

## ACADEMIC PROBATION AND RECOVERY

*This Research Brief provides information regarding academic probation among UNCG's first-time freshman cohorts from Fall 2015 through Fall 2017. Freshmen who experienced academic probation during their first year of enrollment are compared with freshmen who did not. A thorough evaluation of academic abilities and variations in demographics and socioeconomic status was employed in this examination. Academic outcomes were measured by students' GPA following each term during their freshman year and for their freshman year overall, and first-year retention rates were assessed for probationary versus non-probationary freshmen.*

This is the first in a series of Research Briefs produced by the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). Our Research Briefs are intended to answer interesting and novel research questions that will provide useful insights for our campus administrators, faculty, and students. We hope to encourage the use of data in decision-making and resource allocation through thoughtful and practical applications of institutional research.

This Research Brief addresses three main research questions (RQ) related to academic probation and recovery.

**RQ1.** *What is the pre-enrollment academic profile of first-year college students who fall on academic probation at either the end of their first Fall semester or Spring semester?*

**RQ2.** *What is the one-year retention rate of first-year college students on probation?*

**RQ3.** *What is the academic profile of students who fell on probation after their first Fall semester who enroll in UNCG's academic recovery course and retain into their second Fall?*

### MAJOR FINDINGS

- Across the Fall 2015, Fall 2016, and Fall 2017 first-time freshman cohorts, just shy of one-quarter (23.2%) of first-time freshmen experienced academic probation sometime during their first year at UNCG.

### RQ1

- Students on probation during their first year consistently entered UNCG with weaker High School GPA, SAT, and ACT scores.
- Incidence of probation in the first year was higher among males (30.9%) than females (19.3%).
- Incidence of probation was higher among under-represented minorities (27.5%) than non-under-represented minorities (20.7%).
- Incidence of probation was on average about 7% higher for low-income students.
- Rural students and non-rural students had about the same incidence of probation, about 23%.
- On average 26.1% of first-generation students experienced probation in their first year.
- Of students who experienced probation in their first year, their average Fall term GPA was about 1.43; average Spring term GPA was about 1.70; and cumulative GPA through the first year was close to 1.45.

## RQ2

- Students who did not experience probation at any time during their freshman year retained at 87% on average.
- Students who did experience probation at some time during their freshman year retained at only 42% on average.
- Freshmen who fall on academic probation in their first year tend to retain at about half the rate of those who do not fall on probation.

## RQ3

- 80.9% of students on probation their first term enrolled in ARS100 the following Spring semester.
- The pass rate for ARS100 was 81.3% and the fail or withdrawal rate was 18.7%.
- Just over half of students who passed ARS100 in the Spring semester were retained to the subsequent Fall.
- Of students who passed ARS100, retention rates were highest among Asians (55.4%) and African Americans (52.5%), and lowest among Hispanics (46.2%).
- First year cumulative GPA of students who were on probation, passed ARS100, and retained into the next Fall was 2.18.
- First year cumulative GPA of students who were on probation, passed ARS100, and did not retain into the next Fall was 1.32.

## METHODOLOGY

To address RQ1, an academic ability profile was compiled to estimate the scholastic aptitude and potential for success in college for each incoming new freshman class.

The second research question involves identifying new freshmen who experienced academic probation during their first year, and whether they retain into their second year. The probationary students were then compared to the non-probationary students on a variety of academic, demographic, and socioeconomic metrics to identify differences between the populations. By identifying distinguishing characteristics of students who fall on academic probation, interventions may be targeted

towards new freshmen who fit the profile of being at-risk of experiencing academic probation during their first year.

Research question RQ3 was examined to understand characteristics of students who were on academic probation after their first Fall and who subsequently enrolled in UNCG's academic recovery course, ARS100, in the next Spring. This was a deep dive into the academic profile of the identified probationary students.

## DATA

This population for this research was UNCG's first-time freshman cohorts from Fall 2015, Fall 2016, and Fall 2017. First-time freshman cohorts consist of degree-seeking undergraduate students who are entering college for the first time.

