



University of Rhode Island  
Retention and Graduation Rates for  
Centennial Scholarship Recipients  
Between 1994 and 2003

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## Introduction

The merit-based Centennial Scholarship was initiated in 1994 to encourage outstanding freshman candidates to enroll at the University. Current eligibility requirements are a minimum SAT score of 1150 or ACT score of 25 and a rank in the top third of the high school class. Scholarships are renewable each semester if the student maintains continuous full-time enrollment and a 3.0 average or better. Award amounts are variable up to full-tuition costs.

The purpose of this study is to quantify differences between Centennial Scholarship recipients and the Freshman class to which they belong as measured by SAT scores and retention and graduation rates over the last decade.

First-time, full-time Freshmen are defined as students entering with fewer than 24 college credits at admission and carrying at least 12 credits in their initial term of enrollment. Centennial recipients are included in the Freshmen group. In this study Pharmacy students in the six-year first professional degree program (PharmD) are included with four-year baccalaureate degree undergraduates because they also are eligible for the Centennial Scholarship; usually these groups are not combined because of their unequal times to graduation. Students who became ineligible for retaining their awards were not removed from the analysis.

Re-enrollment as of October 15<sup>th</sup> in following fall terms and graduation during an academic year (at the December, May, or August conferrals) are defined as criteria for the retention and graduation rate analyses. Calculations of average rates are based on the maximum number of years available for a particular variable (e.g., graduation rate must allow for the four years of study).

## Results

During the 1994 – 2003 period, nearly a fourth (24.1%) of the freshman undergraduate and PharmD students received a Centennial scholarship upon first enrollment.

The one-year retention rate of Centennial Scholars averages 87.9% (n = 10) which is 9.4% higher than for all freshmen (78.5%). The retention rate after two years drops to 81.8% (n = 9), but the difference between groups rises to 12.4% higher than the rate for all freshmen (69.4%).

During the period, the rate of retention has gradually increased, but the difference between groups has remained substantially equal.

For Centennial Scholars the graduation rate after six years averages 72.8% (n = 5) which is 15.8% higher than for all freshmen (57.0%).

SAT composite scores for Centennial Scholars consistently exceeded those for all Freshmen by an average of 156 points (15.4%). Higher average scores correlate strongly with higher retention rates.

See tables and charts for specific data.

## Conclusions

Centennial Scholarship recipients consistently achieve significantly higher rates of retention and graduation than the overall Freshmen populations. The effect is persistent in that two-year retention and graduation are consistent with one-year retention.

These results are influenced by the minimum SAT score requirement for eligibility. Research on national data has found that admissions selectivity for students with high SAT scores is strongly correlated with retention rate (Freshmen-to-Sophomore Persistence Rates by Institutional Control, Level and Academic Selectivity, 1983 to 2003, Postsecondary Education OPPORTUNITY, Number 134 – August 2003).

Although the impact of the Centennial Scholarship on decisions to enroll and persist at the University is outside the scope of this study, the likelihood is that without it there would be fewer students with higher SAT scores and as a result the retention and graduation rates would be lower.

Table 1. Centennial Scholars compared to all full-time Freshmen from 1994 through 2003.

Fall Term Year	Freshman Cohort	Centennial Scholars	Percent Centennial Scholars	Freshman Retention rate after one year	Centennial Retention rate after one year	Freshman Retention rate after two years	Centennial Retention rate after two years	Freshman Graduation within 6 years	Centennial Graduation within 6 years
1994	1923	524	27.2%	77.5%	85.3%	64.5%	74.4%	57.0%	69.5%
1995	1898	453	23.9%	77.5%	87.0%	69.2%	82.8%	58.6%	72.2%
1996	1885	424	22.5%	76.4%	86.6%	68.6%	80.7%	57.8%	71.7%
1997	2062	462	22.4%	77.0%	87.7%	69.3%	82.3%	57.8%	74.9%
1998	2162	527	24.4%	78.6%	87.7%	68.9%	82.7%	57.2%	75.5%
1999	2178	487	22.4%	78.0%	89.7%	70.2%	83.8%		
2000	2275	537	23.6%	79.7%	88.6%	70.8%	82.7%		
2001	2173	635	29.2%	80.3%	88.5%	71.3%	81.4%		
2002	2361	522	22.1%	81.3%	89.7%	72.1%	85.4%		
2003	2609	599	23.0%	79.1%	88.1%				

