



*A Synopsis of*  
**Chicago Freshman Enrollment  
at DePaul University**  
*Fall 2004-2008*

*Prepared and presented in May 2009 by*

David H. Kalsbeek, Ph.D.

Senior Vice President for Enrollment Management and Marketing

*Research and analysis support provided by*

Enrollment & Marketing Research

Center for Access and Attainment

*This report is an excerpt of a presentation that David Kalsbeek gave to DePaul's Joint Council on March 4, 2009. That presentation discussed the trends in freshman enrollment among students from Chicago.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

DePaul is in so many ways Chicago's university, and just one of the many meaningful measures of that fact is the proportion and the profile of students from Chicago who enroll here. It is wholly understandable that over time there have been marked changes in that enrollment since everything related to DePaul and Chicago is in such dynamic flux. The City and its population mix are changing. The Chicago Public School (CPS) system is changing. The Catholic secondary school system is changing. DePaul itself is changing. The competitive landscape in higher education is changing. In an environment of such dramatic change, it would be surprising if there were not significant shifts in the enrollment profile at DePaul.

It is in this context that this executive summary has been prepared in partial response to questions about how these changes are in fact manifested in DePaul's enrollment profile.

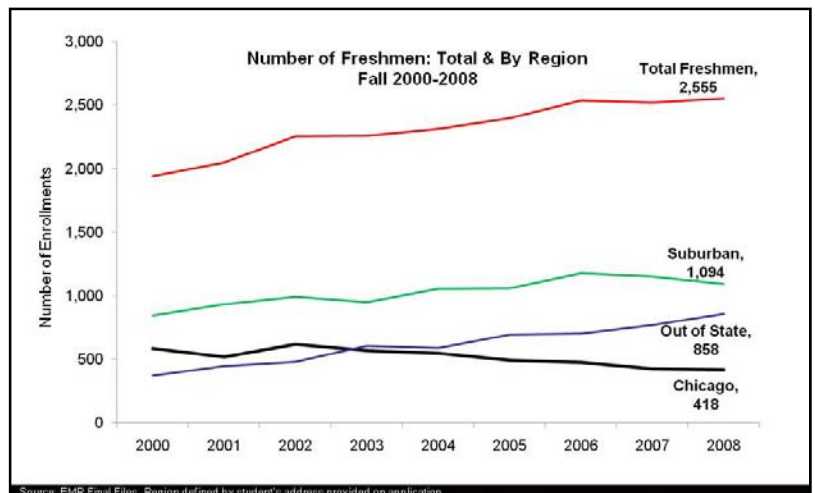
## **BACKGROUND**

Since 2000, the number of students in the fall freshman class at DePaul has increased about 30%, up to more than 2,500 freshmen in fall 2008. Over this time, there have been many changes in the mix, profile and characteristics of the DePaul freshman class—changes in levels of academic preparedness, in racial and ethnic diversity, in socioeconomic diversity and in areas of academic interest. Across the board, the shifts and the gains have served DePaul's strategic interests in elevating institutional visibility and prominence, maintaining a level of diversity and access that is consistent with its mission, and improving both the academic profile and the net revenue outcomes of enrolling freshmen.

As shown here, there have also been significant changes in the geographic distribution of the class. Enrollment from the Chicago suburbs increased at about the same pace as the class at large, up about 30%. Students from outside the state of Illinois increased 130%, or at a rate four times greater than the class at large. The number of students from the City of Chicago itself declined—a decline of about 30% since 2000.