## BACKGROUND

The initial step was to examine the incidence of academic probation for the new freshman cohorts of Fall 2015, Fall 2016, and Fall 2017. At UNCG, **academic probation** occurs when an undergraduate student fails to maintain a minimum 2.0 cumulative GPA. When students experience academic probation, they are required to satisfy the following criteria during their next term of enrollment: (1) the student must limit enrollment to a maximum of 16 credits if the subsequent term is a fall or spring term, or 8 credits in summer; (2) the student must earn a minimum 2.30 term GPA in each subsequent term until a 2.0 cumulative GPA is restored; (3) the student must enroll in and successfully complete the requirements of ARS 100. ARS 100 is a self-guided online course that supports students on academic probation in developing and applying constructive academic recovery behaviors and skills with the goal of restoring academic good standing at UNCG. If the student fails to satisfy all three requirements, they may be suspended at the end of their probationary term. If the student restores a cumulative 2.0 GPA but does not earn at least 67% of their enrolled credits, they will be placed on academic warning.

## FINDINGS

After their first Fall semester, about 19% of new freshmen experienced academic probation. After their first Spring semester, about 15% of new freshmen

experienced academic probation. Overall, the incidence of academic probation after the freshman year was a little over 23%. **Figure 1** shows the incidence of academic probation in freshman year for each of the Fall 2015, Fall 2016, and Fall 2017 new freshman cohorts.

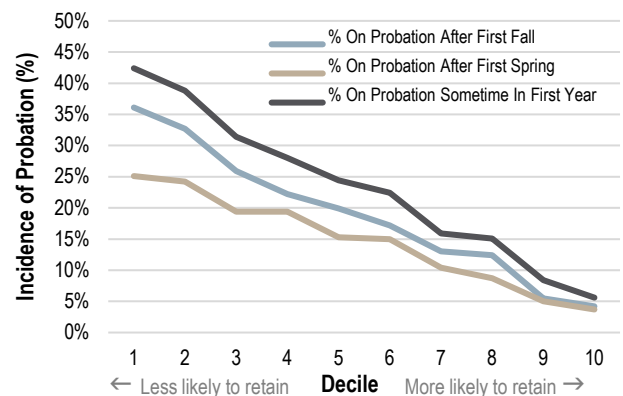
Students in new freshman cohorts were assigned a decile score between one and ten based on the results of a predictive model designed to predict first-year retention. Examining the probationary students by their attrition decile ranking showed that freshman students in the lowest deciles had the highest incidence of probation; in other words, the lower a student's decile ranking, the less likely they were to retain and the more likely they were to experience probation during their first year. **Figure 2** shows the negative relationship between attrition decile ranking and incidence of probation.

The academic potential of incoming freshman students was examined in order to identify which new freshmen may be at risk of probation sometime during their first year. The academic ability profile in **Figure 3** includes mean scores for a variety of pre-college academic measures, including high school GPA, SAT total, Math, and Critical Reading scores, and the ACT composite score. These metrics were compared for students who were on academic probation after their first Fall semester, their first Spring semester, or at any time during their freshman year. The data in **Figure 3** show that new freshmen who fell on

**FIGURE 1. INCIDENCE OF ACADEMIC PROBATION IN FRESHMAN YEAR**

Cohort Starting Term	New Freshman Cohort	On Probation After First Fall		On Probation After First Spring		On Probation Sometime in First Year	
	N	n	%	n	%	n	%
Fall 2015	2,773	509	18.4	388	14	618	22.3
Fall 2016	2,850	538	18.9	405	14.2	653	22.9
Fall 2017	2,791	539	19.3	435	15.6	679	24.3
Three Year Trend	8,414	1,586	18.8	1,228	14.6	1,950	23.2

**FIGURE 2. PERCENT OF FRESHMEN ON PROBATION BY ATTRITION DECILE**  
Fall 2015, Fall 2016, and Fall 2017 New Freshman Cohorts

