

Filipino Educational Status and Achievement at the University of Hawai‘i

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This article describes and analyzes the educational status of Filipino “first time freshman” students at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, the main campus in the statewide University of Hawai‘i system, between 1979 and 1986. The data for this article come from a larger study that was primarily concerned with Native Hawaiian first time freshmen at the University (UH Department of Sociology 1988). These data were obtained from student information files maintained by the University’s Office of Admissions and Records. For the purposes of this paper, a first time freshman is defined as a student who, after graduating from high school, initially began college studies at UH Manoa, i.e., a nontransfer student.

The first section of the article reviews the demographic and educational background characteristics of Filipino first time freshmen (henceforth referred to as FTF) prior to entering the University such as their locale of residence and high school grade point average. The next section is concerned with the educational achievement of Filipino FTF students at UH Manoa in terms of their cumulative grade point average, attrition rate and academic status. The third section discusses the graduation of Filipino FTF students from UH Manoa. In addition to FTF students, the following section reviews the educational attainment and graduation of Filipino community college transfer (henceforth referred to as CCT) students at the University. In each of the above sections, the data for Filipino students are compared with those for Native Hawaiian, Japanese and “All” FTF or CCT students. Lastly, an analysis is provided of the educational status of Filipino students at UH Manoa in terms of institutional constraints that restrict their access to and persistence in higher education.

Precollege Background

This section reviews the demographic and educational background prior to attending college of Filipino first time freshmen who entered the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa during the fall semester in the years 1979 through 1985. The various precollege characteristics of Filipinos discussed below include their relative representation, gender division, high school grade point average (GPA) and rank, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, public and private high school graduation, and locale of permanent residence.

Table 1

Filipino, Native Hawaiian, Japanese and All First Time Freshmen
at UH Manoa, Fall 1979 to Fall 1985

	Filipino		Native Hawaiian		Japanese		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1979	119	5.4	86	3.9	1,025	46.6	2,285	100.0
1980	138	6.4	152	7.1	986	45.8	2,230	100.0
1981	146	6.5	160	7.2	976	43.7	2,239	100.0
1982	144	6.9	139	6.7	892	42.9	2,090	100.0
1983	162	7.3	144	6.5	937	42.2	2,224	100.0
1984	156	8.3	113	6.0	757	40.3	1,888	100.0
1985	171	8.8	137	7.0	790	40.5	1,975	100.0
Mean	148	7.1	133	6.3	909	43.1	2,133	100.0

The Filipino FTF cohorts comprised a mean of 148 students and 7.1 percent of all entering freshmen at UH Manoa between 1979 and 1985 (see Table 1). Filipino freshmen generally increased their absolute number and relative percentage each year from 1979 to 1985 which is a significant factor in the increasing representation of Filipinos at the University during the same period and until the present (see Table 2). The above percentage approximates the 6.7 percent of UH Manoa undergraduates represented by Filipinos in 1985 (Office of Institutional Research and Analysis 1985a: 3). However, both percentages are considerably below the 18 percent represented by Filipinos in the public school system in Hawai'i and thus indicate the severe underrepresentation of Filipinos among FTF students admitted to the University.

In contrast to Filipinos, declining numbers in absolute and relative terms was the case with the Japanese and All FTF cohorts between 1979 and 1985. This trend is consistent with the decreased enrollment at UH Manoa since 1983, particularly of Japanese students which is largely due to their declining college age population. Nonetheless, the mean percentage of the Japanese (43.1%) FTF cohorts constitutes considerable overrepresentation relative to their public school enrollment (16%). As for Native Hawaiians, their mean percentage (6.3%) of 1979-85 entering freshmen at UH Manoa indicates substantial underrepresentation in terms of their public school enrollment (23%).

Table 2

Filipino, Native Hawaiian and Japanese Students at UH Manoa,
Fall 1980 to Fall 1990

	Total		Filipino		Native Hawaiian		Japanese	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1980	20,175	100.0	779	3.5	571	2.8	6,957	34.5
1981	20,446	100.0	838	4.1	801	3.9	7,326	35.8
1982	20,880	100.0	938	4.5	939	4.5	7,461	35.7
1983	20,966	100.0	1,023	4.9	976	4.7	7,441	35.5
1984	19,965	100.0	1,045	5.2	972	4.9	7,067	35.4
1985	19,606	100.0	1,111	5.7	986	5.0	6,993	35.7
1986	18,918	100.0	1,135	6.0	917	4.8	6,625	35.0
1987	18,382	100.0	1,165	6.3	929	5.1	6,191	33.7
1988	18,424	100.0	1,272	6.9	970	5.3	5,960	32.3
1989	18,546	100.0	1,364	7.4	1,037	5.6	5,803	31.3
1990	18,810	100.0	1,488	7.9	1,120	6.0	5,612	29.8

Sources: Fall 1980-84; Office of Institutional Research and Analysis, University of Hawai'i 1985b. Fall 1985-90; Institutional Research Office, University of Hawai'i 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991.

