- Department of Education $246,742
- State lottery funds from the SFSU Presidents Office $13,000
- Educational Opportunity Program $4,825

In previous years, the SFSU Office of Research and Sponsored Programs has also contributed funds to help cover the formal evaluation of the SSS program. None were provided this year.

The SSS program staff has a systematic method in place for recruiting incoming students to join the program. Students completed a needs assessment as part of their application to the Equal Opportunity Program (EOP). Once accepted into EOP, SSS sends out communication to EOP students inviting them to apply for the SSS Program. Those who respond with a complete application are screened to meet federal income and demographic criteria (i.e., first generation and/or disability status) before becoming active SSS participants. Other potential participants can be recruited by word of mouth, or based on recommendations if they are admitted late into the EOP Program, missing the SSS Program invitation. This year, a total of 493 incoming students were invited to apply. Of those, 183 returned questionnaires. Ninety four were selected for participation, and all enrolled. Three were dropped from the program early in the semester, due to lack of participation. The
program includes more than 100 other students who returned in their second year. The 91 students remaining in the first year class comprise the cohort that is being evaluated here.

Students in the SSS program also meet eligibility requirements for the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) on campus. SSS students receive greater support than EOP students, but also are required to expend greater effort in return. SSS students receive the maximum of available financial aid, priority registration for classes, and a dedicated space for study, which includes access to computers, telephones and printing. They must participate in an advising session every three weeks and attend a minimum of two university-sponsored workshops each semester. Students who don’t meet certain expectations with regard to English and Math proficiency are also required to participate in group-tutoring sessions.

The objective of this evaluation is to assess the impact of the SSS program on the academic achievement of first-year freshmen. It does so by measuring students’ performance in relation to two outcome indicators established by the program. The first two indicators are that at least 85% of participants are retained, and that 80% are in good standing at the end of their first year. Good standing is defined as having a grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.0. In addition, this evaluator uses a third and fourth indicator: overall GPA (since this is a more sensitive measure than good standing), and total units earned. These measures are reported for the SSS students, the freshman class cohort of students in the EOP program (273 students), and all other university students (3685 this year).

Methodology

Three sources of data were used in this evaluation. First, records were requested for all incoming freshman from the Student Information Management System (SIMS). The two databases, representing the end of the Fall 2009 and Spring 2010 semesters, contain information on the outcome measures such as GPA, number of units earned, and whether students completed their first year. In addition, demographic data is included such as sex, ethnicity, age, whether students are first-generation college students, and information on the pre-college academic preparation of such students. These are high school GPA and scores on standardized tests. These data are used as controls in the analysis since they have an impact on academic performance. Family income and whether students are disabled may also have an impact, but the former is self-reported and must therefore be considered unreliable while the latter is confidential. In these databases, students are also coded as to whether they are in the EOP program and SSS; the latter are verified with the program office.

The second source is a database is comprised of records compiled by the SSS program office. These record students’ participation in activities such as advising and tutoring sessions, and workshops. Also recorded is the time they spend engaged in independent study in the program office. This database is merged with the two SIMS databases to assess the impact of these activities on the outcomes of interest, while controlling for other factors that may affect performance.

The third source of data consists of the responses to a survey that was administered at the end of the student’s first year (April-May 2010). The survey was designed to provide a
qualitative component to the analysis by eliciting students’ feedback on the effectiveness of program activities. It also asked students to tell us how much they have been making use of non-SSS support services such as tutoring or advising from other campus sources. Completion of the survey was voluntary and students were asked not to put any identifying information on it.

Permission to request SIMS data and administer the survey was requested by submitting required documentation through the standard human subjects approval process at SFSU. The permission to move forward was granted in February of 2009.

This evaluation report proceeds as follows. It begins with showing some comparisons among the three groups of students (SSS, EOP and all other freshmen). That is followed by the formative component which examines students’ compliance with program requirements, using the activity database compiled by the program office. It further reports correlations between each of the activities and outcome indicators in order to assess whether they are having the posited impact on student performance. That section also reports on responses to the student survey.