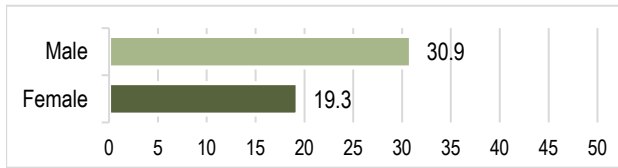


**FIGURE 3. ACADEMIC ABILITY PROFILE OF NEW FRESHMEN**

Probationary versus Non-Probationary Students

Average	Cohort Starting Term	On Probation After First Fall		On Probation After First Spring		On Probation Sometime in First Year	
		No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
High School GPA	Fall 2015	3.66	3.42	3.65	3.41	3.67	3.43
	Fall 2016	3.90	3.48	3.88	3.48	3.92	3.50
	Fall 2017	3.92	3.51	3.89	3.54	3.94	3.53
SAT Total	Fall 2015	1,027	990	1,025	993	1,028	993
	Fall 2016	1,033	994	1,030	1,001	1,034	998
	Fall 2017	1,093	1,066	1,091	1,072	1,094	1,068
SAT Math	Fall 2015	511	497	511	495	512	497
	Fall 2016	514	495	512	499	514	497
	Fall 2017	539	529	539	529	540	528
SAT Critical Reading	Fall 2015	515	493	514	498	516	496
	Fall 2016	520	500	518	501	520	501
	Fall 2017	558	537	556	545	558	541
ACT Composite	Fall 2015	22	21	22	21	22	21
	Fall 2016	22	21	22	21	22	21
	Fall 2017	22	21	22	21	22	21

**FIGURE 4A. PERCENT OF FRESHMEN ON PROBATION IN FIRST YEAR BY GENDER**



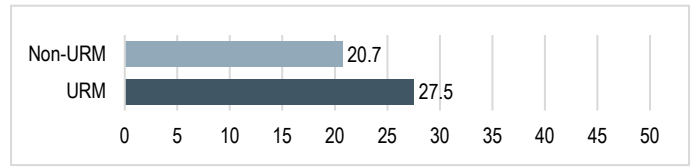
probation during their freshman year entered college with weaker high school GPAs and lower admissions test scores, and thus may be less prepared for the rigors of higher education.

**Figure 4** (see Appendix) provides the complete demographic profile of new freshman cohorts. Students were classified by gender, race, and ethnicity. Also identified was the subpopulation of under-represented minorities (URM) defined as students who are neither Asian nor White. UNCG’s freshman cohorts are typically two-thirds female and one-third male, however, probation occurred more frequently among freshman men than freshman women. **Figure 4A** shows that on average across cohort terms 30.9% of males experienced probation sometime in their first year compared to 19.3% of females. **Figure 4B** illustrates a higher incidence of academic probation among under-represented minorities on average during their first year (27.5%). **Figure 4C** shows average incidence of probation by race and ethnicity across cohort terms.

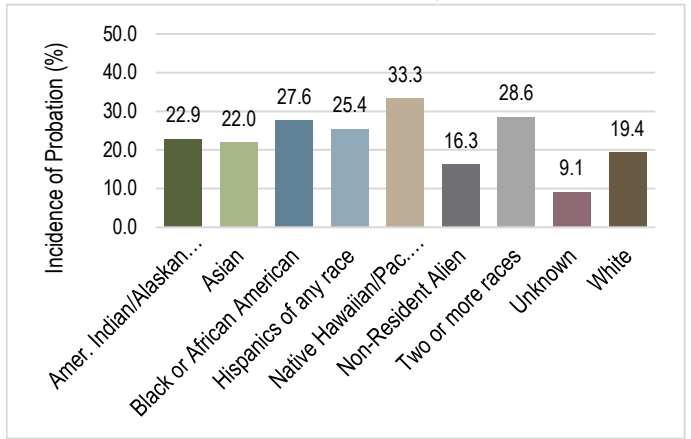
Recognizing that students’ socioeconomic status can impact performance and retention, **Figure 5** provides data on low-income, rural and first-generation students. Students were categorized as ‘low-income’ if they received a Federal Pell Grant. The data show that low-income students were more likely to fall on probation in their first year (26.9% to 27.7%) than non-low-income students (17.2% to 20.4%). Incidence of probation in the first year was on average about 7% higher for low-income students.

