

RESEARCH BRIEF

OIR

Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment

No. 55-14

July 2014

Success and Retention Rates of Student Orientation Advising & Registration (SOAR) Attendees by Demographics: Fall 2013

As part of the Achieving the Dream initiative, several First-Year Experience programs have been implemented at Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) to increase retention and student success. One of these programs is Student Orientation Advising & Registration (SOAR), in which a team of faculty and staff assists incoming students by providing information on topics such as student resources, registration, and course selection prior to the start of classes. During Summer 2013, Alexandria, Annandale, Loudoun, Manassas, and Woodbridge Campuses conducted SOAR sessions for incoming students.

This Research Brief presents success and retention rates of first-time to NOVA students who enrolled in the Fall 2013 semester after attending SOAR in Summer 2013. The average semester grade point average (GPA) and retention rates of SOAR attendees are compared with those of all other first-time to NOVA students who enrolled in the Fall 2013 semester but did not attend a SOAR session. In addition to the overall analysis, data for each group are disaggregated by student demographic characteristics (gender, age, and race/ethnicity).

Tables 1 through 4 and Figure 1 present the average semester GPA for first-time students by SOAR attendance status and demographic characteristics. Tables 5 through 8 and Figure 2 show Fall-to-Spring retention data by SOAR attendance status and demographic characteristics.

Overall, the findings indicate that SOAR attendees had a lower average semester GPA but higher retention rates than other first-time students who did not attend SOAR.

Table 1 and Figure 1 (see next page for Figure 1) present average semester GPA by SOAR attendance status. As seen below, the average semester GPA of SOAR attendees (2.18) was lower than the average semester GPA of the other first-time students (2.39).

Table 1. Average Semester GPA of First-Time Students: Fall 2013

SOAR Attendees		All Other First-Time Students	
#	Semester GPA	#	Semester GPA
2,375	2.18	11,508	2.39

Figure 1. Average Semester GPA of First-Time Students: Fall 2013

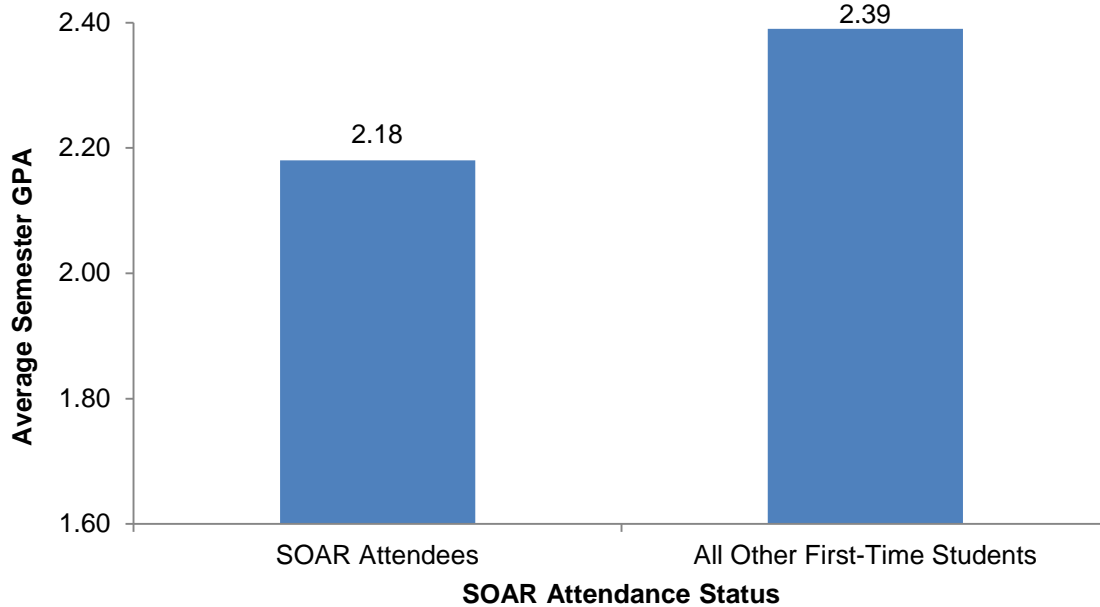


Table 2 displays the average semester GPA by SOAR attendance and gender. On average, both male (2.08 vs. 2.27) and female (2.31 vs. 2.50) SOAR attendees earned a lower semester GPA than their counterparts who did not attend SOAR.

