



# Reisher Scholars at Colorado State University

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The purpose of this report is to track Reisher Scholarship recipients' success at Colorado State University (CSU) compared to a group of similar students who do not receive the award. This analysis is prompted by the possibility of increasing the number of Reisher scholars at CSU.

In summary, Reisher scholars are very successful at CSU compared to similar students who do not receive the award. Specifically, the Reisher students have higher persistence and graduation as well as higher GPA's compared to similar students who did not receive a Reisher scholarship. Additionally, the Reisher scholars have significantly lower amounts of aggregate loan debt compared to their peers.






## Population

Sixty-six Reisher scholars are included in this analysis; among these students, 42 entered as new freshmen but receive the award as continuing students and 24 entered as transfer students. Since the program's inception at CSU in the fall of 2012 there have been a total of 78 Reisher scholars at CSU. Among the 12 Reisher scholars that are excluded from this analysis, 9 received the award this most recent year so there are no longitudinal outcomes to assess and three did not start as full-time students during a spring semester (a criterion for the comparison group).

The comparison groups are created using the award's eligibility criteria. These groups only include resident students who entered CSU between FA11 and SP15 with an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) that is less than 9,000 during the Reisher application year. The transfer comparison group only includes transfers from a 2-year institution with 54 to 75 credits. The continuing comparison group is limited to new freshmen who have a cumulative GPA that is at least 3.0 and have earned at least 24 credits at the end of their first spring semester. Additionally, the continuing comparison group is limited to students that are retained to the start of their second fall semester (point in time that the Reisher award is given). All students in this analysis enrolled full-time their first semester except for students that started in a summer semester.

## Student Success Outcomes

Student success is assessed across the Reisher populations and comparison groups by using the following five metrics:

-  Enrollment Persistence
-  Credit Accumulation
-  Graduation
-  GPA
-  Aggregate Loan Debt

All analyses are completed across two groups (continuing and transfer) because Reisher transfer scholars typically receive their award during their first fall semester at CSU, but continuing scholars first receive the award during their second fall semester (after starting as freshmen). The continuing scholars' persistence is measured at the third and fourth fall semester and graduation is measured after four years while the transfer persistence is measured at the second fall semester and graduation is measured after two years. Aggregate loan debt is calculated by summing the total amount of loans borrowed at CSU; thus, newer cohorts will have less opportunity to borrow. Therefore, interpretations of aggregate debt are estimated by year.



## Demographics

Table 1 displays demographic attributes for Reisher scholars compared to the comparison group.

Table 1.

	Cohort Size	Male (%)	First Generation (%)	Minority (%)	Index (Average)
Reisher Scholars	66	36.4%	78.8%	66.7%	113.8
Comparison Group	2748	40.8%	45.4%	26.8%	116.4

Demographically, Reisher students are different than the comparison group in terms of their gender, first generation and minority representation and their CCHE index score. Approximately, 79% of Reisher scholars are first generation and 67% are an ethnic minority (compared to 45% first generation and 27% ethnic minority among the comparison group). The average index of Reisher scholars is nearly 3 points below the comparison group. Related to the comparison group males are slightly underrepresented among the Reisher scholars (36% compared to 41%).

Prior research on student success at CSU has shown a strong positive correlation between index and student success. Additionally this research has also shown a strong negative correlation between first generation status and student success outcomes. Based on this prior research, Reisher scholars have a demographic profile that has historically been associated with lower levels of student success.

## Student Success Outcomes

The student success outcomes for continuing Reisher scholars as well the continuing comparison group are displayed overall for the groups in Table 2. The cohort level results are available in the Appendix.

Table 2.

	3 <sup>rd</sup> Fall Persistence	4 <sup>th</sup> Fall Persistence	4YR Graduation	3 <sup>rd</sup> Fall Cumulative GPA	3 <sup>rd</sup> Fall Completed Credits	CSU Cumulative Loan Debt
Reisher Continuing Scholars	100.0%	100.0%	77.8%	3.45	82.1	\$5,583
Continuing Comparison Group	95.0%	93.1%	64.8%	3.35	84.9	\$20,907

All continuing Reisher scholars persisted through their 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> fall semesters and 78% graduated within four years. These Reisher persistence and graduation rates are higher than the rates of resident freshmen with similar EFC's who have at least a 3.0 GPA and 24 completed credits at the end of their first year and return for their 2<sup>nd</sup> fall semester by five to thirteen percentage points. The Reisher group's GPA is also significantly higher by .1 grade points ( $p=.055$ ), but the average completed credits is about the same ( $p=.13$ ).