These all lead to the summative component of the evaluation which focuses on the three performance outcome measures: (1) Retention through the end of the first year, (2) whether the students are in good standing, and (3) GPA, which is a more sensitive measure of student performance than simply whether they are in good standing. The number of units completed is also reported.

These indicators are compared to students in the EOP program who were not selected for, or who did not choose to apply for, the SSS program. This cohort serves as the comparison group. While not ideal for comparison purposes, because neither group was randomly selected, it is the best that can be done under the circumstances. Assessment of student outcomes is examined using multivariate analysis techniques so that controls are introduced for other factors that may have an impact on student performance; (e.g., first generation status, measures of pre-college academic preparation). The comparison with the EOP group and multivariate analysis helps support our confidence in our conclusions.

Findings

Comparing the students

Table 1 provides a comparison among SSS students, members of the EOP group (who are not participating in SSS) and all other first time freshmen. In terms of these demographic variables, the only difference is with respect to first-generation status. As expected, for nine out of ten SSS students, neither parent graduated from a four year institution. This is also the case for the vast majority of EOP students (86%), while fewer than half of all other freshmen are in this category.

Consistent with findings outside the university, those who qualify for the EOP program tend to be largely nonwhite. Interestingly, a greater proportion of Asian students are in the SSS program (44%) than in either the EOP program or among nonprogram students (about 28% in both). On the other hand, there is a slightly higher proportion of African Americans and
Latinos in the EOP program (17% and 42%) than in the SSS program (9% and 34%). The proportion of Latinos in both programs is greater than that in the rest of the freshman class (18%). While about one-third of freshmen are White, fewer than 10% of SSS and EOP students are White.

Table 1: Comparing the demographics of SSS, EOP and non-program students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SSS</th>
<th>EOP</th>
<th>Non-program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>68.1%</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-generation</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
<td>85.8%</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>19.1 yrs</td>
<td>19.2 yrs</td>
<td>19.3 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiin, Pacific Isle</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declined to state or more than one</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>3685</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SIMS

Table 2 compares measures that are referred to as “pre-college preparation.” These are measures that approximate the capabilities of students when they start their first semester of college. For example, a student who did better in high school would presumably have a higher GPA when they graduate than students who did not do as well. This is only approximate, because individual high school GPA could also vary by high school.
Table 2 begins by reporting scores on the Entry Level Mathematics (ELM) test, which measures students’ computational skills and the English Placement Test (EPT), which measures students’ reading and writing ability. All students are required to take these tests unless their scores on the SAT, ACT or advanced placement exam meet a certain threshold, or they have completed another course that fulfills the requirement. A much greater percentage of both SSS and EOP students took these tests than non-program students, which probably means that more of latter were able to waive the exams. What is noteworthy is that SSS students scored significantly higher than EOP students on the ELM tests this year (while scores on the EPT test were virtually identical). This is quite a jump from last year (not shown), when they scored, on average, 39.4 on the ELM. At least by this measure, this shows that SSS students started the year with greater reading and writing ability than the EOP students. Non-program students scored slightly lower on the ELM, and slightly higher on the EPT than SSS students.

Another measure of pre-college preparation is the scores on the exams that are required when students apply to SFSU (or any other CSU campus). They must take either the SAT or
ACT test. However, ACT scores on not reported in Table 2 because SIMS data show that less than one-quarter of students chose this option. Scores are available for the vast majority of students on the SAT tests and these show, again, that SSS students scored significantly higher on this measure as well. In fact they scored, on average, a full 75 points higher than last year (not shown). (EOP students scored 14 points lower than last year). Neither did quite as well than all other freshmen whose average score was just 6 points lower than last year.

Next, the table reports on high school GPA. By this measure, as well, this year’s SSS students show that they are at least somewhat more capable than EOP students, and than last year’s students. This year’s SSS cohort has an average GPA of 3.15, compared to EOP students’ average of 2.96. The GPA for SSS students last year was 3.03. Non-program students’ GPA is slightly higher than that of the SSS students.

