

FALL 2025 GRADUATION AND RETENTION REPORT

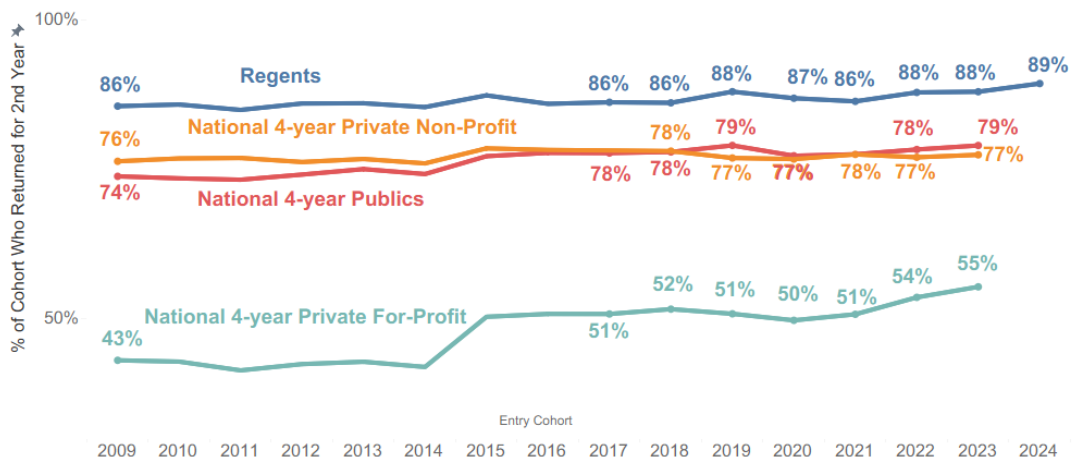
Action Requested: Receive the Fall 2025 Graduation & Retention Report.

Executive Summary:

- The first-year retention rate increased from 88% to 89% in one year. The University of Iowa set a record by retaining 91% of its 2024 entry class.
- The percentage of students graduating within three years increased from 6% from last year to 7%. The three-year graduation rate at the University of Northern Iowa increased from 11% last year to 14%.
- The percentage graduating within four years (60%) was the highest on record, and the percentage graduating within six years (74%) tied an all-time high.
- Three- and four-year graduation rates for students admitted under test-optional meet or exceed those of students admitted with an RAI score between 245 and 254.
- Gaps in retention and graduation by sex have narrowed since last year. Gaps in graduation rate by race/ethnicity increased.

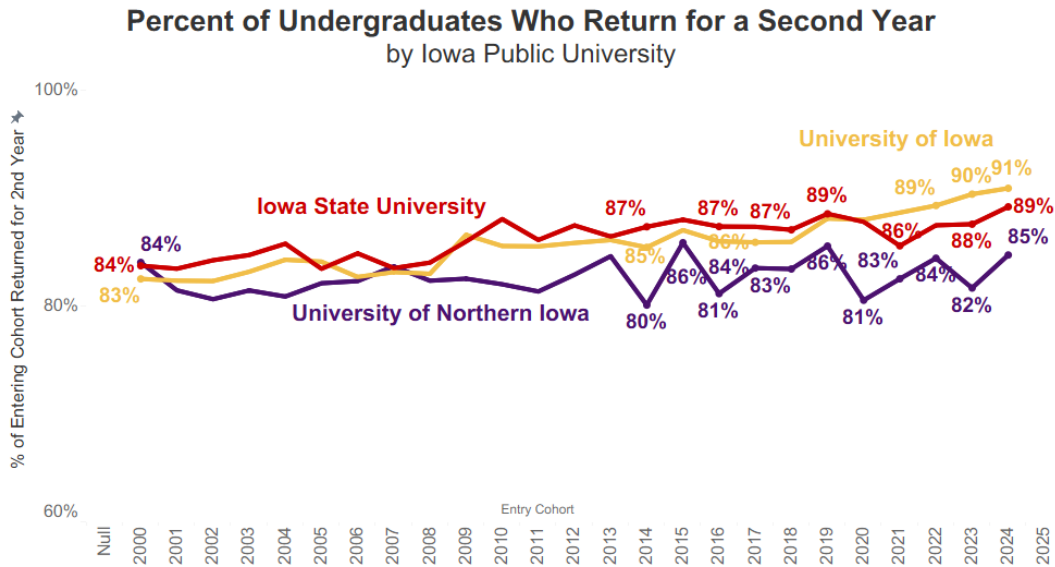
Retention rates: Eighty-nine percent of Regent university undergraduates returned for a second year (also known as first-year retention), the highest on record. Retention rates have fully recovered from a small dip during the COVID pandemic. Overall retention rates for the Regent universities continue to exceed the national averages of both public and private four-year colleges and universities.

Undergraduates Who Return for a Second Year at Same College
by Institutional Type



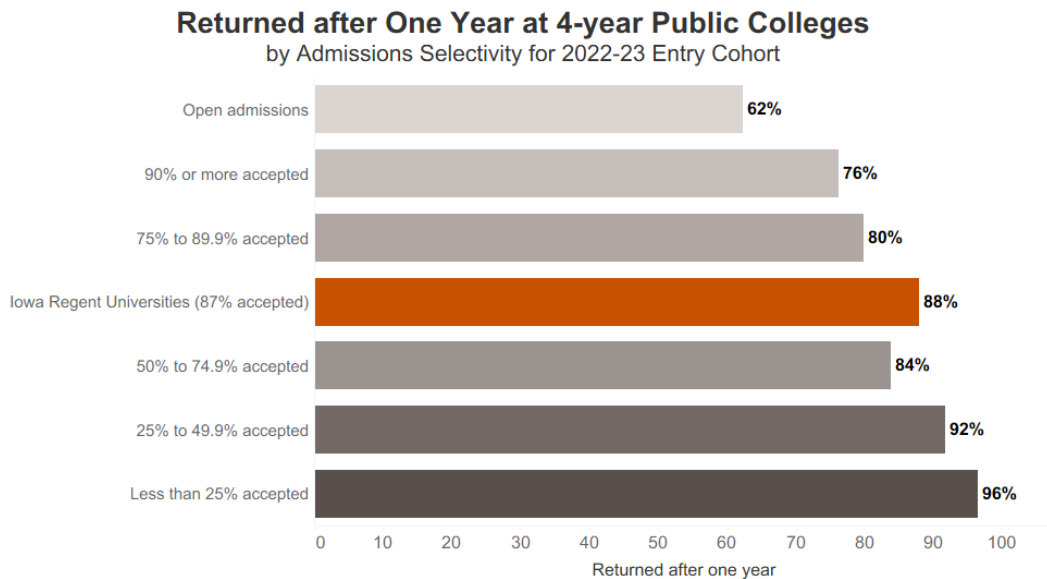
Sources: Iowa Board of Regents & National Student Clearinghouse Research Center *Persistence & Retention - 2025 Report*
Workbook: Fall 2025 Grad & Retention, BOR Warehouse Supplement

The percentage of students returning for their second year increased at all three universities, with the University of Iowa posting its highest retention rate on record. (see graph below)



Source: Iowa Board of Regents
Workbook: Fall 2025 Grad & Retention, BOR Warehouse Supplement

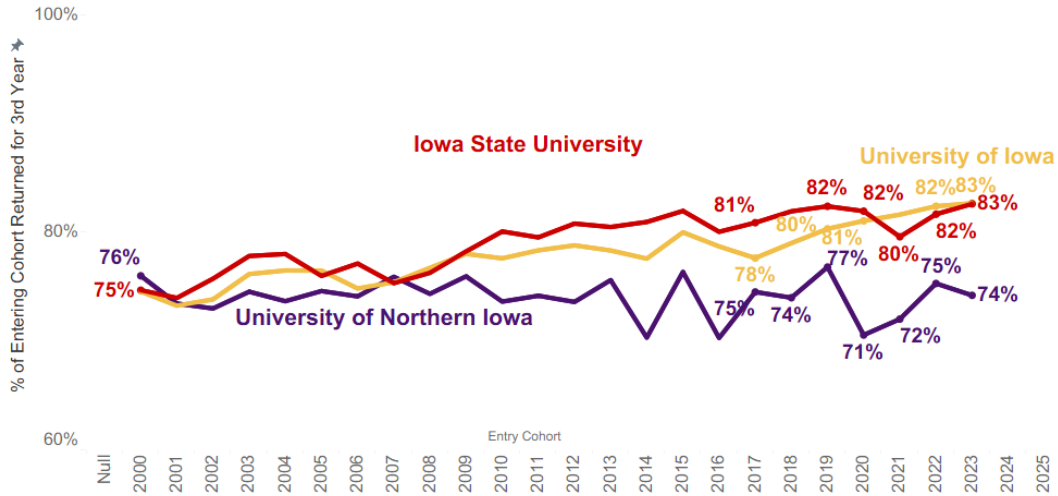
Retention rates tend to vary by institutional selectivity, but retention at the Regent universities not only exceeds four-year public university averages, but outperforms other similarly selective public universities. (see below)



Source: Iowa Board of Regents and 2024 NCES Table 326.30
Workbook: Fall 2025 Grad & Retention, BOR Warehouse Supplement

The rate of students returning for their third year of college (i.e., second-year retention) increased at both the University of Iowa and Iowa State University, while dropping one percentage point at the University of Northern Iowa. The percentage of students who return for their third year is an excellent predictor of an entry cohorts' graduation rate.

