

IN AND OUT OF COLLEGE

by

Oklahoma. State Regents  
for Higher Education.

# in and out of college

***REPORT 1: The First Year***

***A Longitudinal Study  
of the 1962 Freshman  
Class In Oklahoma Colleges***

**Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education  
State Capitol, Oklahoma City**

**October, 1964**

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FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

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**John J. Coffelt and Dan S. Hobbs**

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## FOREWORD

One of the responsibilities of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education is that of prescribing standards for admission and retention of students at colleges and universities of the State System. In the academic year 1961-62, when the State Regents were in the process of reviewing and updating these standards, it became evident that there was insufficient information about college students upon which sound policy decisions could be based.

In the fall of 1962, a study was begun of more than 13,000 first-time freshmen entering Oklahoma colleges and universities, the purpose of which was to identify significant academic, cultural, and socio-economic characteristics associated with admission to and retention in college; and to gain further insights into students' decisions about college, their aspirations, and their academic achievements.

This publication analyzes the characteristics of these entering freshmen and relates their characteristics to persistence during the first year of college. As these students move through college, other reports will be published periodically which will further analyze and interpret pertinent findings.

Results of this study should be helpful not only to the State Regents in further improving admission and retention policies, but also to individual institutions, parents, counselors, and faculty as they guide the youth of Oklahoma in achieving their educational goals.

The State Regents and their staff are grateful to the administrative personnel of colleges and universities in Oklahoma, both public and private, for their wholehearted assistance in obtaining data about Oklahoma college students for this report.

E. T. Dunlap  
Chancellor

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Perhaps no previous generation of students in American higher education has been studied so intensively or written about so extensively as the group now enrolled in the nation's colleges and universities. In spite of the fact that the output of published research relating to college students has quadrupled in this decade over the previous one, the demand for additional information which may be used as the basis for planning continues to run well ahead of the available supply.

The need to know more about students and prospective students in higher education is being compounded annually by an escalating enrollment trend which has seen the number of students in colleges and universities rise from less than 250,000 at the turn of the 20th Century to more than 4,500,000 in the fall semester of 1963. It is of more than passing interest to note that one-half of the increase in the number of students during this century has occurred over the past 10 years, and that even greater increases are projected for the next few years.

The sizeable enrollment increases envisioned for the immediate years ahead will place additional burdens on already overcrowded campus facilities and instructional programs, and these pressures will make it mandatory that colleges and universities find better and more economical ways of selecting and educating students. With instructional space and financial resources at a premium, neither individual institutions nor systems of higher education can any longer afford the luxury of admitting students indiscriminately at the freshman level, only to lose up to one-half of such students by the beginning of the sophomore year. Attrition rates on this order, both in terms of the human and financial resources involved, are far too expensive for the society to underwrite. Instead, ways must be found to minimize such losses by more carefully matching institutions and students so that both can produce to the limit of their respective capacities.

The ultimate goal of research relating to college students, according to T. R. McConnell, Director of the Center for the Study of Higher Education at the University of California, Berkeley, is to discover ways of placing the right student in the right institutional environment. "Presumably," says Dr. McConnell, "there is a college which would be a productive place for one student, but not for another."<sup>1</sup>

If, as Dr. McConnell alleges, there are college students who are unproductive in the institutions in which they are now enrolled, but who would be productive if enrolled in another institutional setting, it would be highly beneficial to both students and colleges in Oklahoma if research could succeed in bringing students and institutions together in the right combinations. The report of the study which follows is but the first step

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<sup>1</sup>T. R. McConnell, "Introduction" to **Research on College Students**, ed. Hall T. Sprague, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and The Center for The Study of Higher Education, December, 1960, p. 4.

in the direction of providing data which will allow both Oklahoma students and institutions to make wiser choices in their mutual search for compatibility.

## **SCOPE AND DESCRIPTION OF THE REPORT**

This report is the first in a projected series of reports to emerge from a comprehensive, long-range study now being made of the group of students who enrolled as first-time freshmen in Oklahoma colleges in the 1962 fall semester. In this longitudinal study, which will be carried out over a six-year period, more than 13,000 students in 32 Oklahoma colleges and universities are being followed systematically as they move through their collegiate careers, from matriculation to graduation. The study is being conducted by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, with the cooperation of all Oklahoma institutions of higher learning, both public and private.

Plans for conducting the six-year study call for investigations into a number of areas in which information has previously been fragmentary or non-existent. Answers will be sought to questions such as the following: What are the academic and socio-economic characteristics of students who enter Oklahoma colleges? What is the incidence of transfer among institutions in Oklahoma, and how does the transfer student fare in relation to non-transfers? How many students drop out of the various colleges during the freshman, sophomore or later years, and what are the factors associated with dropout? How many students who matriculate in Oklahoma colleges as freshmen will later graduate from Oklahoma colleges with a bachelor's degree? What are the institutional factors responsible for high persistence and graduation rates on the part of students?

