

RESEARCH *brief*

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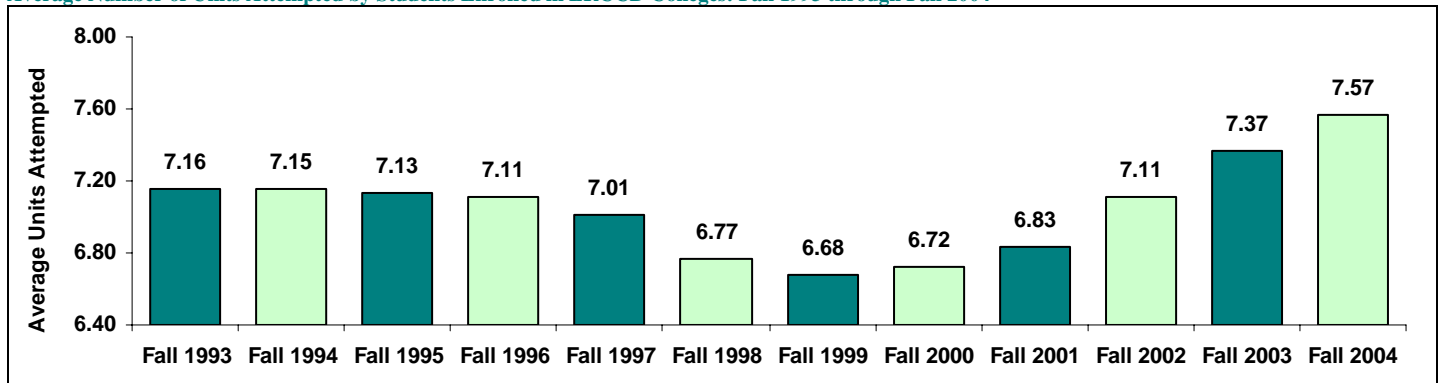
July 2005

TREND OF INCREASINGLY HIGHER UNITS ATTEMPTED BY STUDENTS CONTINUES

In September 2003, analysis of the changing picture of average units attempted by Los Rios college students showed that beginning in 2000 a six-year trend of decline appeared to be changing with three years of steady increase through Fall 2002. The trend of increasingly higher units has continued, with average units attempted surpassing those of the early 1990s, from a then high average 7.16 units in 1993 to an average 7.57 in Fall 2004.

After dropping steadily from the Fall 1993 level of 7.16 to 6.68 units attempted by students in Fall 1999, this trend has reversed itself beginning in the Fall of 2000. Since that time, there has been a steady increase through Fall 2004, when average units attempted increased to 7.57, reflective of a student population that is taking higher course loads.

Average Number of Units Attempted by Students Enrolled in LRCCD Colleges: Fall 1993 through Fall 2004



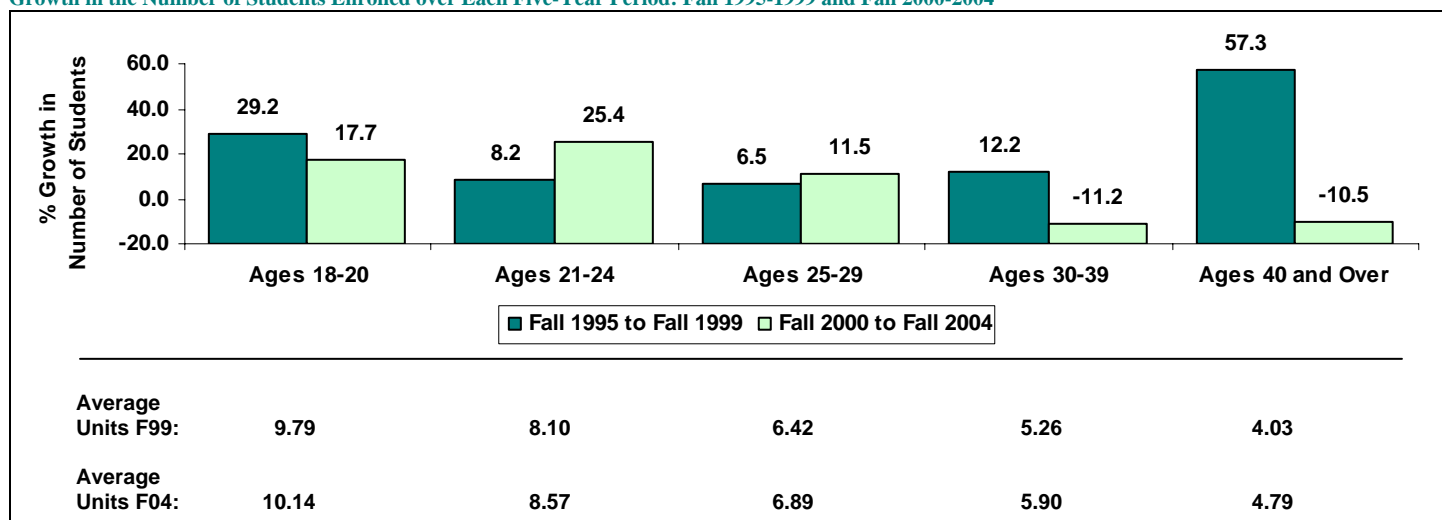
Average units attempted increased at each of the Los Rios colleges from Fall 2003 to Fall 2004, but the average number of units attempted does vary at each of the colleges. Students from CRC attempted the highest number of units at 8.68 in Fall 2004, followed by students from SCC at 8.00 and then FLC at 7.62. Students attending American River College attempted a fewer 7.17 units in Fall 2004.