Table 2. Average Semester GPA of First-Time Students by Gender: Fall 2013

Gender	SOAR Attendees		All Other First-Time Students	
	#	Semester GPA	#	Semester GPA
Male	1,325	2.08	5,624	2.27
Female	1,050	2.31	5,884	2.50

Table 3 presents average semester GPA by SOAR attendance and age group. For the age group with the largest number of students (18 to 21), those who attended SOAR averaged a slightly lower semester GPA (2.18) than their counterparts who did not attend SOAR (2.21). Four other age groups (under 18, 22 to 24, 25 to 29, and 30 to 44) had similar results with SOAR attendees achieving a lower average semester GPA than the comparison groups; however, comparisons for these groups should be made with caution due to the small population size of SOAR attendees.

Table 3. Average Semester GPA of First-Time Students by Age Group: Fall 2013

Age Group	SOAR Attendees		All Other First-Time Students	
	#	Semester GPA	#	Semester GPA
Under 18	41	2.43	1,177	3.16
18 – 21	2,245	2.18	6,059	2.21
22 – 24	48	2.14	1,139	2.43
25 – 29	25	2.02	1,143	2.50
30 – 44	11	1.90	1,415	2.40
45 – 59*	3	2.33	474	2.58
60 and Older*	2	1.75	101	1.06

*The size of this age group is not large enough to make accurate comparisons.

Table 4 presents the average semester GPA for SOAR attendees and all other first-time students by race/ethnicity. As seen below, the average semester GPA for SOAR attendees identifying as White, Black, Hispanic and Other was lower than for those who did not attend SOAR. SOAR attendee students identifying as Asian earned approximately the same average semester GPA as their counterparts (2.44 vs. 2.45).

Table 4. Average Semester GPA of First-Time Students by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2013

Race/Ethnicity	SOAR Attendees		All Other First-Time Students	
	#	Semester GPA	#	Semester GPA
White	1,107	2.28	5,978	2.54
Black	438	1.86	2,054	2.01
Asian	348	2.44	1,734	2.45
Hispanic	446	2.04	1,467	2.17
Native American*	5	2.22	26	1.97
Other	31	2.49	249	2.64

*The size of this racial/ethnic group (n=5) is not large enough to make accurate comparisons.

Table 5 and Figure 2 display Fall-to-Spring retention rates by SOAR attendance status. As seen below, SOAR attendees were retained at a higher rate (84%) than all other first-time students who did not attend SOAR (72%).

Table 5. Fall-to-Spring Retention Rate of First-Time Students: Fall 2013 to Spring 2014

SOAR Attendees		All Other First-Time Students	
#	%	#	%
1,988	83.7%	8,294	72.1%

Figure 2. Fall-to-Spring Retention Rate of First-Time Students: Fall 2013 to Spring 2014

