

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON  
OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

# THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON PERSISTENCE STUDY

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SPRING 2003 SURVEY  
DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Dr. Libby Barlow

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The information presented in this report represents a small portion of the data collected in the Spring 2003 survey of undergraduate students at the University of Houston. A paper survey was administered to students enrolled in the larger core courses. Completed surveys were returned by 3,066 students. Of those, 1297 were from students who are part of the Fall 2002 full-time, first time in college (FTIC) cohort. Although the FTIC cohort comprises a small proportion of the University of Houston undergraduate population, it is a population of interest because it is the population on which we are judged by external agencies, and it is a population for which we have comparison data at other institutions and in the national data sets. The data in this report reflect the responses of the 1297 FTIC students who completed the survey. It is descriptive data only, showing the frequencies of responses to selected questions from the survey. Several presentations of these data were made during the Spring 2005 semester, with slight variations in content. The tables presented in this report are taken from the most complete of those presentations, which was to an audience of Advisors.

These and other questions from the survey are also being used for inferential analyses, the results of which will be presented in separate reports. Follow-up data were collected in the spring of 2005, so longitudinal analyses are also forthcoming.

### **How to Read the Tables**

Each table shows the number of students who chose a given response to each question, and percentages as a subset of both the population of 1297 FTICs and of the students who answered the question. "Valid percent" shows the accurate percentage of those who answered the question, which may be a subset of the 1297 students included in the sample. The "Missing . . . System" row shows the number of students who did not answer the question.

### **A Note About Printing**

The chart on the last page will be intelligible only when rendered in color, which means it must be viewed on a monitor, or printed in color.

## ENVIRONMENTAL PULL FACTORS

Environmental pull factors are the responsibilities and experiences in students' lives that create a pull away from a complete focus on attending college. Work and family are common examples of this, but other issues are possible, especially with a commuter population.

### Where do you live during the school year?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	at home with parents or relatives	864	66.6	67.1	67.1
	rental house, apt. etc. away from campus	118	9.1	9.2	76.2
	dormitory or other UH housing	306	23.6	23.8	100.0
	Total	1288	99.3	100.0	
Missing	System	9	.7		
Total		1297	100.0		

About two-thirds of the FTIC population live at home. While this proportion may change as students get older, it suggests that the influence of parents or other relatives on students may be strong.

### How long does it take you to travel to campus for classes?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I live on campus	290	22.4	22.5	22.5
	less than 15 minutes	138	10.6	10.7	33.2
	16-30 minutes	355	27.4	27.5	60.7
	31-45 minutes	323	24.9	25.0	85.7
	46-60 minutes	140	10.8	10.9	96.6
	more than 60 minutes	44	3.4	3.4	100.0
	Total	1290	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	7	.5		
Total		1297	100.0		

About one third of the FTIC population travels 30 minutes or more to campus.

### Do you work on-campus or off-campus?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	on-campus	60	4.6	4.7	4.7
	off-campus	725	55.9	56.4	61.1
	both (on and off)	12	.9	.9	62.0
	do not work	488	37.6	38.0	100.0
	Total	1285	99.1	100.0	
Missing	System	12	.9		
Total		1297	100.0		

Over half of the population works off-campus, and fewer than 5% work on-campus. These numbers are significant because working off-campus has been shown in research to be negatively associated with persistence, while working on-campus has been shown to have a positive effect.

**FirstGeneration**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	667	51.4	52.4	52.4
	1.00	606	46.7	47.6	100.0
	Total	1273	98.1	100.0	
Missing	System	24	1.9		
Total		1297	100.0		

Close to half of the FTICs are first generation students. This definition calculates first generation as students neither of whose parents has completed college.

**FINANCIAL AID**

Financial Aid is known to have a significant impact on undergraduate persistence. The amount or type of aid may have an effect, but it has also been shown that the extent to which students are worrying about financial matters often has an impact on persistence

**I do not worry about college-related expenses**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	394	30.4	31.1	31.1
	disagree	470	36.2	37.1	68.2
	agree	258	19.9	20.4	88.6
	strongly agree	144	11.1	11.4	100.0
	Total	1266	97.6	100.0	
Missing	System	31	2.4		
Total		1297	100.0		

Over two-thirds of the FTICs worry about college-related expenses.

**I am not stressed out about money throughout a semester**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	321	24.7	25.5	25.5
	disagree	464	35.8	36.8	62.3
	agree	332	25.6	26.3	88.7
	strongly agree	143	11.0	11.3	100.0
	Total	1260	97.1	100.0	
Missing	System	37	2.9		
Total		1297	100.0		

Well over one half report feeling stressed about money.