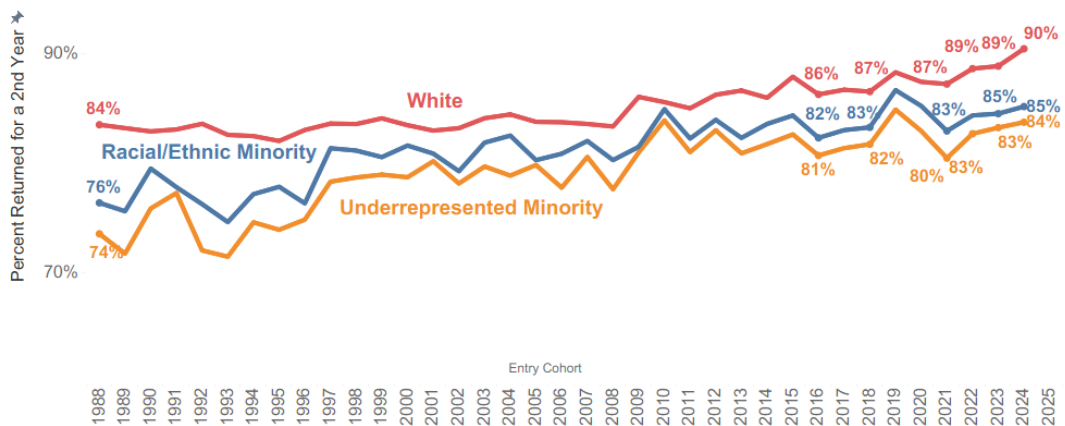
Percent of Undergraduates Who Return for a Third Year
by Iowa Public University



Source: Iowa Board of Regents
Workbook: Fall 2025 Grad & Retention, BOR Warehouse Supplement

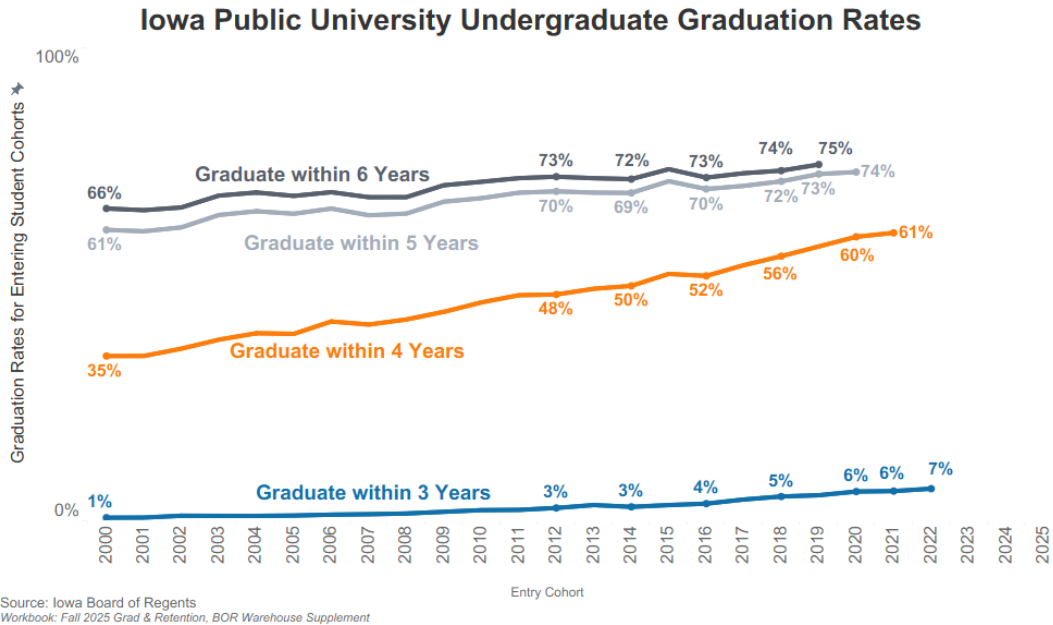
The graph below shows the percentage of undergraduates who return for a second year by race/ethnicity. The gap between students who identify as White and students who identify as a racial/ethnic minority has typically varied between two to five percentage points.

Percent of Undergraduates Who Return for a Second Year
by Race/Ethnicity

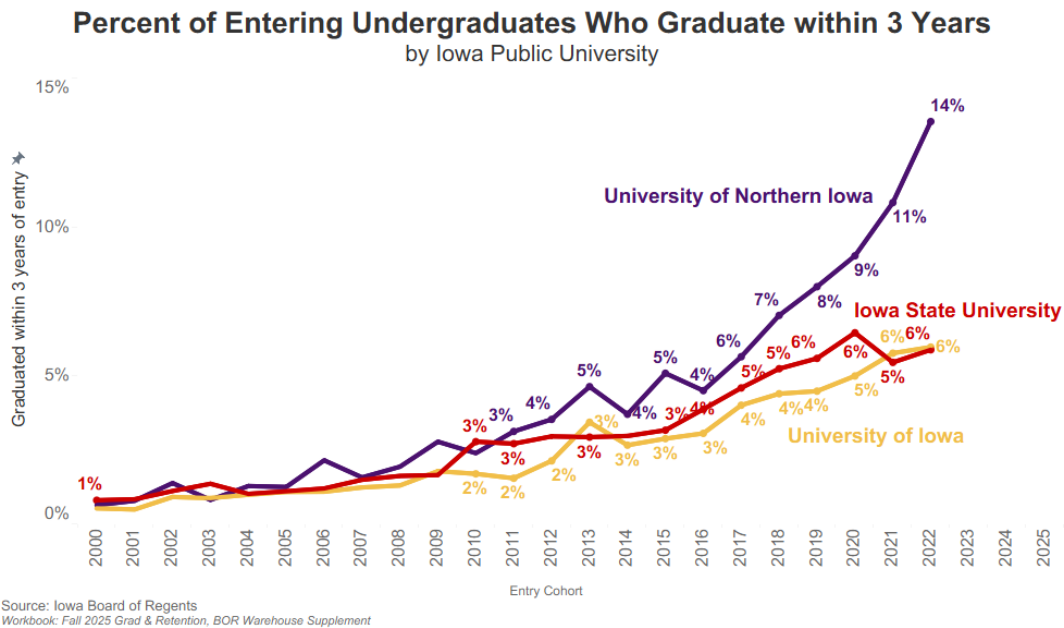


Source: Iowa Board of Regents. Racial/Ethnic Minority includes Asian American students while Underrepresented Minority does not. International students are not included.
Workbook: Fall 2025 Grad & Retention, BOR Warehouse Supplement

