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Overview of UK 101: Academic Orientation Course

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ACADEMIC ORIENTATION COURSE / SEPTEMBER 2014

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Overview of UK 101: Academic Orientation Course

Table of Contents

Purpose and Overview	1
Impact of UK 101 on Retention and Graduation.....	1
Enrollments	2
UK 101 Costs	4
Retention and Graduation Rates Comparisons.....	5
Retention and Academic Preparation.....	6
Digging Deeper: Positive Impact of UK 101 on Sub-cohort Retention	8
Reasons for Retention Impact.....	10
Small Class Sizes.....	10
Consistent Instructor and Peer Instructor Training.....	11
Use of Peer Instructors.....	11
Campus-wide Core Curriculum/Assignments and SLOs.....	11
Flexibility to Add Specialized Sections	12
Issues and Next Steps	13
Closer Look at How Students Are Enrolled	13
Further Communication with Advisors and Faculty	13
Pilot Study of 2-Credit Hour Offering	13
Evaluate Special Sections	13
UK 101 and Living Learning Program (LLP).....	14
Expand the Predictive Indicators for UK 101 Analysis	14
Enrollment Versus Successful Completion in UK 101.....	14
Types of UK 101 Instructors and Success Rates for UK 101.....	14
References.....	16

Charts and Tables

Chart 1: UK 101 Sections and Capacity since 2008	2
Chart 2: UK 101 Enrollments	3
Chart 3: Percentage of First-Year Students Enrolled in UK 101	3
Chart 4: UK 101 One-Year Retention Rate.....	5
Chart 5: UK 101 Retention and Graduate Rates (Differential).....	6
Chart 6: HS GPA Comparison of UK 101 Enrolled / Not Enrolled	7
Chart 7: ACT Composite Scores Comparison of UK 101 Enrolled / Not Enrolled	8
Chart 8: UK 101 Instructors by Classification	15
Table 1: Expenditures for UK 101	4
Table 2: Retention Gains in First Time, Full-time for UK 101, Fall 2011 Cohort.....	9
Table 3: Retention Gains in First Time, Full-time for UK 101, Fall 2013 Cohort.....	9
Table 4: Retention Gains in First Time, Full-time for UK 101, Fall 2008-2013 Cohorts.....	9

NOTE:

Data from Fall 2008 to present utilizes end-of-term, operational data sourced from HANA. Rates in this report may vary from other sources that use only data from Census.

Impact of UK 101, Academic Orientation Course

Purpose and Overview

UK 101: Academic Orientation is a course designed to help first-year students in their transition to university life. The course introduces strategies and resources that build a strong foundation for academic success while promoting opportunities for intellectual and personal growth. Undergraduate Education and Student Affairs collaborate to offer the course relying on the UK 101 Advisory Group, composed of faculty, staff, and students, to develop and evaluate the curriculum. UK 101 is one of the few courses at UK that is directed towards students of all majors and developed, taught and evaluated through campus-wide collaboration.

The student learning outcomes developed for UK 101 address specific issues of student transition, focusing on the purpose and challenges of a college education, promoting student engagement, and increasing knowledge of campus resources. (See more at the UK 101 website: <http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/NewStudentPrograms/UK101/description.php>.) The current student learning outcomes are:

1. Articulate the purpose and nature of a college education at a research university.
2. Explain the purpose and goals of UK Core's student learning outcomes.
3. Apply learning strategies for achieving academic success such as study skills and information literacy.
4. Locate and use designated campus resources.
5. Recognize personal and social issues (e.g., alcohol, diversity, stress) that first-year students often face in a college environment and be able to identify and select appropriate campus resources.
6. Evaluate various campus activities (one campus event, one cultural event, one lecture) for professional, social, and/or academic development.

Specific modules in the syllabus have been intentionally developed to meet these learning outcomes. These modules, explained in greater depth later in this report, have been created by faculty and staff who have research and practice-based expertise in specific areas of retention, student services and student development.

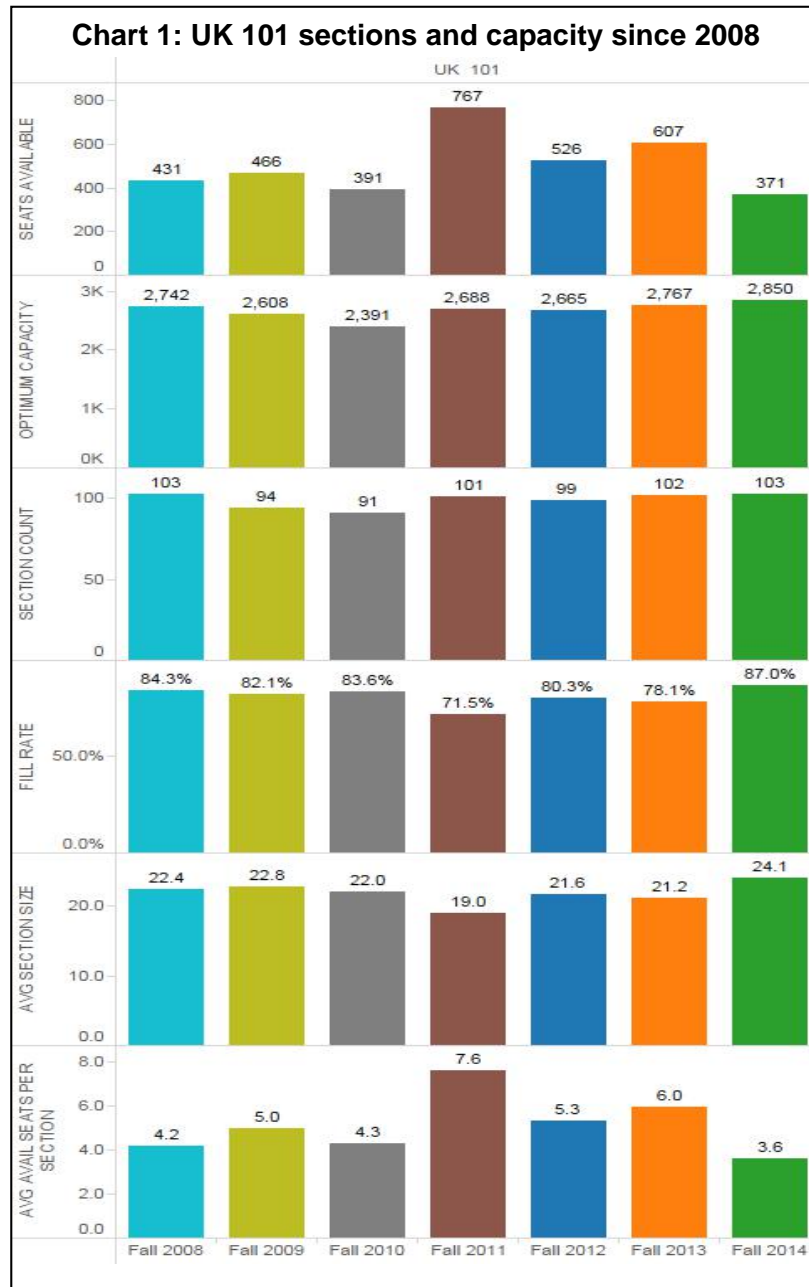
The Impact of UK 101 on Retention and Graduation

