



SACRAMENTO STATE
Leadership begins here.

Student Leadership and Academic Performance

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ABSTRACT

It has been generally assumed that participation in co-curricular activities has a positive impact on the retention of students beyond the first year. However, many also believe that these activities may actually affect student performance in a negative manner due to conflicting time requirements and competing schedules, even if they do in fact enhance student persistence. Interestingly, relatively few studies have been performed in either of these areas due to a lack of applicable data.

This study revealed that students achieved much higher rates of retention and graduation, maintained better GPAs, and had higher good standing rates when they served as either a leader of a student club or on the board in Student Government.

3 undergraduate transfer cohorts from 2007-2009 (N=10,376) were selected for the comparative analyses of retention and academic performance.

2 undergraduate transfer cohorts from 2005-2006 (N=6,386) were selected for graduation analyses. Furthermore, to ensure comparability, "full-time at first term" was used as a control variable.

All transfer students were divided into two groups: Club Leaders and Non-Club Leaders.

In addition, T-Tests and Chi-Square Tests were conducted to identify any significant differences that might exist between the two groups in relation to their academic backgrounds, demographic characteristics, academic performance, retention rates, and graduation.

Four quantitative measurements were adopted to compare academic performance: Cumulative GPA, Good Standing rate, Retention Rate and Graduation Rate.

INTRODUCTION

The research question is whether transfer students who served as club leaders and/or in student government, achieved higher academic performance than their peers who were not involved in such activities.

In order to adequately address this question, it was necessary to examine the impact of serving in club leadership and/or student government with regard to retention and graduation directly, with quantitative measurements.

METHODOLOGY

Retention and Academic Performance

All transfer students from within the 2007-2009 cohort were included in the analyses of retention and academic performance since no significant differences were found to exist between the background characteristics of Club leaders and "Other" students.

First Year Characteristics of Club Leaders and Other Students								
2007-2009 Transfer Cohorts	Club Leaders			Other			Statistical Significance	
	Count	%	Mean	Count	%	Mean	Gap	
Age (Entering year)	101		23.6	10,275		24.1	-0.5	No
Gender								
Female	46	45.5%		5,873	57.2%		-11.6%	No
Male	55	54.5%		4,402	42.8%			
Ethnicity								
URM	28	27.7%		2,155	21.0%		6.7%	No
Other	73	72.3%		8,120	79.0%			
Class level								
Lower Division	12	11.9%		1,381	13.4%		-1.6%	No
Upper Division	89	88.1%		8,894	86.6%			
From Community Colleges	43	42.6%		5,328	51.9%		-9.3%	No
Transfer GPA	61		3.0	6,084		3.0	0.0	No
Total	101			10,275				

T-Test, p<0.001.

2nd and 3rd Year Characteristics of Club Leaders and Other Students								
2007-2009 Transfer Cohorts	Club Leaders			Others			Statistical Significance	
	Count	%	Mean	Count	%	Mean	Gap	
Age (Entering year)	402		23.6	9,974		24.1	-0.5	No
Gender								
Female	201	50.0%		5,718	57.3%		-7.3%	No
Male	201	50.0%		4,256	42.7%			
Ethnicity								
URM	91	22.6%		2,092	21.0%		1.7%	No
Other	311	77.4%		7,882	79.0%			
Class level								
Lower Division	53	13.2%		1,340	13.4%		-0.3%	No
Upper Division	349	86.8%		8,634	86.6%			
From CC	188	46.8%		5,183	52.0%		-5.2%	No
Transfer GPA	263		3.0	5,882		3.0	0.0	No
Total	402			9,974				