Avg	2153	528	24.1%	78.5%	87.9%	69.4%	81.8%	57.7%	72.8%
N	10	10	10	10	10	9	9	5	5

Fall Term Year	Freshman Cohort Composite SAT	Centennial Scholars Composite SAT	SAT Score Difference	SAT Score Difference Percent	One year Retention Rate Difference	Two year Retention Rate Difference	Six year Graduation Rate Difference
1994	968	1103	135	13.9%	7.8%	9.9%	12.5%
1995	969	1138	169	17.4%	9.5%	13.6%	13.6%
1996	1052	1216	164	15.6%	10.2%	12.1%	13.9%
1997	1061	1222	161	15.2%	10.7%	13.0%	17.1%
1998	1068	1227	159	14.9%	9.1%	13.8%	18.3%
1999	1073	1239	166	15.5%	11.7%	13.6%	
2000	1083	1238	155	14.3%	8.9%	11.9%	
2001	1092	1227	135	12.4%	8.2%	10.1%	
2002	1084	1242	158	14.6%	8.4%	13.3%	
2003	1091	1248	157	14.4%	9.0%		

Avg	1054	1210	156	15.4%	9.4%	12.4%	15.1%
N	10	10	10	10	10	9	5

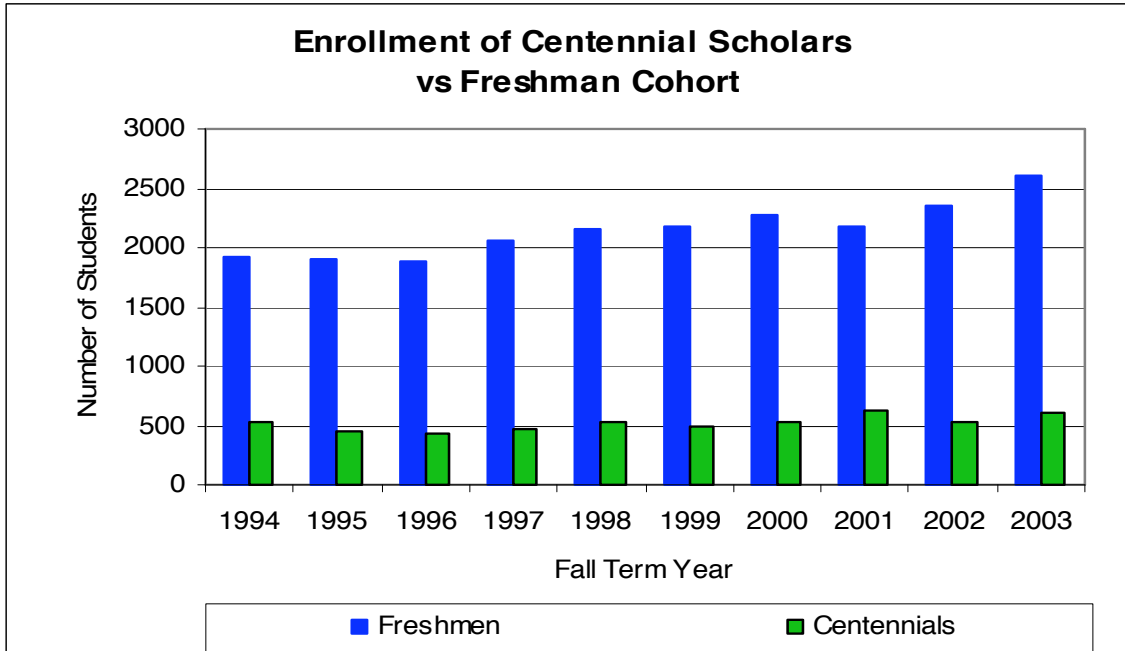


Chart 1. Number of Centennial Scholars compared to full-time Freshmen from 1994 through 2003.