Finding answers to questions such as these will require that systematic studies of students go forward on a semester-by-semester and institution-by-institution basis, and that periodic studies be made of dropouts, transfers, and other students in special categories. As the participants in this study move from the sophomore class through the higher academic levels, additional reports on their progress will be made; and, at the conclusion of the study, a summary report will be published. The final report should yield a great quantity of information about college students which has never before been available to those responsible for state-level higher education planning, either in Oklahoma or elsewhere in the nation.

This initial publication is designed to serve a dual function. The first part of the report will be devoted to a series of analyses on the academic and socio-economic characteristics of entering college freshmen, covering such factors as student aptitude, high school achievement, family income, size of high school attended, scholarships held, and a number of other related characteristics. The second part is a progress report on what has happened to the original group of entering freshmen during the first academic year of the study. In this latter section of the report, analyses will be made of institutional retention, student dropout through two semesters of attendance, and the incidence of student transfer among Oklahoma institutions.

## **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSES OF THE STUDY**

The Constitution and Statutes of the State of Oklahoma provide that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall prescribe standards for "admission to, retention in, and graduation from" institutions in The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education. In order to discharge these constitutional and statutory responsibilities properly, the State Regents must have access to continuous and accurate information about students upon which to base sound policy. It is mandatory not only that data be available on how many and what kinds of students are enrolling in Oklahoma colleges and universities, but also on what happens to these students after they are enrolled. It is therefore necessary that periodic studies such as this one be carried on, in order that policies relating to these matters may be under continuous and systematic review.

Following are the general purposes of the long-term study involving the fall 1962 freshman class in Oklahoma colleges:

1. To isolate significant academic and socio-economic characteristics of the clientele of individual colleges that are associated with admission, retention and graduation from college, and to interpret these relationships in meaningful ways for each campus.
2. To isolate significant factors associated with institutional dropout, and to find ways of reducing the loss of talent represented by those capable students who prematurely discontinue their college education.
3. To synthesize and interpret the data for all institutions included in the study in terms of their societal meaning and significance.
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of present state-wide admission policies in The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education, and to recommend possible improvements.
5. To disseminate the findings to individuals, groups, and organizations interested in and concerned about college admission and retention.

## **PROCEDURES**

In the spring of 1962, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education authorized the Chancellor of Higher Education and his research staff to undertake a comprehensive, longitudinal study of the first-time freshmen who would be entering Oklahoma colleges and universities in the 1962 fall semester. In planning for the accomplishment of this study, the research staff made the decision to go directly to the student for needed academic and socio-economic background information, rather than rely on the various institutions to furnish such data for each student. This decision made, the staff immediately began the development of a questionnaire comprehensive enough to be useful, yet short enough to be easily and quickly administered.

The tentative instrument developed by the research staff was reviewed during the early part of the summer in 1962 by a special 12-member advisory committee representing all types of colleges and universities in Oklahoma.

This committee, composed primarily of registrars and admissions officers, contributed a number of helpful suggestions which were incorporated into a second draft of the questionnaire. After these revisions had been made, the second draft was pre-tested on all first-time freshmen who enrolled at East Central State College at Ada during the 1962 summer session. Each of these students was interviewed personally by a member of the research staff following the administration of the instrument, to ascertain whether any student had experienced difficulty with the instructions or with individual items on the questionnaire.

In order to check the validity of student responses to the questionnaire, particularly with respect to students' estimations of their high-school grade averages, the research staff secured from Mr. Harvey Faust, Registrar at East Central State College, grade-point averages from official high school grade records for the students participating in the pre-test. As a result of this investigation—and also other correlations of actual data with students' estimations—the staff concluded that students' responses were both reliable and accurate enough to be used with confidence. Following this pre-test and validation sequence, the questionnaire forms were printed and distributed to 32 Oklahoma institutions of higher learning in August of 1962. A copy of the final questionnaire form is included in this report as Appendix A.

Each freshman who enrolled in an Oklahoma college in the fall of 1962 was asked to fill out one of these four-page questionnaires, giving such information as his sex, age, race, the size of his home town, his parents' income, his high school grade-point average, and much more information of the same type. The institutions then collected the questionnaires, entered the American College Testing Program Composite Standard score for each student, and sent the forms to the office of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, where they were processed and the information punched into IBM cards. The data from these cards were subsequently placed on electronic tape, in order that the material might be handled and processed with more efficiency.