Finally, the table reports the number of semesters of college prep courses taken by each group. This is the sum of the number of semesters of a broad range of such courses from world history to math to the arts. All three cohorts took an average of 27 semesters, a figure which remains unchanged since last year. The number of semesters within each of the categories did not vary among the three cohorts, either. The range was from virtually no students taking college prep science to students taking an average of seven semesters each of math and English (not shown).

By three measures, ELM score, SAT score, and high school GPA, students in the SSS program this year began their first year better prepared than students in the comparison EOP group. This must be taken into account when evaluating the findings from the analysis of outcome measures (e.g., GPA at the end of the first year, retention, good standing). If SSS students do better than EOP students, it may be because they had a “leg-up” before they even started the program. They would not be expected to do better than non-program students whose scores on these measures are more comparable or, in the case of the SAT, even higher than the SSS students.

Formative Evaluation

SSS Requirements and Services
The SFSU SSS program requires that its students engage in three to four activities on a regular basis that are designed to increase their academic performance. First, all students are required to attend an orientation that takes place early in their first fall semester. Students are further required to see an SSS advisor every three weeks, and attend any two university-sponsored workshops each semester. Students enrolled in remedial English and/or math classes are obliged to meet with a SSS tutor. They are excused from tutoring only if they receive good evaluations from their instructors and maintain a B average in those classes.

Students are reminded of these requirements by the program regularly via e-mail and regular mail. The program also offers students the opportunity to study by themselves in the tutoring room.

The program tracks participation of students in advising, workshops, tutoring and self-study. The extent of this participation is reported in Table 3.
Participation in advising and workshops is very impressive this year. This is the first time in this evaluator’s memory that every student participated in at least one advising session and attended at least one workshop. In fact, every student participated in at least two advising sessions. To meet the requirement of biweekly advising, students would have had to attend at least 10 sessions. Fewer than one-fifth of students (18.7%) met this requirement. However the average was just over 8 sessions per student and this is an increase from an average of 6.8 last year. The maximum number of sessions attended was 14, recorded for two students.

As noted all students reported attending at least one workshop during the year; which is short of the requirement of at least two, but nevertheless an improvement over previous years. The workshops students attend are not recorded, but a survey administered to them at the end of the year does ask them to report the names (see section on survey responses to follow). The average number of workshops, 3.0, also represents an increase over last year when it was 2.4. All but 15 students did attend at least two workshops, meaning 83.5% complied.

As noted, students are required to meet with an SSS tutor if they are taking remedial math or English classes, unless they are excused because they are doing well in those classes. (Of course, students meet with a tutor all year for help with other classes). Students take these remedial classes if they score below certain thresholds on the required ELM and EPT. According to the university Testing Center’s website, those who score below 50 on the ELM or 151 on the EPT tests required to take Math 70, or either English 104 or 106 (depending on how low their EPT score is), respectively. We don’t know how many students are required to participate in tutoring at any given time. However, to put the numbers in Table 3 in perspective, 81% of SSS students earned scores below the threshold on either one or both of these tests. This would seem to suggest that there should be more students engaged in tutoring than is suggested in table 3. Evaluating compliance with tutoring and its effect on improving academic performance would be facilitated if the program office were to keep

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1This calculation is based on the assumption that those without ELM and/or EPT scores were not required to take these tests because they had already demonstrated proficiency in or both areas (see explanation for table 2).
records on who is required to have tutoring or at least track Fall and Spring tutoring participation separately.

Less than two-thirds of students of students participated in tutoring this year, compared to 82% last year. Moreover, the average number of hours of tutoring is just under six, down from 13 hours last year. Among the 55 students who participated in at least some tutoring, the range was from 39 minutes to 63 hours. Among the 55 students who participated in at least some tutoring, the average was 9.3 hours.

