

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

ANNUAL REPORT ON STUDENT RETENTION AND GRADUATION RATES

Action Requested: Receive the Annual Report on Student Retention and Graduation Rates for Fall 2006.

Executive Summary: The graduation and retention rates report describes two groups of students: (1) first-time, full-time freshmen and (2) transfer students. Data for the first-time, full-time freshmen group include first- and second-year retention rates as well as four- and six-year graduation rates. Data for the transfer student group include first-year retention rates and four-year graduation rates. The Fall 2006 Report includes the following trends/changes:

- 📖 An average of more than 83% of the past five entering classes at the Regent universities returned for the second year of studies.
- 📖 An average of approximately 66% of the past five entering classes at the Regent universities graduated within six years.
- 📖 One-year retention rates and six-year graduation rates have consistently exceeded the national average during the past five years.
- 📖 The average number of years to complete a degree by Regent university students who graduated within six years decreased from 4.61 for the entering classes of 1995 to 4.54 for the entering classes of 2000.
- 📖 Retention and graduation rates for racial/ethnic minority students have continued to be lower than for non-minority students.

Background:








- 📖 Definition of Retention Rates. Retention is the rate at which members of an entering class return to that same institution in successive years until the completion of a degree. Research shows that the majority of students who withdraw, transfer, or otherwise leave an institution do so during the first two years of college¹.
- 📖 Retention Factors. Previous national and state studies, as well as the Regent universities' experience, have demonstrated that the following factors contribute significantly to the retention rate – (1) student input; (2) institutional environment; and (3) academic standards².
- 📖 Best Practices in Retention. Retention practices responsible for the greatest contribution to retention include first-year programs, academic advising, and learning support². The Regent universities have established a variety of initiatives, programs, and services (such as tutoring labs, academic advising, career development services, and learning communities) to help students make a successful transition to the rigors of postsecondary learning and to the challenges of independence and adulthood³.

¹ Source: National Center for Education Statistics.

² Source: ACT – *What Works in Student Retention?*

³ Attachments A-C (pgs. 4-6) describe the retention initiatives implemented by the Regent universities.

Highlights:

-  One-Year Retention Rates. During the past ten years, the average one-year retention rate at SUI has been 83.3%; at ISU, it has been 84.1%; and at UNI, it has been 81.7%. The Fall 2006 one-year retention rate at SUI is 84.1%; at ISU, it is 83.4%; and at UNI, it is 82.1%. In 2006, the national average one-year retention rate for public four-year institutions was 73.4%⁴.
-  One-Year Retention Rates by High School Rank. There is a difference in retention rates when high school rank is considered. The average one-year retention rate for Regent university students who graduated from high school in the 90th-99th percentile was 91.8% while the average one-year retention rate for students who graduated in the 50th-59th percentile was 75.4%.
-  One-Year Retention Rates by ACT Score. There is also a difference in retention rates when ACT score is considered. The average one-year retention rate for Regent university students with an ACT score of 32-36 was 89.9% while the average one-year retention rate for students with an ACT score of 19-21 was 79.3%.
-  Six-Year Graduation Rates. During the past ten years, the average six-year graduation rate at SUI has been 64.5%; at ISU, it has been 63.9%; and at UNI, it has been 64.0%. The Fall 2006 six-year graduation rate at SUI is 65.5%; at ISU, it is 65.8%; and at UNI, it is 67.1%, which is an all-time high. In 2006, the national average six-year graduation rate for public four-year institutions was 39.9%⁵.
-  Six-Year Graduation Rates by First-Term GPA. There is clearly a difference in graduation rates when first-term GPA is considered. The average six-year graduation rate for students with a first-term GPA of 3.50-4.00 was 87.6% while the average six-year graduation rate for students with a first-term GPA of 2.25-2.49 was 63.8%.
-  Average Time to Degree. The average number of years to complete an undergraduate degree by students in the entering classes of 2000 at the Regent universities who graduated within six years was 4.5 years. The time beyond four years typically reflects students' participation in additional activities, such as study abroad programs, internships, and double majors. It also reflects students' degree major changes⁶. The national average time to completion for first-time recipients of bachelor's degrees in 1999-2000 was 4.6 years for students who graduated within six years⁷.
-  Diversity. Ethnic and racial minority students in the entering class of 2000 generally had lower retention and graduation rates than non-minority students. Men typically had lower retention and graduation rates than women.

 - At the University of Iowa, the one-year retention rate for racial/ethnic minorities was almost four percentage points lower than for non-minorities. The six-year graduation rate for racial/ethnic minorities was more than 11 percentage points lower than for non-minorities. The one-year retention rate for women was more than two percentage points lower than for men; the six-year graduation rate for men was more than two percentage points lower than for women.

⁴ Source: ACT 2006, traditional admission selectivity.

⁵ Source: ACT 2006, traditional admission selectivity.

⁶ According to the National Center for Education Statistics, more than 20% of college students change their degree major.

⁷ Source: NCES.

- ☑ At Iowa State University, the one-year retention rate for racial/ethnic minorities was essentially the same as for non-minorities. The six-year graduation rate for racial/ethnic minorities was approximately 12 percentage points lower than for non-minorities. The one-year retention for men was two percentage points lower than for women; the six-year graduation rate for men was approximately seven percentage points lower than for women.
- ☑ At the University of Northern Iowa, the one-year retention rate for racial/ethnic minorities was approximately 16 percentage points lower than for non-minorities. The six-year graduation rate for racial/ethnic minorities was approximately 17 percentage points lower than for non-minorities. The one-year retention rate for men was approximately three percentage points lower than for women; the six-year graduation rate for men was more than three percentage points lower than for women.