Academic orientations like UK 101 are a subset of first-year seminars, a category of courses that are considered *high-impact educational practices* (Kuh, 2008) due to their efficacy in promoting student engagement with institutional values. The specific impact of academic orientation courses like UK 101 on retention of first-year students is significant, as documented in the research literature (Davig and Spain 2003-2004; Sidle and McReynolds, 2009). The most recent overview of these courses (Padgett and Keup, 2011), states that "research has established the first-year seminar as one of the most important instructional vehicles for

achieving the learning and developmental objectives of undergraduate education in the United States (p. 3).”

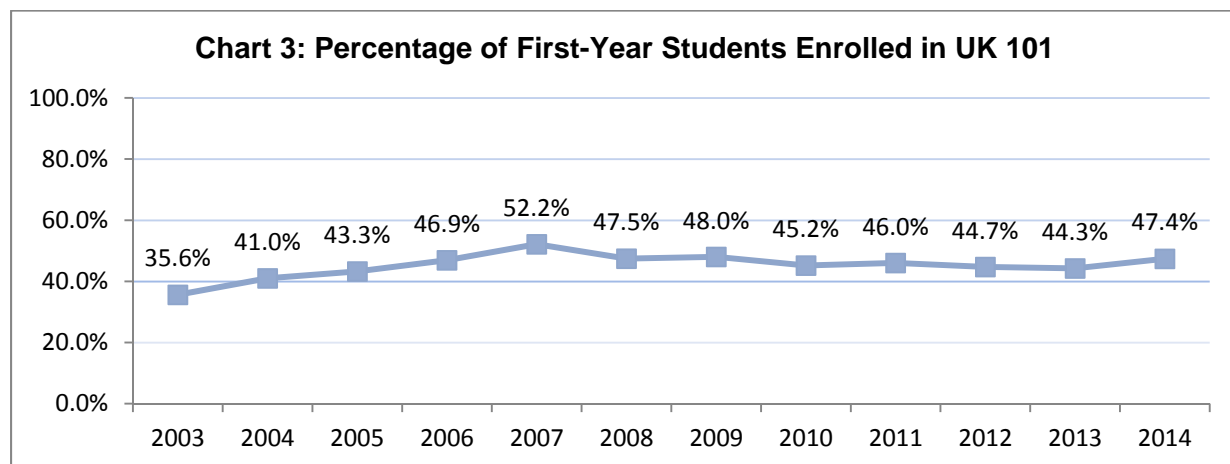
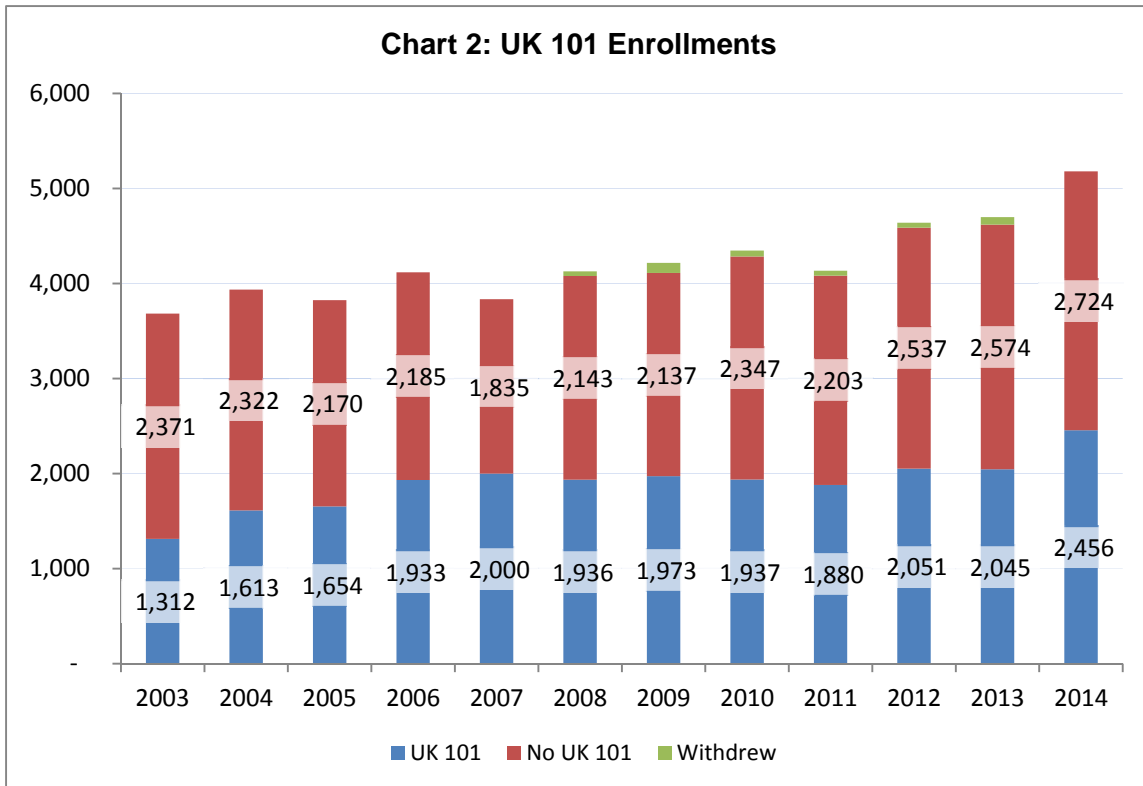
Enrollments

UK 101 has been continuously offered since 1991 in support of incoming first-year students. Another course, UK 201, serves transfer students, and a separate course for Veterans is being piloted this fall. Section sizes are purposefully kept small, averaging 22 students. Chart 1, below, describes UK 101 from a course management perspective. We currently offer 103 sections of UK 101.



While there have been conversations about mandating enrollment in UK 101 for all first-year students, several reasons constrain course capacity: adequate funding to pay for overloads for instructors, lack of classroom space, and the number of qualified faculty/staff on campus available to teach the course. For example, fewer sections were offered in 2009 and 2010 as a budget-cutting measure.