Over 93% of UNCG’s new freshmen are in-state students and typically about 18% come from Guilford county, where UNCG is located. Many of North Carolina’s counties are rural and economically distressed. Consequently, an examination of students from rural

**FIGURE 4B. PERCENT OF FRESHMEN ON PROBATION IN FIRST YEAR BY URM STATUS**



**FIGURE 4C. PERCENT OF FRESHMEN ON PROBATION IN FIRST YEAR BY RACE/ETHNICITY**



counties provided additional insight into their socioeconomic status. Students were identified as ‘rural’ if they came from a rural North Carolina county as designated by the NC Department of Commerce, which takes into account each county’s average unemployment rate, median household income, percentage growth in population, and adjusted property tax base per capita. About the same proportion of students experienced academic probation across both rural (22.4% to 26.7%) and non-rural (21.7% to 23.2%) populations.

Where data were available, the first-generation college criterion was considered. This is a self-reported metric, based on students’ disclosure of their parents’ or guardians’ highest attained level of education. A first-generation student is a student whose parents or guardians have not earned at least a bachelor’s degree. First-generation college students are especially at risk during their first year of enrollment because they face additional challenges that can impact their performance and retention; they typically have less financial and social

**FIGURE 5. SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE OF NEW FRESHMEN**  
 Probationary versus Non-Probationary Students

Demographic	Cohort Starting Term	On Probation After First Fall				On Probation After First Spring				On Probation Sometime in First Year			
		No		Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>LOW INCOME</b>													
Yes	Fall 2015	1,098	77.8	314	22.2	1169	82.8	243	17.2	1028	72.8	384	27.2
	Fall 2016	1,085	77.6	314	22.4	1164	83.2	235	16.8	1022	73.1	377	26.9
	Fall 2017	1,175	77.8	335	22.2	1243	82.3	267	17.7	1092	72.3	418	27.7
No	Fall 2015	1,166	85.7	195	14.3	1216	89.3	145	10.7	1127	82.8	234	17.2
	Fall 2016	1,227	84.6	224	15.4	1281	88.3	170	11.7	1175	81.0	276	19.0
	Fall 2017	1,077	84.1	204	15.9	1113	86.9	168	13.1	1020	79.6	261	20.4
<b>RURAL</b>													
Yes	Fall 2015	749	80.5	182	19.5	797	85.6	134	14.4	712	76.5	219	23.5
	Fall 2016	735	81.2	170	18.8	781	86.3	124	13.7	702	77.6	203	22.4
	Fall 2017	721	79.1	190	20.9	762	83.6	149	16.4	668	73.3	243	26.7
No	Fall 2015	1,515	82.2	327	17.8	1588	86.2	254	13.8	1443	78.3	399	21.7
	Fall 2016	1,577	81.1	368	18.9	1664	85.6	281	14.4	1495	76.9	450	23.1
	Fall 2017	1,531	81.4	349	18.6	1594	84.8	286	15.2	1444	76.8	436	23.2
<b>FIRST GENERATION</b>													
Yes	Fall 2015	913	78.8	245	21.2	978	84.5	180	15.5	861	74.4	297	25.6
	Fall 2016	740	79.1	196	20.9	784	83.8	152	16.2	697	74.5	239	25.5
	Fall 2017	783	78.0	221	22.0	828	82.5	176	17.5	732	72.9	272	27.1
No	Fall 2015	1,037	84.4	191	15.6	1073	87.4	155	12.6	995	81.0	233	19.0
	Fall 2016	1,034	85.2	179	14.8	1074	88.5	139	11.5	991	81.7	222	18.3
	Fall 2017	973	85.1	170	14.9	997	87.2	146	12.8	918	80.3	225	19.7
Unknown	Fall 2015	314	81.1	73	18.9	334	86.3	53	13.7	299	77.3	88	22.7
	Fall 2016	538	76.7	163	23.3	587	83.7	114	16.3	509	72.6	192	27.4
	Fall 2017	496	77.0	148	23.0	531	82.5	113	17.5	462	71.7	182	28.3

support and are less prepared for college than their inter-generational peers. Within the new freshman cohorts, a little over 25% of first-generation students were on academic probation during their first year of college.