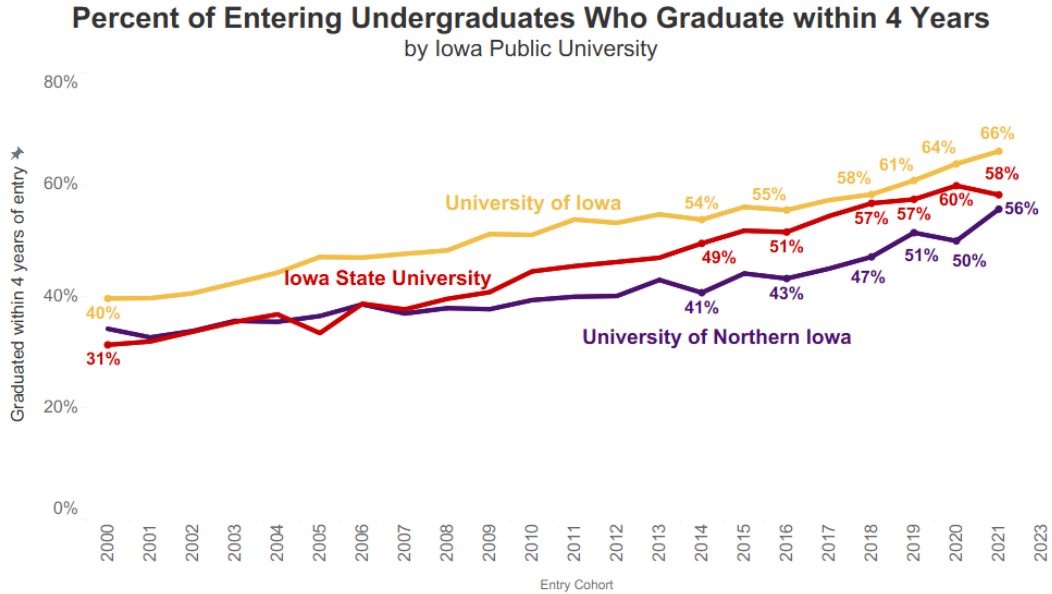
Graduation rates: The average four-year graduation rate across the three Regent universities (61%) is again the highest on record and has steadily improved over the last 20 years. The percentage of students who graduated within three years (7%) and within six years (75%) both set a new record highs for the Regents.



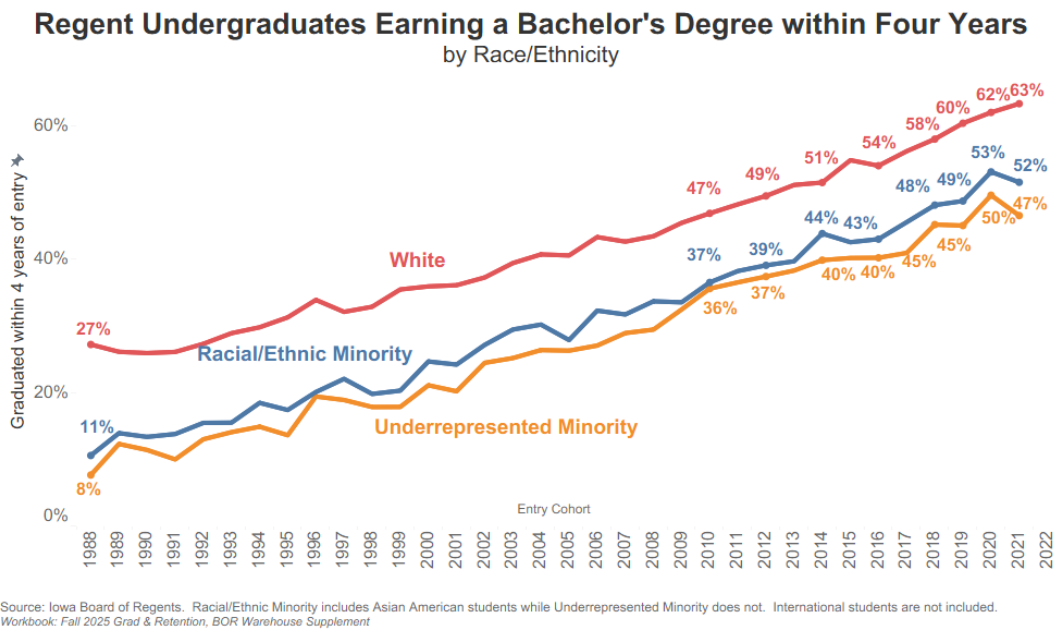
The Regent universities continue to show steady growth in the percentage of students who graduate within three years. This growth in the three-year graduation rate has been particularly strong at the University of Northern Iowa. (see graph below)



The past 20 years have seen large increases in the percentage of students who graduate within four years. The 2021 entry cohort was no exception as graduation rates at both Iowa and the University of Northern Iowa reached record highs. Iowa State's 2021 cohort had a graduation rate two percentage points lower than the 2020 entry cohort. (see graph below)

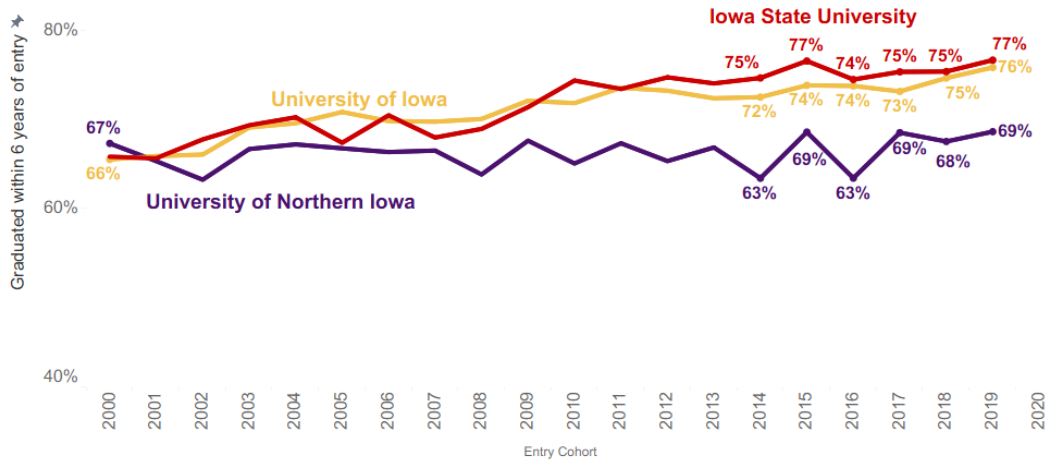


Despite some fluctuations, the four-year degree attainment gap by race/ethnicity has remained largely unchanged for 20 years. The gap between students who identify as White and those who identify as racial/ethnic minorities increased to 11 points last year. (see graph below)



All three universities matched or exceeded their highest six-year graduation rates on record for the 2019 entry cohorts. The graduation rate at Iowa State University (77%), the University of Iowa (76%) and the University of Northern Iowa (69%) all increased over the prior year.

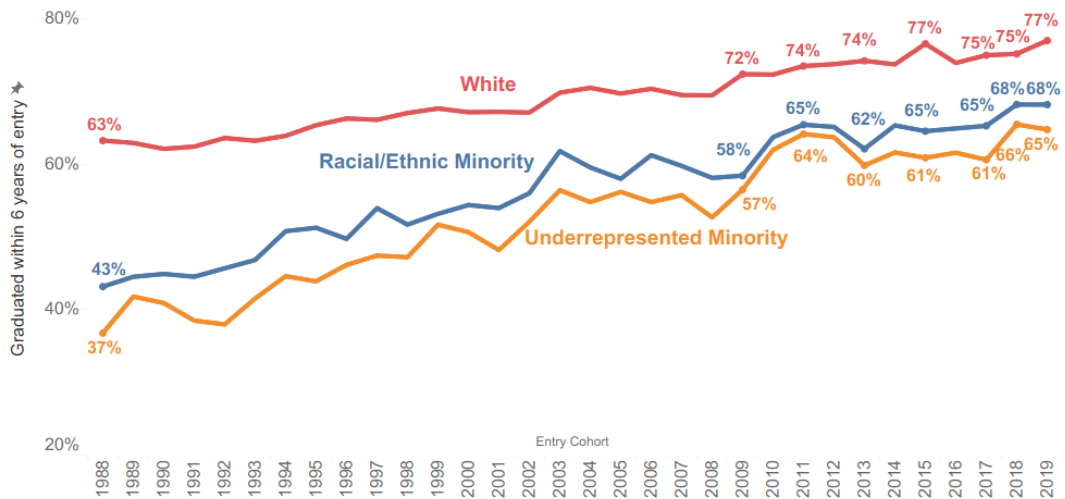
Percent of Entering Undergraduates Who Graduate within 6 Years
by Iowa Public University



Source: Iowa Board of Regents
Workbook: Fall 2025 Grad & Retention, BOR Warehouse Supplement

The gap in six-year graduation rates by race/ethnicity has generally narrowed over time. The gap between students who identify as White and students who identify as racial/ethnic minorities grew two points for the 2019 entry cohort. (see graph below)

