

Education and Student Affairs Committee
Board of Regents, State of Iowa

Subject: Annual Report on Student Retention and Graduation Rates

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Date Submitted: December 1, 2004

Recommended Action: Receive the report.

Executive Summary: The graduation and retention rates cohorts include (1) first-time, full-time freshmen and (2) transfer students.

First-Year
Retention and
Graduation Rates
Summary

- All three institutions experienced an increase in the one-year retention rates for the entering class of 2003.
 - ❖ An average of more than 82% of the entering classes of 2003 returned for the second year of studies at the Regent universities.
 - ❖ During the past ten years, the average one-year retention rate at SUI has been 82.9%; at ISU, it has been 83.5%; and at UNI, it has been 81.7%.
 - ❖ The national first-year retention rate average for four-year colleges and universities is approximately 73%¹.
- SUI's and ISU's six-year graduation rates for the entering class of 1998 are at all-time highs of 66.2% and 66.5%, respectively. UNI has had two consecutive years of slight decreases in their six-year graduation rates.
 - ❖ An average of more than 65% of the entering classes of 1998 graduated within six years at the Regent universities.
 - ❖ During the past ten years, the average six-year graduation rate at SUI has been 63.7%; at ISU, it has been 62.7%; and at UNI, it has been 62.9%.
 - ❖ The national average among NCAA Division I schools (including both public and private institutions) is 60%²; the national average for public four-year institutions is 55%³.

¹ Source: ACT.

² Source: NCAA 2004 Graduation Rates (Attachment B, pg. 18).

³ Source: National Center for Education Statistics.

- The average number of years to complete an undergraduate degree by students in the entering class of 1998 who graduated within six years was 4.59 years.
- Freshmen who entered with higher ACT scores (22 or better) and high school class ranks (80th percentile or better) had better retention and graduation rates than those with lower scores and ranks.
- Ethnic and racial minority students generally had lower retention and graduation rates than non-minority students.
 - ❖ In some cases, the number of students in a racial/ethnic minority cohort is quite small. Significant number changes from year to year result in upward or downward swings in the graduation and retention rates.
- Women had higher retention and graduation rates than men.
- Freshmen who achieved a first-term GPA of at least 2.50 had higher retention and graduation rates than did freshmen whose first-term GPA was below 2.50.
- Students who transferred from Iowa community colleges after having completed an associate of arts (AA) degree and with a transfer GPA of 2.75 or better typically had higher one-year retention and four-year graduation rates than the general population of transfer students.

First-Year
Non-Persistence
Study⁴

The three most frequently occurring major reasons cited by the respondents to the non-persistence study were (1) increases in tuition and fees, (2) transferred to a lower cost institution, and (3) undecided about major or vocation. However, most of the reasons in the survey were not listed as either a major or minor reason for leaving/not returning by the respondents.

A new feature of the study includes data from the National Student Clearinghouse which allows the Regent universities to “track” students who did not return for their second year. There were 10,173 first-time, full-time freshmen in the entering class of Fall 2002. The number who did not return in Fall 2003 was 1,749 (17.2%); of that number, 1,141 (65.2%) transferred to another institution.

Graduation and
Retention Rates
Policy

In March 2000, the Board of Regents adopted a Graduation and Retention Rates Policy aimed at improving the two-year retention and six-year graduation rates of racial/ethnic minority students. Specifically, each university was expected to establish targets to increase the rates for the minority groups to the majority rate. The policy included an expectation of substantial progress on attainment of the two-year retention rate target by 2002.

⁴ The study is based on students from the entering class of 2002 who did not return in Fall 2003.

Link to Strategic Plan:

The following performance indicators in the Board's Strategic Plan are addressed in this report:

- 1.1.2.4 Retention rates of students by race, ethnicity, gender, disability, and socioeconomic status.
 - 1.3.1.1 Undergraduate student four-year and six-year enterprise graduation rates
 - 1.3.1.2 Undergraduate student length of time to degree.
 - 1.3.1.4 Annual survey of reasons students withdraw from the Regent universities prior to graduation.
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Background:

The report includes information by race/ethnicity, gender, residence, ACT scores, high school rank, and first-term GPA data. It presents 3-year, 4-year, 5-year, and 6-year graduation rates as well as 1-year and 2-year retention rate data.

First-Time, Full-Time Freshman Cohort

This cohort includes first-time, full-time freshmen who enrolled at a Regent university directly from high school in the fall or preceding summer of the entering class year.

Transfer Student Cohort

The transfer student cohort includes all transfer students at Regent universities during an entering year regardless of number of credits completed at the transfer institution. The report includes one-year retention and four-year graduation rates of students who transfer into Regent universities from community colleges in Iowa, from independent colleges and universities in Iowa, and from colleges outside of Iowa.

Differences Between Student Cohorts

The transfer cohort, unlike the first-time, full-time freshmen cohort, does not include the total number of entering students at the transfer institution. The students who did not persist at the transfer institution during the first and second years do not become part of the transfer cohort; therefore, it is impossible to compare the retention or graduation rates of the two cohorts.

Definition of Graduation Rates for First-Time, Full-Time Freshmen

Graduation rates for first-time, full-time freshmen are normally measured on a cumulative six-year time frame that is 150% of the typical eight-semester time frame to complete a baccalaureate program⁵. The most recent data report the graduation rates for the entering class of Fall 1998, which would have graduated no later than August 2004.

⁵ As defined by the U. S. Department of Education – Student Right to Know Act.

Definition of Graduation Rates for Transfer Students

Graduation rates for transfer students are calculated from the date of admission to a Regent university. Years of study completed at previous institutions are not included in the determination of graduation rates.

Because the Student Right to Know measure of six-year graduation rates applies only to first-time, full-time freshmen, four-year (measured from time of entry to the Regent universities) graduation rates are more appropriate for transfer students.