Data in **Figure 6** depict academic outcomes of new freshman students after their first year. Not surprisingly, GPA was lower for students who were on academic probation and higher for students who were not on academic probation. Fall term GPA for students who

**FIGURE 6. FIRST YEAR GPA FOR NEW FRESHMEN**  
 Probationary versus Non-Probationary Students

Average	Cohort Starting Term	On Probation After First Fall		On Probation After First Spring		On Probation Sometime in First Year	
		No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
First Fall Term GPA	Fall 2015	3.13	1.27	3.00	1.48	3.18	1.44
	Fall 2016	3.17	1.27	3.02	1.51	3.21	1.45
	Fall 2017	3.16	1.17	3.00	1.49	3.21	1.40
First Spring Term GPA	Fall 2015	2.99	1.91	3.08	1.35	3.09	1.75
	Fall 2016	3.01	1.85	3.11	1.18	3.12	1.65
	Fall 2017	2.97	1.84	3.09	1.25	3.11	1.65
First Year Cumulative GPA	Fall 2015	3.06	1.46	2.98	1.42	3.13	1.50
	Fall 2016	3.09	1.43	3.01	1.35	3.16	1.47
	Fall 2017	3.06	1.35	2.99	1.35	3.15	1.42

FIGURE 7. FIRST YEAR RETENTION OF PROBATIONARY STUDENTS IN ACADEMIC RECOVERY

Cohort Starting Term	Fall Probationary Students N	Academic Recovery Course Outcome															
		Did Not Take in Spring				Pass				Fail				Withdrew			
		Retained		Retained		Retained		Retained		Retained		Retained		Retained			
		No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes				
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Fall 2015	509	94	95.9	4	4.1	155	47	175	53	58	90.6	6	9.4	14	82.4	3	17.6
Fall 2016	53	87	86.1	14	13.9	195	51.9	181	48.1	38	97.4	1	2.6	19	86.4	3	13.6
Fall 2017	539	96	95	5	5	161	47.5	178	52.5	65	91.5	6	8.5	25	89.3	3	10.7
Three Year Trend	1,586	277	92.3	23	7.7	511	48.9	534	51.1	161	92.5	13	7.5	58	86.6	9	13.4

went on probation after their first Fall (1.17 to 1.27) was compared to their Spring term GPA (1.84 to 1.91). These students should have been enrolled in ARS100 in their Spring term, so one would expect to see higher overall GPAs in the Spring as many of these students successfully completed the requirements for academic recovery.

Figure 7 includes only students who were on probation after their first Fall semester. Retention rates were compared for students who did not take ARS100 as well as those who took the course and either passed, failed, or withdrew. As illustrated previously in Figure 1, 18.8% of first year students on average fell on academic probation after their first Fall semester. Of those, 80.9% enrolled in ARS100 in the Spring. The pass rate for these students was 81.3% and the fail or withdrawal rate was 18.7%.

Furthermore, 51.1% of those who passed ARS100 retained into their next Fall.

Academic, demographic, and socioeconomic characteristics of the probationary students who passed ARS100 were then examined to determine if there were differences between students who did and did not retain into the next Fall. No notable differences in these areas were found except retention by race and ethnicity as shown in Figure 8. Most students were more likely to retain after passing ARS100 across races and ethnicities except Hispanics. Only 46.2% of Hispanics retained into the next Fall even after passing ARS100. This could be an area of interest for further study. Asians and African Americans had among the highest retention rates (55.4% and 52.5% respectively) after passing ARS100.