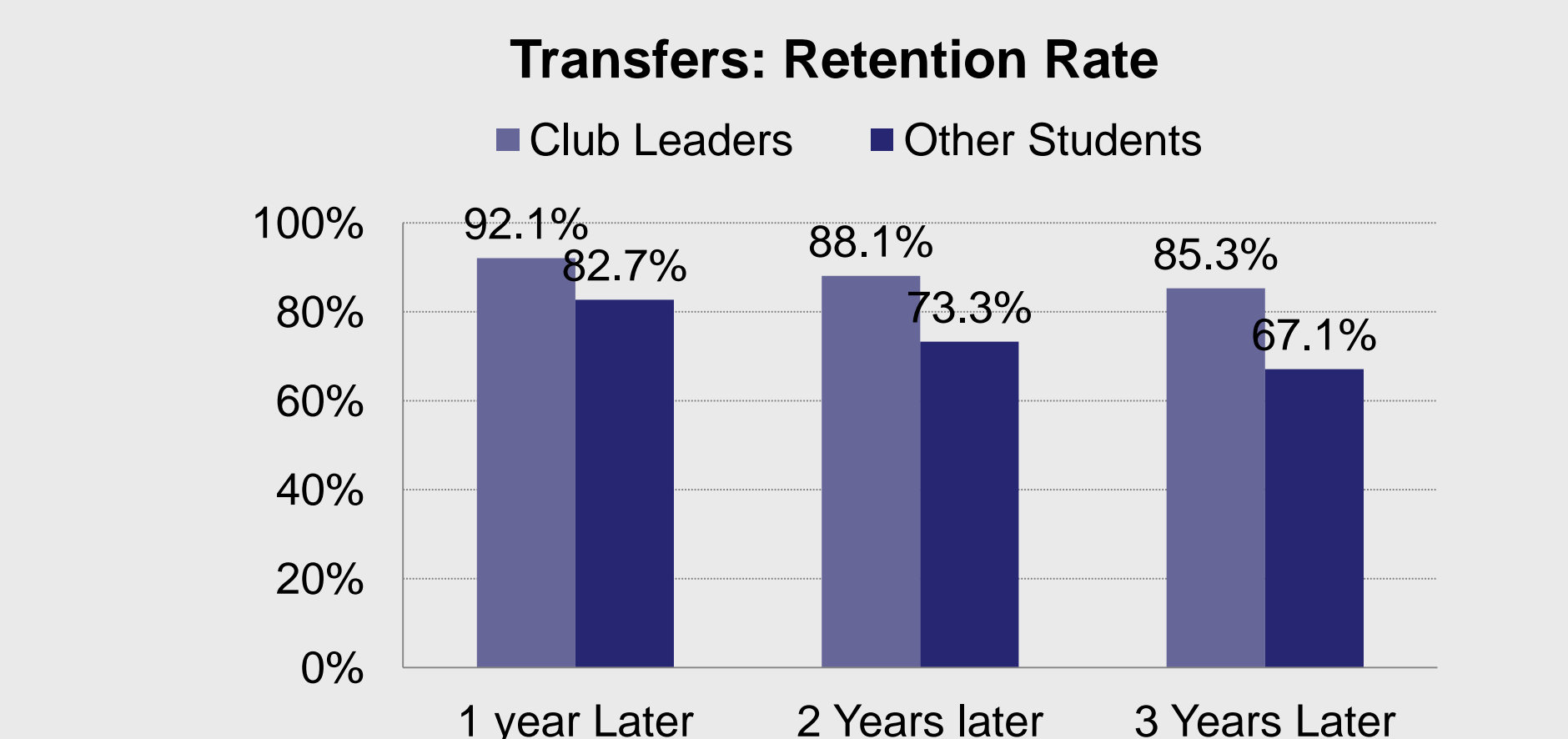
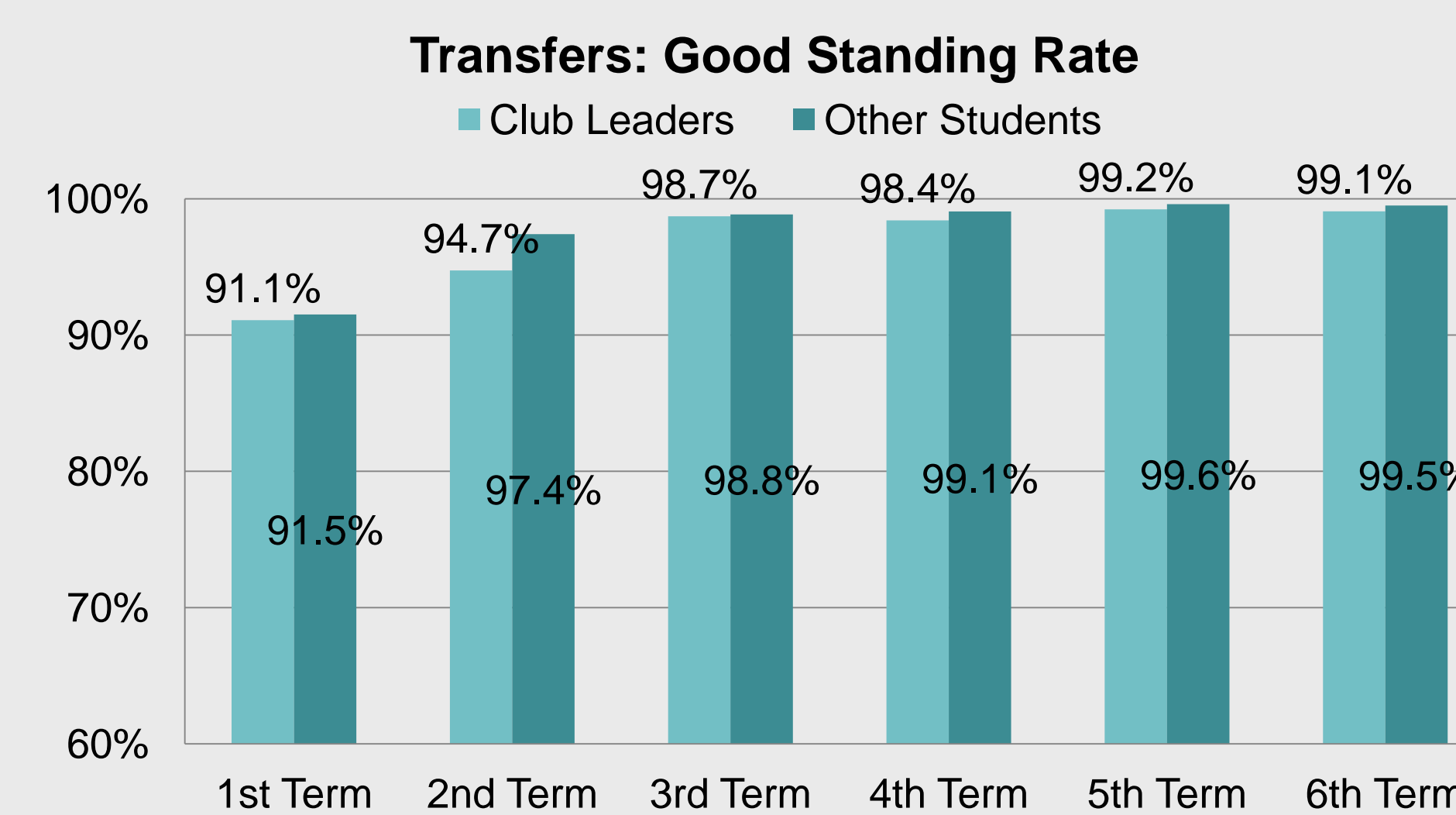