Definition of Retention Rates

Retention is the rate at which members of an entering freshman class return to that same institution in successive years until the completion of a degree. Research⁶ shows that the majority of students who withdraw, transfer, or otherwise leave an institution do so during the first two years of college.

Four-Year Graduation Plan

In 1995, the Board's Priority Study Group on Graduation Rates recommended that each institution develop a four-year graduation plan that would effectively guarantee full-time students the opportunity to complete a bachelor's degree within eight semesters. A Four-Year Graduation Plan currently exists at each of the Regent universities for students who desire that option. SUI's target for the four-year graduation rate is 40%. UNI's target for the four-year graduation rate is 35%.

Analysis:

Retention

The transition from high school to university life poses significant challenges for many entering students. A variety of academic, social, cultural, economic, and personal factors can influence the success of that transition.

Previous national and state studies, as well as the Regent universities' own experience over many years, have demonstrated that the following factors contribute significantly to the retention rate:

- Student input factors of entering freshmen (high school rank, ACT scores, socioeconomic status);
 - Institutional environmental factors (housing, advising, orientation, extracurricular activities, support services); and
 - Academic standards factors (major field requirements, core curriculum requirements, development courses, grading practices).
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Institutional Selectivity

Highly selective institutions have higher graduation rates and lower dropout rates than traditionally selective public institutions, according to studies by the American College Testing Service.

⁶ Source: NCES.

Best Practices in Retention According to John Gardner, executive director of the Policy Center on the First Year of College at Brevard College, the first-year experience is the key factor in a student's success in college and "colleges typically do not focus on this phase of student life." Rather than emphasizing "retention," colleges need to foster student success.

Institutional Experiences The Regent universities are committed to the academic success of their students. Reducing attrition and improving retention are important priorities on each campus. Undergraduate admissions standards are designed to ensure that each student has the appropriate academic background and potential to complete a degree program.

The institutions⁷ 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 both to the rigors of postsecondary learning and to the challenges of independence and adulthood.

FIRST-TIME, FULL-TIME FRESHMAN COHORT

Non-Persistence Despite extensive intervention efforts, the Regent universities regularly lose 25% to 30% of each year's entering full-time freshmen within two years. A part of this loss may occur when students change or refine educational goals that require transfer to another institution or suspension of their studies.

One-Year Retention Rates During the past ten years, the one-year retention rates at the Regent universities have been relatively stable and are consistent with or somewhat better than national indices. ISU and UNI have established significant targets, 90% and 85%, respectively, for their first-year retention rates.

ONE-YEAR RETENTION PERCENTAGE RATES FOR ENTERING FRESHMEN CLASSES OF 1993 – 2003

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
SUI	83.6	83.4	82.0	82.9	83.7	83.5	83.9	82.6	82.5	80.9	83.2
ISU	81.1	81.5	81.5	82.8	83.6	84.4	85.1	83.7	83.4	84.2	84.6
UNI	80.2	80.7	81.8	82.0	82.4	81.0	81.4	84.0	81.4	80.6	81.4

Institutional Effectiveness Earning a college degree is one important and widely used outcome measure of institutional effectiveness. Graduation rates are also one of the required reporting elements under the federal government's Student Right-to-Know Act.

⁷ Attachment A (pgs. 15-17) describes the retention initiatives implemented by the Regent universities.

- Graduation rates are often referenced to demonstrate that institutions are achieving their missions with a high level of efficiency and productivity.
- However, lack of completion of a degree from the matriculating institution does not necessarily reflect failure on the part of the institution or of the student. Many legitimate, unexpected, and uncontrollable factors can lead to this result; for example, some students may not set the completion of a degree as their educational goal, or family responsibilities may require some students to return home.

Four-Year
Graduation
Rates

SUI has identified a target of 40% for its four-year graduation rate. SUI indexes its four-, five-, and six-year graduation rate targets to ACT scores, with higher rates expected for those with higher scores. UNI has identified a target of 35% for its four-year graduation rate.

**FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION PERCENTAGE RATES
FOR ENTERING FRESHMEN CLASSES OF 1990 – 2000**

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
SUI	32.9	32.3	32.3	34.6	34.3	35.3	37.8	37.6	35.8	37.7	39.5
ISU	19.0	20.6	21.7	22.3	24.0	25.1	28.4	27.0	29.2	31.4	31.2
UNI	24.3	24.1	26.2	27.1	29.0	30.1	33.4	28.8	29.5	33.5	33.9

Six-Year
Graduation
Rates

Six-year graduation rates for all three Regent universities have remained at 60% or higher since 1991. Minor fluctuations in these rates occur every year but they have not indicated any significant trend. Changes in the size and composition of each entering class may account for modest variations in rates as might individual student decisions⁸.

ISU has established a six-year graduation rate target of 70%. UNI has identified a target of 65% for its six-year graduation rate.

**SIX-YEAR GRADUATION PERCENTAGE RATES
FOR ENTERING FRESHMEN CLASSES OF 1988 – 1998**

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
SUI	61.2	60.9	62.6	63.1	63.7	62.8	64.0	64.9	64.4	64.6	66.2
ISU	63.6	61.6	60.0	60.1	61.1	60.4	62.4	63.7	65.3	65.7	66.5
UNI	60.4	61.9	59.4	60.4	62.2	62.9	62.2	64.2	66.5	65.2	64.3

⁸ According to the National Center for Education Statistics, more than 20% of college students change their degree major.