Self-study in the SSS offices is not a requirement, but it is recorded nonetheless. This is useful for determining how much this activity contributes to academic performance. Table 3 shows that nearly 80% of SSS students spent at least some time engaged in self-study in the program office during their first year. This is not surprising, given that it provides a supportive atmosphere where they can connect with other SSS students. The amount of time ranged from 0 to 74 hours (which represents about two hours per week over two 16 week semesters (including the final exam weeks). The average is 12 hours per student, which represents less than an hour a week. The numbers reported in table 3 are about the same as last year when 84% of students participated in self-study for an average of 11.5 hours.

In short, the program was successful in ensuring that all students participated in at least some advising and attended at least one workshop during the year. While students did not meet the full requirement in this respect, their compliance was improved over last year. Participation in tutoring was less impressive, with far fewer students engaging in this activity, and for, on average, fewer hours. It is difficult to gauge how many students should be spending time with a tutor. We know that about 80% should have been enrolled in remedial English and/or math in the Fall semester, these numbers are tracked over a year.

Participation in program activities is important, because it is these activities that the program theory suggests are having an impact on academic performance. Before looking at the impact these requirements and other services have on the outcomes, it should be noted that this assessment can only be approximate. If students are not fully complying with requirements, then we don’t know how effective the program would be if it were operating as intended; that is, with students fully completing program expectations.

Table 4 presents the results of a Pearson correlation procedure which tests the degree to which each individual activity is positively related to retention, GPA and being in good standing at the end of the year.

Table 4. Correlation between activities and outcome measures at the end of Spring semester

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Advising</th>
<th>Workshops</th>
<th>Tutoring</th>
<th>Self-study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retained</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.41*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In good standing</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, **p < .01,
Source: Program records and SIMS data
The data show that advising and workshops were positively correlated with academic performance. For every advising session students participated in, on average, their GPA rose by about one-quarter of a point. For every workshop they attended, GPA increased by four-tenths of a point, on average. That these two activities showed a positive correlation with the outcomes is fairly typical, as is that workshops show the stronger relationship of the two. Last year there was no correlation between advising and the outcome measures. But participation in advising was greater this year. While, the proportion of students attending at least one session only increased marginally, from all but two students last year to all students this year, the average number of hours increased from 6.8 to 8.09. Moreover, the correlations between advising and workshops and GPA, for example, is much stronger this year than last year. This shows the value of ensuring that students are complying with these requirements. Greater participation in both activities is paying off.

Neither tutoring nor self-study had any impact on academic performance. Tutoring has generally not had a consistent impact on the outcomes of interest, while last year there was at least a small correlation (r=.21; p<.05) between self-study and GPA.

Next, we employed a multivariate analysis of the impact of each activity on GPA, while taking into account each of the other activities. It includes high school GPA as a control variable to account for differences in the pre-college preparation of students in the program.

Table 5: Impact of individual SSS services on GPA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advising</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>.311*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Study</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school GPA</td>
<td>.521</td>
<td>.322*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.698</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=91, R²=.28, *p<.01
Source: Program records and SIMS data

The results displayed in Table 5 suggest that, controlling for all else, only workshops have a significant impact on GPA. High school GPA has an impact as well; suggesting students who did better in high school do better at the end of the year, as measured by their university GPA. But even so, taking that into account, attendance at workshops still has an independent and positive impact on GPA, even more so than advising.

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2 The procedure for estimating the effect of these activities on retention and good standing status would be logistic regression, and the sample size is not large enough to employ that here.

3 Various test scores were also introduced, but were deleted as they did not contribute to the model.
The next section reports on the findings from a survey administered to students at the end of the year. That will help to put some of the findings in this section in perspective as it adds information about the kinds of workshops students are attending and their own views on the value of SSS activities.

**Students own assessment**
In the latter part of the spring semester, SSS staff distributed a questionnaire designed by the evaluator (see appendix), along with a return envelope. Students were told that completion was voluntary, and that they should not put any identifying marks on the instrument. Thirty-nine students returned the survey, for a response rate of 43%. While this is not as good as last year, when the rate was 50%, it is certainly better than several prior years and enough to get a good sense as to what students were thinking about the program last Spring.