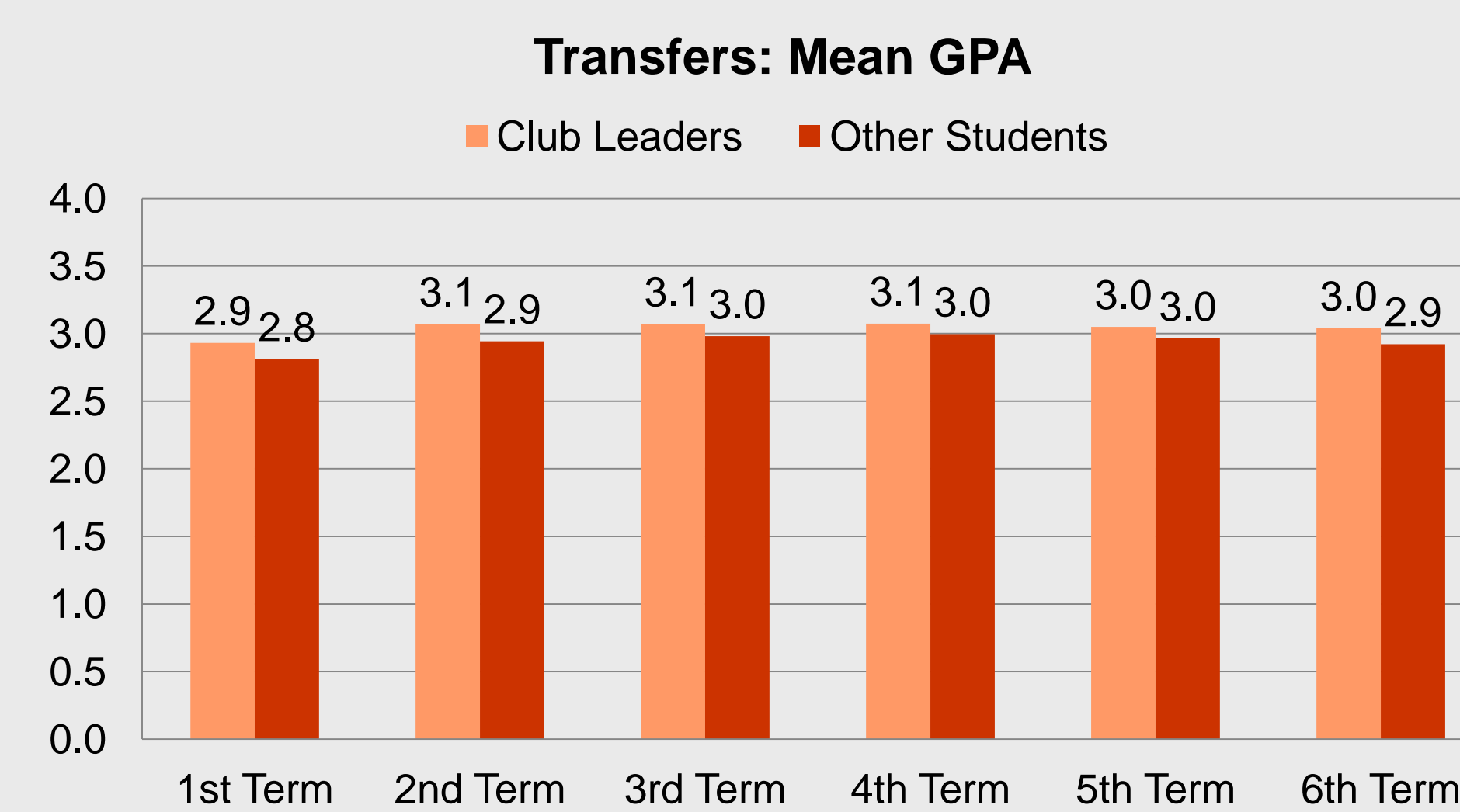
T-Test, p<0.001.