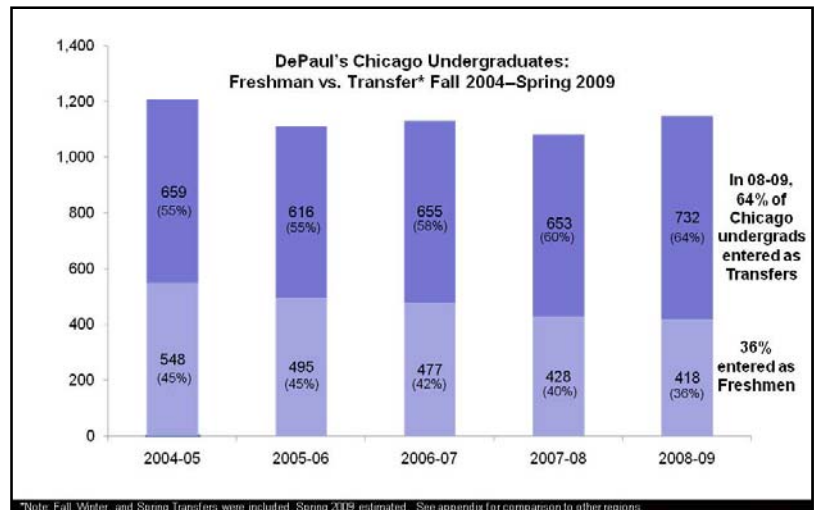
Students from outside Illinois have increased since 2000 from one out of five to one out of three DePaul freshmen. For many reasons, this represents a strategic gain for DePaul; it signals a strengthening of our market position and brings with it corresponding benefits in terms of the academic and socioeconomic profile of the undergraduate student population.

Since the suburban population has remained constant as a proportionate share of DePaul's freshmen class, the consequence of the growing share of out-of-state students is a corresponding decline in the share of freshmen coming from Chicago, decreasing from 30% in fall 2000 to 16% by fall 2008.



The graph here illustrates the decline in Chicago-area freshmen over the past five years, the timeframe that will be the focus for the balance of this summary report. This graph shows a 24% decline, or a decrease of 130 freshmen between the 548 enrolling in 2004 and the 418 enrolling in 2008.

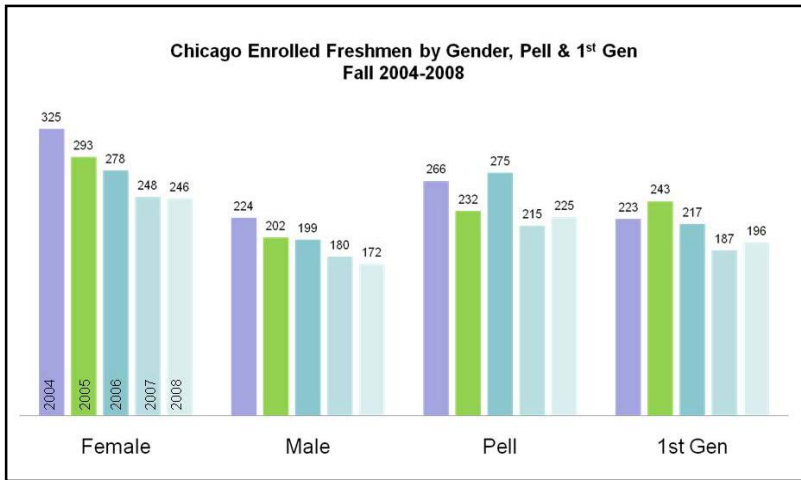
This graph contrasts that decline in Chicago freshmen with the gain in the number of new Chicago undergraduates entering DePaul each year as transfers from two-year and from other four-year colleges and universities. Over this time period, the number of transfers from Chicago increased by 11%, or by 73 students.



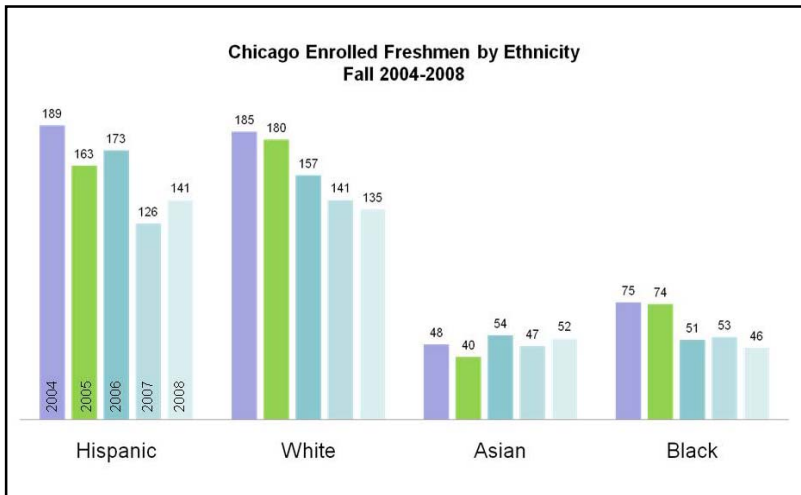
As a result, the overall decline in the number of undergraduates entering DePaul each year who are residents of the city of Chicago has been only 5%. In 2008, two out of every three Chicago undergraduates entering DePaul entered as transfers and only 36% entered as traditional freshmen.