A series of analyses on the entering characteristics of this 1962 fall freshman class has now been made, a number of which appear in the first section of this report. In addition, a semester-by-semester record of each student's progress in college is being kept. At the beginning of each semester, each Oklahoma institution is sent a listing of participating students who were reported as enrolled in that particular institution at the beginning of the previous semester. The institution then updates this listing by marking off the terminations from the previous semester and adding their cumulative grade-point averages, and by listing the names of those students who transfer in from other Oklahoma institutions. The lists are then returned to the State Regents' office, where they are brought up-to-date through a special program which utilizes the assistance of the IBM 1410 Computer. The above sequence of operation, with some variations, will continue for a period of six years, until the great majority of students who

will graduate from college have done so. This particular report, however, covers only the first year of the study. Subsequent reports of the same nature are planned to be published periodically.

## THE STUDY UNIVERSE

The universe under investigation in this study is the total of 13,276 first-time freshmen who enrolled in 32 Oklahoma colleges and universities in the 1962 fall semester. The institutions participating in the study, along with the number of freshmen enrolled in each, are listed below.

### NUMBER OF FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN IN OKLAHOMA COLLEGES, FALL 1962<sup>2</sup>

State-Supported		Private & Municipal	
OU	2,219	Tulsa	569
OSU	2,452	Ben Hts	6
CSC	1,052	Bethany	305
ECSC	381	OBU	360
NESC	687	OCC	198
NWSC	338	OCU	290
SESC	311	Phillips	279
SWSC	596	Bacone	151
OCW	153	St Greg	86
PAMC	221	Altus	79
LU	201	El Reno	28
Cameron	567	Poteau	52
Connors	166	Sayre	69
Eastern	324	Seminole	32
Murray	194		
NEOAMC	549		
NOJC	265		
OMA	96		
Total	10,772	Total	2,504
Grand Total 13,276			

Because the size of the entering freshman class at some institutions was quite small and it was anticipated that sub-analyses of student characteristics would be made on an institution-by-institution basis, the use of a random sample was not appropriate. This presented no major problem, however, as the use of electronic data-processing equipment made it nearly as easy to follow and analyze the total group as it would have been to process a smaller sample group.

It will be noted that slightly more than four out of five freshman students enrolled in Oklahoma colleges and universities in 1962 were in

<sup>2</sup>A list of the institutions participating in this study, along with a standard system of abbreviation of institutional names, is listed in Appendix B of this report.

state-supported institutions. Out of a grand total of 13,276 freshmen, some 10,772 (81.1%), were enrolled in state-supported institutions, while 2,504 (18.9%), were in private and municipal colleges.

## **LIMITATIONS**

In any research project in which the matter under investigation is complex and the quantities of statistical data are great, some delimitation of scope is necessary in order to avoid a superficial treatment of the subject under investigation. This particular research study is no exception to the rule. Many promising avenues of investigation had to be left unexplored in the design of the study, some of which are mentioned briefly in the following paragraphs.

The present research does not undertake to find out what happened to all of the graduates from the 1962 Oklahoma spring high school graduating class; nor does it attempt to discover how many young people from the 1962 class went on to college. Instead, the present study concerns itself **only** with that group of students—both residents of Oklahoma and those from out-of-state—who began their college careers in Oklahoma colleges and universities in the fall semester of 1962. Since no account was taken of those Oklahoma students who attended out-of-state colleges and universities in the summer and fall semester of 1962, nor of those who began their studies in Oklahoma colleges in the summer of 1962, the number of Oklahoma students involved in the present project will understate by a considerable margin—perhaps 15 per cent or more—the total percentage of Oklahoma high school graduates going on to college in the year 1962.

Although it is believed that adequate provisions have been made in the research design of this study to secure background information on the personal, academic and socio-economic characteristics of students, no attempt has been made to obtain measurements of student personality, nor to ascertain how students distribute themselves among institutions according to personality type. While it is recognized that research of this nature is both productive and promising, it is not within the scope of the present study to give attention to this aspect of research on college students.

A longitudinal study based on only one group of college students has at least one inherent limitation: What is true for one group of students may not have universal validity for subsequent groups of students. To the extent then, that the class of students being studied is atypical, the conclusions reached herein may not have equal value for all future classes of students.

## **CLASSIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONS**

In order that the information obtained in this study might be presented and analyzed in the most meaningful manner, two types of classifications have been used. These are: (1) type of control; and (2) type of program.

**Type of Control.**—The 32 participating institutions have been organized into three groups to distinguish among types of control. "State" institutions

are the 18 colleges and universities of The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education and which are supported in part by direct legislative appropriations. "Private" institutions are the nine participating colleges and universities under the management and control of governing boards of independent or public governmental agencies and which are supported by private funds. "Municipal" institutions are the five junior colleges under the management and control of local boards of education and which are supported by school district revenues and student tuition.