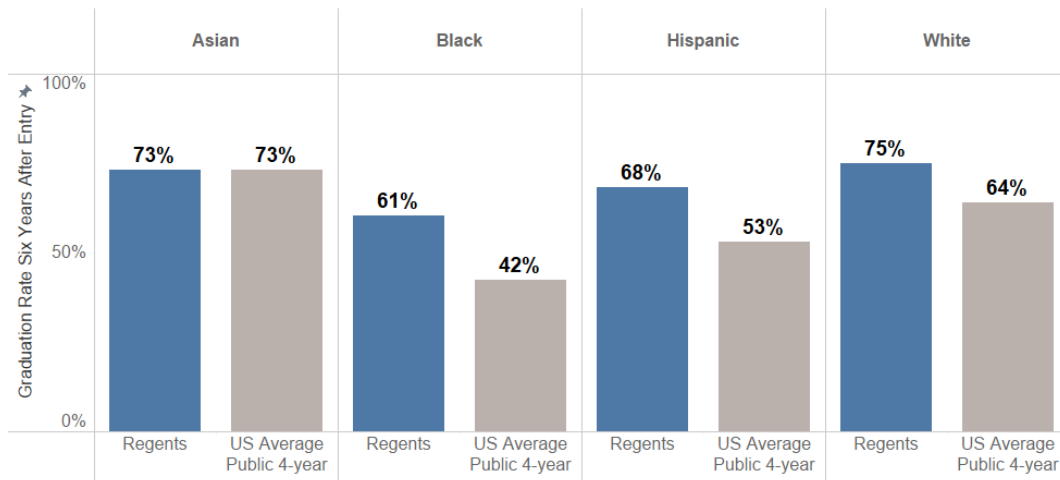
Regent Undergraduates Earning a Bachelor's Degree within Six Years
by Race/Ethnicity



Source: Iowa Board of Regents. Racial/Ethnic Minority includes Asian American students while Underrepresented Minority does not. International students are not included.
Workbook: Fall 2025 Grad & Retention, BOR Warehouse Supplement

National & state benchmarking: The Regent universities consistently meet or exceed national averages among all racial/ethnic groups attending four-year public universities. The graph below shows six-year graduation rates by race/ethnicity.

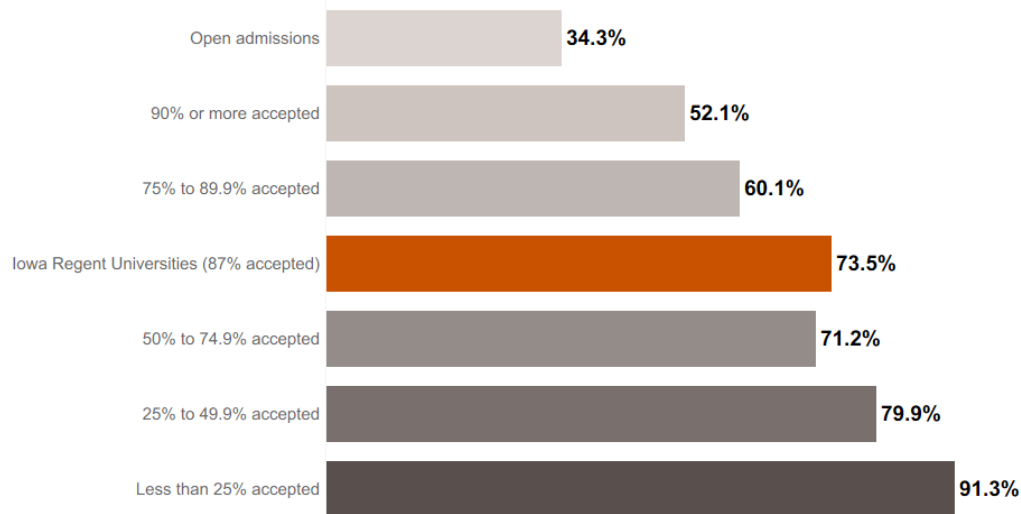
Graduation Rates for Students Who Started and Completed at the Same 4-Year Public University
by Race/Ethnicity for 2018 Entry Cohort



Source: Iowa Board of Regents, National Student Clearinghouse Signature 16 Report. Graduation rates within six years of entry shown.
Workbook: Fall 2024 Grad & Retention Report, BOR Warehouse Supplement

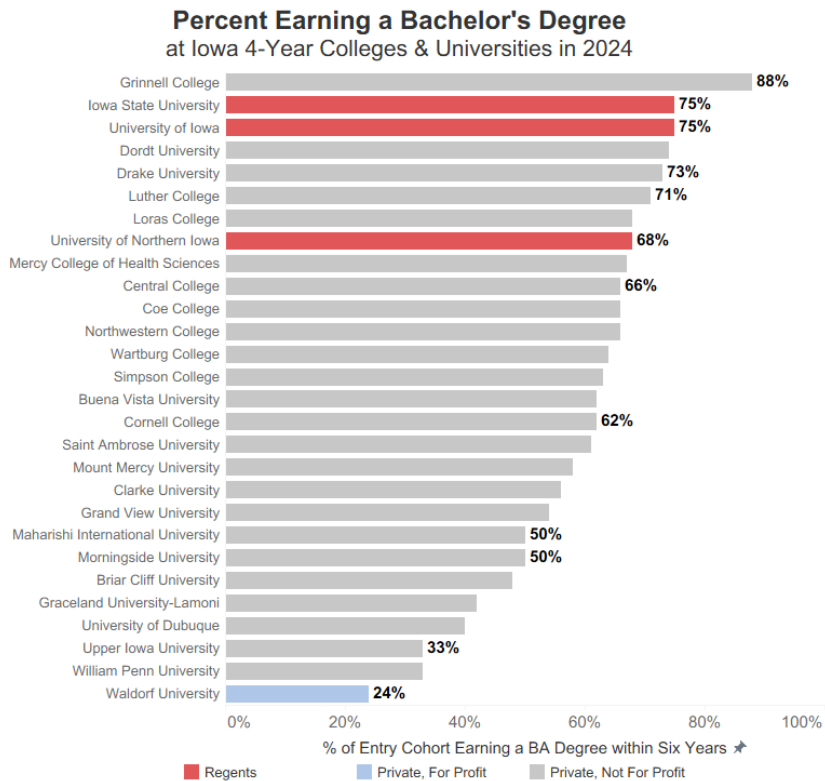
Graduation rates also exceed expectations based on institutional selectivity. The Regents have graduation rates that are similar to colleges that are significantly more selective. (see below)

Graduation Rates after Six Years at 4-year Public Colleges
by Admissions Selectivity for 2017 Entry Cohort



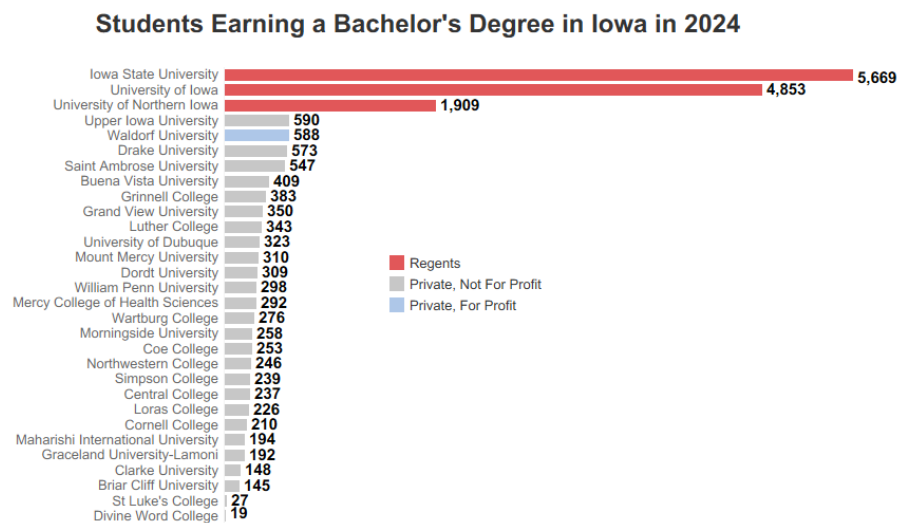
Source: Iowa Board of Regents and 2024 NCES Table 326.10
Workbook: Fall 2025 Grad & Retention, BOR Warehouse Supplement

Regent university graduation rates also compare well to other Iowa colleges and universities. The six-year graduation rates at Iowa State and the University of Iowa are second only to Grinnell College. (see graph below)



