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This report examines outcomes for participants in the Fiat Lux program, specifically, retention and GPA. The Fiat Lux Scholars program serves students who are first generation and meet specific financial criteria, while the comparison group of non-participating students from the Fall 2018 cohort consisted of students who met the same criteria but did not participate. Compared to students with similar characteristics, Fiat Lux participants had higher first year retention and similar GPA, though the difference in retention did not reach statistical significance.

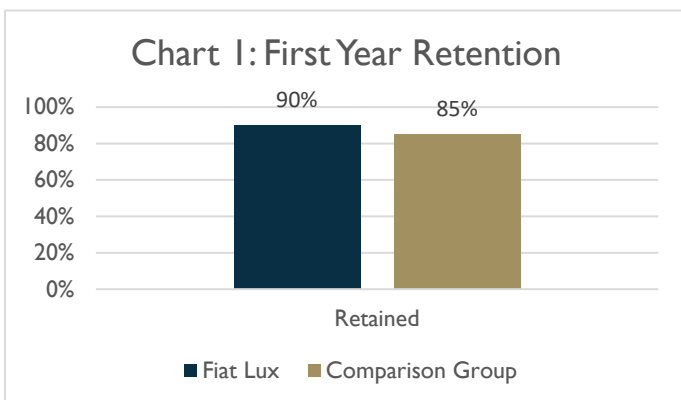
Background

The Fiat Lux program serves income eligible, first-generation students at UC Merced. Selection criteria for the program are first-generation college students (e.g. neither parent has a 4-year degree) and who are income eligible (i.e., eligible for Pell and/or Cal grants, with \$0 Expected Family Contribution and \$0 Assets). Students were ranked by high school GPA and were selected in descending order to reach the program cap.

Academic Outcomes

To evaluate potential associations between participation in the Fiat Lux program and first year academic outcomes, we selected a comparison group of students who met all Fiat Lux criteria but who did not participate. These students were also full-time, first-generation college students who met the same financial eligibility guidelines and had high school GPAs above the same 3.41 cutoff as their Fiat Lux peers.

First Year Retention Retention to the second year was not significantly¹ higher for Fiat Lux students. Chart 1 shows that 90% (113 students) of the 125 Fiat Lux students, and 85% (223 students) of the 261 comparison students were retained to the second year.



First Year GPA Cumulative first year GPA was not significantly² different for Fiat Lux participants, who attained an average first year GPA of 3.01, while the comparison group had an average first year GPA of 3.05.

Preparatory Courses There was not a significant difference¹ in the proportion of Fiat Lux and the comparison group who enrolled in a Math 005 course, with 78% of Fiat Lux (97 students), and 70% of the comparison group (182 students) who had taken Math 005. Writing I enrollments also did not significantly differ; 71% of Fiat Lux students (89 students) and 67% of the comparison group (175 students) had taken Writing I (*not pictured*).

Conclusion

Retention rates were higher, though not significantly higher for participants in the Fiat Lux program. Cumulative GPA was not significantly different at the end of the first year between Fiat Lux students and the comparison group.

Preparatory course enrollments (in particular, Math 005 and Writing 001) did not differ between Fiat Lux students and the comparison groups, showing similarity in academic background.

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ENDNOTES

1. Calculated via Chi-square test of independence; a threshold of $p < .05$ was used for significance testing
 2. Calculated via an independent samples t-test; a threshold of $p < .05$ was used for significance testing
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