With regard to the gender division of the Filipino FTF students, there were overall more females (59.3%) than males (40.3%), and this relative ratio generally was the case for every cohort. The Native Hawaiian, Japanese and All students cohorts also had more women than men but in slightly lower percentages than Filipinos.

In terms of high school grade point average, the Filipino FTF cohorts had the highest mean GPA from 1979 to 1985 (3.25 on a maximum 4.0 scale): Native Hawaiians (3.00), Japanese (3.16) and All students (3.14) (see Table 3). Data from another study which included several other ethnic groups (e.g., Chinese) indicate that Filipinos may well have the highest mean high school GPA of all freshmen entering the University (Takeuchi 1988: 32).

High school quintile rank refers to a student's relative ranking on a five point scale in his or her high school graduating class that is based on cumulative grade

Table 3

Mean High School Grade Point Average of Filipino, Native Hawaiian, Japanese and All First Time Freshmen at UH Manoa, Fall 1979 to Fall 1985

	Filipino		Native Hawaiian		Japanese		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1979	102	3.27	69	2.99	968	3.16	2,062	3.15
1980	115	3.29	128	2.98	934	3.19	2,000	3.16
1981	129	3.21	135	2.99	919	3.16	1,941	3.13
1982	114	3.26	108	3.05	852	3.16	1,826	3.14
1983	147	3.24	119	2.97	902	3.16	1,999	3.13
1984	138	3.26	92	3.06	730	3.17	1,708	3.15
1985	153	3.22	117	2.99	771	3.15	1,752	3.14
Mean		3.25		3.00		3.16		3.14

point average. Given their comparatively highest mean high school GPA, it is not surprising to find that Filipino freshmen had by far the highest mean quintile rank (4.64) compared to Native Hawaiians (3.97), Japanese (4.40) and All students (4.33). Filipinos also had by far the greatest mean percentage of students in the fifth or highest quintile (upper 20% of high school graduating class): Filipinos (72.2%), Native Hawaiians (37.1%), Japanese (58.6%) and All freshmen (55.3%).

As for Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, the Filipino freshmen generally increased their scores between 1979 and 1985, particularly their SAT verbal and combined scores. However, their mean SAT mathematics (482), verbal (393) and therefore their combined (873) scores generally were lower than those of the other groups: Native Hawaiians (908), Japanese (972) and All students (958). These lower SAT scores of Filipinos are somewhat anomalous given that they had the highest high school GPA of all entering freshmen and thus perhaps are an indication of the inherent cultural biases of standardized achievement tests such as the SAT (Cabras 1989: 10). The relation of SAT scores to the academic performance and graduation of Filipino and other students at the University is discussed below.

A majority of Filipino entering freshmen at UH Manoa from 1979 to 1985 was graduated from a public (80.7%) rather than a private (15.9%) high school in Hawai'i. The data also indicate that the overwhelming majority (96.6%) of Filipino FTF students was graduated from a Hawai'i high school (as was the case with Native Hawaiian and Japanese freshmen) with smaller numbers graduating from schools in the continental United States, Guam and the Philippines. The Native Hawaiian FTF cohorts had by far the highest mean percentage of private high school graduates (59.9%), especially from the Kamehameha Schools, compared to Japanese (18.4%) and All students (25.1%). Conversely, Native Hawaiians had the lowest mean percentage of public high school graduates (37.8%) in comparison to the Japanese (79.1%) and All (64.7%) freshman cohorts.

In terms of locale of permanent residence, the Filipino FTF cohorts between 1979 and 1985 were primarily from rural O'ahu (39.7%), followed by Honolulu (32.0%) and the neighbor islands (26.1%). Native Hawaiian freshmen also resided for the most part in rural O'ahu (42.3%), then Honolulu (34.0%) and the neighbor islands (22.8%). In contrast, Japanese freshmen were primarily from Honolulu (44.8%), followed by rural O'ahu (30.8%) and the neighbor islands (23.0%). Similarly, All students generally were from Honolulu (45.2%), then rural O'ahu (29.8%) and lastly the neighbor islands (17.1%).