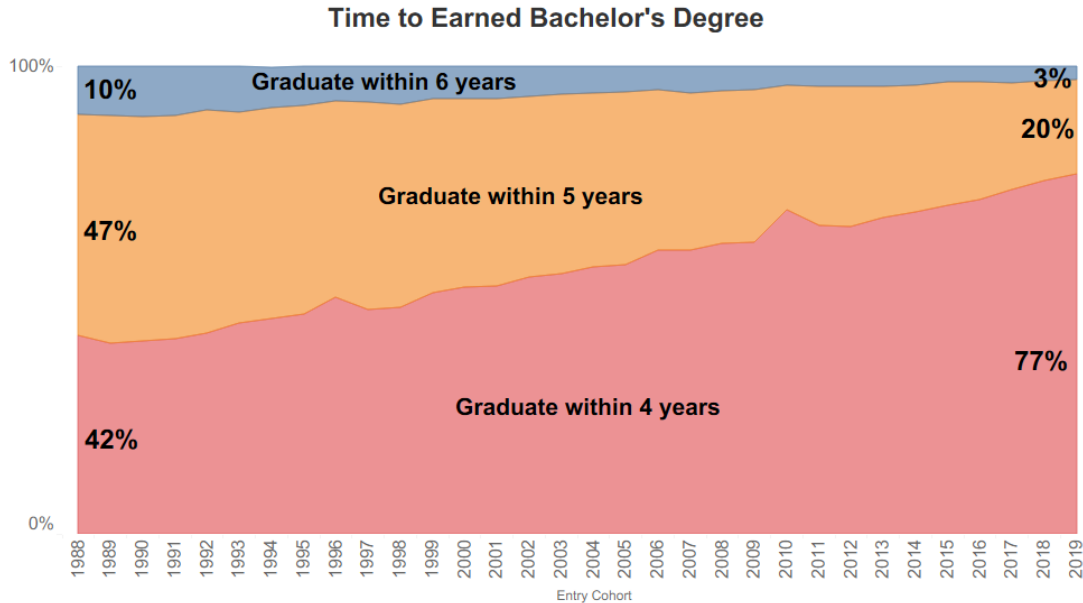
Source: U.S. Dept. of Education Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Rates represent the percent of the 2018 entry cohort who earned a BA within 6 years. Workbook: Fall 2025 Grad & Retention, BOR Warehouse Supplement

The Regent universities are also the top three producers of bachelor's degrees in the state of Iowa. Combined, they awarded 61% of all bachelor's degrees. (see graph below)



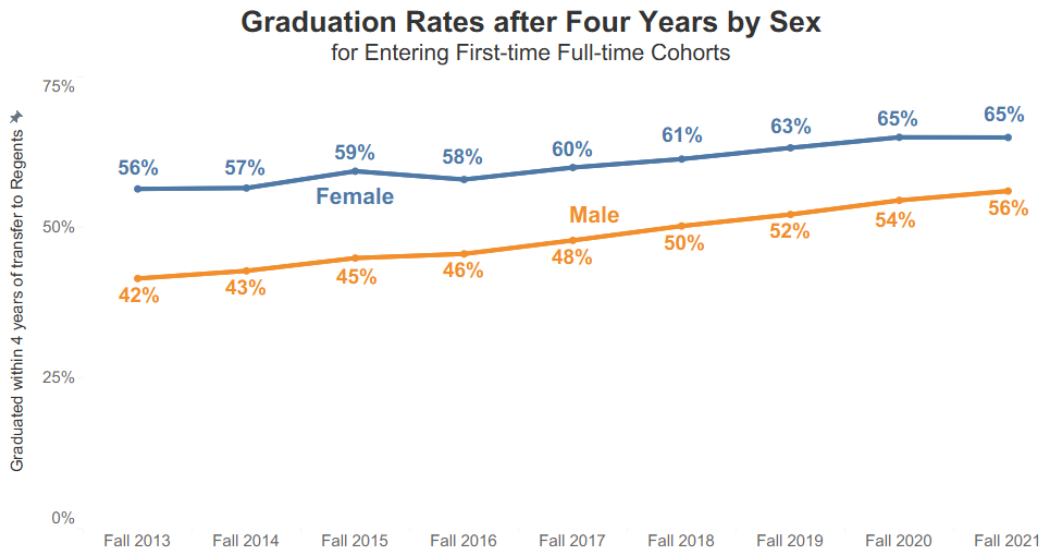
Source: U.S. Dept. of Education Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Graph shows institutions that reported earned a bachelor's degrees in Iowa. Workbook: Fall 2025 Grad & Retention, BOR Warehouse Supplement

Time to degree: The amount of time Regent university students need to complete a degree has declined steadily over time. The graph below shows elapsed time from entry to graduation. Only 42% of Regent graduates who entered in 1988 finished their degree within four years. That has improved to 77% for the 2019 graduate cohort. Meanwhile, only three percent of degree recipients in the 2019 cohort needed a sixth year to finish.



Source: Iowa Board of Regents for first-time full-time bachelor's degree graduates looking six years after entry.
Workbook: Fall 2025 Grad & Retention, BOIR Warehouse Supplement

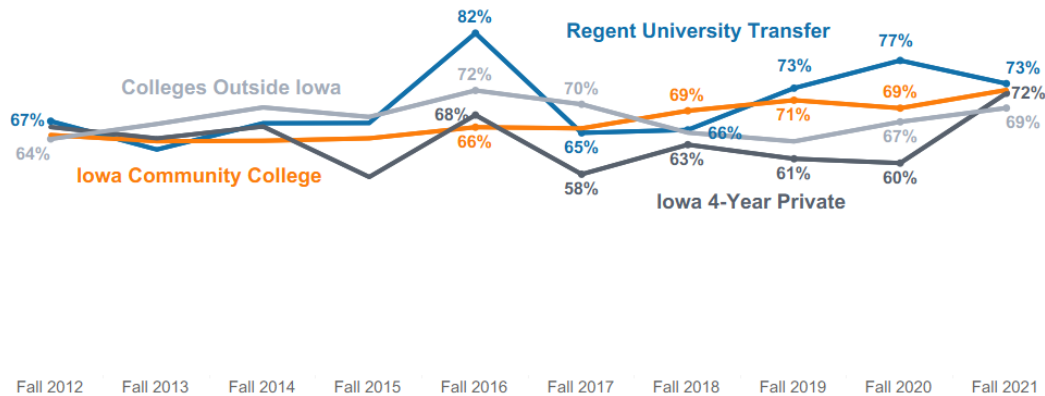
Sex: Women at the Regent universities consistently earn degrees at a higher rate than men. However, both men's and women's graduation rates have grown over time and outperform four-year public university national averages.



Source: Iowa Board of Regents Data Warehouse
Graduation and retention rates based on counts of entering first-time full-time undergraduates.
Workbook: Graduation & Retention Report Graphs & Charts, SQL Tables

Transfer: The Regents also track graduation rates for students who have transferred into a Regent institution from another college or university. Most students who transfer to the Regents schools have similar graduation outcomes to students who entered directly from high school. These rates can change from year-to-year based on the number of transfers and the number of credit hours transferred in by these students.

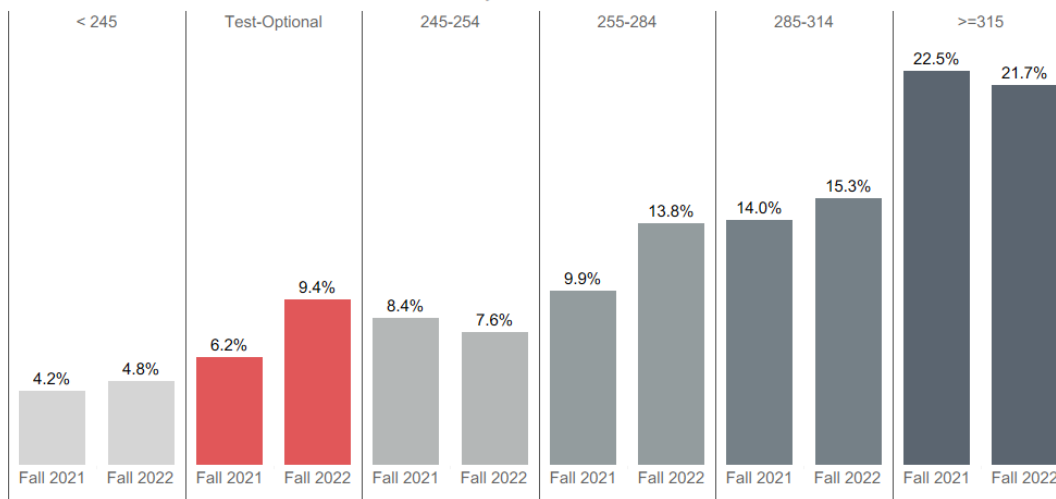
Graduation Rates after Four Years by Transfer College Type
for Entering Full-time New Transfer Cohorts