This is the first key observation from this analysis: focusing on freshmen only gives a partial view of the enrollment dynamic of Chicagoans enrolling at DePaul, since the majority has—and always has—been composed of transfer students.

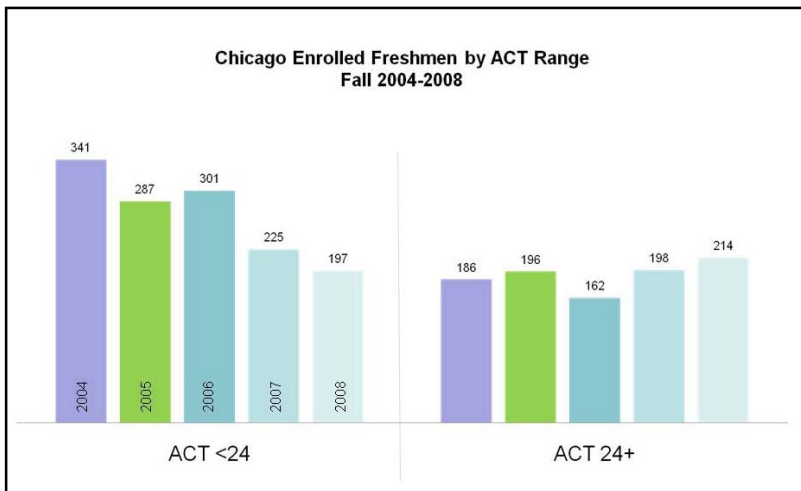
**A PROFILE OF DEPAUL’S CHICAGO FRESHMEN**



Chicago students are a diverse group. Among those enrolling at DePaul, significantly more are female than male, though both declined by about the same proportion. While the number of Chicago freshmen has declined 24% since 2004, there has only been about a 15% decline in the lowest income students (Pell grant recipients) and a 12% decline among first-generation students.



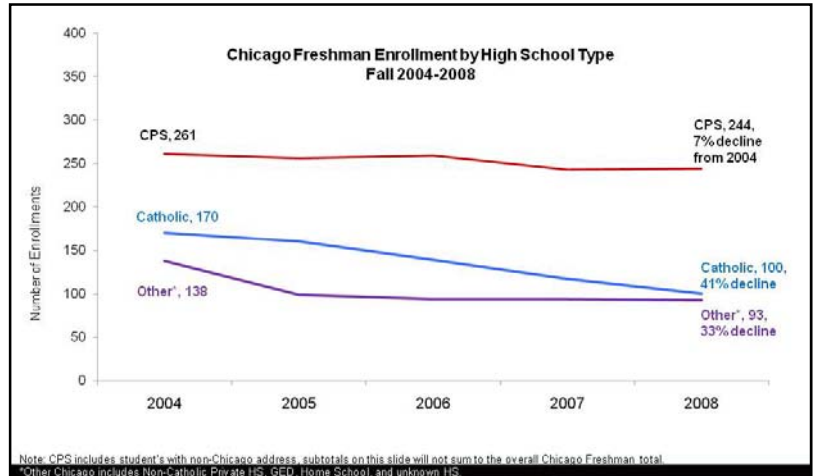
In terms of racial/ethnic diversity, the freshman from Chicago are 36% white, 38% Hispanic/Latino, 14% Asian and 12% African American. Among these groups, the greatest numeric decline has been among white students though the greatest proportionate decline is among African-American students.