Naturally, the students who retained after passing ARS100 had higher term and cumulative GPAs than those who passed but did not retain. Figure 9 shows the cumulative GPA of those not retained is 1.32 on average across cohort terms, lower than needed to persist. Despite success in the

FIGURE 8. FIRST YEAR RETENTION OF STUDENTS WHO PASSED THE ACADEMIC RECOVERY COURSE BY RACE/ETHNICITY

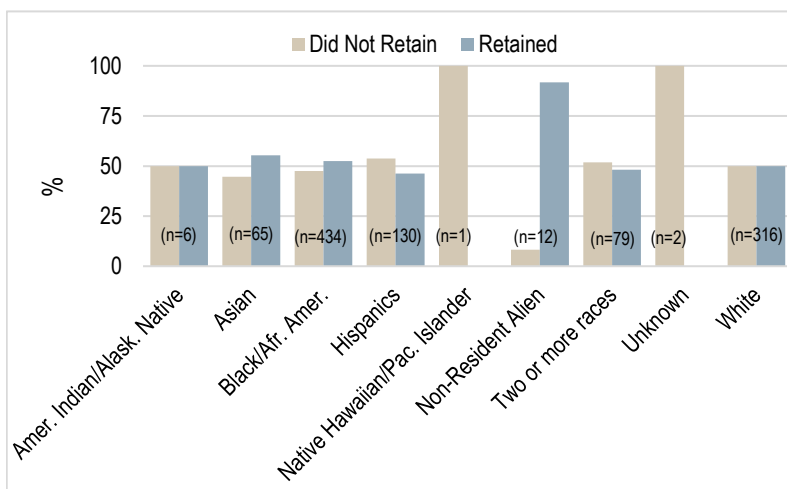


FIGURE 9. TERM AND CUMULATIVE GPA OF STUDENTS WHO PASSED THE ACADEMIC RECOVERY COURSE

Students Who Passed ARS100	Retained	
	No	Yes
First Fall Term GPA	1.26	1.66
First Spring Term GPA	1.40	2.72
First Year Cumulative GPA	1.32	2.18

academic recovery course, some students' cumulative GPA was insufficient to continue at UNCG.

**Figure 10** presents the first-year retention rates of probationary versus non-probationary students for each of the freshman cohorts and overall. Students who did not experience probation at any time during their

freshman year retained at 87% on average. Students who did experience probation at some time during their freshman year retained at only 42% on average. Freshmen who fall on academic probation in their first year tend to retain at about half the rate of those who do not fall on probation.

**FIGURE 10. FIRST YEAR RETENTION OF NEW FRESHMEN**  
Probationary versus Non-Probationary Students

Cohort Starting Term	New Freshman Cohort N	On Probation After First Fall				On Probation After First Spring				On Probation Sometime in First Year			
		No		Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes	
		Retained		Retained		Retained		Retained		Retained		Retained	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Fall 2015	2,773	1,925	85.0	188	36.9	1,978	82.9	135	34.8	1,850	85.8	263	42.6
Fall 2016	2,850	2,006	86.8	199	37.0	2,076	84.9	129	31.9	1,930	87.8	275	42.1
Fall 2017	2,791	1,935	85.9	192	35.6	1,983	84.2	144	33.1	1,843	87.3	284	41.8
Three Year Trend	8,414	5,866	85.9	579	36.5	6,037	84.0	408	33.2	5,623	87.0	822	42.2

**FIGURE 4. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF NEW FRESHMEN**  
 Probationary versus Non-Probationary Students