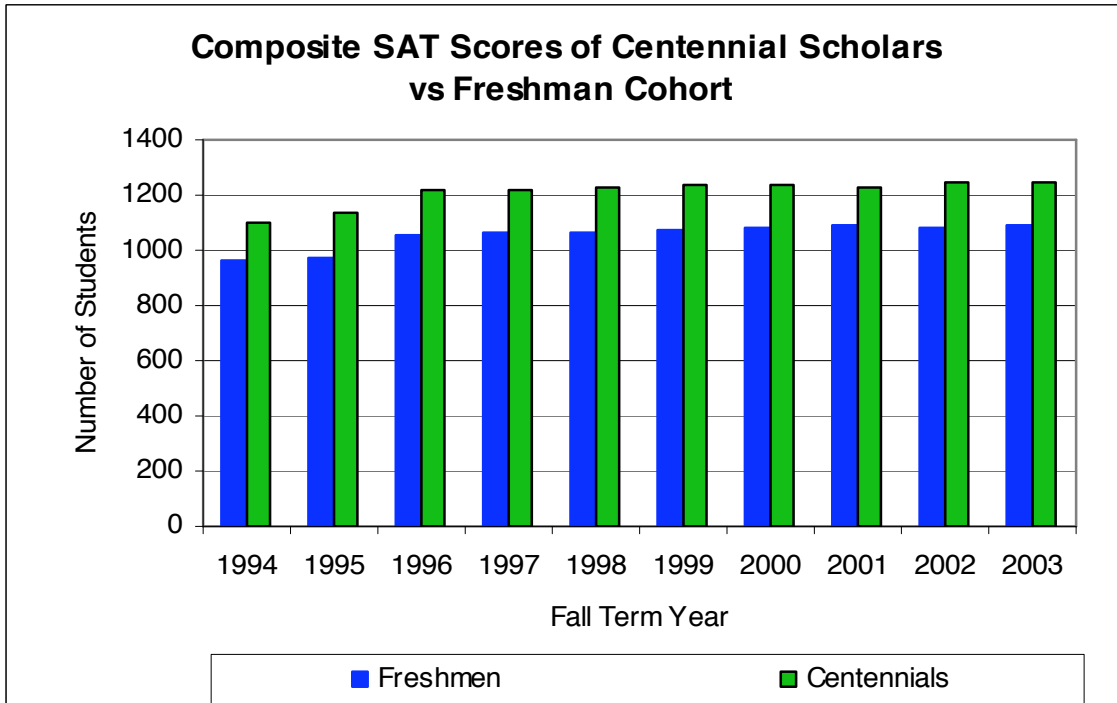


Chart 2. SAT composite scores for Centennial Scholars compared to full-time Freshmen from 1994 through 2003.

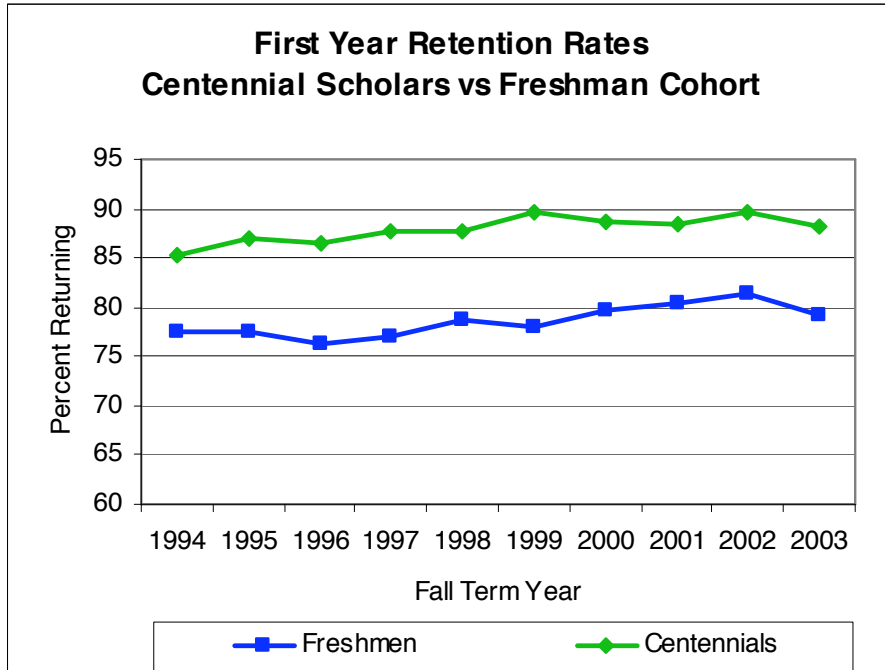


Chart 3. Retention rates after one year for Centennial Scholars compared to full-time Freshmen students from 1994 through 2003.

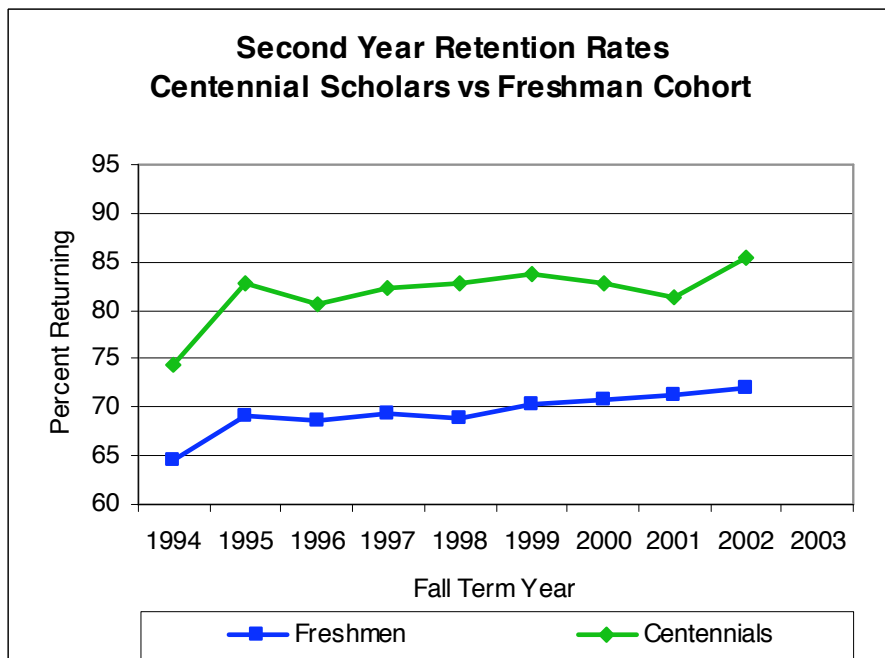


Chart 4. Retention rates after two years for Centennial Scholars compared to full-time Freshmen students from 1994 through 2002.