Third Year								
2007-2009 Transfer Cohorts	Club Leaders			Others			Statistical Significance	
	Count	%	Mean	Count	%	Mean	Gap	
Age (Entering year)	356		23.2	6,195		24.1	-0.9	No
Gender								
Female	184	51.7%		3,578	57.8%		-6.1%	No
Male	172	48.3%		2,617	42.2%			
Ethnicity								
URM	75	21.1%		1,330	21.5%		-0.4%	No
Other	281	78.9%		4,865	78.5%			
Class level								
Lower Division	62	17.4%		873	14.1%		3.3%	No
Upper Division	294	82.6%		5,322	85.9%			
From CC	285	80.1%		5,086	82.1%		-2.0%	No
Transfer GPA	151		3.1	2,375		3.0	0.0	No
Total	356			6,195				

T-Test, p<0.001.

Comparative Analyses

Mean GPA, Good Standing, and Retention



- As illustrated in the graphs shown above, transfer students who served as club leaders achieved higher 1, 2 and 3-year retention rates than "Other" students. Their GPAs were generally higher as well. However, the Good Standing rate between Club leaders and "Other" students were similar to one another.

METHODOLOGY

Graduation

The 2005-2006 transfer cohort was selected for graduation analyses. Two measurements were used: Graduation Rate and Degree GPA.