The Reisher scholarship has an important impact on students' cumulative debt. All students in this report (Reisher scholars and comparison groups) are lower income and rely on financial aid to pay for college; however, the Reisher scholarship is associated with borrowing at an overall rate that is reduced by about \$15,300 (\$20,907 minus \$5,583) for continuing students. Please note that newer cohorts have less time to borrow so this aggregate calculation can be averaged by cohort over the three years of scholarship receipt. On average Reisher scholars are borrowing about \$5,500 less each year compared to the reference students.



The overall (cohort level results in Appendix) student success outcomes for transfer Reisher scholars and their comparison group are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3.

	2 <sup>nd</sup> Fall Persistence	2YR Graduation	2 <sup>nd</sup> Fall Cumulative GPA	2 <sup>nd</sup> Fall Completed Credits	CSU Cumulative Loan Debt
Reisher Transfer Scholars	91.7%	27.8%	3.39	106.1	\$5,949
Transfer Comparison Group	87.2%	17.5%	2.99	105.6	\$21,530

The Reisher transfer scholars' persistence and graduation rates are higher than the rates of resident transfer students with EFC's less than 9,000 who transferred from a community college with 54-75 credits. The Reisher transfer scholars typically receive their award at the beginning of their first fall semester and approximately 92% of these students persisted to their second-fall semester (compared to 87%) and 28% graduate within two years (compared to about 18%). The Reisher group's GPA is also significantly higher by .4 grade points ( $p < .001$ ), but the average completed credits is about the same ( $p = .852$ ).

Similar to the freshman group, the Reisher scholarship is associated with borrowing at an overall rate that is reduced by about \$15,600 (\$21,530 minus \$5,949) for transfer students. This aggregate difference can be averaged by cohort for the two years of scholarship receipt. On average Reisher transfer scholars are borrowing about \$9,200 less each year at CSU compared to the reference transfer group.

## Conclusions

Reisher scholarship recipients are a very diverse group of scholars (79% first generation and 67% ethnic minority). These students also have high school GPA and test scores, as measured by CCHE index, that are lower than their peers who also meet the scholarship eligibility. Historically at CSU these characteristics are associated with lower levels of success; however, these scholarship recipients are very successful. For instance, continuing and transfer students who receive a Reisher scholarship have higher rates of persistence and graduation and have higher cumulative GPA during the scholarship's second academic year compared to the eligible non-recipients. The credit accumulation during the scholarship's second academic year is about the same for the Reisher groups and the comparison groups.

The scholarship is also very important for the recipients in terms of reducing overall loan debt. Financial need is a criterion for scholarship eligibility and receipt of this award is associated with significantly reduced cumulative loan debt. On average a Reisher transfer scholar borrows about \$9,200 less per year for their last two academic years and a continuing scholar borrows about \$5,500 less per year for their last three academic years compared to the respective comparison group. This is a significant reduction in CSU loan debt acquired during undergraduate education and could have important implications for these students' choices after earning their degrees.

The Reisher scholarship program is small (10 to 20 transfer and continuing students per academic year) so the success of these students has little weight on the overall rates at CSU. However, the positive results of this assessment indicate that an expansion of the program could influence our overall rates upwards. Typically about 45 new freshmen make one percentage point in our FTFT persistence and graduation rates. Considering the continuing Reisher cohort is only about 10 students there would need to be significant growth in order to have an influence on the overall rates.

**Appendix**

## Reisher Continuing Scholars

Cohort Year	Cohort Size	3 <sup>rd</sup> Fall Persistence	4 <sup>th</sup> Fall Persistence	4YR Graduation	3 <sup>rd</sup> Fall Cumulative GPA	3 <sup>rd</sup> Fall Completed Credits	CSU Cumulative Loan Debt
2011-12	9	100.0%	100.0%	77.8%	3.52	85.2	\$5,957
2012-13	9	100.0%	100.0%		3.36	77.4	\$5,688
2013-14	13	100.0%			3.46	83.2	\$5,926
2014-15	11						\$4,585
Overall	42	100.0%	100.0%	77.8%	3.45	82.1	\$5,583

## Reisher Transfer Scholars

Cohort Year	Cohort Size	2 <sup>nd</sup> Fall Persistence	2YR Graduation	2 <sup>nd</sup> Fall Cumulative GPA	2nd Fall Completed Credits	CSU Cumulative Loan Debt
2011-12	1	100.0%	0.0%	2.92	59.0	\$2,452
2012-13	9	77.8%	22.2%	3.40	110.4	\$5,684
2013-14	8	100.0%	37.5%	3.57	108.7	\$5,442
2014-15	6	100.0%		3.23	105.8	\$7,116
Overall	24	91.7%	27.8%	3.39	106.1	\$5,949