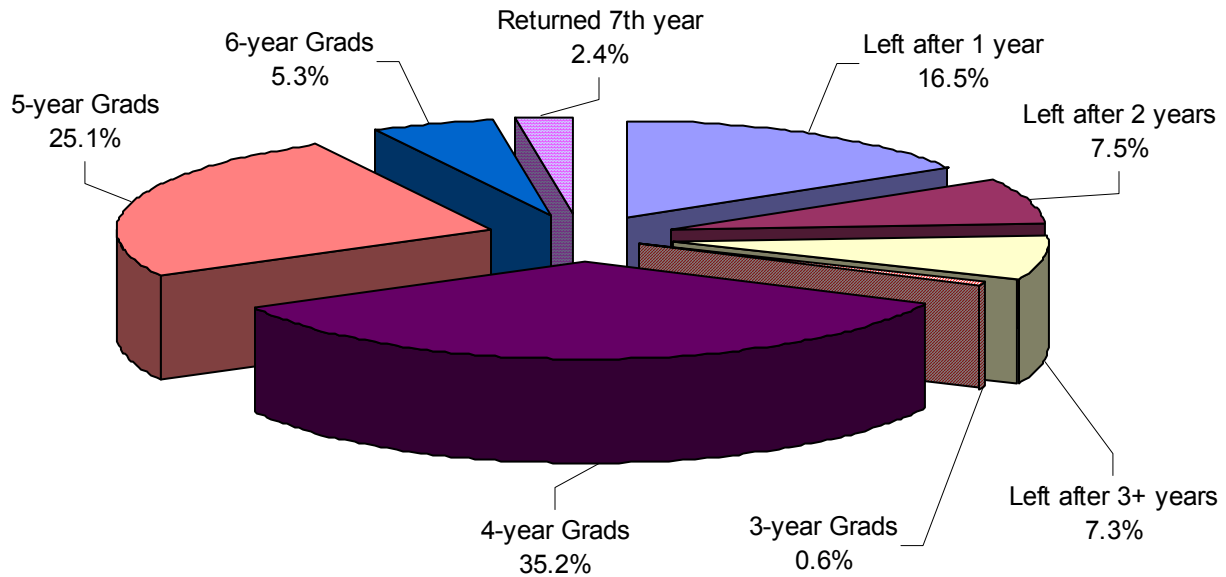
Charts

The pie charts on the following pages illustrate the academic status of the entering class of 1998 at the beginning of the seventh year. The charts depict graduation and retention rates at each university for that year's total cohort of 9,678 students.

University of Iowa

SUI's entering freshman class cohort of 1998 includes 3,896 students. SUI's six-year graduation rate for the entering freshman class of 1998 was 66.2%. An additional 2.4% of that entering class returned for the seventh year in Fall 2004, illustrating persistence in excess of six years toward a bachelor's degree. However, 31.3% of the entering class of 1998 did not graduate from SUI.

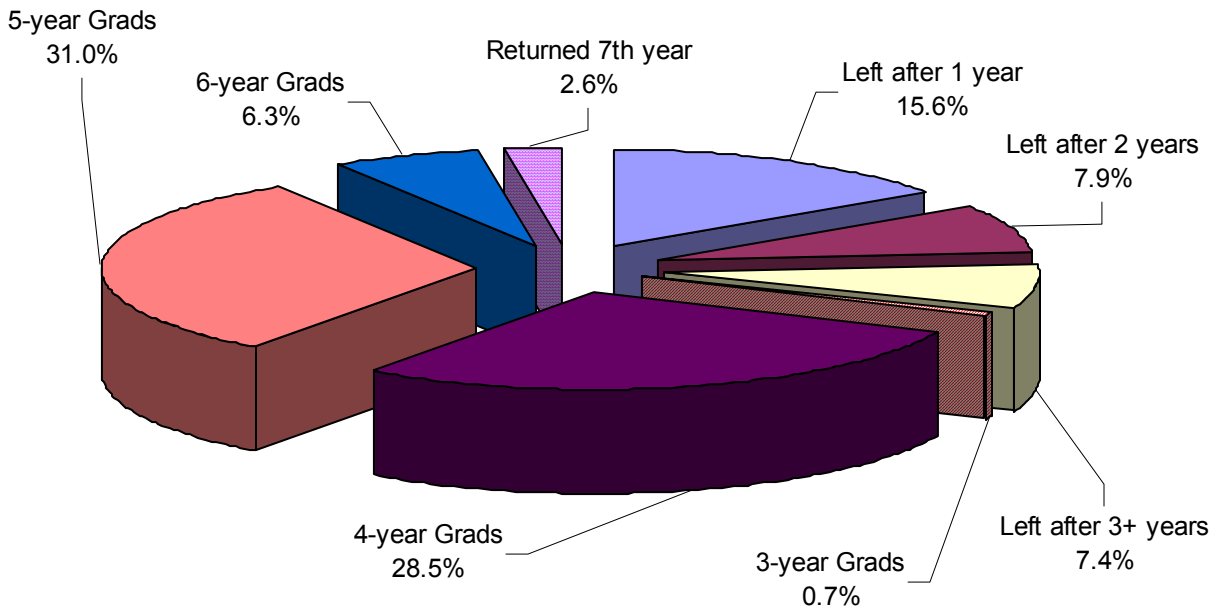
**UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
ENTERING FRESHMAN CLASS OF 1998**



Iowa State University

ISU's entering freshman class cohort of 1998 includes 3,800 students. ISU's six-year graduation rate for the entering freshman class of 1998 was 66.5%. An additional 2.6% of that entering class returned for the seventh year in Fall 2004, illustrating persistence in excess of six years toward a bachelor's degree. However, 30.9% of the entering class of 1998 did not graduate from ISU.