Source: Iowa Board of Regents Data Warehouse
Graduation and retention rates based on counts of full-time new transfer undergraduates.
Workbook: Graduation & Retention Report Graphs & Charts, SQL Tables

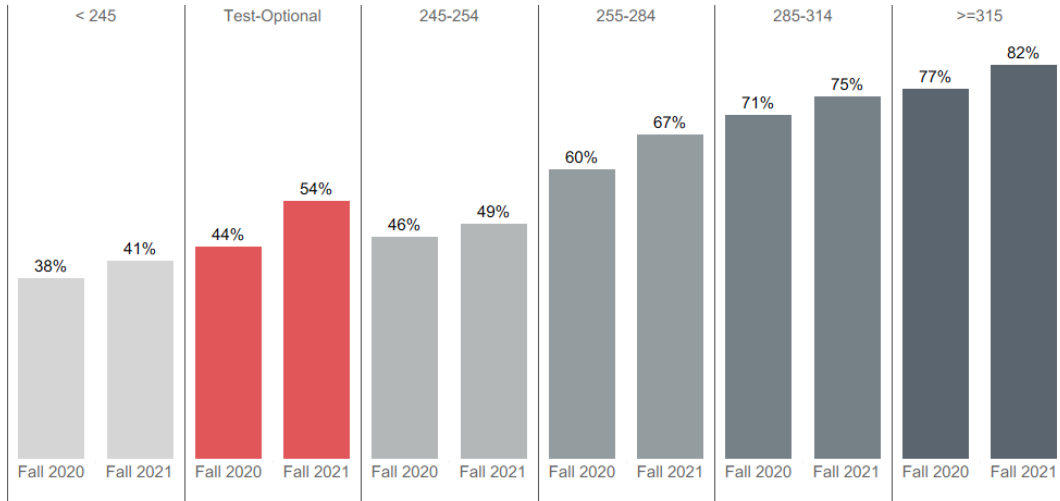
Test-Optional: Preliminary graduation data indicate that students admitted under the Regent university test-optional policy have graduation rates similar or better than students admitted automatically with an RAI score of 245-254. See three- and four-year graduation rates below.

Percent of Regent University Undergraduates Who Graduate Within Three Years
by RAI Score



Source: Iowa Board of Regents Data Warehouse
Graduation and retention rates based on counts of full-time new transfer undergraduates.
Workbook: Graduation & Retention Report Graphs & Charts, SQL Tables

**Percent of Regent University Undergraduates Who Graduate Within Four Years
by RAI Score**



Source: Iowa Board of Regents Data Warehouse
Graduation and retention rates based on counts of full-time new transfer undergraduates.
Workbook: Graduation & Retention Report Graphs & Charts, SQL Tables

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA FALL 2025 GRADUATION AND RETENTION HIGHLIGHTS

The University of Iowa is pleased to report continued, record-setting progress in undergraduate graduation and retention outcomes. These gains reflect the university's sustained investment in student success, the dedication of faculty and staff across all colleges and units, and the momentum generated through the 2022–2027 Strategic Plan.

- The six-year graduation rate for the entering class of 2019 is 75.8%, a new record.
- The four-year graduation rate for the entering class of 2021 is 66.0%, another all-time high and a five-percent improvement over the past two years.
- The first- to second-year retention rate for the fall 2024 cohort is 90.9%. It is the fourth consecutive year the university has increased its retention rate to a new record.

These results demonstrate the coordinated, institution-wide efforts to help all students succeed by strengthening the transition to college, improving the learning environment, and increasing access to meaningful, career-building experiences. Over the past several years, the university has invested in a wide range of initiatives that promote high-quality teaching, provide tailored academic support, and reduce barriers to student progress.

The sections that follow highlight several strategic initiatives that have been instrumental in supporting student retention and timely graduation.

Promoting Excellence in Teaching and Learning

The **Learning Assistants Program** continues to strengthen the student learning experience in high-enrollment STEM and quantitative courses by embedding trained undergraduate peer leaders directly into the classroom. In 2024–25, more than 130 learning assistants supported thousands of students across key gateway courses, including General Chemistry I and II, Principles of Chemistry I, Anatomy for Human Physiology, Human Physiology, and Mathematics for the Biological Sciences. By helping facilitate active learning, encouraging collaboration and providing an accessible avenue for students to ask questions and receive guidance, learning assistants contribute to more engaging classroom environments and improve students' confidence and persistence in academically rigorous courses.

Supplemental Instruction (SI) experienced another year of significant growth and impact, with the 2024–25 academic year marking the largest number of SI visits in the program's history. A total of 22,021 SI visits were recorded, with 3,054 unique students participating in peer-led study sessions across approximately 30 high-enrollment courses each semester. Students who attended SI once per week averaged a five-percentage point increase in their final course grade compared to peers who did not participate. These outcomes demonstrate the continued effectiveness of SI in promoting active, collaborative learning and supporting students' success in courses critical to retention and timely graduation.

The **Scholarly Teaching Program** is a P3-supported initiative that builds an interdisciplinary learning community for teaching-focused faculty to explore and apply evidence-based instructional practices. The program provides structured space for faculty to enhance their teaching, develop course materials, and document professional growth. Participants selected for the program also receive financial support to attend a national teaching conference. In 2024–25, the program supported 19 instructors across 18 departments and four colleges, whose courses collectively enrolled more than 5,200 students.

Enhancing Career Development and Preparation

My Career Path, a P3-supported online career development tool, provides 24/7 personalized guidance to help students explore interests, build career skills, and take concrete steps toward their goals. The platform offers suggested activities, career exploration tools, and learning modules tailored to each student's preferences, allowing them to track progress, organize completed tasks, and strengthen confidence in their career preparation. In 2024–25, more than 2,400 students used My Career Path, which was embedded into more than 75 academic courses across campus. These on-demand career resources — including modules on interviewing, networking, résumés, internships, and student employment — make career planning and preparation accessible to all students.

Hawkeye Experience Grants continue to expand access to high-impact, career-building opportunities by helping undergraduates participate in internships, research, community engagement and other applied learning experiences that might otherwise be out of reach financially. Since 2021, more than 111 experiences have been funded, providing more students with practical skills, professional exposure and hands-on learning that strengthens their preparation for future careers. One in three grant recipients has been a first-generation college student.

Programs like **Iowa GROW®** and the **Hawkeye Work Grant** are transforming student employment into meaningful learning opportunities that build confidence, belonging and future-ready leadership. Iowa GROW® uses structured conversations between student employees and supervisors to help students connect their work to academic learning and professional skill development, with participants reporting greater gains in time management and critical thinking than their peers. The Hawkeye Work Grant supports first-year students with financial need by pairing on-campus jobs with \$750–\$1,000 grants. In 2024–25, 156 students earned more than \$248,000 in wages and received \$113,000 in grant support.

Extending Financial and Basic Needs Support

Student Success Grants—which include the Student Emergency Grant, Hawkeye Retention Grant, and Hawkeye Completion Grant—provide critical need-based financial support that helps students overcome unexpected financial barriers and stay on track for graduation. The university invests nearly \$1 million annually in these targeted grants, which typically provide \$1,000 or less to help students overcome unexpected financial barriers, preventing disruptions to their academic progress. With support from P3 funds, UI researchers studied the impact of

these programs and found that recipients achieved higher GPAs, earned more credit hours, and had significantly stronger retention and graduation outcomes than peers.

The university continues to expand access to essential support services that promote student resilience and help ensure all students have the resources they need to thrive. In 2024–25, the **Food Pantry at Iowa** recorded 13,607 visits and distributed 164,305 pounds of food, providing reliable access to nutritious options for students facing food insecurity. The **Hawkeye Meal Share** program continued to serve as a short-term resource for students experiencing temporary food needs by allowing peers to donate unused meal swipes for use in University Housing and Dining marketplaces. The university also enhanced its suite of mental health resources, adding physical and virtual **Hope Boxes** as a tool for suicide prevention and emotional well-being. In fall 2024, the university opened a new **Student Disability Services Lounge**, a welcoming space designed to support community, connection, and low-sensory comfort for study, socializing and rest.