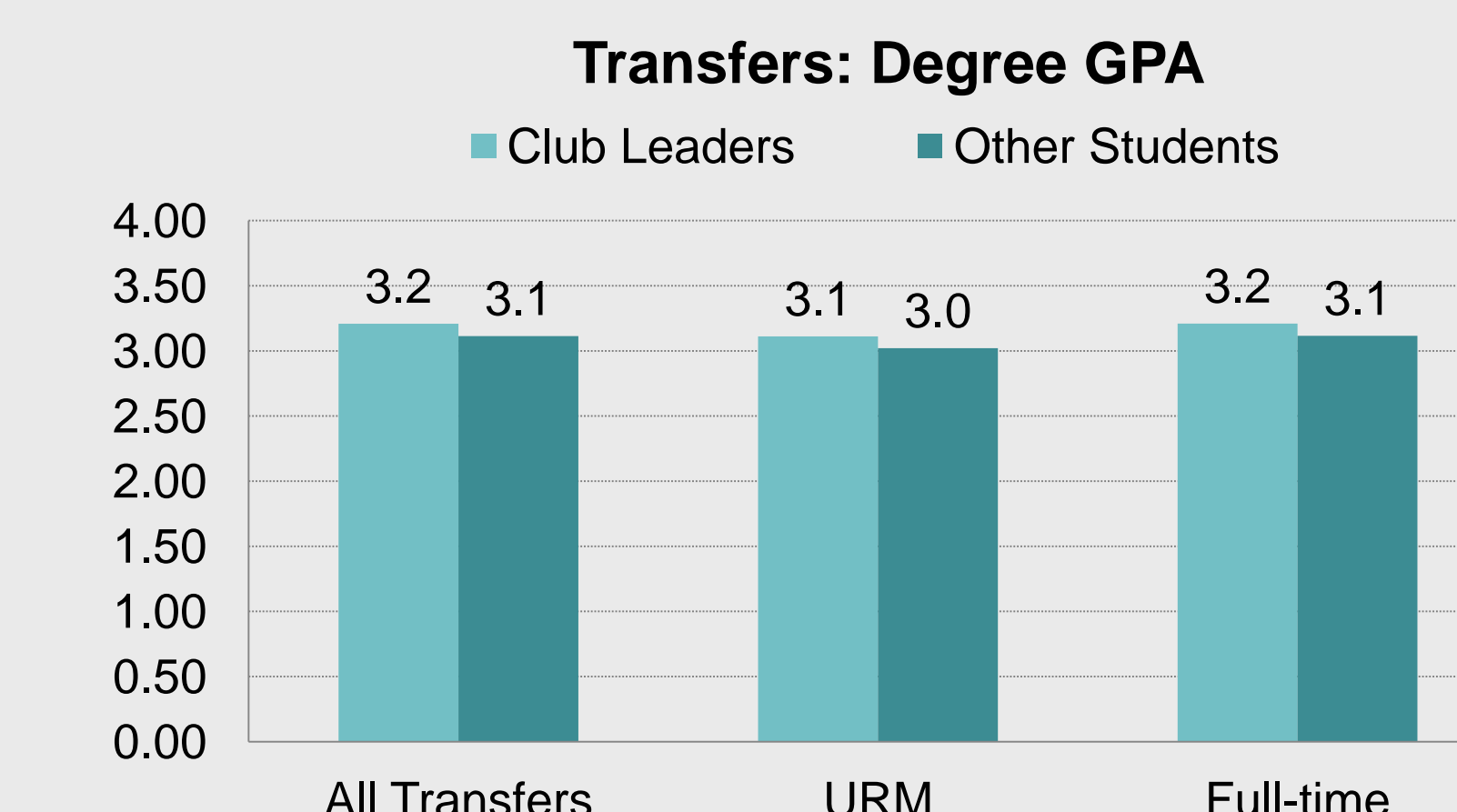
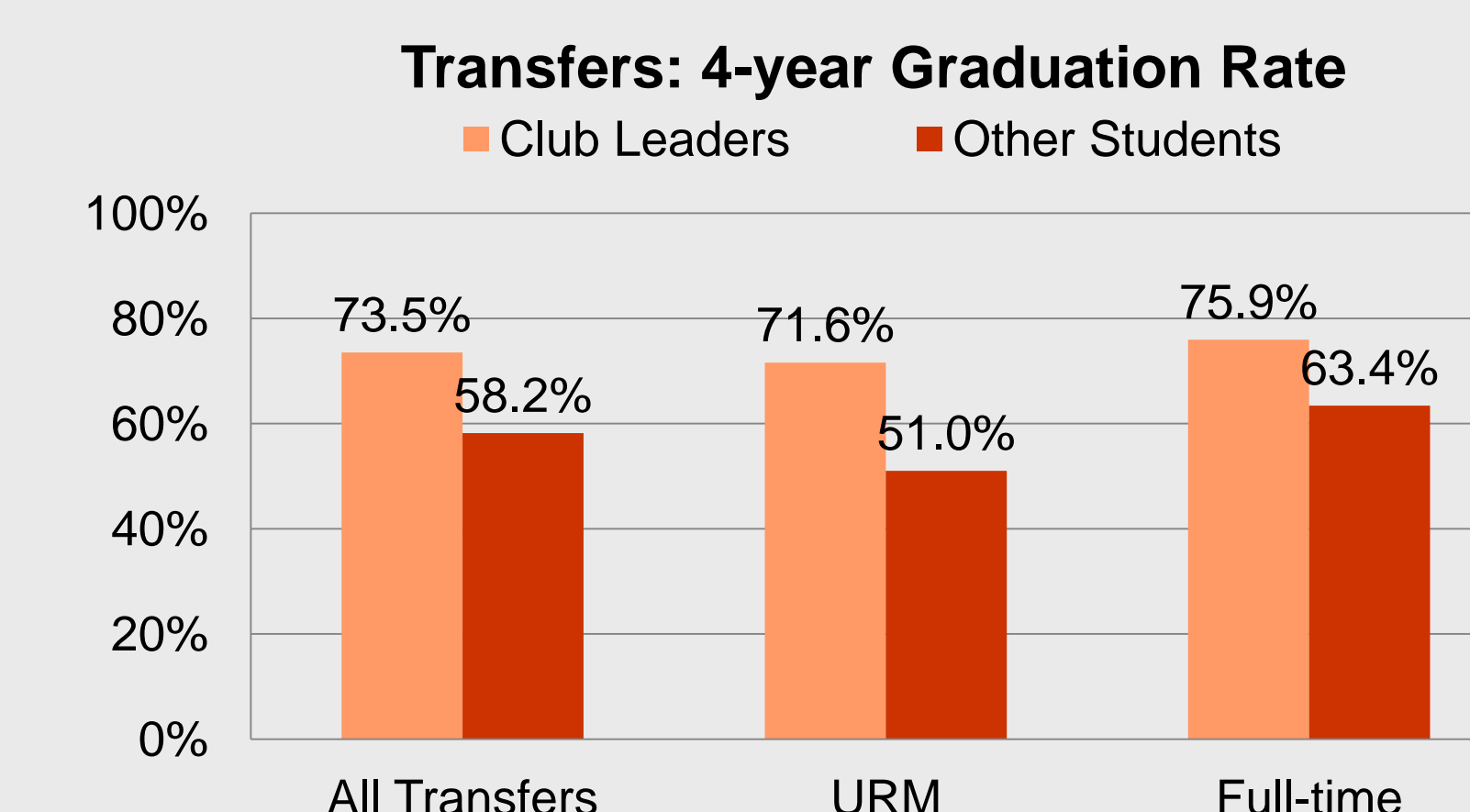
Full-time status at first-term was used as a controlling variable in the analysis as a significantly larger proportion of Club leaders were full-time students during their first-term.