Demographic	Cohort Starting Term	On Probation After First Fall				On Probation After First Spring				On Probation Sometime in First Year			
		No		Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>GENDER</b>													
Female	Fall 2015	1,574	84.5	288	15.5	1,644	88.3	218	11.7	1,510	81.1	352	18.9
	Fall 2016	1,618	85.2	281	14.8	1,681	88.5	218	11.5	1,554	81.8	345	18.2
	Fall 2017	1,536	83.2	310	16.8	1,608	87.1	238	12.9	1,461	79.1	385	20.9
Male	Fall 2015	690	75.7	221	24.3	741	81.3	170	18.7	645	70.8	266	29.2
	Fall 2016	694	73.0	257	27.0	764	80.3	187	19.7	643	67.6	308	32.4
	Fall 2017	716	75.8	229	24.2	748	79.2	197	20.8	651	68.9	294	31.1
<b>ETHNICITY</b>													
American Indian or Alaskan Native	Fall 2015	6	66.7	3	33.3	7	77.8	2	22.2	6	66.7	3	33.3
	Fall 2016	10	76.9	3	23.1	10	76.9	3	23.1	10	76.9	3	23.1
	Fall 2017	12	92.3	1	7.7	11	84.6	2	15.4	11	84.6	2	15.4
Asian	Fall 2015	118	79.7	30	20.3	135	91.2	13	8.8	115	77.7	33	22.3
	Fall 2016	135	81.8	30	18.2	140	84.8	25	15.2	127	77.0	38	23.0
	Fall 2017	122	83.6	24	16.4	124	84.9	22	15.1	116	79.5	30	20.5
Black or African American	Fall 2015	664	76.7	202	23.3	695	80.3	171	19.7	618	71.4	248	28.6
	Fall 2016	613	78.0	173	22	649	82.6	137	17.4	579	73.7	207	26.3
	Fall 2017	701	78.1	197	21.9	737	82.1	161	17.9	648	72.2	250	27.8
Hispanics of any race	Fall 2015	231	84.3	43	15.7	241	88.0	33	12.0	221	80.7	53	19.3
	Fall 2016	218	76.0	69	24.0	237	82.6	50	17.4	204	71.1	83	28.9
	Fall 2017	271	78.3	75	21.7	284	82.1	62	17.9	252	72.8	94	27.2
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Fall 2015	1	50.0	1	50.0	1	50.0	1	50.0	1	50.0	1	50.0
	Fall 2016	2	66.7	1	33.3	2	66.7	1	33.3	2	66.7	1	33.3
	Fall 2017	1	100.0	-	-	1	100.0	-	-	1	100.0	-	-
Non-Resident Alien	Fall 2015	43	95.6	2	4.4	43	95.6	2	4.4	43	95.6	2	4.4
	Fall 2016	23	85.2	4	14.8	25	92.6	2	7.4	23	85.2	4	14.8
	Fall 2017	21	65.6	11	34.4	29	90.6	3	9.4	21	65.6	11	34.4
Two or more races	Fall 2015	112	76.2	35	23.8	118	80.3	29	19.7	102	69.4	45	30.6
	Fall 2016	120	75.5	39	24.5	129	81.1	30	18.9	115	72.3	44	27.7
	Fall 2017	154	78.2	43	21.8	163	82.7	34	17.3	142	72.1	55	27.9
Unknown	Fall 2015	7	87.5	1	12.5	7	87.5	1	12.5	7	87.5	1	12.5
	Fall 2016	7	100.0	-	-	7	100.0	-	-	7	100.0	-	-
	Fall 2017	6	85.7	1	14.3	6	85.7	1	14.3	6	85.7	1	14.3
White	Fall 2015	1,082	84.9	192	15.1	1,138	89.3	136	10.7	1,042	81.8	232	18.2
	Fall 2016	1,184	84.4	219	15.6	1,246	88.8	157	11.2	1,130	80.5	273	19.5
	Fall 2017	964	83.8	187	16.2	1,001	87.0	150	13.0	915	79.5	236	20.5
<b>UNDER-REPRESENTED MINORITIES</b>													
Yes	Fall 2015	810	77.0	242	23.0	850	80.8	202	19.2	756	71.9	296	28.1
	Fall 2016	754	77.4	220	22.6	802	82.3	172	17.7	712	73.1	262	26.9
	Fall 2017	880	78.6	240	21.4	921	82.2	199	17.8	813	72.6	307	27.4
No	Fall 2015	1,404	84.2	264	15.8	1,485	89.0	183	11.0	1,349	80.9	319	19.1
	Fall 2016	1,528	83.0	314	17.0	1,611	87.5	231	12.5	1,455	79.0	387	21.0
	Fall 2017	1,345	82.4	287	17.6	1,400	85.8	232	14.2	1,272	77.9	360	22.1
Unknown	Fall 2015	50	94.3	3	5.7	50	94.3	3	5.7	50	94.3	3	5.7
	Fall 2016	30	88.2	4	11.8	32	94.1	2	5.9	30	88.2	4	11.8
	Fall 2017	27	69.2	12	30.8	35	89.7	4	10.3	27	69.2	12	30.8



## **UNCG OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH**

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