Thus, the typical Filipino first time freshman at UH Manoa is female, had a "B+" grade point average in high school which numerically is the highest of all FTF students, was in the fifth quintile of his or her high school graduating class, has lower SAT scores than the average entering freshman at the University, was graduated from a public high school in Hawai'i and is from rural O'ahu.

Academic Achievement at UH Manoa

This section reviews the educational achievement of Filipino first time freshman students at UH Manoa between 1979 and 1986. In contrast to the previous section, the discussion is limited to the 1979, 1980 and 1981 FTF cohorts since they are the only groups of which a significant proportion of students would have been graduated by 1986. The college achievement characteristics reviewed below include grade point average, attrition rate, and academic status, i.e., probation, suspension or dismissal from the University.

The Filipino freshmen had a mean GPA of 2.37 (on a maximum 4.0 scale) after their first semester at UH Manoa which is substantially above the Univer-

sity standard for satisfactory academic performance (2.0). Their GPA was higher than that of Native Hawaiians (2.11) but lower than that of the Japanese (2.55) and All (2.52) FTF cohorts.

The University of Hawai'i at Manoa has as one of its admission requirements for incoming freshmen an SAT verbal score of 430, although this minimum standard is not applied rigorously in the admissions process (Ikeda et al. 1985: 12). A substantial majority (70.5%) of Filipino students who had SAT verbal scores below 430, nonetheless, achieved grade point averages of 2.0 or higher during their first semester at UH Manoa. That is, those students performed satisfactory or better college work despite having SAT verbal scores that would have prevented them from being admitted to the University if the SAT verbal standard was strictly applied as the sole criterion for admission. In fact, none of the seven Filipino FTF cohorts from 1979 through 1985 had a mean SAT verbal score above 430, although their grade point averages at UH Manoa demonstrate clearly that they are more than capable of successful college study. Significant majorities of Native Hawaiian (56.5%), Japanese (73.9%) and All (73.0%) FTF students who had SAT verbal scores less than 430 also attained grade point averages of 2.0 and above during their first semester at the University. Recall that the Native Hawaiian (419), Japanese (434) and All (431) FTF cohorts all had mean SAT verbal scores very proximate to the 430 standard. Thus, the above data indicate that the present SAT verbal standard for admission to UH Manoa is not an especially accurate predictor of satisfactory academic performance insofar as it would deny entry to the great majority of incoming freshmen who are quite able to perform successfully in college. Therefore, its salience as an admission criterion relative to other criteria such as high school grade point average should be reevaluated.

The mean attrition rate of Filipino freshmen from UH Manoa after the first semester was 6.7 percent, i.e., that proportion of each entering cohort between 1979 and 1981 did not enroll for the second semester at the University. However, based on other data that were obtained through interviews, some of those students later may have resumed their studies at UH Manoa or transferred to a community college or another university. At any rate, the first semester attrition rate of Filipinos was lower than that of Native Hawaiians (12.2%) but higher than that of Japanese (3.2%) and All (5.9%) students.

Filipino freshmen who were enrolled at UH Manoa for the entire first year performed more than satisfactorily on the whole. They had a mean grade point average of 2.43 compared to that of the Native Hawaiian (2.23), Japanese (2.64)

and All (2.61) FTF cohorts. Also, a substantial majority of Filipino freshmen (70.7%) had a GPA of 2.0 or above after their first year at the University, although this percentage was lower than that of Japanese (80.6%) and All (76.8%) students but higher than for Native Hawaiians (59.4%).

In terms of their academic status as determined by cumulative grade point average, a considerable majority of the Filipino FTF students (61.6%) experienced no academic difficulty (probation, suspension or dismissal) while attending UH Manoa. This percentage was below that of Japanese (73.7%) and All (72.3%) students but above that of Native Hawaiians (57.8%).

With regard to students ever placed on academic probation (cumulative GPA below 2.0), the Filipino FTF cohorts (27.7%) had a slightly greater mean proportion than Native Hawaiians (26.8%), Japanese (20.0%) and All students (20.3%). However, in terms of students ever academically suspended from the University, Filipinos (24.5%) were intermediate between Native Hawaiians (32.9%) on the one hand, and Japanese (16.2%) and All students (17.7%) on the other. Filipinos also had an intermediate ranking in terms of the mean percentage of students ever academically dismissed from UH Manoa: Filipinos (8.5%), Native Hawaiians (10.9%), Japanese (5.4%) and All students (5.6%).