Chart 2, below, reflects actual enrollments in UK 101 at census date. Total enrollments and percentage of the first-year cohort served have fluctuated over the last ten years.



These two charts illustrate two periods of increased emphasis and enrollment. From 2003 to 2004, enrollment grew by 300 (15 sections) due to a recommendation of the Provost’s First-year Initiative which identified increased participation in UK 101 as way to communicate academic expectations to students and reconnect faculty and staff to the needs of undergraduates (Jensen, 2002; Jensen, 2004). In 2006, the Provost again provided additional funds to support UK 101. This permitted UGE to expand the number of sections to 103, to lengthen the course from eight to ten weeks of instruction, and to revise the curriculum. The stated goal at that time was to increase capacity in the course so that more than 50% of the cohort could benefit from its curriculum (Eldred, et. al. 2004: 28). UGE’s Strategic Plan for 2009-14 called for increasing participation in UK 101 to 75% of the first-year cohort. As the chart below demonstrates, the 50% goal was met once in 2007. In subsequent years, this 50% goal was not met – a result of decreased enrollment in UK 101 (2011) and an overall increase in the size of the incoming cohort (2008-2010, 2012-2014).

UK 101 Costs

The primary costs for UK 101 are the cost of instruction and training. Stipends for staff and some faculty were instituted in 1993. As fewer faculty have taught the course, stipends have risen to attract more and better quality instructors. Undergraduate Education and New Students and Parents Programs (NSPP) administer the funding for the courses, and the year-end totals are shown in the table below. Prior to 2012, some funding was provided through Student Affairs Student Services Fee (UK 101 Self-Study, 2011). Also in previous years, some colleges covered the costs of faculty instruction while NSPP covered some costs of training, materials, and peer mentor supplies) Due to budget reductions in 2012, UGE cut its recurring budget for UK 101 and funding necessary to support the program was provided on a non-recurring basis through the Provost’s Office. Stipends were last raised in 2007, increasing \$800/instructor to \$1000. Beginning in 2012 Peer Instructors received \$100 on their Plus Accounts. Currently, stipends are \$1000 for instructor payment (plus \$100 for benefits) and \$400 to cover materials. In Fall 2014 for the 2-credit UK 101 courses, UGE offers stipends of \$2000/instructor.

Fiscal Year	UGE	NSPP	Total Spent	Cost Per Student
2008 (Fall 2007)	\$87,082	\$15,592	\$102,675	\$51
2009 (Fall 2008)	\$87,585	\$15,592	\$103,177	\$53
2010 (Fall 2009)	\$96,830	\$15,592	\$112,423	\$57
2011 (Fall 2010)	\$97,751	\$15,592	\$113,344	\$59
2012 (Fall 2011)	\$103,699	\$19,592	\$123,292	\$66
2013 (Fall 2012)	\$148,500		\$148,500	\$72
2014 (Fall 2013)	\$153,000		\$153,000	\$75
2015 (fall 2014)	\$164,000		\$164,000	\$67

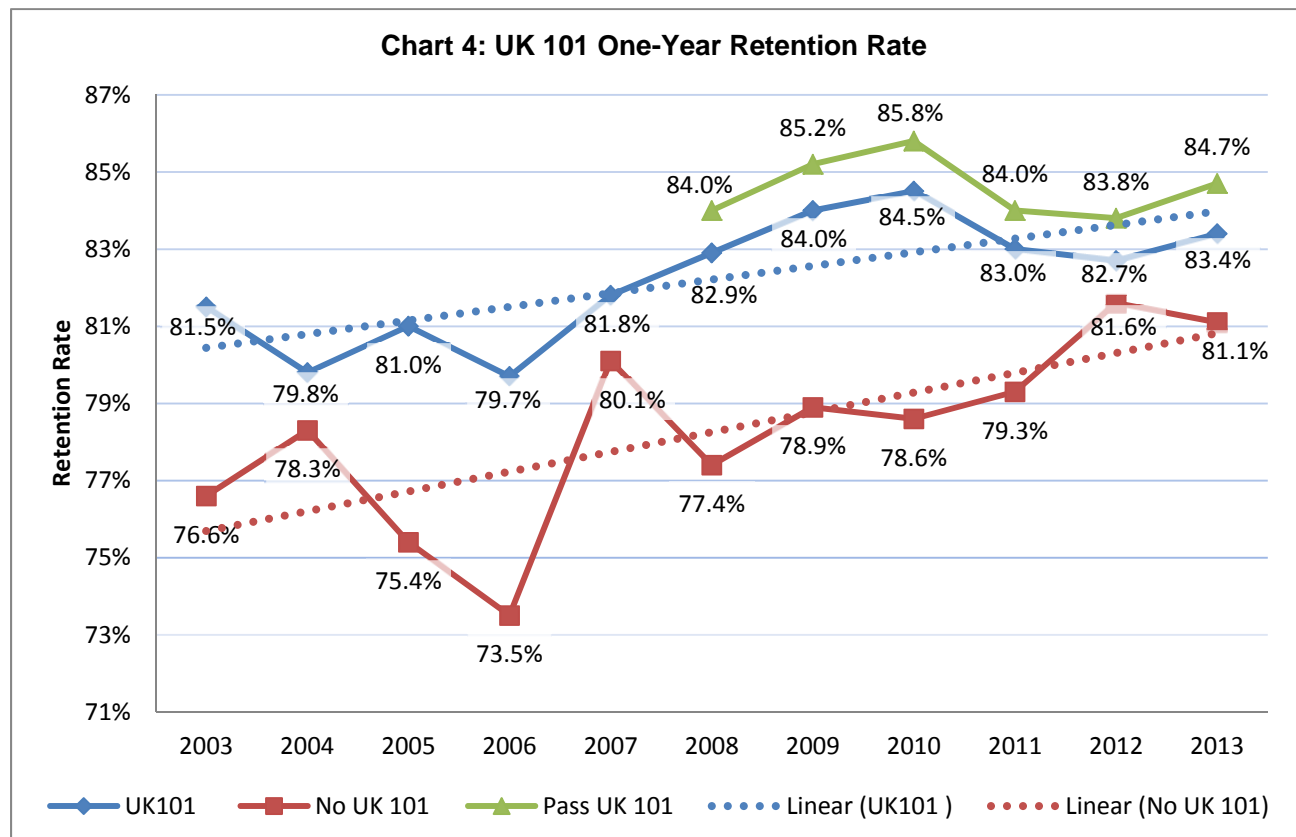
NOTE: This chart lists expenditures recorded by UGE and NSPP but some costs are not reflected in the total expenditures.