📖 Transfer Students. Completion of an associate degree and attainment of a high transfer GPA reflect higher retention and graduation rates at the Regent universities.

- ☑ Students who transferred from Iowa community colleges after they completed an associate of arts (AA) degree had a higher one-year retention rate (81.2%) and a higher four-year graduation rate (70.5%) than transfer students who completed another associate degree (79.0% and 56.1%, respectively) or who had not completed any associate degree (72.9% and 53.0%, respectively).
- ☑ Students with a transfer GPA of 3.00-3.24 had a significantly higher average one-year retention rate than students with a transfer GPA of 2.00-2.24 (78.6% and 60.6%, respectively), and higher average four-year graduation rates (67.5% and 36.3%, respectively).

📖 First-Year Non-Persistence Study. Each year, the Regent universities conduct a study of first-time, full-time students who did not return for their second year. The five most frequently occurring major reasons cited by the respondents to the study were (1) did not achieve a feeling of belonging; (2) classes were too large; (3) desired program was not available; (4) transferred to a lower cost institution; and (5) emotional/homesick.

📖 Non-Persisters⁸. Using data from the National Student Clearinghouse, the Regent universities were able to “track” students who did not return for their second year. Approximately, one-fourth of the entering class of 2000 who did not persist at a Regent university transferred elsewhere; of those who transferred, more than 50% graduated. More than 7% of the entering class of 2000 graduated from another institution; when those numbers are factored into the total graduation rates, the six-year graduation rates increase from 65.5 % - 67.1% to 72.4% - 75.6%.





The Graduation and Retention Rates Report addresses the Board’s Strategic Plan strategy to “continue to improve efforts to recruit, enroll, and retain a qualified and diverse student population (1.1.2) and determine levels of student program completion and promote degree attainment (1.3.1)”.

The data tables for the Graduation and Retention Rates Report and the First-Year Non-Persistence Study are available on the Board of Regents website.

⁸ Lack of completion of a degree from the matriculating institution does not necessarily reflect failure on the part of the institution or the student. Many legitimate, unexpected, or uncontrollable factors can lead to this result.

University of Iowa Retention Highlights
Fall 2006

The University has implemented a number of retention and graduation efforts, including:

-  The four-year graduation plan, which was instituted in 1995, assures students who meet the guidelines of the plan that course availability issues will not impede them. Approximately 75% of the University's first-year students sign up for the plan each year.
-  College Transitions is a one-semester course designed to help new students make the adjustment to the demands of college life by providing instruction in areas such as time management, personal responsibility, career planning, and library usage. Approximately 1,200 students took this course in 2006. This course, which is offered in sections of no more than 19 students each, was first offered in 2002.
-  First-year students have the opportunity to join one of 12 (Fall 2007) living-learning communities where they can live with others who share an academic interest and participate in related programming. Approximately 650 students are members of learning communities. The University plans to expand this effort because recent research at SUI demonstrates that students in learning communities, controlling for other factors, are more than twice as likely to persist to their second year.
-  Faculty, staff, students, and administrators have recently formed the Student Success Team to identify programs, practices, and policies to support students in their persistence to graduation at the University.

Iowa State University Retention Highlights
Fall 2006

The University has implemented a number of retention and graduation efforts, including:

- 📖 The University continues to focus on programs that promote student academic success through the Retention Task Force and other initiatives. Participation in freshman learning communities rose to a record high of 57.1% in Fall 2006 with more than 60 learning communities available for new freshmen. Graduation rates for students who participate in learning communities are significantly higher than for non-learning-community students; 74.8% of learning community participants graduate within six years compared to 61.0% for non-participants.
- 📖 The new Hixson-Lied Student Success Center will house a variety of support services designed to improve academic achievement and increase student retention and graduation rates. Services available through the Center will be available to any ISU student and will include academic counseling, tutoring, and testing.
- 📖 Transfer student success at ISU continues to improve. This is particularly true for transfer students from Iowa community colleges - 71.9% of Iowa community college students who enter ISU after earning an AA degree graduate within four years of entering ISU.
- 📖 The new Admissions Partnership Program (APP) with Iowa community colleges was designed to provide benefits to current and future students planning to earn a bachelor's degree at ISU. Students from four Iowa community colleges are currently eligible to participate in the Program; other community colleges will be added to the Program over time.

University of Northern Iowa Retention Highlights
Fall 2006

The University has implemented a number of retention and graduation efforts, including:

- 📖 Peer Advisors in Residence, a cooperative program with Academic Advising and the Department of Residence, offers on-site advising, referrals, learning strategies, and outreach to students living in residence halls.
- 📖 Transfer Plan It, an online resource, assists potential transfer students to determine which UNI requirements they have satisfied and to facilitate their decision-making and academic planning.
- 📖 The new Innovative Teaching and Technology Center focuses on providing physical and programmatic connections for areas supporting student learning and retention.
- 📖 Initial design elements for Gilchrist Hall include more student services and programs to enhance the Follon Student Services Center.
- 📖 Approximately 330 new freshmen live in eight Springboard houses which focus on first-year students and programs specific to students' transition needs.
- 📖 Educational and Student Services and Academic Affairs are collaborating to provide follow-up contacts, resources, and referrals to students identified as deficient in Fall 2006 classes. The process will be enhanced in Spring 2007.
- 📖 The President's Council on Enrollment Management is being established and will focus on retention. A campus-wide committee to identify retention/persistence needs and strategies has been proposed and will be initiated in Spring 2007.
- 📖 Students who live on campus for two years have approximately twice the graduation rate of those students who live off-campus which affirms the importance of positive campus living environments and quality programs and services offered by the Department of Residence.
- 📖 A position will be added in the Office of the Dean of Students in FY 2008 to increase first-year student programs.