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA
FALL 2025 GRADUATION AND RETENTION HIGHLIGHTS**

UNI student success rates have increased again this fall, with the highest three- and four-year graduation rates in university history. These continued improvements in time to degree have contributed to long term declines in student loan indebtedness and increased return on investment for UNI graduates.

- Nearly one in seven UNI students graduate in three years, representing the highest three-year graduation rate in university history and an increase of over two percentage points as compared with the previous year's cohort.
- The four-year graduation rate for the fall 2021 cohort is 55.6%, the highest in university history and an increase of 8.6 percentage points over the previous five-year average. UNI's four-year graduation rate is well above Board-approved institutional peers (43%) and Carnegie peers (37%).
- The first-to-second year retention rate for the entering class of 2024 is 84.7%, a three-percentage point increase over last year's cohort and a 1.8 percentage point increase over the previous five-year average. The retention rate for the fall 2024 cohort is significantly higher than that of our institutional peers (78.8%) and our Carnegie peers (73.0%).

Some highlights of campus-wide initiatives and process improvements driving these gains in retention and timely degree completion include the following:

Academic support programs such as UNI PLUS (Peer Led Undergraduate Support) and free tutoring (both walk-in at Rod Library and virtual) provide students with ready access to academic help in a range of course subjects. UNI PLUS provides course-embedded academic assistance to students in traditionally challenging courses, and PLUS assistants work closely with faculty to offer supplemental study sessions outside of regular class times and additional office hours. Students who attend at least three study sessions earn, on average, $\frac{1}{3}$ of a final letter grade higher than their peers who don't attend. Students also have access to walk-in tutoring in Rod Library, staffed by nationally-certified student tutors. Online tutoring is also available in a range of subjects at no additional cost, and is available 24 hours a day.

The **Panther Completion Grant, Student Emergency Fund, and the Richter Scholarship** are donor-supported funds that provide assistance to students facing short-term financial barriers to persistence, allowing students to continue moving toward graduation rather than stopping out. These funds assisted a total of 27 students in overcoming financial hardships during the 2024 - 2025 academic year, awarding a total of \$27,487 during that time period. The **Panther Pantry** offers free food and basic necessities to UNI students. During the 2024 - 2025 academic year the Panther Pantry served 732 students (an increase of 16.7% over the previous year), many of whom used the Pantry on a weekly or monthly basis.

Orientation and Panther Welcome programs prepare new students for a successful university experience, and include one-to-one meetings with academic advisors, family consultations with financial aid counselors, introduction to campus and community resources, engagement with faculty and staff, social activities designed to help students connect with their peers, and guidance from student leaders.

The **UNI Early Intervention System** harnesses data from a variety of sources to inform proactive outreach to students based on individual needs. This work begins prior to enrollment, and continues during students' first and second years on campus. Faculty and staff identify students who may be struggling using predictive retention model data (focused on pre-college indicators), student responses to the Connection and RISE Surveys (four weeks after the start of each semester), registration progress information, course activity, and various additional data sources. This facilitates timely outreach from academic advisors, faculty, and staff to help students get the assistance they need to achieve their goals.

The **Jump Start Scholars program** supports the successful transition of students who are academically at risk and demonstrate significant financial need. Through an intensive extended orientation program just before the start of fall classes, students learn more about their finances and develop a plan to address any remaining balances using available support and payment options; work one-on-one with an academic advisor to create a clear plan of study aligned with their goals; and build meaningful connections with peers, faculty and staff while learning how to navigate key campus resources at UNI. The program is designed to help students ease financial stress and build academic skills, which supports their retention and degree completion. Students who participated in Jump Start Scholars during fall 2025 are currently retained into spring 2026 at a rate over two percentage points higher than their peers.

PACE (Panther Access, Connection, and Engagement) is a supplemental academic advising program designed to increase the retention of first-generation college students. The PACE program helps students build a strong academic foundation and sense of belonging, and facilitate academic and career connections. PACE participants achieve higher retention rates as compared to non-participants.

First-Year Only course sections and **Course-Embedded Peer Mentors** ensure that new students have ready access to peer mentoring within their first-year courses. In this program, UNI faculty prepare sections of general education courses specifically for first-year students, with a focus on supporting students' successful transition to college. Peer mentors are embedded within each course to assist with study skills, community building, role modeling and connection to campus resources. 97% of students reported that their peer mentor was "...outstanding or good in relation to their attitude, approachability, acting as a role model, and impact on class".

Success Coaching provides one-to-one guidance to students who are struggling academically, including those on academic alert, academic probation, those referred by faculty, and students who opt in to the program through the early intervention outreach efforts described above.

Discussion topics include time management, prioritization, goal setting, motivation, stress management, and study strategies. Program data indicates that success coaching participants have higher retention rates than comparison groups of non-participants.

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY FALL 2025 GRADUATION AND RETENTION HIGHLIGHTS

Iowa State University of Science and Technology continually strives to foster collaboration across the university to positively influence the time to degree, persistence and degree completion of students. These efforts are clearly reflected in the university's strong retention- and graduation rates.

Iowa State University is proud to report a record-high 89.2% one-year retention rate (entering class fall 2024), which compares very favorably to the national one-year retention rates of other four-year public colleges and universities. Moreover, the university's graduation rates continue to exceed the national average for four-year public colleges and universities; Iowa State's six-year graduation rate (entering class of 2019) was the second highest on record at 76.6%.

This report highlights a few of the innovative strategies, initiatives and high-impact practices Iowa State University has employed to facilitate its strong retention and completion rates.

Connecting With Students Early Through Learning Communities

Iowa State University's Learning Communities, a collaborative partnership between the Division of Academic Affairs and the Division of Student Affairs, has been one of the institution's most successful retention initiatives for 30 years. In fall 2025, 79 learning communities were offered, serving 7,256 students and 95.2% of all first-year, full-time (FYFT) students. Participation among underrepresented and underserved FYFT student populations was robust, with 94.4% of multicultural students, 94.4% of first-generation students, and 95% of Pell-eligible students participating in a Fall 2025 learning community. Additionally, 91.4% of FYFT international students and 50.7% of full-time transfer students engaged in a learning community.

Retention and graduation rates for students participating in learning communities continue to surpass those of non-learning community participants. The one-year retention rate for learning community students (i.e., the fall 2024 cohort of new direct from high school (NDHS)) was 4.9 percentage points higher than for non-learning community students (i.e., 89.4% for LC participants versus 84.5% for non-LC participants). The six-year graduation rate (i.e., fall 2019 cohort of NDHS learning community students) was four percentage points higher (i.e., 77.2% for LC participants versus 73.2% non-LC participants). Ninety-seven faculty and staff serve as LC Coordinators campus-wide, and more than 600 upper-division students provide leadership within the program as peer mentors.

EAB Navigate Student Success and Retention Efforts

Iowa State University is continuing to center the use of EAB Navigate for student success and retention to enhance collaboration, improve efficiency, and increase student satisfaction. Navigate serves as the primary tool employees use to refer students to non-emergency support. Using the Cyclone Support Connections Model, Iowa State can quickly and seamlessly refer students to necessary services and resources like financial aid, student

wellness and the Academic Success Center using Navigate's "Connections" feature. As a result of referrals, appointment campaigns and student self-scheduling, over 126,000 appointments with campus support and engagement opportunities occurred in the 2024-2025 academic year.

Students who receive a Navigate connection tap into an intentional outreach and support that helps them get connected to the right resources at the right time. For example, Cyclone Support Specialists directly connect with students via SMS text messages to learn more about their needs, answer their questions, and then schedule appointments for the best first step for that student. Students also have the opportunity to visit Cyclone Support Central located in Parks Library, where they can receive in-person support that mirrors the communication from Cyclone Support Specialists; they can also use the "Hand Raise" tool in Navigate to start a conversation with a Cyclone Support Specialist. A total of 91% of students who received outreach shared that they were "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" with the support they received; moreover, a significant number of students reported they would not have sought support if they did not receive outreach from a Cyclone Support Specialist.

An active learning AI-enabled online training launched for all employees at the start of the fall 2025 semester. The Cyclone Support Training both informs and empowers all employees to understand their critical role in student success and enables them to effectively use the Cyclone Support Connections model to serve students. Feedback from the over 500 participants indicated high satisfaction with the content and increased confidence in their ability to impactfully refer students to necessary campus support.