Total cost per 1-credit section is \$1500. Average cost per student enrollment across all sections in Fall 2014 is \$60.

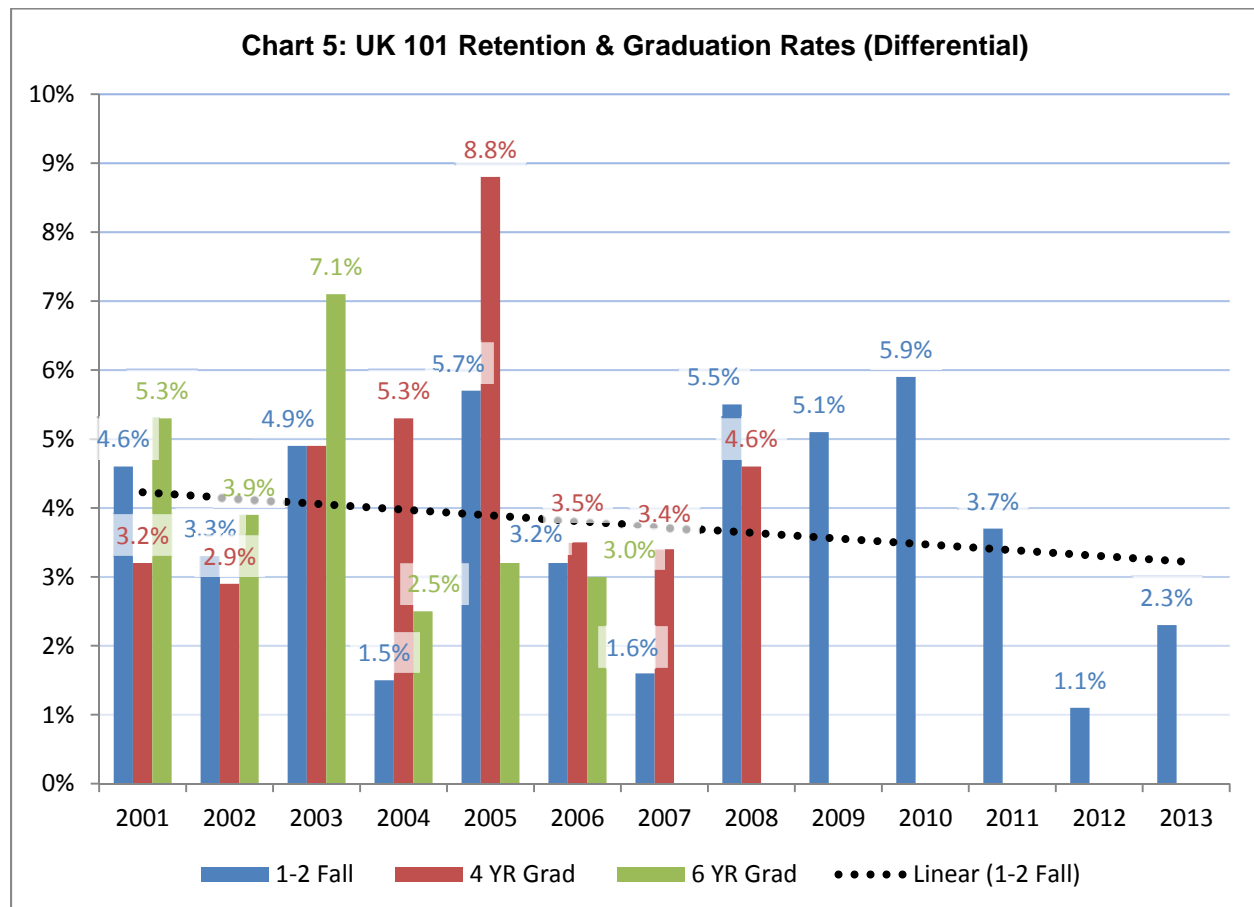
Retention and Graduation Rate Comparisons

Since 2003, UK has experienced an overall positive growth in the first-second year retention rates for all students, though this trend has been long and slow. Chart 4, below, shows that this trend toward higher retention is seen in both students who enrolled in UK 101 and those who did not enroll. Within this general trend, there remains a clear differential between the first-second fall retention rates of those students who enrolled in UK 101 and those who did not.

Students enrolled in UK 101 have achieved a higher retention rate than those who did not enroll. The connection to retention was noted in the 2007 report of the Provost’s Retention Group which identified substantial, previously unidentified, connections with retention, noting that participation in UK 101 is a “powerful predictor of student success” (Provost Retention Group, Initial Report, 2007:14, 31). Data collected by UK Analytics and Undergraduate Education have consistently shown the significant impact that enrollment in UK 101 has on retention rates (UK OIR, 2011). The retention rates for students completing the course average a full point greater than for all those enrolled.



A clear measure of the impact of UK 101 is the differential in retention between students who enrolled in the course and those who did not. Chart 5, below, helps us visualize this differential which for 1-2nd Fall retention has been as high as 5.7% (in 2005) and as low as 1.1% (2012). The average differential in the 13 years covered by this study is 3.72% (3.93% since 2008). Chart 5 also visualizes the consistently higher rates of 4-year and 6-year graduation achieved by students who enrolled in UK 101 (first noted by Mullen, et. al. n.d.). The 4-year graduation rate differential ranges from 2.9% in 2002 (note that the students graduating in that year would have taken UK 101 in 1998, before the curriculum was strengthened) to 8.8% in 2005. During the years covered by this survey, the difference in 4-year graduation rates between students who enroll in UK 101 and those who do not averages 4.75%. The difference in 6-year graduation rates is nearly as pronounced, averaging 4.17% since 2001.

