

MEMO

Date: April 24, 2023

To: Shoshana Zeisman-Pereyo, Executive Director, Student Learning Initiatives
Erica Wagner, Vice Provost, Student Success

From: Suwako Watanabe, Chair, ARC 

Dear Shoshana,

This memo is to inform you that the Academic Requirements Committee reviewed the proposal to extend the temporary suspension of the 3.0 high school GPA requirement for incoming first-year students for two more academic years and are in support of the proposal. We value the supporting efforts such as the Summer Bridge Program to help the students with a lower GPA succeed at PSU, and we are pleased to see some evidence of better results with the appropriate interventions. Some of the ARC members expressed that it would be desirable if PSU will offer similar support programs for those admitted with the GPA range between 3.0 and 3.25. The ARC would like to express our appreciation for providing data to support the effect of the summer program.

Office of Academic Affairs

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DATE: March 30, 2023

To: Academic Requirements Committee
ATT: Suwako Watanabe, Chair

From: Shoshana Zeisman-Pereyo
Executive Director, Student Learning Initiatives

Erica Wagner
Vice Provost, Student Success

Re: Two-year extension of the temporarily reduced GPA requirements

I. The context for Proposal

The Open for Fall, Open for All strategy to support incoming students impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic was approved by the Faculty Senate in the spring of 2020. A component of this strategy was to amend the incoming minimum GPA requirement for first-year students from 3.0 to 2.5. The goal of this change was based on various factors, mainly that the pandemic had potentially affected students' GPAs in a way that could not be quantified, and PSU did not want to turn students away that could be successful.

Simultaneously, PSU recognized that providing holistic support for students negatively impacted by the pandemic would be critical. In 2021, PSU received federal funding and state appropriations from the Oregon Legislature to create a program to ease incoming students' transition to college.

As the temporary suspension of the 3.0 high school GPA requirement for incoming first-year students will expire after the fall of 2023, we request the Academic Requirements Committee to **extend the requirement for two additional years. In addition, we request approving the provision that students admitted with a high school GPA of below 3.0 complete the requirements outlined below.**

II. Problem Statement

The Summer Scholars Program (formerly Summer Bridge) has proven to be an effective program for supporting students who arrive at PSU with GPAs lower than 3.0. Students who participate in the program persist at higher rates than those who do not and have lower rates of academic and financial holds. In contrast, first-year students admitted below a 3.0 high school GPA and who do not participate in the Summer Scholars Program are less likely to persist and are more likely to have registration holds and financial balances. Further, 1 in 2 students admitted with a below 3.0 HS GPA *and who do not complete the summer program* do not persist to the second year (Tables 1, 2). Finally, from an equity standpoint, while the lower GPA requirement has increased our BIPOC student population, these students are disproportionately represented when we look at financial balances, holds, and lower-than-average course completion rates (see data [here](#)).

In the program's first years, only 40% of students with less-than-3.0 GPAs participated. To support our mission of access and equity, we **strongly recommend** that students admitted with a GPA below 3.0 fulfill requirements that provide holistic support for student success.

III. Data

The following tables illustrate the effectiveness of the Summer Scholars Program and how the planned intervention will lead to improved persistence for students admitted with less than a 3.0 high school GPA.

AY 2021-2022

Group	# Students	% of Total	1 Year Retention	Difference in Retention vs. 3.0+
Less than 3.0 HS GPA - Summer Scholars	122	41%	68.9%	-5.5%
Less than 3.0 HS GPA - Not Summer Scholars	175	59%	54.3%	-20.1%
Less than 3.0 HS GPA Total	297	100%	60.3%	-14.1%
3.0+ HS GPA	1,322		74.4%	
Grand Total	1,619		71.8%	

Table 1: Fall 2021 retention rates of full-time first-year students

*Summer Scholars based on enrollment in UNST199; full-time students only

AY 2022-2023

Group	# Students	% of Total	F-2-W Retention	Diff in Retention vs. 3.0+	Avg. Fall GPA	Avg. Fall Credits Earned	Diff in credits vs. 3.0+
Less than 3.0 HS GPA - Summer Scholars	136	40%	87.5%	-5.5%	2.37	10.3	-1.9 credits
Less than 3.0 HS GPA - Not Summer Scholars	205	60%	81.5%	-11.5%	2.26	9.9	-2.3 credits
Less than 3.0 HS GPA Total	341	100%	83.9%	-9.1%	2.30	10.1	-2.1 credits
3.0+ HS GPA	1,278		93.0%		3.19	12.2	
Grand Total	1,619		91.1%		3.00	11.8	

Table 2: Fall 2022 retention rates of full E part-time first-year students

*Summer Scholars based on student attribute; full and part-time students

The tables above list outcomes from the 2021 and 2022 years of the Summer Scholars Program. For both years, students who participated in the program had better GPAs, credits earned, and retention outcomes than their peers who did not participate.

IV. Proposal:

We know that, with the right support, students can excel in college. Our research has shown that students with less than a 3.0 GPA who complete the Summer Scholars program persist at significantly higher rates than their peers. As such, **we propose that all first-year students with an incoming high school GPA below 3.0 will be conditionally admitted to the university.** Students will have access to the people, resources, and skills-building opportunities to make the most of their first year at PSU and gain full admission to the University.

Full admission requires each scholar to select and complete one of these three options:

1. Full participation in the Summer Scholars Program in the summer and participation of first-year support through the Scholars Workshop (1 credit fall, winter, E spring terms)
OR
2. UNST 194: College Success (3 credits) in the fall term + Scholars Workshop (3 credits: 1 credit fall, winter, E spring terms)
OR
3. ACCESS Program (3 credits) through OGD I (participation and registration depending on eligibility) + Scholars Workshop (3 credits: 1 credit fall, winter, E spring terms)

The student agrees to complete certain activities, and PSU agrees to provide resources, connections, and skills-building to support their success.

If a student does not participate/successfully complete the Summer Scholars Program, they will be manually registered for option 2: UNST 194: College Success and UNST 199: Scholars Workshop in the fall. The Scholars Program Project Coordinator will check registration throughout the summer to ensure all students admitted to PSU below a 3.0 incoming HS GPA are enrolled in the Summer Scholars Program or UNST 194 in the fall.

If the student fails to complete one of the three options **by the end of first term**, their admission will be rescinded.

All communications with students admitted to PSU with less than a 3.0 high school GPA will be asset-based and focused on ensuring that students know that PSU is committed to them and their educational journey.

Additionally, all communications will be transparent about PSU's belief in them and how the Summer Scholars Program has been proven effective in helping students transition to college and throughout their first year at PSU.

Each scholar will be assigned to one of PSU's Student Success Advocates and be supported by the Scholars Retention Team. Additional benefits of participation include:

- Priority registration
- Timely workshops aimed at wellness, financial literacy, study skills, and other topics
- Direct connection to campus resources
- Technology when needed
- Emergency funds

Appeal Process:

Any first-year student admitted to PSU with an incoming high school GPA below 3.0 can appeal the Summer Scholars Program requirement. The appeal form can be emailed to any student that requests an appeal. A decision will be made based on the following criteria:

- Students who will have a final high school GPA above 3.0
- Non-traditional students who would be better served in the Transfer Scholars Program

All students who submit an appeal will find out within six weeks of submitting all necessary documentation.

A limited number of stipends will be available to students to replace lost income during the program. The program will also provide a letter to employers explaining the programming and asking for leniency with the student's work schedule.

Request

We hope the ARC will agree that the rationale and evidence supporting this request are compelling and will approve the petition. Thank you for your consideration.

V. Appendix

[Summer Scholars Website](#)