The academic profile of Chicago freshmen has improved notably since 2004. A student’s composite score on the ACT college entrance exam is not necessarily the best indicator of college preparedness and academic ability, but it is a readily available and meaningful metric. The overall median ACT score for DePaul freshmen is a 24; the number of Chicago freshmen below that point has declined 42% while the number above that overall median has increased 15%.

One important way to segment Chicago is by the type of secondary school the entering freshmen attended—as is done in the graph to the right.

When viewed this way, one immediately sees sharp differences in the enrollment patterns between groups that compose the overall Chicago market. First, graduates of CPS make up more than half of all Chicago freshmen (58%) yet have only declined by 17 students (down 13%) since 2004. DePaul’s partnerships and outreach have been successful in maintaining strong enrollments from CPS schools.



More than half (54%) of the decline in Chicago area freshmen enrollment is among those graduating from Catholic high schools. This group has declined in enrollment by 41% since 2004 and constitutes about one out of every four Chicago freshmen (24%). Enrollment from Chicago’s Big Shoulders schools and from Catholic high schools in the city of Chicago have been fairly stable and together now account for nearly three out of four of the Catholic high school graduates, compared to 58% in 2004. The group which accounts for the greatest decline in this segment (with a 65% decline since 2004) are Chicago residents attending Catholic high schools that are near Chicago, schools like Loyola Academy in Wilmette; in fact, five high schools account for more than half of the total decline of Chicago residents in Catholic high schools.

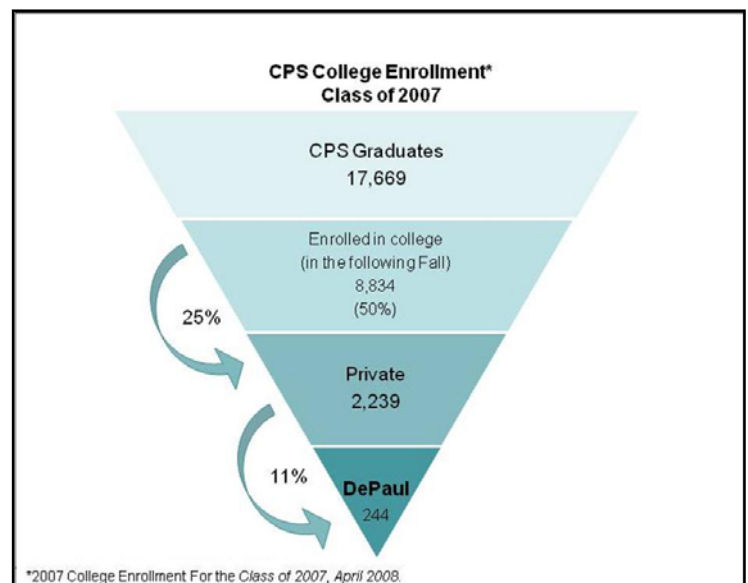
There also are students who are combined on the graph above into an “other” category that includes home schooled students, non-Catholic high school graduates, and those who earned a GED. This group has declined by 33% since 2004, and accounts for about one out of every five Chicago freshmen (22%).

An overview of enrollment trends and outcomes of multiple initiatives with CPS will be outlined in a subsequent report. The decline since 2004 in the number of Chicago freshmen from Catholic high schools will be explored and explained in a separate report as well.

Shifting attention back to the number of students enrolling at DePaul from CPS, it is important at the outset to place DePaul’s enrollment into comparative context.