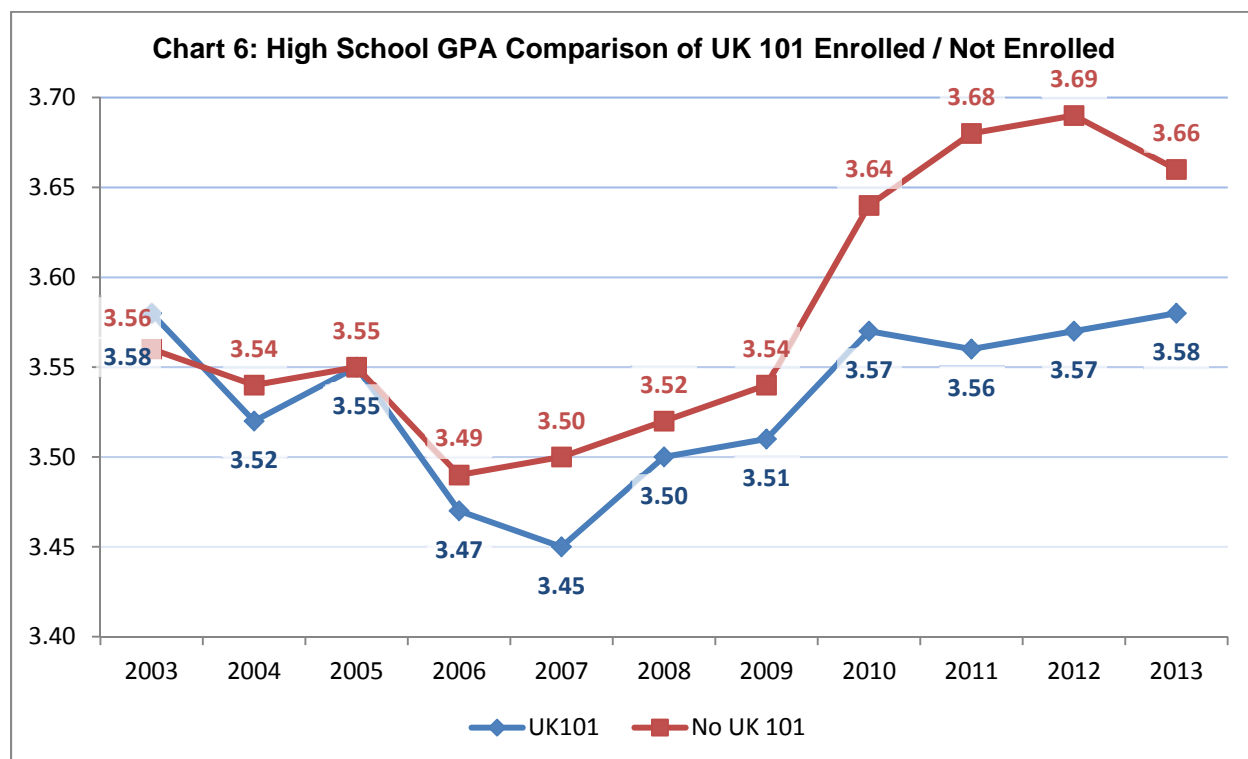


Retention and Academic Preparation

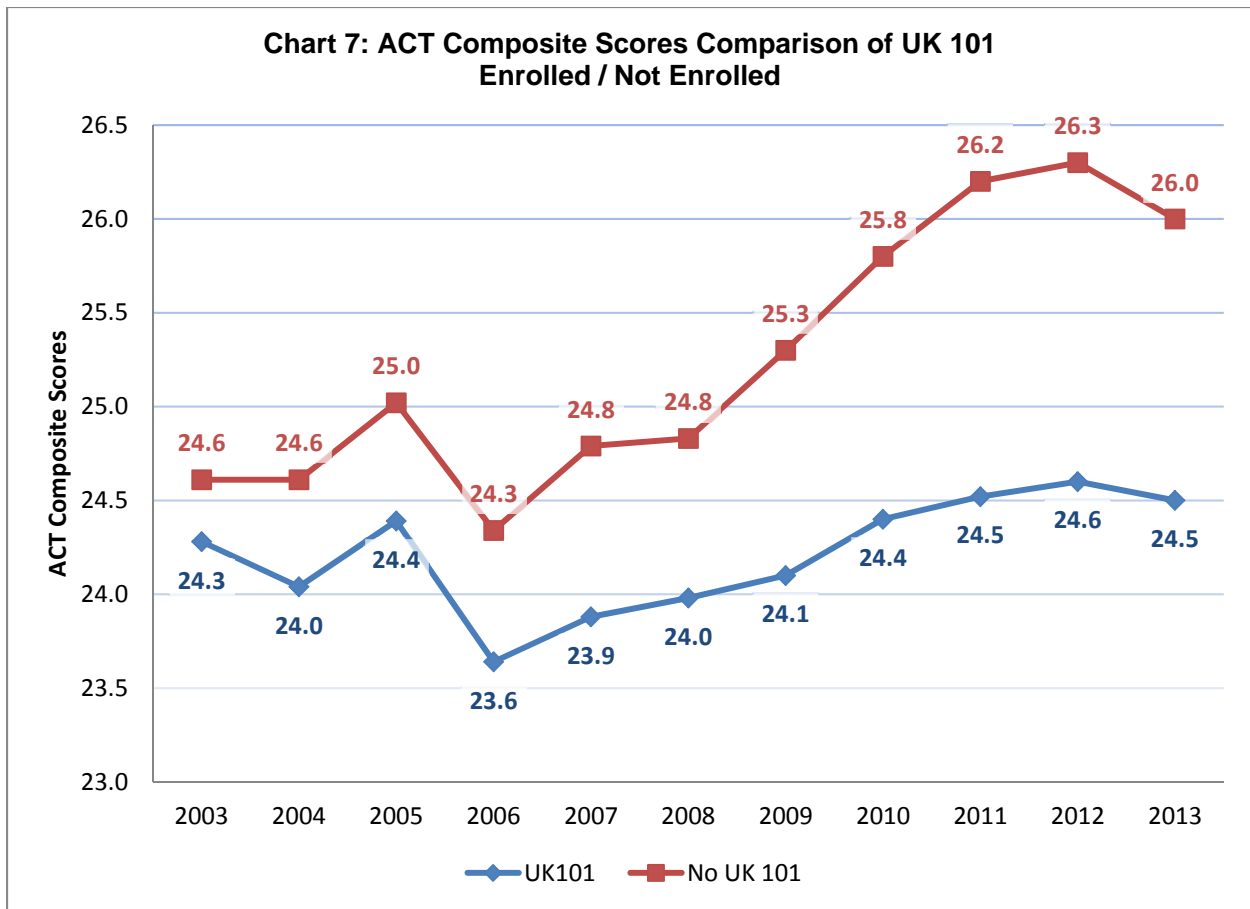
As the graphs above indicate, the differential impact of UK 101 on first-to-second year retention differential appears to decline over the last several years. This trend downward is inconsistent and punctuated with steep gains, particularly from 2008-2011 following the reemphasis on UK 101 in the Provost's "War on Attrition." From 2008-2011, the average differential was 5.5% (this spike in retention impact may or may not be correlated to the increase in stipends paid to

instructors beginning in 2007.) From 2011-2013, the differential was 2.37%. This trend in the differential in first-to-second year retention rates for students enrolled/not enrolled in UK 101 demands closer scrutiny.

