

SUMMER-ON-TRIAL, 1965: A ONE-YEAR  
FOLLOW-UP STUDY

Charles J. Gelso  
South Georgia College

In the summer of 1965, eighty-four students attended South Georgia College (SGC) on a trial basis. All of these students had marginal academic potential, as measured by their high school average and or Scholastic Aptitude Test scores. Sixty-four (76%) of the on-trial students performed well enough in the summer program to be admitted to the 1965 Fall Quarter at S.G.C., and fifty-five of these students actually attended during the Fall Quarter.

This is the report of a study which was made to determine how well these fifty-five students did during their freshman year at SGC. It was also hoped that this research would provide a better understanding of the efficacy of SGC's summer-on-trial policies.

### Findings

#### Academic Performance

It was found that only fifteen (27.2%) of the fifty-five students persisted through their freshman year at SGC. Of the remaining forty, twenty-seven failed out and thirteen withdrew voluntarily.

In order to get a more accurate picture of the academic performance of these students during their freshman year, a check was made of their grade point averages (GPA's). The mean GPA's and standard deviations of: (a) the students who persisted through their freshman year, (b) those who withdrew voluntarily, (c) those who failed out and (d) all students combined are presented on Table 1. These GPA's were calculated on a four-point scale: A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1.

It can be seen that none of the three groups had a mean GPA of C or better. The fifteen students who persisted through their freshman year had only a D+ average, while both the voluntary dropouts and the students who failed out barely reached a D- GPA.

Table 1

Mean Freshman Year GPA and S.D. for the Three  
Groups of On-trial Students

Group I		Group II		Group III		Groups I, II & III	
Persisted through freshman year (N=15)		Withdrew Voluntarily (N=12)		Failed out (N=27)		All three groups combined (N=54)	
Mean GPA	S.D.	Mean GPA	S.D.	Mean GPA	S.D.	Mean GPA	S.D.
1.76	.25	1.16	.25	1.07	.35	1.27	.51

In carrying this investigation a bit further, it was found that the freshman year GPA's of the fifteen persisters ranged from 1.4 to 2.4. In addition, only three of the fifteen had a GPA of 2.0 or better, and six of the fifteen were on scholastic probation at the end of their freshman year. These findings indicate that, although the fifteen persisted through their freshman year, things may not be very comfortable for many of them during their sophomore year. That is, many of these "successful" students probably will not persist through their sophomore year at SGC.

The data in Table 1 also show that the mean GPA of the students who withdrew voluntarily was very similar to the mean GPA range of the voluntary withdrawers was from .7 to 1.8 - none of these students had a C or better average. In addition, all of them were on scholastic probation when they withdrew. These findings seem to indicate that these students may well have seen the handwriting on the wall when they dropped out. It is probable that the large majority, it not all, of them would have failed out if they had not dropped out.

#### Regular Year Grades as Compared to Summer School Grades

The above evidence indicates that students' success in a summer-on-trial program at SGC is by no means a good predictor of success during the regular year. The question

now arises as to how much these student's regular-year performance differed from their summer-on-trial performance. That is, was their regular-year performance significantly worse than their performance in the summer-on-trial program? Or, on the other hand, were the academic standards for success in the on-trial program so low that the on-trial students actually performed on about the same level in the summer as they did during the regular year? If this latter possibility were the case, the on-trial students might have performed on about the same level in the regular year as in the summer session; but, due to different standards, they could have succeeded in the summer and failed in the regular year.

Answers to these questions are presented in Table 2. The mean GPA's and S.D.'s of: (a) those who persisted through their freshman year, (b) the voluntary withdrawers, (c) the flunk outs, and (d) all three groups combined are presented for the summer session in which they were on trial and for the regular year.

Table 2

Mean GPA and S.D. of the three groups in the summer-on-trial sessions as compared with the mean GPA and S.D. of these groups in the regular year.

	GROUP I		GROUP II		GROUP III		GROUPS I, II&III	
	Persisted through frosh-yr. (N=15)		Withdrew Voluntarily (N=12)		Failed out (N=27)		All three group combined (N=54)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Session	GPA	S.D.	GPA	S.D.	GPA	S.D.	GPA	S.D.
Performance in summer school	2.14	.27	2.00	.36	1.74	.39	1.91	.56
Performance in the regular year	1.76	.25	1.16	.25	1.07	.35	1.27	.51

The figures in Table 2 indicate that the on-trial students performed at a much higher level in their summer-on-trial program than they did during the regular year. However, the performance of many of these students in the summer program still left much to be desired; as a group, their mean GPA was less than 2.0.

The Prediction of Freshman  
Year Grades

A key question remains. That is, although the on-trial students did much better in the summer than during the regular year, was there a significant relationship between their summer grades and their regular-year grades? Knowledge of this would eventually enable SGC to accurately predict regular-year grades of on-trial students on the basis of their summer grades.

It was found that a correlation, corrected for attenuation, of .56 existed between summer and regular-year grades for this group. Since this significant relationship was found, predictions of regular year GPA's based on summer school grades were made through the use of a regression equation. These predictions are given in Table 3.