**I do not have to work to make ends meet**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	286	22.1	22.7	22.7
	disagree	378	29.1	30.0	52.6
	agree	394	30.4	31.2	83.8
	strongly agree	204	15.7	16.2	100.0
	Total	1262	97.3	100.0	
Missing	System	35	2.7		
Total		1297	100.0		

As freshman, slightly over one-half of the population feel they must work to make ends meet.

**COMMITMENT**

Although it may seem to be stating the obvious, students' commitment to degree completion and to the university may impact persistence. While it is important to track the changes in these attitudes over time, the responses below reflect student attitudes near the end of their first year.

What is the highest academic degree you expect to obtain in your lifetime?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		26	2.0	2.0	2.0
	bachelor's	282	21.7	21.7	23.7
	master's	583	44.9	44.9	68.7
	doctorate or prof.	406	31.3	31.3	100.0
	Total	1297	100.0	100.0	

As freshman, our FTIC students have high expectations.

**How important is it for you to complete a Bachelor's degree in your lifetime?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		22	1.7	1.7	1.7
	very unimportant	13	1.0	1.0	2.7
	unimportant	18	1.4	1.4	4.1
	important	124	9.6	9.6	13.6
	very important	1120	86.4	86.4	100.0
	Total	1297	100.0	100.0	

A substantial majority feel that completing a bachelor's degree is very important.

**How important is it for you to complete a Bachelor's degree at the University of Houston?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20	1.5	1.5	1.5
very unimportant	35	2.7	2.7	4.2
unimportant	145	11.2	11.2	15.4
important	380	29.3	29.3	44.7
very important	717	55.3	55.3	100.0
Total	1297	100.0	100.0	

Over three-quarters think it is important to complete their degree at the University of Houston.

**What is your best guess about the chances that you will take some courses at other colleges but graduate from UH**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	29	2.2	2.2	2.2
definitely	253	19.5	19.5	21.7
probably	331	25.5	25.5	47.3
maybe	398	30.7	30.7	77.9
probably not	199	15.3	15.3	93.3
definitely not	87	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	1297	100.0	100.0	

Despite the sense that earning the degree from UH is important, most students are open to the possibility that they will take some courses at other institutions.

**What is your best guess about the chances that you will transfer to another college before graduating**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	28	2.2	2.2	2.2
definitely	109	8.4	8.4	10.6
probably	159	12.3	12.3	22.8
maybe	413	31.8	31.8	54.7
probably not	382	29.5	29.5	84.1
definitely not	206	15.9	15.9	100.0
Total	1297	100.0	100.0	

About half think it is possible they will transfer to another college. Further data documenting what causes students to transfer is needed to understand the relationship between transferring and the seemingly strong commitment to UH shown in the above tables.

## SUPPORT AND MENTORING

Persistence has been linked with encouragement and support from family and friends, and to support and mentoring within the college experience.

How much encouragement and support do you receive from family to continue?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	very discouraging	7	.5	.6	.6
	a little discouraging	9	.7	.7	1.3
	neutral	55	4.2	4.5	5.9
	a little supportive	117	9.0	9.7	15.6
	very supportive	1021	78.7	84.4	100.0
	Total	1209	93.2	100.0	
Missing	System	88	6.8		
Total		1297	100.0		

Most students report their families are very supportive.

How much encouragement and support do you receive from friends to continue?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	very discouraging	3	.2	.2	.2
	a little discouraging	8	.6	.7	.9
	neutral	117	9.0	9.7	10.6
	a little supportive	274	21.1	22.7	33.3
	very supportive	807	62.2	66.7	100.0
	Total	1209	93.2	100.0	
Missing	System	88	6.8		
Total		1297	100.0		

Friends are also supportive overall, although the “very supportive” proportion is smaller than with family.

How much encouragement and support do you receive from UH faculty to continue?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	very discouraging	17	1.3	1.4	1.4
	a little discouraging	15	1.2	1.3	2.7
	neutral	477	36.8	40.1	42.8
	a little supportive	261	20.1	21.9	64.7
	very supportive	420	32.4	35.3	100.0
	Total	1190	91.8	100.0	
Missing	System	107	8.2		
Total		1297	100.0		

The majority of FTICs find faculty supportive, but a significant number (40%) describe them as neutral.