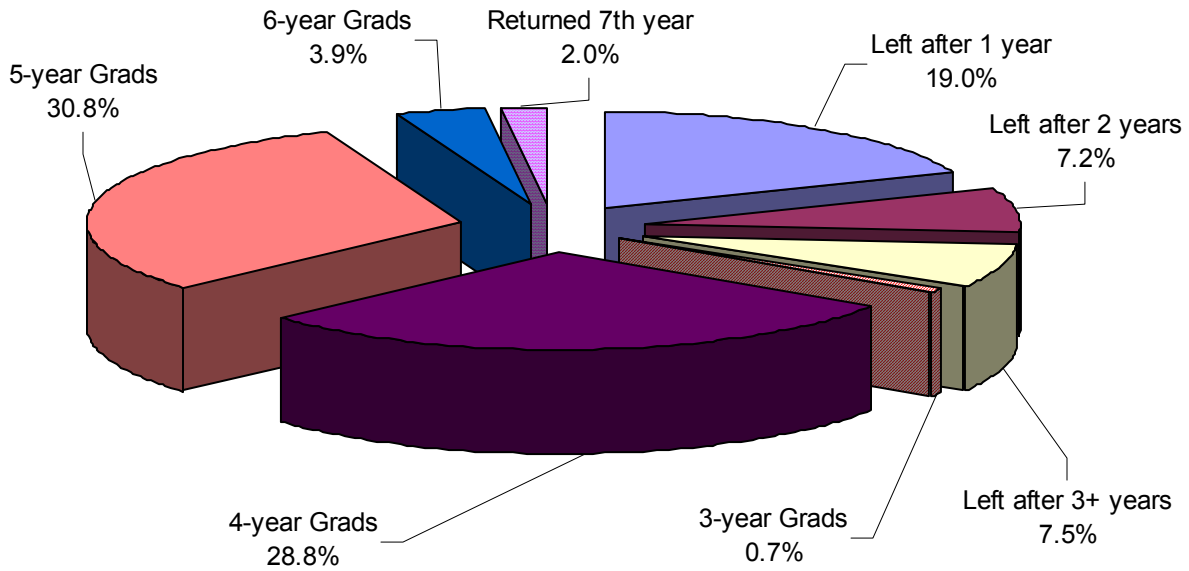
IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY ENTERING FRESHMAN CLASS OF 1998



University of Northern Iowa

UNI's entering freshman class cohort of 1998 includes 1,982. UNI's six-year graduation rate for the entering freshman class of 1998 was 64.3%. An additional 2.0% of that entering class returned for the seventh year in Fall 2004, illustrating persistence in excess of six years toward a bachelor's degree. However, 33.7% of the entering class of 1998 did not graduate from UNI.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA ENTERING FRESHMAN CLASS OF 1998



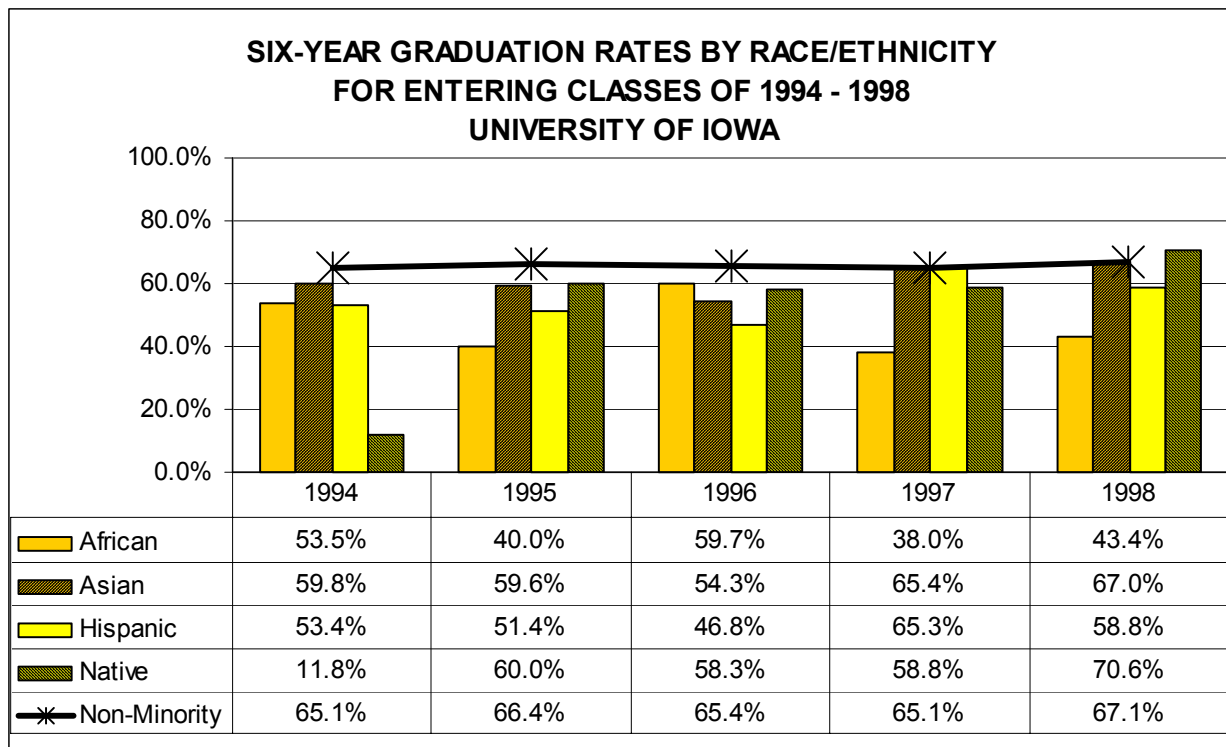
Six-Year Graduation Rates by Gender

Graduation rates for women are traditionally better than those for men. This trend has continued for the past ten years at ISU and SUI. At UNI, the six-year graduation rate for women has exceeded that for men at UNI for eight out of the past ten years.