Table 3  
Predicted GPA

Summer GPA	Predicted regular-year GPA	Summer GPA	Predicted regular-year GPA
3.1	2.03	2.0 (C)	1.36
3.0(B)	1.97	1.9	1.30
2.9	1.91	1.8	1.24
2.8	1.85	1.7	1.18
2.7	1.79	1.6	1.12
2.6	1.73	1.5	1.06
2.5	1.67	1.4	.99
2.4	1.60	1.3	.93
2.3	1.54	1.2	.88
2.2	1.48	1.1	.81
2.1	1.42	1.0 (D)	.75

Note that for a student to have a predicted freshman year GPA of 2.0 he should have a GPA of 3.1 in his summer-on-trial program. In addition, if an on-trial student made a 2.0 average in the summer, it is predicted that he would make a 1.36 GPA in the regular year. The chances are approximately 68 out of 100 that his regular-year GPA would be between .95 and 1.77, and they are approximately 95 out of 100 that it would be between .54 and 2.18. The chances of the students getting a C average in the regular year if he did not have a C average or better in the summer-on-trial session would be extremely poor. In fact, his chances of getting a respectable D+ average, 1.7 for example, would be very slim.

Since the sample is so small, one should be careful in generalizing these predictions to future on-trial students. However, it is a good bet that the predictions will be reasonably valid in the future since research on past summer-on-trial students has shown a highly similar trend.

#### Discussion

Probably the most relevant question which is raised by these findings is simply: why was there such a large drop in the performance of these students in the regular year as compared to the summer? One plausible explanation for this phenomenon might be that during a short, intensive summer session (six weeks or three weeks, as had been the case) in which these students are working under the pressure of being on trial, they can do enough work to pass. However, during the regular year, when the pressure of being on trial is off, they revert to their old study patterns which are not conducive to academic success.

To render the above analysis feasible, it must be added that the large majority of the students were on trial to start with because of low high school averages. Their SAT scores, on the other hand, were generally acceptable. The mean STA Verbal and Math scores of the 55 students who were accepted for the Fall Quarter and did attend were not significantly below the mean of the remainder of the 1965 Fall Quarter entering freshmen. The mean HSA of these 55 students, however, was only 16 (D), while the mean HSA for the remainder of the freshman class was approximately 24 (c). Thus, one gets the picture of a group of students who, generally, have never really learned to succeed in academic situations, although they probably are capable of it.

Although related explanation is that on-trial students usually take the courses in the summer in which they feel they can do best. These may be courses which are reputed to be fairly "easy," courses in which the student has done relatively well in high school, or both. However, in the regular year, since the student must stick to a fairly acceptable program, he is required to take some of the "harder" courses. Since as implied above, these on-trial students generally have never really learned to consistently put forth the required effort academically, they find it very difficult to succeed in the more difficult college courses.

Finally, the results of this study indicate that the chances of an on-trial student's earning a C or a D+ average in his freshman year if he does not earn a C average in the summer are extremely slim. In light of this, the efficacy of some of the past summer-on-trial academic policies becomes questionable. For example, a student has been permitted to enter in the Fall Quarter if he earned a minimum of a C and a D in three summer courses. As a result, a student could have earned a C, D and an F in his on-trial program (1.0 or D average) and still have been admitted in the Fall Quarter. Assuming that the predictions which were made in this study hold up reasonably well in the future, the student's chances of earning a C average in his freshman year would be less than 1 in 100. In fact, if the on-trial person earned a C and a D in his summer program, his chances of earning a C average in his freshman year would be less than 1 in 50.

#### Summary and Conclusion

A study was made to determine the freshman-year level of performance of fifty-five students who entered South Georgia College on a trial basis in the summer of 1965 and did well enough to be admitted to the Fall Quarter, 1965. A summary of the findings is enumerated below:

- (1) Fifteen of the fifty-five persisted through their freshman year at S.G.C., thirteen withdrew voluntarily during the year, and twenty-seven failed out.
- (2) Only three of the fifteen students who persisted earned a 2.0 or better average in their freshman year, and six of the fifteen were on scholastic probation at the end of the quarter.

- (3) None of the thirteen dropouts and twenty-seven fail-outs earned a 2.0 average. In addition, all of the dropouts were on scholastic probation when they withdrew. It was suggested that a large majority, if not all, of these students would have failed out if they did not drop out.
- (4) The summer school GPA of the on-trial students, as a group, was significantly higher than their regular-year GPA. However, even during their summer-on-trial program the mean GPA of the group was less than 2.0. Possible causes of this drop in regular-year as compared to summer school academic performance were discussed.
- (5) Although there was generally a large drop in the GPA's of these students in the regular-year as compared to the summer, a fairly high correlation was found to exist between summer and regular-year grades for this group. Because of this, regular-year grades on the basis of summer school grades of on-trial students were predicted through the use of a regression equation.
- (6) It was found that if an on-trial student was to have a fair chance at getting a C average in his freshman year, he should have had at least a C average (and preferably higher) in his on-trial program. On the basis of these findings, it was suggested that the procedure of admitting an on-trial student to the Fall Quarter if he had a minimum of a C and a D in three summer courses was questionable.

It will be interesting to observe the effects of two changes which have been made in the summer-on-trial program on the performance of on-trial students. For one, SGC has moved to a full summer quarter, rather than a six-week and a three-week session. In addition, on-trial students now need to make two C's and a D in their summer program to be eligible for Fall Quarter admission. It is suggested here that these changes will probably result in a lower percentage of on-trial students succeeding in their summer program. However, it is likely that with the new policies the rate of regular-year attrition among the students who do well enough in the summer to be admitted to the Fall Quarter will be significantly reduced.