How much encouragement and support do you receive from academic advisor to continue?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	very discouraging	12	.9	1.0	1.0
	a little discouraging	11	.8	.9	1.9
	neutral	408	31.5	34.3	36.2
	a little supportive	244	18.8	20.5	56.8
	very supportive	514	39.6	43.2	100.0
	Total	1189	91.7	100.0	
Missing	System	108	8.3		
Total		1297	100.0		

Students find advisors generally supportive, although one-third describe advisors as neutral.

**My academic advisor is knowledgeable**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	30	2.3	2.4	2.4
	disagree	54	4.2	4.4	6.8
	neither agree nor disagree	459	35.4	37.1	43.9
	agree	503	38.8	40.6	84.5
	strongly agree	192	14.8	15.5	100.0
	Total	1238	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	59	4.5		
Total		1297	100.0		

**My academic advisor is helpful with academic questions**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	33	2.5	2.7	2.7
	disagree	52	4.0	4.2	6.9
	neither agree nor disagree	437	33.7	35.4	42.2
	agree	514	39.6	41.6	83.8
	strongly agree	200	15.4	16.2	100.0
	Total	1236	95.3	100.0	
Missing	System	61	4.7		
Total		1297	100.0		



**I know where to find an academic advisor**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	65	5.0	5.2	5.2
	disagree	91	7.0	7.3	12.5
	neither agree nor disagree	154	11.9	12.3	24.8
	agree	480	37.0	38.4	63.3
	strongly agree	459	35.4	36.7	100.0
	Total	1249	96.3	100.0	
Missing	System	48	3.7		
Total		1297	100.0		

The majority of students know where to find an academic advisor, but as many as one-quarter may not be certain.

**ENGAGEMENT**

The term “engagement” has come to signify a number of things, which are probably most accurately summarized as the extent to which students are substantively connected to the broader fabric of college-going. Participation in clubs and other campus events is a significant predictor of persistence, as is out-of-class interaction with faculty and peers.

How often have you asked your instructor for course-related information

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	386	29.8	31.2	31.2
	occasionally	290	22.4	23.4	54.6
	sometimes	431	33.2	34.8	89.3
	often	132	10.2	10.7	100.0
	Total	1239	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	58	4.5		
Total		1297	100.0		

This series of six questions asked students to indicate the frequency of their participation in certain activities representing interaction with faculty and advisors.

How often have you visited informally and briefly with an instructor after class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	277	21.4	22.5	22.5
	occasionally	418	32.2	34.0	56.5
	sometimes	401	30.9	32.6	89.0
	often	135	10.4	11.0	100.0
	Total	1231	94.9	100.0	
Missing	System	66	5.1		
Total		1297	100.0		

While most students report some interaction with instructors, a surprising number “never” have these interactions with instructors.

How often have you seen an instructor during office hours

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	374	28.8	30.3	30.3
	occasionally	420	32.4	34.0	64.2
	sometimes	343	26.4	27.8	92.0
	often	99	7.6	8.0	100.0
	Total	1236	95.3	100.0	
Missing	System	61	4.7		
Total		1297	100.0		

How often have you gone for tutoring or help service

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	447	34.5	36.2	36.2
	occasionally	327	25.2	26.5	62.6
	sometimes	296	22.8	23.9	86.6
	often	166	12.8	13.4	100.0
	Total	1236	95.3	100.0	
Missing	System	61	4.7		
Total		1297	100.0		

Slightly over one-third of FTICs have never used tutoring or help services. A small proportion use the services “often.”

How often have you visited an academic advisor

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	226	17.4	18.4	18.4
	occasionally	418	32.2	34.0	52.3
	sometimes	408	31.5	33.1	85.5
	often	179	13.8	14.5	100.0
	Total	1231	94.9	100.0	
Missing	System	66	5.1		
Total		1297	100.0		

As of April 2003, when this survey was administered, 18% of the FTICs who entered the previous Fall semester had never visited an academic advisor.

How often have you discussed career plans and ambitions with an academic advisor

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	532	41.0	43.1	43.1
	occasionally	340	26.2	27.6	70.7
	sometimes	244	18.8	19.8	90.4
	often	118	9.1	9.6	100.0
	Total	1234	95.1	100.0	
Missing	System	63	4.9		
Total		1297	100.0		

Over half the FTICs have discussed career plans and ambitions with advisors at least once; 43% have never done so.

How often have you discussed career plans and ambitions with an instructor

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	800	61.7	64.9	64.9
	occasionally	219	16.9	17.8	82.6
	sometimes	156	12.0	12.7	95.3
	often	58	4.5	4.7	100.0
	Total	1233	95.1	100.0	
Missing	System	64	4.9		
Total		1297	100.0		

Nearly two-thirds of FTICs have never discussed career plans and ambitions with an instructor.