Six-Year Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity

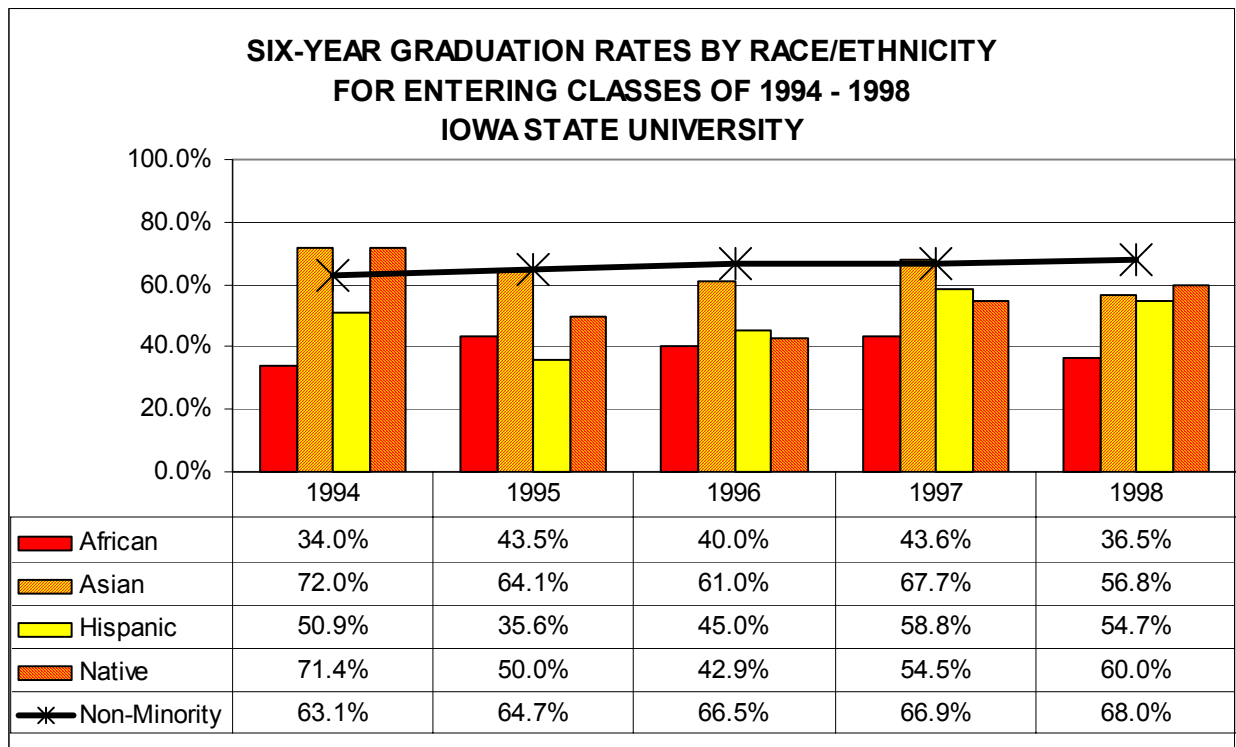
University
of Iowa

- Between 1994 and 1998, the range of six-year graduation rates for African-American students was 38.0% (1997) – 59.7% (1996); the five-year average was 46.9%.
- The range of six-year graduation rates for Asian-American students was 54.3% (1996) – 67.0% (1998); the five-year average was 61.2%.
- The range of six-year graduation rates for Hispanic-American students was 46.8% (1996) – 65.3% (1997); the five-year average was 55.1%.
- The range of six-year graduation rates for Native American students was 11.8% (1994)⁹ – 70.6% (1998); the five-year average was 51.9%.
- The range of six-year graduation rates for non-minority students was 65.1% (1994 & 1997) – 67.1% (1998); the five-year average was 65.8%.
- In 1994, 1995, and 1996, the non-minority six-year graduation rate was higher than all racial/ethnic minority groups; in 1997 the six-year graduation rates of Asian-American students and Hispanic-American students were slightly higher than the six-year graduation rate of non-minority students, by 0.3 and 0.2 percentage points, respectively; in 1998, the six-year graduation rate of Native American students was higher by 3.5 percentage points than the six-year graduation rate of non-minority students.

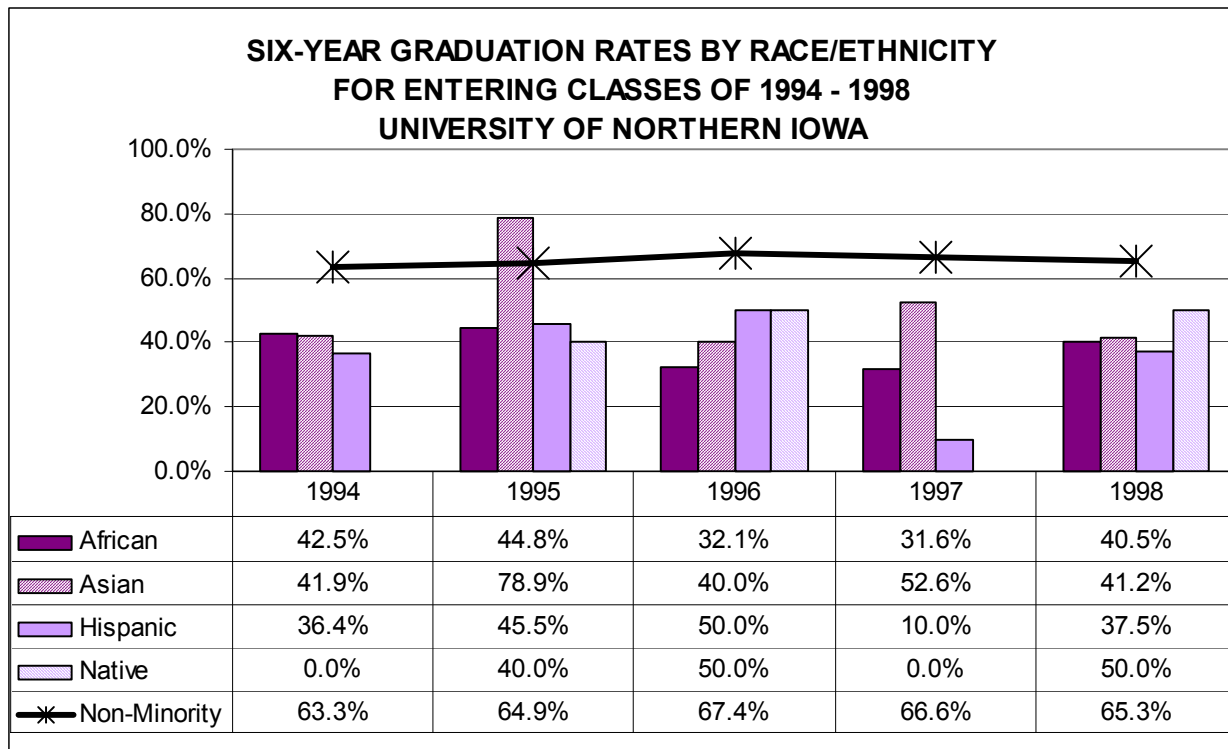


⁹ The cohort size of Native American students was 2 or less in 1994.