Additional Navigate features including case creation, automations, reports, and dashboards are being harnessed to enhance student, staff, and faculty success. An important use-case blending all of the above features is the re-enrollment campaign; blending targeted outreach from both academic advisors and the Cyclone Support Specialists, Navigate enables precise outreach to students who have yet to enroll, helping them navigate any holds, questions and/or appointments that need to be scheduled in order to successfully register for the next semester.

Innovative Strategies to Combat Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is a local and national collegiate health issue. In fall 2025, Iowa State University administered the National Collegiate Health Assessment (NCHA) survey, which indicated that 31.7% of our students experience food insecurity. This is reflected in the increased use of Iowa State resources like the Students Helping Our Peers (SHOP) on-campus food pantry, the Sloss House Resource Room, and the Give a Swipe program through ISU Dining. Students who are food insecure who utilize these resources indicate a higher likelihood of continuing at Iowa State than those who face similar challenges and do not engage with these programs.

- The Student Wellness department, in partnership with SHOP, facilitates the operations of the on-campus food pantry. During the 2024-2025 academic year, SHOP served 16,906 visitors and distributed more than 209,000 pounds of food. In fall 2025, Student Wellness conducted an anonymous survey of SHOP users, which indicated the following:

- Eighty percent (80%) of SHOP users indicated that having access to food through SHOP helped them be academically successful.
 - Seventy-four percent (74%) of SHOP users indicated that having access to food through SHOP helped them stay enrolled at the university.
 - Eighty-four percent (84%) of SHOP users indicated that having access to food through SHOP helped them be able to attend or participate in campus activities such as clubs, meetings, and events.
- Located in the middle of campus in the historic Sloss House is the Sloss Resource Room, which is a “no questions asked” shelf-stable food and household item pantry for students with need. Through donations from the Iowa State Student Government, the Graduate and Professional Student Senate, and private donations, the space offers unique items including spices, toiletries, and supplies for student parents such as diapers. In the 2024-25 academic year, Sloss engaged over 1,113 unique students, with many accessing the Sloss Resource Room for essential hygiene, parenting, and limited food items. Resource Room usage demonstrates an on-going basic needs demand, particularly among student parents and non-traditional students, for whom unmet basic needs are shown to negatively impact attendance, academic participation and persistence.
 - ISU Dining helps students with food insecurity through the “Give A Swipe” program, where students who have meal plans can donate a meal “swipe” and/or dining dollars to ISU Dining who can give it to a student in need. ISU Dining collaborates with various partners including Student Counseling Services, the Office of Student Financial Aid, and the Office of Student Assistance to identify students who would benefit from the program. During the 2024-25 academic year, 562 meals were provided to students through the “Give A Swipe” program.

Addressing Student Help-Seeking Behavior

The Division of Student Affairs provides leadership for the university’s Cyclone Support initiative. Cyclone Support is a comprehensive, all-campus approach designed to better serve students by encouraging and promoting help-seeking opportunities, fostering connection among the campus community, and enhancing student success, all of which lead to higher persistence and graduation rates.

Over the years, Iowa State students have indicated several barriers to seeking help, such as being unsure where to go for assistance, not knowing what help is available, being afraid of the stigma around seeking help, and having trouble navigating institutional barriers to resources. These barriers, in addition to students indicating a variety of well-being concerns (e.g., like poor sleep, social isolation, feeling overwhelmed, moderate to high stress levels, etc.), created the foundation for this initiative.

In the 2024-25 academic year:

- 6,485 students checked in at Cyclone Support Central, which is a space dedicated to wellness, increased focus, mental health, and relaxation.
- 3,939 students attended programs like free haircuts, financial wellness workshops, FASFA submission sessions, and de-stress activities.
 - After participating in a Cyclone Support event:
 - Eighty-three percent (83%) of students reported a decrease in stress levels.
 - Seventy-five percent (75%) of students agreed that they know someone on campus that can support their well-being.
- More than 28,000 people visited the Cyclone Support website, which is a “one-stop shop” for all support resources on campus.

Cyclone Support Navigators (CSN) were hired to staff Cyclone Support Central and provide direct outreach to students. A recent survey indicated that after interacting with a CSN, 97% of students knew what to do next to solve their problem, and 93% of students felt more confident in their ability to seek support.

Providing Free Tutoring to All Students

For many years, Iowa State relied on a fee-based and scheduled tutoring model; this approach negatively impacted access for students with financial need, and for students who were in need of immediate support. As a result, the Academic Success Center piloted a redesign of the program where they now offer free drop-in tutoring; this is support by Supplemental Instruction (SI) and financial disruption grants.

Free drop-in tutoring is intentionally positioned within a broader ecosystem of course support including office hours, help rooms, and Supplemental Instruction (SI). SI serves as an evidence-based model for sustained academic skill development. Among students enrolled in courses with Supplemental Instruction (SI) in Fall 2025:

- Students who attended no SI sessions had an average GPA in the course of 2.87
- Students who attended 1-4 SI sessions in the semester had an average GPA in the course of 3.00;
- Students who attended 15+ SI sessions in the semester had an average GPA in the course of 3.22.

“Being able to work one-on-one with someone who understood the topic and provided example programs helped me further my understanding,” shared one participant. Among students who participated in drop-in tutoring and provided feedback, most reported positive outcomes: Seventy-eight percent (78%) said tutoring helped them better understand course materials; seventy-four percent (74%) noted it contributed to improving their course grade, and; Seventy-five percent (75%) reported increased confidence in their academic abilities.

These findings directly align with academic momentum research showing that early mastery of gateway courses is one of the most consistent predictors of persistence and timely graduation.

Empowering Students Through Difficult Times

Financial instability, family emergencies, mental health crises, and complex personal circumstances are among the most common drivers of stop-out at public institutions of higher education. Iowa State University's Office of Student Assistance mitigates these attrition risks by providing direct case management that supports students as they navigate medical leaves, academic disruptions, housing or food insecurity, and financial aid complications. This work reduces the likelihood that a student withdraws, fails to return the following semester, or disengages due to unmet basic needs.

- Over the 2024-25 academic year 1,624 students received case management support from the Office of Student Assistance for academic, financial, medical, mental health or personal barriers.
- Eighty-four percent (84%) of students who engaged with the staff in the Office of Student Assistance identified a new campus resource for support, and 80% reported increased confidence in handling their concern and appropriate next steps.

Integrating Education into the Student Conduct Process

Rather than treating academic misconduct as solely punitive, the Office of Student Conduct redesigned its Academic Integrity Program to teach academic skills, ethical decision-making, and resource awareness. This approach reduces recidivism, improves academic strategy, and prevents escalation to disciplinary suspension or dismissal, all of which directly support persistence.

Among students completing the Academic Integrity Program, which includes pre- and post-assessments, as well as in-course exercises:

- One hundred percent (100%) demonstrated increased awareness of academic integrity impacts;
- Ninety-nine percent (99%) identified campus academic resources; and
- Seventy-nine percent (79%) reported increased confidence in making different decisions in the future.

The Academic Integrity Program and alternative resolution pathways allow students to remain enrolled while addressing misconduct, rather than defaulting to punitive disciplinary record outcomes. Many cases involve confusion about expectations, disability-related organizational challenges, or high stress. After engagement, students demonstrated increased understanding of academic and student life policies, resources, and next steps, which support continued persistence.

Focus on First-Generation Student Support

First-generation students, who comprise more than 20% of the Iowa State University undergraduate student population, face structural barriers that include lower financial capital, limited family campus navigation support, and difficulty traversing institutional norms. Iowa State's First Scholars program, established in 2024, creates a physical hub and financial support system for first-generation students, as does the federally funded TRIO Student Support Services Program. These programs offer scholarships and financial support, financial literacy,

peer support, and direct coaching. Financial continuity and navigation support are two of the strongest predictors of first-generation student persistence and degree attainment.

- Since its establishment, the First Scholars Office has grown from serving 202 students to over 1,400 students.
- A portion of the \$13 million from the Dean of Students Office directly benefited first-generation students through emergency funds, completion grants, and direct grant aid for graduating seniors.

The First Scholars Office provides students with navigational support through the Pathways to Success Program, which is a cohort model program that builds confidence and preparation for college life. Participants are paired with a mentor, engage in workshops, and receive 1:1 advising that addresses the unique needs of first-generation students.