**Type of Program.**—For purposes of some analyses, institutions are classified by the following types of programs. "Universities" are those institutions which, in addition to a regular undergraduate program, also offer graduate programs leading to the doctor's degree in one or more fields. "Four-Year Colleges" are those institutions which offer programs leading to the bachelor's or master of teaching degrees. "Two-Year Colleges" are those institutions which offer work leading to the associate degree.

## DEFINITIONS

The following definitions, while they do not comprise an exhaustive list of those developed in the process of the study, are probably the most significant to an understanding of the report.

**The Study Universe.**—The study universe is the term used in this report to refer to the original group of more than 13,000 students who enrolled as first-time freshmen in 32 Oklahoma institutions of higher learning in the fall semester of 1962.

**First-Time Freshman.**—A first-time freshman is a student who was not previously enrolled in any college prior to the fall semester of 1962.

**College.**—As defined in this report, a college is an institution of higher learning which offers work leading toward an associate or bachelor's degree. Under this definition, business colleges, barber colleges, beauty colleges, and vocational-technical schools would not be considered as colleges.

**Terminator.**—A terminator is a student from the study universe who was originally enrolled in an Oklahoma institution of higher learning, but who terminated his enrollment and did not re-enroll **in that same institution** in the semester immediately following his withdrawal. As used in this context, the term includes both dropouts and transfers to other Oklahoma institutions.

**Dropout.**—A dropout is a student from the study universe who was originally enrolled in an Oklahoma institution of higher learning, but who terminated his enrollment and was not enrolled **in any Oklahoma institution** at the beginning of the 1963 fall semester.

**Transfer.**—A transfer is a student from the study universe who terminated his enrollment at one Oklahoma institution, and who in a subsequent semester enrolled at some other Oklahoma institution.

**Re-Entry.**—A re-entry is a student from the study universe who terminated his enrollment in an Oklahoma institution, and who subsequently re-enrolled in the same institution after an absence of one or more semesters.



## REVIEW OF EXISTING RESEARCH

The great majority of previous studies relating to college students may be classified into one or more of four general categories, as described below.

**Prediction Studies.**—Since the early 1920's, colleges and universities—chiefly private institutions—have been interested in improving upon their methods of selecting students for admission. For this purpose, institutions have gathered data on students' high school grades, and also scores from aptitude and achievement tests, and these factors have been employed in an effort to try to predict students' success or failure in college, such success or failure usually being measured in terms of students' grade averages compiled during the first semester or first year in college. Fishman and Pasanella reported that nearly 600 such formal studies were catalogued during the 1950's, with perhaps as many more unreported studies accomplished by collegiate admissions officers in the course of their regular institutional duties.<sup>3</sup>

In the overwhelming majority of these prediction studies, the best single predictor of college grades has been found to be high-school grades, with achievement test scores and aptitude test scores being slightly less reliable as predictors. When employed singly, each of these three factors will ordinarily correlate with first-year college grades within the range  $+ .40$  to  $+ .60$ . Used in combination, two or more of these factors will correlate with college grades within the  $+ .55$  to  $+ .65$  range. These ranges of predictive efficiency have remained practically unchanged over the past four decades.<sup>4</sup> Recently, however, new research has raised the possibility of prediction to the range of  $+ .70$  to  $+ .75$ .

This level of accuracy in the prediction of college grades appears to be nearing the theoretical limit of  $+ .80$ , according to Bloom and Peters, who reported in 1961 that "It is clear . . . from our data that unless grading is improved we should not expect correlations much higher than those reported here ( $+ .75$ ). More refined statistical procedures may improve the predictions slightly but higher correlations are to be expected only if the reliability of college grades is improved."<sup>5</sup>

Since a theoretical ceiling has been approached in predicting student performance during the first year as measured by college grades, it does not appear that additional inquiry into this particular area would prove to add anything of significance to the body of research already available.

**Studies on Post-Graduation Activities of High-School Graduates.**—A relatively recent development in research is the type of project which sets for itself the task of studying the post-graduation activities of the spring graduates from all the high schools within a state for a given year. This type of study is sociological in scope, since it involves the whole universe of high school graduates, not just those who are planning to go to college. Some

<sup>3</sup>Joshua A. Fishman and Ann K. Pasanella, "College Admission-Selection Studies," *Review of Educational Research: Higher Education*, Vol. XXX, No. 4, October, 1960, p. 298.

<sup>4</sup>Benjamin S. Bloom and Frank R. Peters, *Academic Prediction Scales*, New York, The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc., 1961, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 131.