- Between 1994 and 1998, the range of six-year graduation rates for African-American students was 34.0% (1994) – 43.5% (1995); the five-year average was 39.5%.
- The range of six-year graduation rates for Asian-American students was 56.8% (1998) – 72.0% (1994); the five-year average was 64.3%.
- The range of six-year graduation rates for Hispanic-American students was 35.6% (1995) – 58.8% (1997); the five-year average was 49.0%.
- The range of six-year graduation rates for Native American students was 42.9% (1996) – 71.4% (1994); the five-year average was 55.8%.
- The range of six-year graduation rates for non-minority students was 63.1% (1994) – 68.0% (1998); the five-year average was 65.8%.
- In 1995, 1996, and 1998, the non-minority six-year graduation rate was higher than all racial/ethnic minority groups; in 1994 the six-year graduation rates of Asian-American students and Native American students were higher than the six-year graduation rate of non-minority students, by 8.9 and 8.3 percentage points, respectively; in 1997, the six-year graduation rate of Asian-American students was higher by 0.8 percentage points than the six-year graduation rate of non-minority students.



- Between 1994 and 1998, the range of six-year graduation rates for African-American students was 31.6% (1997) – 44.8% (1995); the five-year average was 38.3%.
- The range of six-year graduation rates for Asian-American students was 40.0% (1996) – 78.9% (1995); the five-year average was 50.9%.
- The range of six-year graduation rates for Hispanic-American students was 10.0% (1997) – 50.0% (1996); the five-year average was 35.9%.
- The range of six-year graduation rates for Native American students¹⁰ was 0.0% (1994 & 1997) – 50.0% (1996 & 1998); the five-year average was 28.0%.
- The range of six-year graduation rates for non-minority students was 63.3% (1994) – 67.4% (1996); the five-year average was 65.5%.
- In all years except 1995, the non-minority six-year graduation rate was higher than all racial/ethnic minority groups. In 1995, the six-year graduation rate of Asian-American students was higher than the six-year graduation rate of non-minority students, by 14.0 percentage points.



¹⁰ The cohort size of Native American students was 2 or less in all years except 1998.

TRANSFER STUDENT COHORT

One-Year Retention Rates of Transfer Students More than 4,000 students transfer annually into Regent institutions after initial enrollment at other postsecondary institutions, including other Regent universities. While there is not a significant difference in one-year retention rates between those transfer students who completed an AA degree and those who did not, there is a significant difference in one-year retention rates by transfer GPA.

ONE-YEAR RETENTION RATES OF TRANSFER STUDENTS BY SECTOR TO REGENT UNIVERSITIES FOR THE ENTERING CLASS OF 2003

	SUI	ISU	UNI
Iowa 2-yr Public, AA Degree	75.6%	80.5%	82.3%
Iowa 2-yr Public, No AA Degree	76.6%	75.1%	73.8%
All Iowa 2-yr Public	76.1%	76.6%	78.8%
Iowa Private 2-yr	0.0%	50.0%	70.6%
Iowa Private 4-yr	75.3%	74.5%	73.2%
Iowa Public 4-yr	78.9%	77.5%	80.6%
Colleges Outside Iowa	78.5%	77.4%	80.0%
TOTAL	76.9%	76.6%	78.5%

ONE-YEAR RETENTION RATES OF TRANSFER STUDENTS BY TRANSFER GPA TO REGENT UNIVERSITIES FOR THE ENTERING CLASS OF 2003

	SUI	ISU	UNI
3.50 – 4.00	89.2%	88.1%	88.7%
3.25 – 3.49	78.6%	78.5%	88.3%
3.00 – 3.24	81.8%	74.7%	77.2%
2.75 – 2.99	71.8%	77.8%	81.4%
2.50 – 2.74	69.3%	72.2%	72.1%
2.25 – 2.49	59.3%	73.3%	66.7%
2.00 – 2.24	73.3%	66.0%	51.4%
1.00 – 1.99	33.3% ¹	43.8%	50.0%
0.00 – 0.99	100.0% ¹	66.7%	70.0%
NA	90.9%	NA	NA
TOTAL	76.9%	76.6%	78.5%

¹The cohort size of each of these groups was 2 or less.

Four-Year
Graduation
Rates of Transfer
Students

The four-year graduation rates for transfer students at the Regent universities differ by sector. Furthermore, there is a significant difference in four-year graduation rates between those transfer students who completed an AA degree and those who did not as well as by transfer GPA.

**FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATES OF TRANSFER STUDENTS (BY SECTOR)
TO REGENT UNIVERSITIES FOR THE ENTERING CLASS OF 2000**

	SUI	ISU	UNI
Iowa 2-yr Public, AA Degree	57.5%	79.0%	75.0%
Iowa 2-yr Public, No AA Degree	48.3%	59.1%	49.8%
All Iowa 2-yr Public	52.0%	65.1%	64.8%
Iowa Private 2-yr	57.1%	66.7%	50.0%
Iowa Private 4-yr	65.1%	65.3%	64.4%
Iowa Public 4-yr	71.4%	76.9%	73.2%
Colleges Outside Iowa	61.1%	61.0%	58.1%
TOTAL	58.2%	64.9%	64.3%

**FOUR-YEAR RETENTION RATES OF TRANSFER STUDENTS BY TRANSFER GPA
TO REGENT UNIVERSITIES FOR THE ENTERING CLASS OF 2000**

	SUI	ISU	UNI
3.50 – 4.00	78.1%	77.5%	75.7%
3.25 – 3.49	67.7%	70.4%	76.8%
3.00 – 3.24	63.1%	72.0%	75.0%
2.75 – 2.99	53.2%	70.7%	79.9%
2.50 – 2.74	50.0%	57.3%	51.2%
2.25 – 2.49	42.5%	53.1%	38.4%
2.00 – 2.24	31.7%	50.4%	44.0%
1.00 – 1.99	25.0%	18.2%	0.0%
0.00 – 0.99	38.1%	50.0%	55.6%
NA	0.0%	0.0%	NA
TOTAL	58.4%	64.9%	64.3%

Data Tables

The graduation and retention rates tables and the non-persistence study results tables are available on the Board of Regent's website.

ATTACHMENT A

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA INITIATIVES ON PERSISTENCE AND RETENTION FALL 2004

The University of Iowa is very pleased with its progress in improving persistence and graduation rates. Currently, all three of our graduation rates are at all time highs. The six-year rate has increased from 64.6% in 2003 to 66.2% in 2004. The five-year rate has increased from 60.9% in 2003 to 61.8% in 2004. And the four-year rate has increased from 37.7% in 2003 to 39.5% in 2004.

We attribute this success to three quite different interventions. The first is the Four-Year Graduation Plan which was first offered in the fall of 1995. This plan provides students with a set of benchmarks that helps them plan their schedules and keep on track. It also offers a financial guarantee that the University will make sure that the courses students need for graduation are available when they are needed or, should we fail, that the University will pay the tuition for any necessary courses. About 75% of entering freshmen sign up for the Plan and those who do are much more likely to graduate in four years than those who do not. Moreover, we are happy to report that the University plans so well now that we have never had to pay for an unavailable course.

The second intervention includes a set of courses begun in 2001. These are aimed at integrating students into the academic and social community during their freshman year. These include "The College Transition," a first-year experience course intended to help students adjust to the new responsibilities and greater demands that college life brings, and "College Success Seminar," a second semester course for freshman who are put on probation after their initial term. We also offer a series of "Freshman Seminars" that introduce students to faculty members' specialized areas of expertise and interest. We also have a variety of "Residential Learning Communities" that allow students with common academic interests such as health science, business, performing arts, or writing to live together and benefit from academic programming in their interest areas.

The third intervention involves how we select students who do not qualify for automatic admission. Since 2001, we have been trying to identify the factors that discriminate between students who will do well here at Iowa and those who will not. As our enrollments have grown, we have begun to enforce our deadlines and requirements more vigorously based on our experience with students who have been admitted in the past despite deficiencies. For example, we no longer accept late applications because we have learned that students who choose us late tend not to persist. Also, we are very careful now about what we accept in lieu of actual course work in the high school unit requirements. This new rigor in enforcing standards has allowed us not only to do a better job of selecting students for potential success at Iowa but also allow us to support high school teachers in encouraging students to take all required courses.

**IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
COMMENTS ON RETENTION AND GRADUATION REPORT
FALL 2004**

Iowa State University has set a goal of achieving a 70% six-year graduation rate, and this year's retention and graduation report indicates that progress has been made towards achieving that goal. For the entering class of Fall 1998, 66.5% of the students in that cohort graduated within six years of entry, up from 65.7% for the Fall 1997 entering cohort. The five-year graduation rate has also improved significantly, with 62.7% of students in the Fall 1997 cohort graduating within five years, compared to 60.2% of the Fall 1996 cohort. Reviewing the data for resident students, 68% of the entering class of Fall 1998 graduated within six years, the highest six-year graduation rate for residents in this retention and graduation report series.

A number of recent University initiatives have focused on enhancing student persistence, particularly from the first to the second year. The Course Availability Committee, formed in 2001, has been a collaborative effort between administrative units and colleges to improve course availability for undergraduate students. Significant emphasis has been placed on academic assistance opportunities for students, including the Supplemental Instruction Program (SI) that is targeted at large classes with a history of lower student success. The Academic Success Center provides a variety of services including tutoring, counseling referrals, minority student support programs, and assistance to students with disabilities. As a result of these and other efforts, student retention for the second year improved during the past year, with 84.6% of freshmen returning for their second year of study.

ISU Learning Communities have been a critical component of University efforts to improve first-year retention, and retention and graduation data continue to show that students in learning communities persist and graduate at a higher rate than students who are not in learning communities. Of the 1771 first-time, full-time freshmen in fall 2003 learning communities, 88.0% returned for their second year at ISU compared to 81.9% of the first-time full-time freshmen who were not members of learning communities. The freshman learning community participation rate for fall 2003 was 45.9%, and this was the first year that the learning community participation rate has exceeded 40%. Of the 1490 first-time, full-time students in fall 2000 learning communities, 37.5% graduated within four years compared to 27.9% of the first-time, full-time non-learning community participants who entered ISU at the same time.

During the past and current academic year, Iowa State University has expanded efforts to enroll students in the four-year graduation plan, Soar in Four. Over 22% of new freshmen for Fall 2003 signed up for Soar in Four, up from 6% participation for the Fall 2001 class. The second year return rate for Soar in Four participants who entered Fall 2003 is 89.1%. Degree program planning tools developed for students in Soar in Four provide a benefit to all students and ISU students are completing their degrees faster than in the past. Over the past 10 years, 1990-2000, ISU's four-year graduation rate for entering freshmen has risen from 19.0% to 31.2%, a 64% increase.