Each of the requirements and benefits that the program offers was listed with a 4.0 Likert scale from 1, indicating very important to their academic success, to 4, meaning not at all important. In the figures below, these values were recoded so that the higher the number, the more important the students consider the item to be. Figure 1 presents the average assessment of all requirements and benefits except workshops, which are provided in Figure 2.

**Figure 1. Average student rating of SSS requirements and benefits**

![Figure 1: Average student rating of SSS requirements and benefits](image)

**Source:** SSS student survey

The figure shows that students find all of the services provided by the program to be important in helping them to do well in their classes. It is not surprising that students find the additional financial aid and priority registration to be the most important. The additional financial aid may mean for many that they do not have to work, or to work fewer hours, which gives them more time to study. Competition for classes can be tough at SFSU, particularly in the last two years when the university has had to reduce the number of class
sections offered as a result of significant funding cuts from the State. So it is also not surprising that students find priority registration to be of prime importance as well. Advising received the next highest rating, which helps to confirm its benefit in also raising the academic performance of these students. Tutoring, which was shown to not have much of an impact on grades or retention, received the lowest rating, although 3.3 on a 4.0 scale is still a good score.

Workshops are reported separately because of the wide variety of options available to students in this regard (see figure 2). The program records show that all students were recorded as attending at least one workshop during the year, for an average of 3 per student. The survey asked students to report how many workshops they attended. All but three of the students indicated they attended at least one, for an average of 2.5 per student. (The modal number was two workshops, and the maximum was six). They were also asked to list the workshops separately and to provide a rating on the same importance scale for each one.

The survey respondents reported attending 27 different workshops, so for ease of presentation we grouped these into rough categories. The horizontal axis shows the average rating for each category, and the numbers on the vertical axis show how many students rated a workshop in each category.

Figure 2. Average rating of workshop categories, (numbers of students attending workshops in each category)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Stress</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: student survey

Nine students counted the mandatory orientation the program provides at the beginning of the fall semester as one of their workshops. While the orientation does fulfill the workshop requirement, it might be better to amend the survey instrument in the future to distinguish this event from the workshops students choose on their own. Of all the workshops rated, the orientation received the highest marks, nearly 3.8 on the four-point scale. It would be
useful to know if the students who did not think to include the orientation on their list of workshops share the assessment of those who did.

The next most highly rated cluster of workshops was that which we labeled “academic.” There are a total of ten different workshops in this category, including such varied names as “business major,” “writing,” and “study abroad.” The most popular, attended by four students, was “internship.” Workshops in the general class of health and stress included nine different titles, ranging from time management to conga dance, with the most popular one attended by six students, simply called health and wellness. The overall rating was also very good, 3.6 on the four-point scale.

The category we call financial includes such workshops as “financial aid,” “money management” and “scholarship.” Just ten students participated in these, giving them a slightly lower rating (though still good) of 3.4. The “other” category includes the remaining workshops, some of which were unclear. Three students, for example, included the March 2010 march in Sacramento which was organized to protest cuts in university funding.

We also took advantage of the survey to find out from students whether they received tutoring and advising from other university sources in addition to that provided by the SSS program. Potential sources of advising include the EOP program, Advising Center or their major department. Students may also obtain tutoring from EOP, the math or English department or CARP. A summary of those responses is reported in table 6.

Table 6: Student participation in non-SSS advising and tutoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Total students participating</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advising</td>
<td>10 (27%)</td>
<td>1 session/month</td>
<td>5 sessions/month</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring</td>
<td>13 (35%)</td>
<td>1 hour/week</td>
<td>17.5 hours/week</td>
<td>2.7§</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Not included in totals are those students who did not respond to the question

§This average includes the one student who reported receiving 17.5 hours of tutoring, whereas the rest reported no more than three. Without that “outlier,” the mean is 1.63

Source: Student survey

About one-quarter of survey respondents (10) indicated that they had received advising from other sources. Only five reported the number of hours of tutoring they received; the other left that item blank. The average was 1.3 sessions. This is a reduction from last year when 35 percent of students reported receiving advising from other sources. Tutoring was slightly more popular, with 13 students (35%) indicating they had received advising from other sources. Still, last year more than half responded positively to the question. All but one reported the number of hours per week, with a range from one to 17.5 hours. The latter was an outlier, though, as all other students indicated receiving one to three hours. The mean including that outlier is 2.7; without it, 1.63.