One key variable tied to retention, progression and timely graduation is the academic preparation of the students when they enter college (UK OIR, 2004). Looking at the academic preparation of UK students, enrolled/not enrolled in UK 101, measured by high school grade point average (HS GPA) and ACT composite scores, reveals important trends. Chart 6 shows that while in earlier years there was no significant gap in HS GPA between those students who enrolled and those who did not, over time the difference has grown larger.



Similarly, Chart 7 (below) demonstrates that the small gap in ACT composite scores between these two groups has grown to nearly two full points. Students who do not enroll in UK 101 are, on average, show higher scores than those who enrolled. This is expected, in part, because academic advisors often strongly encourage enrollment in UK 101 for those students whose scores show they are not academically prepared for college.



The ramifications of this trend are important. Analysis of retention data indicates that we should expect students with lower HSPA and lower ACT composite scores to exhibit lower retention rates (Provost Retention Group, 2007: 10). Because the students enrolled in UK 101 have, on average, lower ACT scores and HSGPA than those students who do not enroll in the course, we would expect that their retention rates should be lower than those students who do not enroll. The 2007 report of the Provost Retention Group found a similar effect, noting that “students with lower HSGPAs gain more benefit from UK101 than students with higher HSGPAs.” The data collected in this study from 2008-2013 support and extend these findings. UK 101 plays an important role in “leveling the field” for those who take it; students who take the course are retained at a higher rate than would be predicted by their incoming academic credentials.

Digging Deeper: Positive Impact of UK 101 on Sub-cohort Retention

In 2011 Institutional Research (now UK Analytics) conducted a study of UK 101 strongly linking UK 101 to better retention. Table 2, below, presents some of the results of this study. One noticeable element of the 2011 IR study is that it confirms the earlier 2007 assessment of UK 101, illustrating the degree of that impact on students in the mid-ranges of academic preparedness. This is particularly noticeable in the HSGPA of 3.0-3.5 and the 2nd Quartile of students’ ACT composite scores.

The 2011 Institutional Research report also demonstrates new findings, showing notable gains for minority, international, and out-of-state students who take UK 101.

Characteristic of Student	Retention Rates for Those Enrolled in UK 101	Retention Rates for Those Not Enrolled in UK 101
Black, non-Hispanic	74.8% (+8.1%)	66.7%
Out-of-State	81.2% (+2.3%)	78.9%
Nonresident Alien	84.6% (+8.0%)	76.7%
2 nd Quartile ACT (average 24.5)	85.6% (+7.6%)	78.0%
HSGPA 3.0 to 3.25	72.5% (+5.4%)	67.1%
HSGPA 3.5 to 3.74	82.1% (+2.2%)	79.9%

Using a Tableau Workbook recently developed by UK Analytics, we can dig even deeper into this analysis. Table 3, below, provides comparative data from the Fall 2013 cohort and focusing on particular at-risk groups. These are groups whose retention rates present persistent gaps compared to the majority UK population (retention of white students enrolled in UK 101 was 84.3%; those not enrolled was 82.7%). This data indicates that UK 101 enrollment is correlated to retention gains for Black, low-income, and first generation students; the data does not show the same impact on out-of-state students.

Characteristic of Student	Enrolled in UK 101 (number)	Not Enrolled in UK 101 (number)	Differential
Black, non-Hispanic	77.4% (301)	56.3% (87)	+ 21.1%
Out-of-State	81.0% (558)	81.3% (553)	- 0.3%
Pell Eligible	78.4% (643)	74.6% (626)	+ 3.8%
First Generation College-going	77.1% (336)	70.0% (280)	+7.1%

The Tableau Workbook also permits us to look more broadly, extending an analysis to include the six years of the Fall 2008-2013 cohorts. The data collected supports the conclusions of the analysis of the 2011 and 2013 cohorts. UK 101 has proven and substantial impact on students in these at-risk populations, including out-of-state students. The 14.3% differential in the retention of Black students enrolled in UK 101 is particularly noticeable.

Characteristic of Student	Enrolled in UK 101 (number)	Not Enrolled in UK 101 (number)	Differential
Black, non-Hispanic	77.5% (1716)	63.2% (361)	+ 14.3%
Out-of-State	80.6% (2751)	77.5% (2771)	+ 3.1%
Pell Eligible	81.0% (3668)	75.6% (3490)	+ 5.4%
First Generation College-going	76.0% (1841)	69.2% (1619)	+ 6.8%

Reasons for Retention Impact

The significant impact on retention that UK 101 enrollment has can be ascribed to several features of the course.

Small Class Sizes

Two strengths of UK 101 are the small class size (typically 17 to 27 students) and the use of co-instructors (a faculty or professional staff and an upper-class peer instructor). In his paper *High-Impact Educational Practices*, Dr. George Kuh writes the following about first-year seminars: “The composition of the size of the course ensures that every student will get to know at least one faculty member well in the first-year of college, in addition to other students in class (Kuh, 2008).” This class structure enhances the opportunity to achieve a sense of community, faculty-student interaction, peer-to-peer influence, and the development of friendships, all researched factors in retention (Kuh, 2008; Kuh et al., 2005; Upcraft et al., 2005).

At the University of Kentucky, UK 101 may be the only small class in which a student is enrolled. The more personalized environment promotes student engagement and frequent interactions with both the instructor and the peer instructor. As the co-instructors build rapport with their students and better understand their academic and other needs, they are able to directly intervene and help students or refer them to campus resources. For example, a UK 101 instructor inquired about a student’s chemistry exam. When the student stated that he failed, the UK 101 instructor referred him to the Chemistry Help Desk, The Study, and the professor’s office hours. The following week, the instructor followed up with the student to ask which resources he had used. A second example spotlights the importance of the peer instructor. A first-year student confided to her peer instructor that she was extremely homesick and thinking of transferring to a college closer to home. The peer instructor encouraged this student to consider talking to someone in the Counseling Center and eventually walked the student to her appointment. The peer instructor also invited her to a student organization meeting that he thought might be of interest to her. Both first-year students cited in these examples are still enrolled at the University of Kentucky.

The following first-year student quotes are typical statements from the open-ended questions on the UK 101 student course evaluation. Their remarks support the importance of the small class and interaction with the instructor and peer instructor.