Almost one-half (46.9%) of the Filipino FTF nongraduates of UH Manoa, that is, students who had not yet completed their bachelor's degrees or who had left the University, did not experience any academic difficulty, at least as evident from their cumulative GPAs, while at UH Manoa. This figure suggests that many Filipino students do not graduate from the University for nonacademic reasons, perhaps because of financial constraints or family commitments that require them to terminate their studies or because of transfer to another university. In comparison with the other groups, the Filipino percentage approximated that of Native Hawaiians (46.2%) but was lower than that of Japanese (53.7%) and All students (56.8%).

Graduation from UH Manoa

For reasons stated above, data on graduation from UH Manoa for only the 1979, 1980 and 1981 Filipino FTF cohorts were analyzed. The graduation rate of the 1981 FTF cohort was lower than that of the other two groups because the data available extended only through the 1985-86 academic year, i.e., for five years in the case of the 1981 cohort but for six and seven years for the 1980 and 1979 cohorts, respectively. The longer period of matriculation at UH Manoa

Table 4

Filipino, Native Hawaiian, Japanese and All First Time Freshman
Graduates of UH Manoa: 1979-1981 Cohorts

	Filipino		Native Hawaiian		Japanese		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1979	119	49.6	86	33.7	1,025	66.1	2,201	56.9
1980	138	43.5	152	30.9	986	62.0	2,154	52.6
1981	146	27.4	160	21.3	976	42.2	2,231	36.9
Mean		40.2		28.6		56.8		48.8

reviewed for the latter two groups contributes to their higher rates of completion of college studies. For this reason, those rates are probably more representative of the ultimate graduation outcomes of the FTF cohorts than the tabulated means on graduation for the 1979, 1980 and 1981 groups discussed below.

A mean of about forty percent (40.2%) of the Filipino FTF cohorts was graduated from UH Manoa (see Table 4). However, with the passage of time, it can be conjectured that the eventual graduation rate of the three cohorts would exceed this percentage and approach or perhaps even surpass that of the 1979 cohort (49.6%). In contrast, the Native Hawaiian (28.6%) cohorts had a lower mean graduation rate, while the Japanese (56.8%) and All students (48.8%) cohorts had higher completion rates, all of which also can be expected to increase over time. For example, a study of the 1979 FTF cohort at UH Manoa over a seven year period found the following graduation rates: Chinese (70%), Filipinos (50%), Native Hawaiians (34%), Japanese (66%), Koreans (48%) and All students (56%) (Takeuchi 1988: 43).

Filipinos represented a mean of 5.0 percent of all FTF graduates of UH Manoa from the 1979-81 cohorts, a percentage which is slightly lower than their proportion (6.1%) of entering freshmen at the University between 1979 and 1981. Since more Filipinos from the 1980 and 1981 cohorts can be expected to have graduated, the actual difference between the above two percentages is probably minimal.

In comparison, Native Hawaiian FTF students comprised a mean of 3.5 percent of the FTF graduates from the three cohorts which is considerably lower than the 6.1 percent of entering UH Manoa freshmen between 1979 and 1981 that they represented. In contrast, Japanese students constituted 52.7 percent of the FTF graduates of the University which is substantially greater than the 45.4 percent of entering freshmen that they comprised from 1979 to 1981. Thus, in relation to their percentage of FTF students at UH Manoa, Filipinos are proportionately represented among FTF graduates, Native Hawaiians are underrepresented, and Japanese are overrepresented.

As for the schools and colleges of the University from which they were graduated, a plurality (41.6%) of Filipino FTF students were graduates of the College of Arts and Sciences. Filipinos also were graduated in significant percentages from the College of Business Administration (14.6%), School of Nursing (13.1%), College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (10.9%), and College of Engineering (6.7%). Unfortunately, a somewhat low percentage of Filipino FTF students were graduates of the College of Education (5.0%) since Filipinos continue to be severely underrepresented as teachers in the Hawai'i public school system (3.6%) (*Honolulu Star-Bulletin* 1989: A-3). Filipinos also were not especially well represented among graduates of the School of Travel Industry Management (3.1%) despite the substantial number of Filipino workers in the tourist industry in Hawai'i.

With regard to the other groups, they also had a plurality of their FTF graduates from the College of Arts and Sciences, and all had significant numbers of graduates from the Colleges of Business Administration, Engineering, Education, and Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources.

The Filipino FTF graduates of UH Manoa had a mean cumulative grade point average of 2.85. This figure was slightly lower than the GPA of Native Hawaiians (2.89), Japanese (3.06) and All students (3.04).