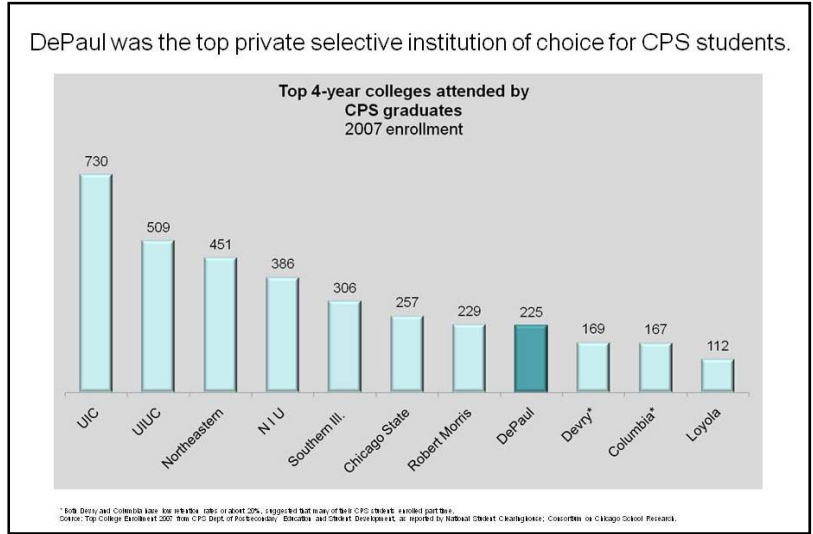
This CPS Enrollment Funnel (at right) places DePaul’s enrollment in the context of all CPS graduates.

Only about half of all CPS graduates enroll in college the fall following their high school graduation; of those students, only one out of every four enroll at a private college or university. Of that group, over one out of ten enroll at DePaul as new freshmen. The fact that more than 10% of all CPS graduates who attend private universities choose DePaul is a powerful statement of DePaul’s market position.



The chart here shows the comparative number of CPS graduates enrolling at the four-year institutions that enroll the most CPS graduates. The number of CPS graduates enrolling at DePaul is twice the number of the next comparable university (Loyola), and makes DePaul the largest of all selective private universities at which CPS graduates enroll.

The focus of this report is not on the long-term success of DePaul undergraduates, but it is important to note here that not only does DePaul enroll more CPS graduates than any selective private university, but those students enrolling at DePaul achieve a level of success that exceeds that of other students. While the first quarter GPA of CPS freshmen is lower (3.03) than the overall freshman class average (3.22), the first-year retention rate for CPS graduates equals that of the class at large and the six-year graduation rate of 76% far exceeds that of the freshman class at large (64%). Moreover, based upon data from the Consortium on Chicago School Research, the retention and graduation rates of CPS graduates at DePaul far exceed that of CPS graduates attending other four-year institutions (public and private).



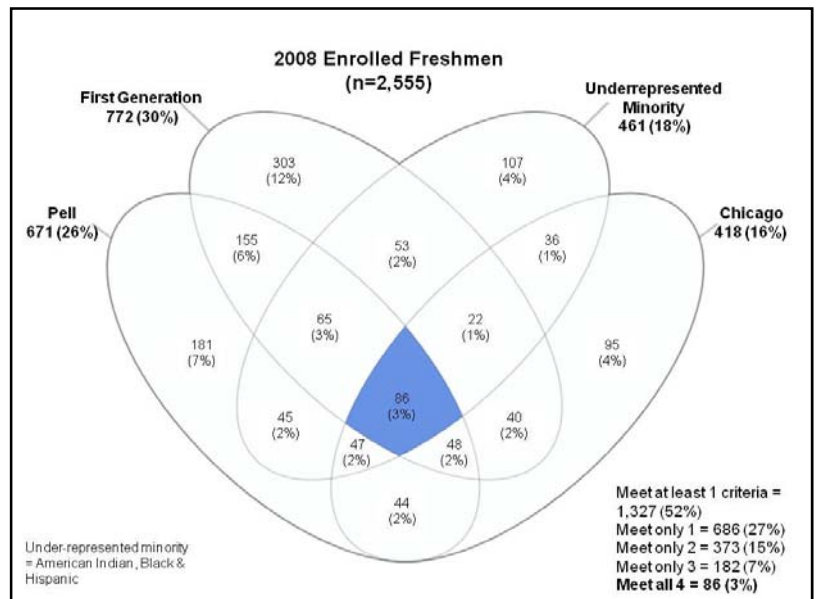
**CHICAGO FRESHMEN AND OTHER MISSION-BASED ATTRIBUTES**

One useful way to illustrate the mix of DePaul’s undergraduate enrollment is by showing the intersections across four attributes that typically are associated with DePaul’s mission: low-income students (Pell recipients), first-generation students, underrepresented minority students and residents of the city of Chicago.