- *The best part of UK 101 was the feeling of community. The instructors were great, and I felt like they were just there to help--not intimidating at all, like other professors. I liked getting to know the people in UK 101.*
- *I liked the smaller classroom setting and that we could talk about so many topics relevant to a college freshman's life.*
- *I liked that it gave me a chance to actually meet people in a class because there were not 300 people in it. It gave me a lot of useful information about being a UK student.*

- *UK 101 helped me feel more connected and involved on campus. This class answered a lot of the questions I had when I first came here.*
- *It was a good place not to be embarrassed about not knowing everything or asking questions, because you know everyone there is a freshman and in the same boat.*
- *I really liked both of my instructors. They are down to earth and pretty approachable in every way. My peer instructor could relate to me a lot so she was pretty cool to talk to.*

Consistent Instructor and Peer Instructor Training

The significant role of instructors and peer instructors requires a robust training program. All instructors and peer instructors attend a planning meeting in April where they meet with their teaching partners. They also are introduced to the UK 101 core curriculum, syllabus, roles of the instructor and peer instructor, and tips on getting to know their students so that they may intervene when appropriate. In addition, all new UK 101 instructors participate in a one and one-half day training in May. The new instructor training includes information and discussion regarding institutional information about our first-year students; retention factors; developmental information on the typical UK first-year student; the UK 101 core curriculum; syllabus; website resources; class facilitation skills; and tips from experienced UK 101 instructors. Participants also experience numerous class sessions so that they are well prepared to teach them. A fall semester workshop prepares the instructors to facilitate discussions on the Common Reading throughout UK 101 and to assign meaningful paper or project assignments that relate to the book. Finally, both instructors and peer instructors receive support and resources from the course coordinators in the Dean of Students Office throughout the semester.

Use of Peer Instructors

The presence of peer instructors in the classroom and their role in planning and evaluating the course is also a factor in retention. Peer Instructors provide an exemplar and role model for students in the course. The Peer Instructor model provides opportunities for sophomores, juniors, and seniors to engage directly with faculty and staff. For example, the Peer Instructors participate in a workshop before the beginning of the fall semester. The format of the workshop is a variation of the faculty training. It is important to note that the Peer Instructor position allows over 100 sophomores, juniors, and seniors to develop leadership, presentation, facilitation, and teaching skills and make a meaningful contribution to the University of Kentucky. These students are chosen for the position after a competitive application and interview process.

Campus-wide Core Curriculum/Assignments and Student Learning Outcomes

Topics and themes in the curriculum are thoughtfully chosen by the UK 101 Advisory Group members—comprised of faculty, staff, and students—who annually receive an overview of the course evaluations by students, instructors, peer instructors, and UK Analytics. National research on student success and persistence factors also influences the selection of curriculum topics and assignments for the course. UK 101 lessons, class exercises, and assignments introduce students to research-based retention elements or strategies such as clear academic expectations, time on task or time management/study strategies, student involvement, self-efficacy, use of campus resources, academic advising, undergraduate research, education

abroad, wellness issues, a common intellectual experience (through the Common Reading), and diversity. (Kuh, 2008; Kuh et al., 2005; Upcraft et al., 2005)

To ensure a measure of consistency across the 102 sections of UK 101, a core curriculum, approved by the Advisory Group, is provided to instructors during an annual training. The 2014 core curriculum topics are as follows:

- Academic Expectations
- Professors and Classroom Decorum
- Library/Information Literacy & Assignments
- Goal Setting and Time Management and assignment
- Study Strategies and Assignments
- Undergraduate Research
- Career and Resume
- Campus Resources
- Purpose of UK Core
- Academic Integrity
- Academic Advising & Assignments
- Common Reading & Assignments
- Education Abroad
- Stress Management
- Substance Education
- Bystander Intervention
- Diversity
- Getting Involved & Assignments

Instructors also choose from an optional curriculum that addresses other important issues such as money management and credit card debt. Instructors of UK 101 sections that are specific to Living-Learning Programs or colleges add curriculum pertinent to their areas.

Flexibility to Develop Specialized UK 101 Sections

Almost half of the current UK 101 sections are restricted for students within particular colleges, majors, living-learning communities, or groups such as first-generation students. A list of these specialized sections follows:

- College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment-2 sections
- College of Arts and Sciences-5 sections
- College of Business and Economics-9 sections, including Global Scholars and Business Enterprise LLP
- College of Communication and Information-3 sections including CI Connect Community LLC; Pre-Journalism, Pre-ISC, Pre-Mass; and preCOM.
- College of Design-1 section
- College of Education-6 sections including KHP LLP and EDLife LLP
- College of Health Sciences- 2 LLP
- College of Medicine (Biomedical Research)-1 section
- College of Pharmacy (pre-Pharmacy)-2 sections
- College of Public Health-1 section
- College of Social Work-1 section
- Undergraduate Studies-8 sections
- Global Village LLC-1 section
- iNet LLC-1 section
- Wellness LLC-1 section
- First-Generation LLC-3 sections

Issues and Next Steps

Closer Look at How Students Are Enrolled

The growing gap in the HSGPA and ACT Comp scores for students enrolled and not enrolled is troubling. While we should ensure that students who most benefit in the course find seats, it is crucial to the success of the course that a wide range of academic abilities be represented. Students with better academic preparation and study habits can provide role models for others and form peer networks. We also do not want the course to become stigmatized as one only for “low performers.” This could drive away students who could benefit from the course. Can we encourage more high-performing students to take UK 101 if it is a requirement for peer mentors, RAs, or other positions where students can benefit from the UK 101 curriculum?

Further Communication with Advisors and Faculty

First-year students are informed about the UK 101 course by their academic advisors during See Blue U. Parents are also told about the course during the Dean of Students session on day one of See Blue U. Before the summer orientation program, Ben Withers and Becky Jordan meet with the Advising Leadership Team to inform them about which students benefit the most from UK 101 and to ask their college advisors to enroll students who are in these categories (first-generation, out-of-state, minority, international, underprepared by GPA or ACT). They also summarize the benefits of the course to students more generally. We plan to continue and strengthen this engagement with the Advising Network to encourage even more advisors understand the impact of UK 101 and encourage students to enroll and complete the course.

Pilot Study of 2-Credit Hour Offering

Currently, UK 101 is a variable credit (one or two hours), letter-graded course. This fall semester, 102 UK 101 sections are scheduled, including two sections at the Paducah Engineering Campus. Ninety-two of the Fall 2014 sections are one-credit-hour classes with 22 contact hours occurring within the first 11 weeks of the semester. Ten pilot sections of the full-semester, two-credit-hour class are scheduled for students enrolled in Undergraduate Studies (8 sections) and the College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment (2 sections). In the fall of 2015, the difference in retention rates will be examined between the students who took the two-credit class and those who previously enrolled in the one-credit class for those units.