The final survey item asked students to provide any comments they have about the SSS program. Fifteen of the respondents wrote remarks, nearly all positive. The following are a few that illustrate their enthusiasm for the program:
Greatest program I ever enrolled in. I wouldn't have been where I am right now. SSS helped me get the hang of SF State and without it, attending here would have been very difficult.

Everything about SSS is important. Meeting with the advisor helped me choose my classes and helped me complete my G.E. requirement. The resources are great. I don't have a printer at home so come to SSS to print out my papers.

This is a great program – I wish it was 4 years, not 2.

Just two students offered suggestions as to how they think things can be improved:

The workshops should be reduced to 1.

I would ask maybe to put more signs up or have someone going around to help control the noise level in the tutoring room. It can get pretty loud at times.

Survey responses confirm the value of most SSS program benefits and requirements. The average ratings were all between 3.0 and 4.0 on a four-point scale; and so are considered at least somewhat important to students. Financial aid and priority registration were given the highest marks and so are most important to the average student, while advising received ratings nearly as high. The orientation earned nearly as high marks. Other workshops, despite their contribution to academic performance (see tables 5 and 6), did not do as well as the orientation. Tutoring, while still receiving a good rating of 3.3, did not do as well as the other services, just as it does not bear a relationship to grades or retention. The fact that students seemed less interested in seeking an SSS tutor this year (table 3), were more interested than last year in seeking tutoring from other sources (table 6) and received lower ratings than previous years (figure 1) certainly suggests that this is an area worth looking into.

Summative Evaluation

The impact of SSS this year

The purpose of a summative evaluation is to examine the effectiveness of a program. To some extent, this report has already provided some of that information. In an earlier section, we showed that SSS students’ participation in workshops and advising were correlated with three outcome measures: retention, good standing and GPA at the end of their first year. In this section we report the extent to which SSS met its core outcome measures; that is, whether 85% were retained at the end of the first year and whether 80% were in good standing. To understand whether success in achieving these outcomes can be attributed to the SSS program, we go further by comparing SSS students to the comparison group. That group consists of first-time freshmen who are similar to the SSS students, in that they are also low-income and first-generation. They also receive financial aid and have the opportunity to receive advising and tutoring services. But they do not face the same requirements nor do they receive the other benefits the SSS students do.
We report the results for SSS’s core outcome indicators along with two others: average GPA at the end of the semester and average units earned. While these are not central to our analysis, they provide two other measures of academic success (see table 7). We report the same data for the EOP students, but also all other first-time freshmen for comparison purposes.

Table 7. Outcome measures for SSS, EOP and nonprogram students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SSS</th>
<th>EOP</th>
<th>Non-program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Retained</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% in Good Standing</td>
<td>87.9*</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>86.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average GPA</td>
<td>2.87**</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of units earned</td>
<td>27.1**</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>3685</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Differences between SSS and EOP students * p<.05, **p<.001
Source: SIMS

The results presented in table 7 show that students met and exceeded both of the programs core outcome objectives. Ninety-two percent were retained and 88% were in good standing at the end of the year. Moreover, the results exceed those of the EOP comparison group, of whom only 86% were retained and 77% completed the year in good standing (only the latter difference between SSS and EOP is statistically significant.) A greater proportion of SSS students were retained and in good standing than the rest of the freshmen class as well. The SSS students further earned, on average, a higher GPA (2.87) than EOP students (2.46) and non-program students (2.76) and completed five more units by the end of the year; two more than all other freshmen. These differences are statistically significant. A word of caution needs to be made about interpreting these results. Recall from table 2 that the SSS students started their first year better prepared than the EOP students, according to the measures reported there. They had higher ELM (but not EPT) scores, higher SAT scores and a higher GPA. The difference in outcomes could reflect, at least in part, the fact that SSS students began their year more academically prepared than EOP students.