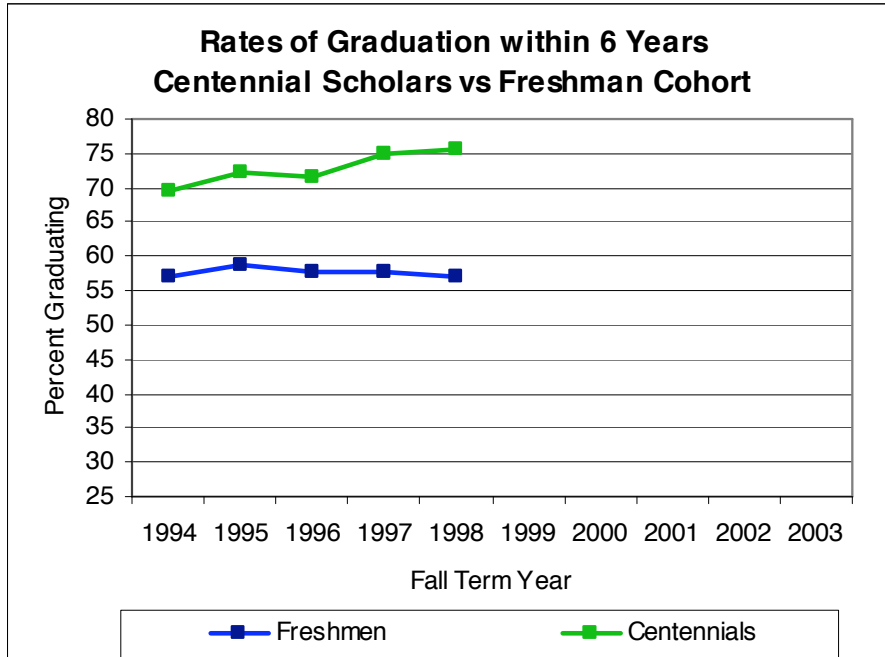


Chart 5. Six-year graduation rates for Centennial Scholars compared to full-time Freshman students from the 1994-95 through 1998-99 academic years.

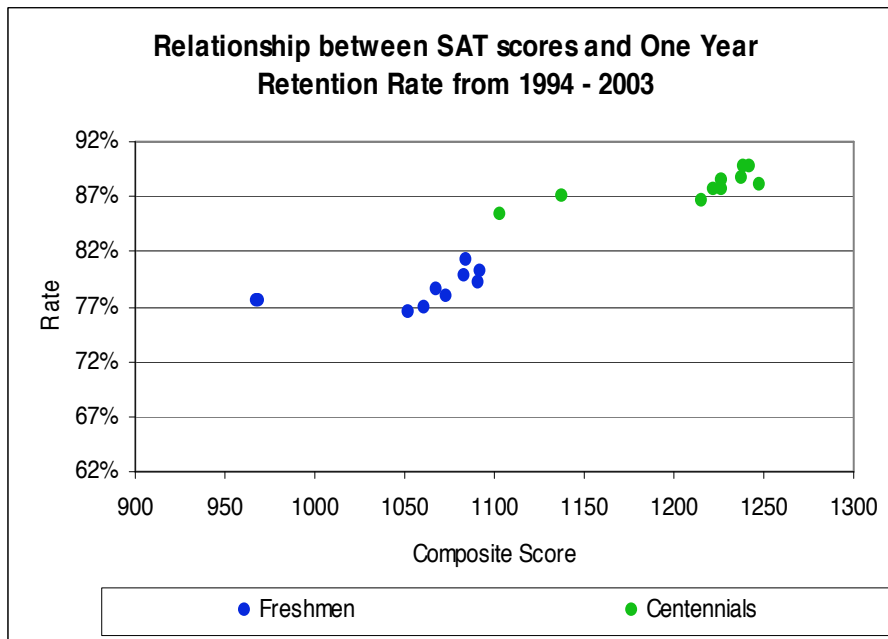


Chart 6. SAT composite scores compared to one-year retention rate for Centennial Scholars and full-time Freshmen from 1994 through 2003. Outlying points to the left of each group cluster are from 1994 and 1995 before the scoring re-centering method existed.