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA
COMMENTS ON PERSISTENCE AND RETENTION REPORT
FALL 2004**

This year's report for the University of Northern Iowa is noteworthy for its consistent high rates for retention and persistence. All major reporting categories remained within historic ranges.

Two areas appear to show the makings of a trend. The Average Number of Years to Complete a Degree seems to be showing an improving trend which we believe will continue. This can be coupled with the percentages of graduation by year within the total figure. More students are graduating after 4 years than in the past. The trend is definitely toward students moving through the system faster while the total graduation rate remains a relative constant. This speaks well for the students who desire to graduate in 4 years and the institution which makes it possible.

To place these figures in perspective we note that UNI's graduation rate of **64.3%** can be compared to a mean graduation rate of **48.0%** for our Board of Regents designated peer institutions. In the recent report published by the Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS) of the Department of Education, sixty-one institutions were listed as comparable to UNI. Those sixty-one institutions have an average graduation rate of **45.0%** compared to UNI's rate of **64.3%**.

Recently, UNI's high graduation and retention rates have been highlighted nationally. The Education Trust identified the UNI graduation rate as first in the nation among comparable institutions. Because of our higher than predicted graduation rate, UNI has been selected as one of twelve campuses nationally to serve in a study of best practices leading to high retention and graduation rates. The study is conducted jointly by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and the National Association of System Heads.

While the University is pleased with the findings of these reports we will continue efforts focused on increasing both retention and persistence rates. We are now into the second year of implementation of our Plan of Study initiative which we are confident will have a positive benefit on both retention and persistence rates. At this point over sixty-two percent of all undergraduates have established a 'plan of study'.

**APPENDIX B
SIX-YEAR GRADUATION RATES AT REGENT UNIVERSITIES AND PEER INSTITUTIONS¹¹**

	Reported Six-Year Graduation Rates for Entering Classes of:									
	1987	1988	1989	1990	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
UNIVERSITY OF IOWA	63%	62%	61%	63%	63%	64%	65%	65%	64%	65%
<u>Comparable AAU Universities</u>										
University of Arizona	49%	51%	50%	51%	54%	52%	54%	55%	55%	55%
University of California - Los Angeles	77%	77%	77%	77%	78%	79%	80%	82%	85%	87%
University of Ill., Champaign-Urbana	80%	80%	79%	78%	77%	75%	76%	79%	80%	81%
Indiana University - Bloomington	67%	70%	68%	70%	66%	68%	65%	69%	69%	72%
University of Michigan	85%	85%	85%	84%	83%	82%	82%	83%	84%	85%
University of Minnesota - Twin Cities	49%	51%	48%	52%	49%	51%	50%	50%	54%	54%
University of N. Carolina - Chapel Hill	83%	85%	84%	82%	80%	80%	79%	79%	80%	83%
Ohio State University	65%	61%	60%	55%	56%	56%	55%	56%	59%	62%
University of Texas - Austin	62%	62%	65%	63%	67%	65%	69%	70%	71%	71%
University of Wisconsin - Madison	72%	73%	73%	72%	73%	74%	76%	76%	75%	76%
Median (excluding SUI)	70%	72%	71%	71%	70%	71%	73%	73%	73%	73%
Mean (excluding SUI)	69%	70%	69%	68%	68%	68%	69%	65%	71%	73%
IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY	63%	64%	62%	60%	60%	62%	64%	64%	65%	66%
<u>Comparable Land Grant Universities</u>										
University of Arizona	49%	51%	50%	51%	54%	52%	54%	55%	55%	55%
University of California - Davis	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	76%	72%	75%	78%	81%
University of Ill., Champaign-Urbana	80%	80%	79%	78%	77%	75%	76%	79%	80%	81%
Michigan State University	72%	70%	69%	66%	66%	64%	66%	69%	69%	69%
University of Minnesota - Twin Cities	49%	51%	48%	52%	49%	51%	50%	50%	54%	54%
North Carolina State University	64%	68%	67%	67%	63%	65%	60%	62%	64%	63%
Ohio State University	65%	61%	60%	55%	56%	56%	55%	56%	59%	62%
Purdue University	69%	70%	71%	69%	65%	64%	64%	62%	64%	66%
Texas A & M University	66%	67%	68%	68%	71%	71%	69%	74%	75%	75%
University of Wisconsin - Madison	72%	73%	73%	72%	73%	74%	76%	76%	75%	76%
Median (excluding ISU)	66%	68%	68%	67%	65%	64%	64%	62%	64%	68%
Mean (excluding ISU)	65%	66%	65%	64%	64%	64%	63%	65%	66%	68%
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA	61%	60%	62%	59%	63%	62%	64%	64%	67%	65%
<u>Comparable Public Comp. Univ.</u>										
California State University - Fresno	46%	46%	48%	47%	45%	41%	40%	42%	43%	46%
Central Michigan University	61%	57%	53%	51%	50%	52%	50%	51%	47%	49%
Illinois State University	55%	59%	53%	54%	53%	54%	55%	56%	57%	59%
Indiana State University	35%	35%	35%	36%	36%	38%	35%	39%	37%	39%
Northern Arizona University	40%	42%	38%	39%	41%	44%	42%	42%	46%	52%
Ohio University - Athens	65%	66%	70%	68%	70%	70%	68%	70%	70%	70%
University of Minnesota - Duluth	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	40%	42%	42%	44%	47%
Univ. of North Carolina - Greensboro	52%	50%	51%	46%	47%	47%	47%	46%	48%	50%
University of North Texas	36%	36%	38%	35%	37%	39%	36%	37%	38%	39%
University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	50%	55%	54%	56%
Median (excluding UNI)	49%	48%	50%	47%	46%	46%	45%	44%	47%	51%
Mean (excluding UNI)	49%	49%	48%	47%	47%	48%	47%	48%	48%	51%

¹¹ Source: 2004 NCAA Divisions I & II Graduation Rates Annual Report for all full-time degree-seeking students.