How important were the following considerations in your choice of major: a family member recommended it

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	very important	160	12.3	16.3	16.3
	somewhat important	391	30.1	39.8	56.1
	not at all important	432	33.3	43.9	100.0
	Total	983	75.8	100.0	
Missing	System	314	24.2		
Total		1297	100.0		

Families are a significant influence on students' choice of major.

How important were the following considerations in your choice of major: I thought it would be easy

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	very important	60	4.6	6.1	6.1
	somewhat important	297	22.9	30.2	36.4
	not at all important	625	48.2	63.6	100.0
	Total	982	75.7	100.0	
Missing	System	315	24.3		
Total		1297	100.0		

The difficulty of the major is usually not a dominant consideration when choosing a major.

How important were the following considerations in your choice of major: I think I'll get a good job with this major

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	very important	650	50.1	66.1	66.1
	somewhat important	251	19.4	25.5	91.6
	not at all important	83	6.4	8.4	100.0
	Total	984	75.9	100.0	
Missing	System	313	24.1		
Total		1297	100.0		

The relationship between major and job prospects is clearly a consideration among FTICs.

How important were the following considerations in your choice of major: I like the subject matter

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	very important	690	53.2	70.0	70.0
	somewhat important	252	19.4	25.6	95.5
	not at all important	44	3.4	4.5	100.0
	Total	986	76.0	100.0	
Missing	System	311	24.0		
Total		1297	100.0		

Subject matter is also important in choice of major, and perhaps even more important than job prospects.

How important were the following considerations in your choice of major: I like the faculty

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	very important	108	8.3	11.0	11.0
	somewhat important	376	29.0	38.4	49.4
	not at all important	496	38.2	50.6	100.0
	Total	980	75.6	100.0	
Missing	System	317	24.4		
Total		1297	100.0		

Liking the faculty associated with the major is not a strong reason for choosing it.

**About how many hours a week do you spend studying?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	none	24	1.9	1.9	1.9
	1-5 hours	616	47.5	47.9	49.8
	6-10 hours	381	29.4	29.6	79.4
	11-15 hours	152	11.7	11.8	91.2
	16-20 hours	65	5.0	5.1	96.3
	more than 60 minutes	48	3.7	3.7	100.0
	Total	1286	99.2	100.0	
Missing	System	11	.8		
Total		1297	100.0		

Three-quarters of the freshman FTICs study 10 hours a week or less.

**When I don't have time to study or complete assignments, it is usually because of boredom**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	always	165	12.7	13.4	13.4
	sometimes	677	52.2	55.0	68.4
	never	389	30.0	31.6	100.0
	Total	1231	94.9	100.0	
Missing	System	66	5.1		
Total		1297	100.0		

Over two-thirds report some level of boredom affecting the time they spend studying

**How much time do you spend on campus other than for class and/or work?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		24	1.9	1.9	1.9
	none	236	18.2	18.2	20.0
	1 - 2 hrs/week	303	23.4	23.4	43.4
	3 - 5 hrs/week	264	20.4	20.4	63.8
	5 - 10 hrs/week	130	10.0	10.0	73.8
	10 - 15 hrs/week	74	5.7	5.7	79.5
	> 15 hrs/week	266	20.5	20.5	100.0
	Total	1297	100.0	100.0	

Most FTICs spend very little time on campus outside of class.

**When I don't have time to study or complete assignments, it is usually because of family obligations**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	always	122	9.4	10.0	10.0
	sometimes	714	55.1	58.7	68.7
	never	381	29.4	31.3	100.0
	Total	1217	93.8	100.0	
Missing	System	80	6.2		
Total		1297	100.0		

Family obligations may also play a role in the time spent studying.

**When I don't have time to study or complete assignments, it is usually because of work hours**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	always	198	15.3	16.1	16.1
	sometimes	506	39.0	41.1	57.2
	never	526	40.6	42.8	100.0
	Total	1230	94.8	100.0	
Missing	System	67	5.2		
Total		1297	100.0		

Over half report some interference from work on the time they spend studying.

**I can devote more time to my studies**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	73	5.6	5.8	5.8
	disagree	248	19.1	19.8	25.6
	agree	644	49.7	51.4	77.0
	strongly agree	289	22.3	23.0	100.0
	Total	1254	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	43	3.3		
Total		1297	100.0		

About three-quarters of the respondents acknowledge that they could spend more time studying than they do.