Why has there been an increase in the average units attempted over the past several years? A close look at the changing patterns of enrollment, especially by the age of our students, tells an interesting story. The following chart and discussion summarizes the impact of age on the increase in average units attempted.

Growth of all students from Fall 1995 through Fall 1999 was a strong 25.8%, which compares to a much lower 4.0% growth during the most recent five year period from Fall 2000 to Fall 2004. The growth between Fall 1995 and 1999 was greatest for students over the age of 40, increasing substantially by 57.3%. Comparatively, the number of students enrolled from this age group actually declined by 10.5% between Fall 2000 to 2004. Likewise, the number of students ages 30-39 also increased, by 12.2%, between Fall 1995 and 1999 but the numbers declined by 11.2% for the most recent five-year time period. Conversely, the growth for younger students between the ages of 18 to 24 was 37.4% between Fall 1995 and 1999 compared to a higher 43.1% increase for the most recent five-year time period, with recent growth most dramatic for those between 21-24.

The changing enrollment pattern by age group is significant because of the average units attempted by each age group. The chart below exemplifies that although the average units attempted has increased for older students, they remain lower, on average, than the overall 7.57 for students district-wide.

Growth in the Number of Students Enrolled over Each Five-Year Period: Fall 1995-1999 and Fall 2000-2004



* Where LRCCD average = 7.57 in Fall 2004

The average units attempted by older students also continues to be significantly lower than the average units attempted by younger students. This is especially true for students ages 18-20 whose average units attempted increased from 9.79 in Fall 1999 to a higher 10.14 in Fall 2004. Likewise, the average units attempted by those students ages 21-24 increased from 8.10 in Fall 1999 to 8.57 in Fall 2004.

Average units attempted by age also differ at each of the Los Rios colleges. CRC students between 18-20 attempt the highest units on average, 11.17 in Fall 2004, followed by 10.86 at FLC, 10.55 at ARC and 9.27 at SCC. Likewise, CRC students ages 21-24 attempt higher than average units with 9.27 in Fall 2004, followed by 9.12 at SCC, 8.44 at FLC and 8.25 at ARC.

It is within the younger student population that Los Rios colleges are experiencing enrollment growth, both in the number of students as well as a proportion of all students. Looking at enrollment by age as a proportion of *all* students, finds the proportions of younger students between the ages of 18 to 24 were almost half, 49.3%, of all students enrolled in Fall 2004, up from 41.3% in Fall 1999. Conversely, the 35.3% of students who were 30 and over in Fall 2004 is a much lower proportion compared to the 41.4% of students who were older than 30 in Fall 1999. This is important, specifically for both the planning of courses offered and facilities use, as it is this growing population of younger students who take higher average unit loads. Should this trend continue, the District is likely to see a continuing strain on its facilities for the foreseeable future, not because the total number of younger students are growing, but because many of these students are increasingly attempting to take more courses when they enroll.

Besides looking at students by age, there are other specific student groups that attempt a higher than average number of units as well as those who take a lower than average number. The average units attempted by white students attending Los Rios colleges (7.56) mirrors the LRCCD average of 7.57 for all students in Fall 2004.

Student groups who tend to take higher average units are:

- ◆ Females students
- ◆ African American, Asian, Filipino, Native American and Pacific Islander students
- ◆ Students whose household income is below poverty
- ◆ Students whose household income is low

Those who tend to take a lower number of units include:

- ◆ Male students
- ◆ Latino Students
- ◆ Students whose household income is middle and above

This **Research brief** was written by Betty Glycer-Culver, Research Analyst. It is based on data generated from the LRCCD Research Database, developed and managed by Minh La, IT Analyst II. Additional copies of this **Research brief**, may be requested by e-mail: IR@losrios.edu or by telephone: 916-568-3131. Visit our website at: <http://irweb.losrios.edu>.

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