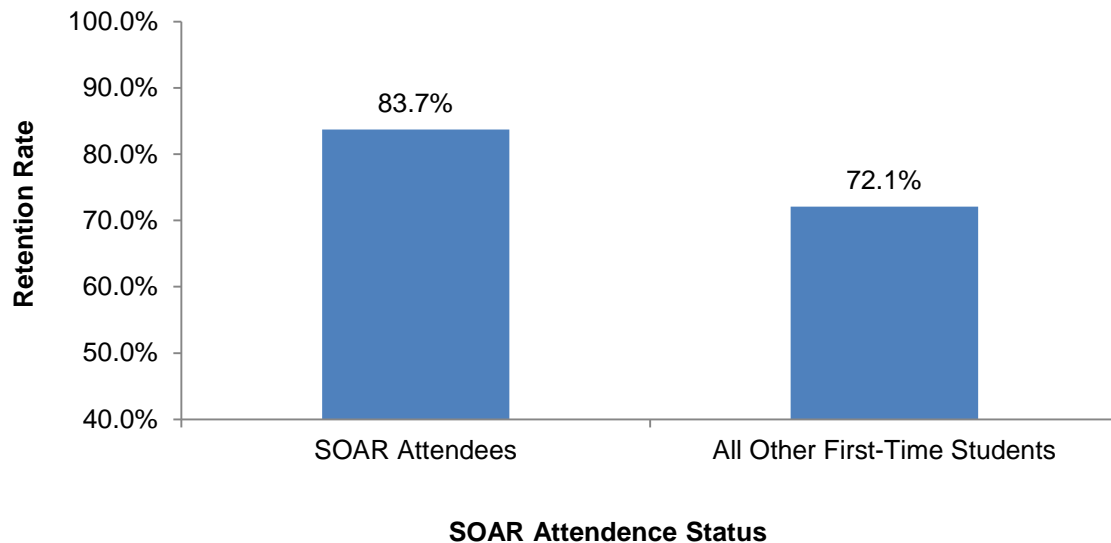


Table 6 displays the Fall-to-Spring retention rates of first-time students by SOAR attendance status and gender. Both male and female students who attended SOAR were retained at higher rates in comparison to students who did not attend SOAR (male: 84% vs. 71%, female: 84% vs. 73%).

**Table 6. Fall-to-Spring Retention Rate of First-Time Students by Gender:
Fall 2013 to Spring 2014**

Gender	SOAR Attendees		All Other First-Time Students	
	#	%	#	%
Male	1,106	83.5%	4,006	71.2%
Female	882	84.0%	4,288	72.9%

Table 7 compares the Fall-to-Spring retention rates of first-time students by SOAR attendance status and age group. In Spring 2014, SOAR attendees aged 18 and up were retained at higher rates than their counterparts who did not attend SOAR. SOAR attendees under the age of 18 were retained at a lower rate than their counterparts (73% vs. 89%). Among all age groups, SOAR attendees aged 30 to 44 had the highest retention rate (91%).

**Table 7. Fall-to-Spring Retention Rate of First-Time Students by Age Group:
Fall 2013 to Spring 2014**

Age Group	SOAR Attendees		All Other First-Time Students	
	#	%	#	%
Under 18	30	73.2%	1,050	89.2%
18 – 21	1,887	84.1%	4,794	79.1%
22 – 24	36	75.0%	679	59.6%
25 – 29	21	84.0%	682	59.7%
30 – 44	10	90.9%	821	58.0%
45 – 59*	2	66.7%	225	47.5%
60 and Older*	2	100.0%	43	42.6%

*The size of this age group is not large enough to make accurate comparisons.

Table 8 compares Fall-to-Spring retention rates of first-time students by SOAR attendance status and race/ethnicity. In Spring 2014, SOAR attendees in all race/ethnicity groups returned to NOVA at higher rates than their counterparts who did not attend SOAR.

**Table 8. Fall-to-Spring Retention Rate of First-Time Students by Race/Ethnicity:
Fall 2013 to Spring 2014**

Race/Ethnicity	SOAR Attendees		All Other First-Time Students	
	#	%	#	%
White	921	83.2%	4,094	68.5%
Black	352	80.4%	1,448	70.5%
Asian	315	90.5%	1,378	79.5%
Hispanic	366	82.1%	1,166	79.5%
Native American*	5	100.0%	18	69.2%
Other	29	93.6%	190	76.3%

*The size of this racial/ethnic group (n=5) is not large enough to make accurate comparisons.