Evaluate Specialized Sections

While numerous colleges offer specialized sections of UK 101, some colleges and departments (e.g. Nursing, Visual Arts) offer versions of their own academic orientations. A primary idea behind this kind of offering is to solidify a sense of “college fit” in the students’ first year. We have not evaluated or assessed these courses centrally, relying on the colleges and units to do so. However, we plan to look at these sections to see if they include the UK 101 “core curriculum” in their syllabi. This is important because so many UK students change majors. The UK 101 Advisory Group has determined the “core curriculum” based on research into the needs of first-year students and we should make sure that specialized sections do likewise and in a way that benefits students who may end up in another major.

Also, are these sections offered by colleges/departments having the impact that we see in regular UK 101 sections? If we look at graduation rates as well as retention rates, might we find a statistical difference in favor of the specialized sections over time? We might include in the analysis other, related, kinds of success rates. For example, would we find that the LLP-related UK 101 sections simply about keeping the students in the residential community from fall to spring or is there a statistical impact on long term persistence? Do the Undergraduate Studies sections show a particular result, e.g., do US students from UK 101 declare a major sooner?

UK 101 and the Living Learning Program (LLP)

Many new Living Learning Communities are looking to UK 101 as a type of embedded course to support their programs. There are currently 16 sections of UK 101 that support the LLP. These include: Wellness, International, CI Connect, iNet, Health Care Residential College (2 sections), College of Education (2), Business Enterprise (2), KHP (2) and 1G(3). These versions of UK 101 are similar to specialized sections offered by colleges/units (described above). Are these co-enrollment classes having the impact on retention over those that are not co-enrolled?

Expand the Predictive Indicators for UK 101

As our ability to gather and analyze data improves, we should examine whether there other high predictive indicators (besides HSGPA or ACT) that might be at play. For example, might membership in a Greek organization be statistically connected (pro or con) to success in UK101? What about the K-feed score - does this indicate anything in regards to success in UK101 vs not-in-UK101? Is there a way we can use predictive indicators to assist with outreach tied to retention?

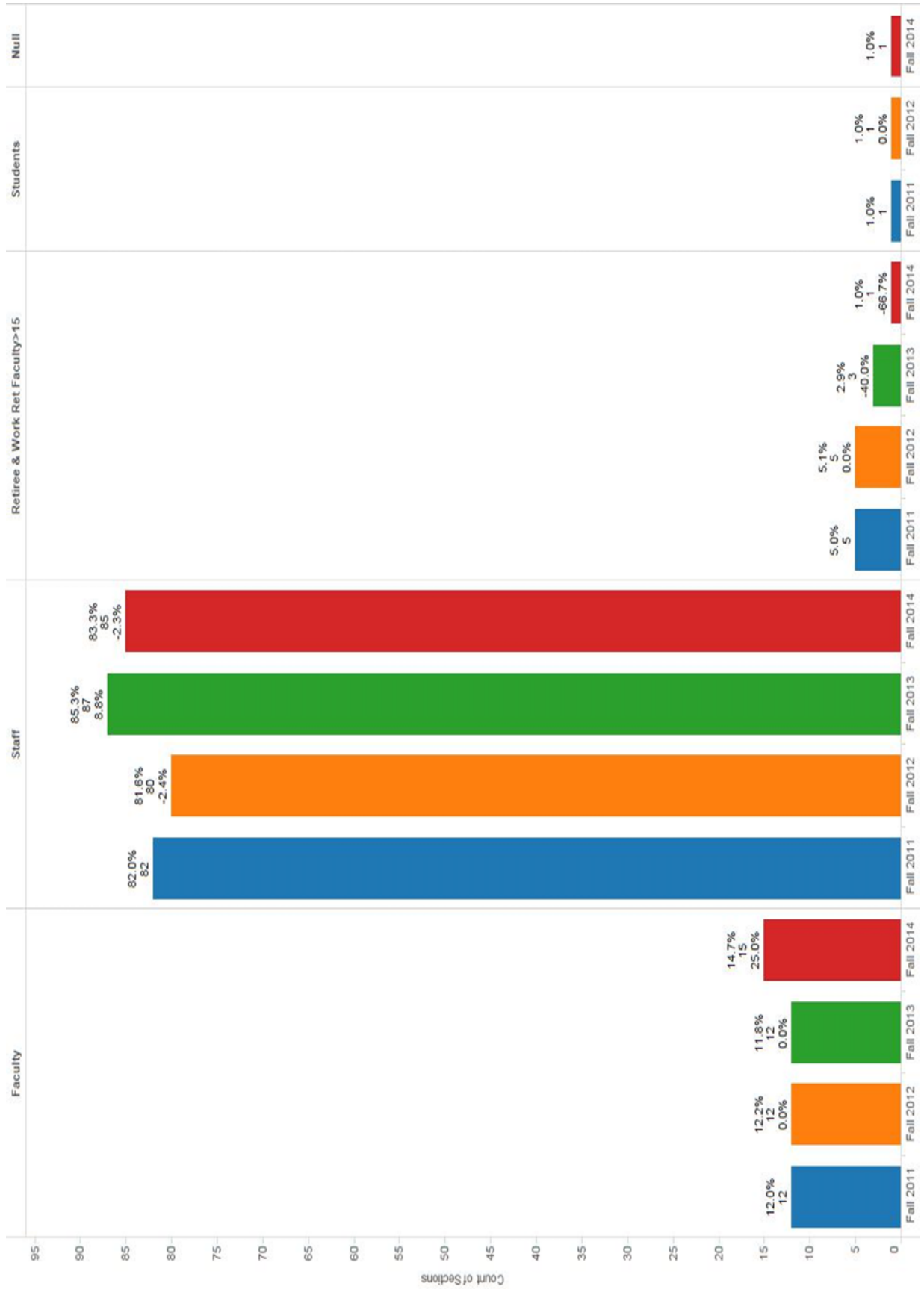
Enrollment Versus Successful Completion of UK 101

As Chart 4 (page 5) indicates, students who successfully complete UK 101 show even higher retention rates. We will explore strengthening interventions for those students who withdraw, show frequent absences, or who do poorly on early graded exercises in order to increase the number of students who successfully complete the course.

Types of UK 101 Instructors and Success Rates for UK 101

As the chart below indicates, over 80% of UK 101 instructors are professional staff. Are there any noticeable differences between those UK101 courses offered by professional/teaching staff and those offered by clinical faculty or those offered by regular faculty in terms of grading patterns or TCE results? As the size of the first-year cohort continues to increase, it is crucial to find more highly qualified UK 101 instructors. UK faculty could play a key role. In the past, it has proven difficult to convince some faculty to attend the mandatory training for UK 101 and as a result the quality of faculty instruction has been variable. How do we recruit more full-time UK faculty to teach this course?

Chart 8: UK 101 Instructors by Classification



References

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