## HOURS RATIO

Recent research from the U.S. Department of Education has shown that the ratio of the credit hours students earn to the number they attempt is a significant predictor of persistence. “Attempted” hours are those to which a student is committed on the twelfth class day; “earned” represents those for which credit is awarded at the end of the semester. The more credits students attempt but do not earn, the less likely they are to graduate.

The table below shows the proportion of Fall 2004 students at the University of Houston who dropped one or more courses in a given semester. These figures suggest that the number of students negatively affected by unearned semester credit hours may be significant.

	Student Headcount		
	N	N Dropping <u>1+</u> Classes	<u>%</u>
<b>Total Drops</b>			
Spring 2004	33,499	7,998	23.9%
Fall 2004	35,180	8,793	25.0%
<b>Undergraduate Drops</b>			
Spring 2004	23,797	7,365	30.9%
Fall 2004	26,366	8,094	30.7%
<b>PB/Grad/SP Drops</b>			
Spring 2004	8,470	633	7.5%
Fall 2004	8,814	699	7.9%

## CONTINUOUS ENROLLMENT

Research from the Department of Education has also shown that continuous enrollment in college is an important predictor of graduation. This finding suggests that stopping out can be detrimental, and it is an important consideration with the UH population.

What is your best guess about the chances that you will need extra time to complete your degree requirements?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	25	1.9	1.9	1.9
definitely	200	15.4	15.4	17.3
probably	453	34.9	34.9	52.3
maybe	333	25.7	25.7	77.9
probably not	219	16.9	16.9	94.8
definitely not	67	5.2	5.2	100.0
Total	1297	100.0	100.0	

As early as their freshman year, most FTICs are expecting to need extra time to complete their degree.

What is your best guess about the chances that you will drop out of college temporarily (exclude transferring)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	30	2.3	2.3	2.3
definitely	6	.5	.5	2.8
probably	29	2.2	2.2	5.0
maybe	118	9.1	9.1	14.1
probably not	431	33.2	33.2	47.3
definitely not	683	52.7	52.7	100.0
Total	1297	100.0	100.0	

Most FTICs are not expecting to stop out.

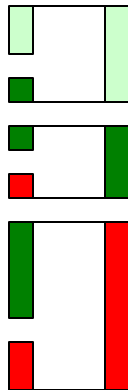


## HOW THE CHART IS BUILT

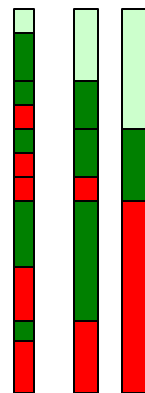
It is commonly understood that University of Houston undergraduates do not often complete a bachelor's degree within four years. If they do complete their degree and complete it at UH, they are more likely to do so in six years or more. In fact, the graduation rate does not level off until about twelve years out. The chart below is a graphic representation of the enrollment patterns of the 1993 FTIC cohort – the most recent cohort for which we have twelve years of data. The enrollment status of each FTIC student during each of the twenty-four semesters is shown, with each student represented by a row, and each semester by a column, or bar. The bars are paired by academic year, and each bar

represents a long semester for the 12 years beginning Fall 1993. Every student included in the chart was enrolled in the Fall of 1993, so the bar representing Fall 1993, at the far left, is entirely dark green. The data for the chart is sorted backwards, so that the far right bar, which represents Spring 2005, shows the students who had graduated (light green) at the top, the students who were still enrolled (dark green) in the middle, and the students who were neither enrolled nor graduated (red) at the bottom. This sorting allows you to see what enrollment patterns precede each of those final states. The drawing below shows how the sorting works.

The far right of the two bars shows enrollment status the final semester. The near right bar breaks out each group from the far right bar into the enrollment status the prior semester.



The bars at the right show the same information without the spacing, with the addition of a third bar.



## WHAT THE CHART MEANS

Looking at the chart as a whole, it becomes clear that students who graduated were, for the most part, continuously enrolled prior to graduation. This is seen by looking in the upper portion of the chart. The light green at the right is preceded on the chart by a great deal of dark green (representing enrollment) with only a small, intermittent showing of red, or non-enrollment.

The chart also makes clear that dropout/stopout curve is steep well beyond the first year. This is shown in the shape of the border between the red and predominantly dark green areas. Conventional wisdom is that the year of most significant risk for students dropping out is the first year, but UH students continue to leave at a steady rate for two or three more years.

1993 FTIC Cohort  
Full-Time and Part-Time