Comparing across years
Last year we provided a table that compared these outcomes for SSS students across the four year funding cycle. Since this year represents an extension of that four year cycle, we include it as a fifth year in table 8.

Fewer SSS students were retained than last year; however, the standard for defining retention was raised this year. In previous years it had been defined as students who returned for a second semester, this year it was defined as those who had completed at least one unit at the end of the Spring term. We have learned that neither of these definitions meet DoE’s preferred one, however, which is the proportion who returned the following Fall. This method of computing retention for this report will have to be changed in future years. It is a good time to do so as next year represents the beginning of a new funding cycle.
Table 8. Measures of academic performance over four years

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Retained</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>92.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% in Good Standing</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>89.5</td>
<td>81.9</td>
<td>87.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average GPA</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average # of units earned</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SIMS

The data show that the percent in good standing and average GPA exceeded last year’s by healthy margins. The proportion in good standing is six percentage points greater and this year’s GPA is .22 higher than last year’s. The number of units earned is about the same. In fact, with respect to GPA, this year’s is the 2nd highest in the last five years. This again confirms the value of advising and tutoring for increasing these outcomes. All in all, the SSS program had a very successful year.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This was another successful year for the SSS program. First, it began with a cohort of students who were better academically prepared than those who chose not to apply or were not selected into the program, and so remained in the traditional EOP program. There was greater participation in advising, and better attendance at workshops than some previous years. Survey responses show that students believe that the services provided by the program, along with its required activities, are important to their academic success.

All program objectives were met and exceeded. Ninety-two percent of students were retained, compared to the objective of 85%. While retention was lower than, that was no doubt due to the different means that was used for measuring retention, rather than a reflection on the program’s success in this regard. Eighty-eight percent were in good standing at the end of the year, compared to the objective of 80%. Moreover, this proportion was six points high than last year. The average GPA was higher by just over 0.2 points, while the students continued to earn 27 units by the end of the year.

This evaluation showed the workshops and advising are working well. Participation was higher this year, and their relationship to academic performance was higher. Students gave advising high marks, and workshops nearly as high marks. These activities should be encouraged and greater compliance with them sought. Tutoring was a different story. It has never shown a positive relationship with academic performance. In that sense, it might make sense to drop it as a requirement. However, it was particularly problematic this year, and so it may be worth working on it in a more steadfast manner for a couple of years more first. This year there was much less participation in tutoring than last year, and while the students didn’t say it was not important to their success, they gave it the lowest marks of the three requirements, and an even lower rating than study space. The program should take a look at what may have been different this year than in previous years that may account for
these changes. In particular it is recommended that a means be made to track which students are participating in tutoring and whether the ones for which it is required are indeed showing up. At a minimum, if it could be tracked separately for the Fall semester when most students who are required to take remedial classes are enrolled in those classes, compliance with that requirement could be better assessed.

In terms of other requirements and services, the priority registration and financial aid are very important to the students and it makes sense why this would be the case. They facilitate students ability to devote hours to school rather than work, and to get into the classes they need before they are filled with other students. Study space is more questionable. It shows no relationship to academic performance, was the second lowest activity in terms of student ratings, but did generate several positive comments on the surveys. It no doubt provides a positive, supportive environment for students, but should only do so if it is not detracting students from their work. While the effect shown in table 4 was too small to even count, the fact that it was preceded by a negative sign is troubling.

One final suggestion is that in future surveys, the mandatory orientation should be included as a category for students to rate separately from the other workshops so that a distinction is made between the two. Questions 9, 10 and 11 regarding self-reported GPA and units could be dropped as they have consistently failed to show a relationship to other survey items in any way that could be useful.

In short, the SSS program was very successful this year, and by many measures more successful than last year. Consideration of the recommendations made in this concluding section should strengthen it even further.