The diagram below illustrates the overlapping characteristics of the 52% of the DePaul freshman class in 2008 that had at least one of these four attributes. There were 16% of the freshmen who were from Chicago, and the largest number (22%) are non-minority, non-first generation, non-Pell students. Nevertheless, one out of every five of DePaul’s Chicago freshmen demonstrates all three of the other attributes (e.g., minority, low income and first generation).

It is essential to note that the majority (59%) of DePaul’s minority freshmen are not from Chicago, the majority of DePaul’s first-generation freshmen (75%) are not from Chicago, and the majority (66%) of DePaul’s lowest income freshmen are not from Chicago. In other words, DePaul’s attainment of its mission related to these populations is not wholly dependent upon the enrollment of students from CPS or the city of Chicago. (The strategic implications of this will be explored in future reports.)

In terms of this graphic, of all of these 15 segments, the greatest numeric decline has been in Chicago residents but in freshmen who are neither minority, low income nor first generation



(-49 students). But overall, nearly 60% of the decline in Chicago freshmen has been among underrepresented minority students, and this decline in Chicago enrollment among minority students was not offset by gains outside of Chicago. The greatest proportionate declines in freshmen have been among minority residents of Chicago.

The same is not true for low-income and first-generation students. Declines among Pell students in Chicago were more than offset by gains outside of Chicago and the vast majority of the 28% gain in first-generation freshmen is among students who are neither low income, minority nor Chicago residents.

## **STRATEGIC RESPONSES**

DePaul has several new initiatives that focus on strengthening enrollments from Chicago. These include:

The Center for Access and Attainment at DePaul provides research centered on issues of access and attainment that stimulates campus, community and international discourse; cultivates institutional and community partnerships to foster high school to university transition, particularly with the CPS; delivers pre-college programs for underserved college-bound students; and administers the university's federal TRiO programs (Student Support Services and McNair Scholars Program) for low-income and first-generation students. Brian Spittle, assistant vice president for access and attainment, is on Steering Committee for the Consortium on Chicago School Research, which brings together researchers at the University of Chicago, CPS and other organizations to inform policy and practice in CPS and to study the long-term effects of school reform.

International Baccalaureate (IB) Partnerships between DePaul and programs within CPS have gained attention from the national IB community. IB is a rigorous college preparation curriculum implemented in 14 neighborhood high schools; the majority of IB students in Chicago are students of color and/or from low-income families. About 20 IB students from CPS enroll at DePaul each year. The six-year graduation rate for Chicago IB students at DePaul is close to 90%.

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) College Bridge provides high-achieving CPS juniors and seniors the opportunity to take classes at DePaul and earn college credit while still in high school; more than 1,200 CPS students have taken courses at DePaul through this program since 1998. About 17% of College Bridge students enroll at DePaul as undergraduates.

DIAMOND (Developing Insight for Admission through the Mining of Non-Traditional Data) Program provides a mechanism within the admission process to assess non-cognitive indicators of academic potential, thereby enhancing the capacity to select applicants with high potential for academic success. Applicants are asked to complete a short essay instrument based on the research of William Sedlacek at the University of Maryland. Oregon State has found that use of the instrument in admission has improved both diversity and retention.

First-year Academic Success Program offers pre-requisite math and writing courses at no cost to students in the summer. This enables DePaul students who arrive academically underprepared for college-level coursework with necessary preparation without using—and without paying for—college credit for pre-college work.

Transfer Enrollment Initiatives targeted to Chicago residents have focused on partnerships with the City Colleges of Chicago and include: new Transfer Guides for each of the city colleges that show students how to choose courses at the city colleges that will count in their majors as they prepare to transfer to DePaul; dual admission programs and programmatic partnerships between DePaul and several city colleges; as well as events that bring faculty and advisors from the city colleges together with DePaul faculty and staff to discuss curriculum and classroom techniques and to present new developments at DePaul.