Comparative Analyses

Graduation

2005-2006 Transfer Cohorts	Characteristics of Club Leaders and Other Students						Statistical Significance	
	Club Leaders			Other				
	Count	%	Mean	Count	%	Mean	Gap	
Age (Entering year)	374		23.1	6,012		24.1	-1.0	No
Gender								
Female	188	50.3%		3,494	58.1%		-7.8%	No
Male	186	49.7%		2,518	41.9%			
Ethnicity								
URM	81	21.7%		1,266	21.1%		0.6%	No
Other	293	78.3%		4,746	78.9%			
Class Level								
Lower Division	53	14.2%		683	11.4%			
Upper Division	321	85.8%		5,329	88.6%		-2.8%	No
Full-time (first-term)	320	85.6%		4,473	74.4%		11.2%	Yes
Transfer From CC	317	84.8%		5,141	85.5%		-0.8%	No
Transfer GPA	96		3.3	1,416		3.2	0.1	No
Total	374			6,012				

T-Test, p<0.001. Highest value is highlighted in yellow.



- As shown above, Club leaders achieved a significantly higher 4-year Graduation Rate and Degree GPA than "Other" students.
- A logistic regression model created to examine the prediction power that being a club leader has in relation to graduation found that transfer students who served as club leaders were 1.8 times more likely to graduate within 4 years than non-club leaders.
- These findings provide evidence in support of the perception that serving as a club leader has long lasting impact and effect on the academic performance and graduation of transfer students.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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