In terms of their academic status as determined by cumulative grade point average, 17.1 percent of the Filipino FTF graduates had been in some type of academic difficulty (probation or suspension) at some time during their undergraduate tenure at the University. This percentage was higher than that of the other groups: Native Hawaiians (13.7%), Japanese (11.7%) and All students (11.5%).

As for the number of years necessary to graduate from UH Manoa, for each of the Filipino FTF cohorts, a majority of graduates required at least five years to complete their bachelor's degrees. Of the Filipino graduates from the 1979

cohort, 59.4 percent required five years or less to finish their undergraduate studies. This percentage was higher than that for Native Hawaiians (55.1%) but lower than that for Japanese (68.8%) and All (68.7%) FTF graduates. The data also show clearly that less than one-fifth of the FTF graduates of the University are able to graduate in the traditional four year period. The extended period of study required for graduation is probably due to working while attending college.

To summarize the academic achievement characteristics of the Filipino FTF graduates of UH Manoa, they were likely to have had almost a "B" cumulative grade point average, not to have ever been in academic difficulty (probation or suspension), to have been graduated from the College of Arts and Sciences, and to have graduated in five years.

Precollege Characteristics of Graduates

The demographic and educational background characteristics prior to entering UH Manoa of the Filipino FTF graduates may indicate factors that can be correlated with academic success and thus which should be the focus of University concern. A majority of the graduates were females (61.9%) as was the case with their 1979-81 entering cohorts at roughly the same percentage. The other FTF graduates also were comprised of more women than men: Native Hawaiians (57.8%), Japanese (62.4%) and All graduates (60.8%). Native Hawaiian and Japanese females also appear to complete their degrees in a shorter period of time than their male counterparts.

A slight plurality of the Filipino FTF graduates were from the neighbor islands (35.5%) and were followed by those from rural O'ahu (34.8%) and Honolulu (26.8%), although only 29.8 percent of their 1979-81 FTF cohorts were from the neighbor islands. The higher graduation rate of neighbor island students might be attributed to their probable greater tendency to reside in University dormitories than students from Honolulu since campus residence has been found to be positively associated with undergraduate academic success. Dormitory residence provides students with facility of access to libraries, peer support networks, professors, computer laboratories and other campus facilities and academic activities.

There is a slight tendency for the Native Hawaiian FTF graduates to have rural O'ahu (38.5%) as their primary locale of permanent residence rather than Honolulu (36.1%) or the neighbor islands (25.4%). This residence pattern also was the case for the Native Hawaiian freshman cohorts between 1979 and 1981.

Table 5

Mean SAT Verbal Score of Filipino, Native Hawaiian, Japanese and All First Time Freshman Graduates of UH Manoa: 1979-1981 Cohorts

	Filipino		Native Hawaiian		Japanese		All	
	N	SAT	N	SAT	N	SAT	N	SAT
1979	56	399	25	440	660	433	1,228	433
1980	52	397	44	419	598	438	1,119	434
1981	37	395	32	403	409	432	800	427
Mean		397		421		434		431

The Japanese FTF graduates were primarily from Honolulu (44.8%), then rural O'ahu (29.9%) and the neighbor islands (24.2%) as were their 1979-81 FTF cohorts. Similarly, All FTF graduates were from Honolulu (46.4%), followed by rural O'ahu (27.2%) and the neighbor islands (19.1%) which also was the case with All FTF students between 1979 and 1981.

As for their high school educational background, the Filipino FTF graduates generally had higher educational achievement characteristics than their 1979-81 freshman cohorts. For example, the Filipino graduates had a mean high school grade point average of 3.36 which was somewhat higher than the mean GPA of the Filipino freshman cohorts between 1979 and 1981 (3.26). The Native Hawaiian (3.10), Japanese (3.26) and All (3.24) FTF graduates had lower mean high school GPAs than that of the Filipino graduates. The Filipino FTF graduates had a mean high school quintile rank of 4.80 which was considerably higher than that of Filipino freshmen between 1979 and 1981 (4.65). The quintile ranking of the Filipino graduates was much higher than that of the Native Hawaiian (4.21), Japanese (4.55) and All (4.51) FTF graduates.

The Filipino FTF graduates (84.4%) had a greater percentage of students in the fifth quintile of their high school graduating class than did the 1979-81 Filipino entering freshmen (74.2%). This percentage was substantially higher than that of the Native Hawaiian (48.2%), Japanese (68.2%) and All (65.2%) FTF graduates.