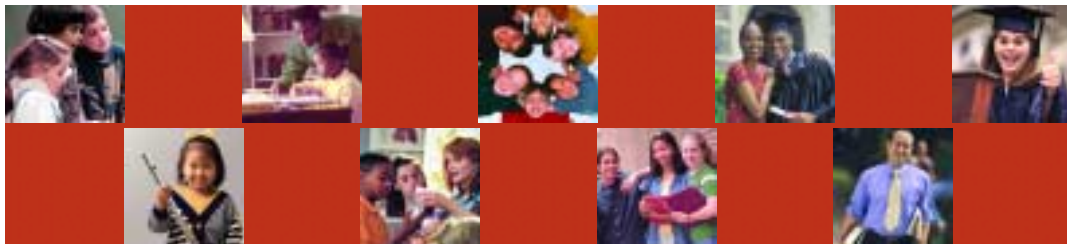


the condition of education 2003



INDICATOR 20

Institutional Retention and Student Persistence at 4-Year Institutions

The indicator and corresponding tables are taken directly from *The Condition of Education 2003*. Therefore, the page numbers may not be sequential.

Additional information about the survey data and supplementary notes can be found in the full report. For a copy of *The Condition of Education 2003*, visit the NCES web site (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2003067>) or contact ED PUBs at 1-877-4ED-PUBS.

Suggested Citation:

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Postsecondary Persistence and Progress

Institutional Retention and Student Persistence at 4-Year Institutions

Among bachelor's degree seekers beginning at a 4-year institution in 1995–96, just over half graduated from that institution within 6 years. The overall bachelor's degree attainment rate was higher because some students transferred and earned a degree elsewhere.

Postsecondary institutions and other organizations frequently report graduation rates for 4-year colleges and universities. ACT, for example, publishes 5-year graduation rates for different types of institutions each year, and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is required by law to report 6-year graduation rates annually for each member institution.¹

However, the institutional perspective provides only a partial picture of students' success because institutions are rarely able to track students who leave their institution. Calculating graduation rates from the student perspective involves following students throughout the postsecondary system. This approach results in higher graduation rates because some students who begin at one institution earn a degree elsewhere.

Among students who intended to earn a bachelor's degree and began their postsecondary education at a 4-year institution in 1995–96, 55 percent had earned a bachelor's degree at that institution within 6 years. How-

ever, approximately one-quarter of those seeking a bachelor's degree transferred from their first institution and continued their education elsewhere. When the outcomes for these transfer students are considered, the cohort's overall bachelor's degree attainment rate increases to 63 percent.

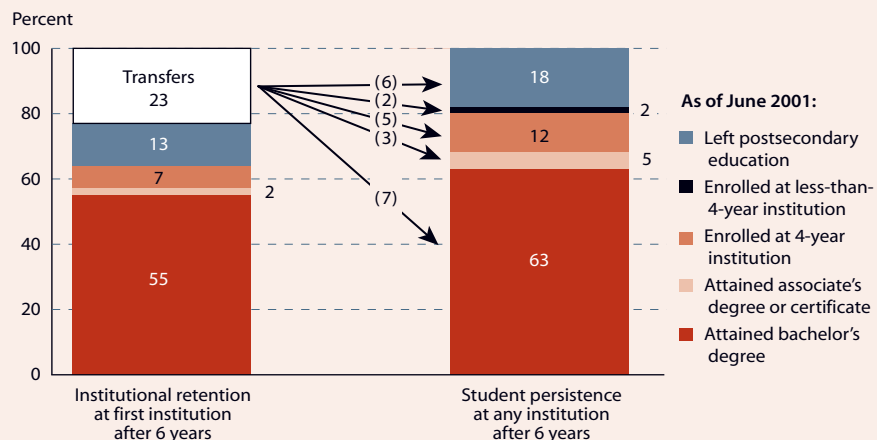
Attainment rates and transfer behavior differed for students who began at public versus private not-for-profit 4-year institutions. For example, students who began at public institutions in 1995–96 were less likely than their peers who began at private not-for-profit institutions to earn a bachelor's degree at their first institution (50 vs. 65 percent), more likely to transfer to another institution (24 vs. 21 percent), and less likely to attain a bachelor's degree at any institution within 6 years (57 vs. 73 percent). In both the public and private not-for-profit sectors, students who began at doctorate-granting institutions were more likely than those who began at nondoctorate-granting institutions to earn a bachelor's degree either at their first institution or overall (see supplemental table 20-1).

¹ACT reports are available at <http://www.act.org/news/releases/2001/update.html>; the NCAA reports are available at <http://www.ncaa.org/>.

NOTE: Only those students with a bachelor's degree goal were included. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Students who attained a degree and then transferred or remained enrolled are included only in the attainment categories.

SOURCE: Berkner, L., He, S., and Forrest Cataldi, E. (2002). *Descriptive Summary of 1995–96 Beginning Postsecondary Students: Six Years Later* (NCES 2003–151), figure 5. Data from U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 1996/01 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:96/01).

RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE: Percentage distribution of 1995–96 first-time beginning students at 4-year institutions according to their enrollment status or degree attainment at the first and at all institutions attended as of June 2001



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Supplemental Notes 3, 8
Supplemental Table 20-1

Institutional Retention and Student Persistence at 4-Year Institutions

Table 20-1. Percentage distribution of 1995–96 first-time beginning students at 4-year institutions according to highest degree attained and 6-year retention and transfer status at the first and at all institutions attended as of June 2001, by first institution type

Enrollment status or degree attainment	All 4-year beginners	First 4-year institution type and highest offering					
		Public 4-year institution			Private not-for-profit 4-year institution		
		Total	Nondoctorate granting	Doctorate granting	Total	Nondoctorate granting	Doctorate granting
Retention and attainment at the first institution attended							
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Attained bachelor's degree	55.3	50.0	40.3	55.2	65.3	62.0	71.4
Attained associate's degree or certificate	1.6	1.8	2.9	1.2	0.9	1.2	‡
No degree, still enrolled at first institution	6.8	8.7	9.9	8.1	3.5	3.2	3.9
Left postsecondary education from first institution	13.2	15.2	19.0	13.2	9.3	10.2	7.6
Transferred from first institution	23.2	24.3	27.9	22.4	21.1	23.5	16.8
Persistence and attainment anywhere							
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Attained bachelor's degree	62.7	57.3	48.9	61.8	73.0	69.6	79.3
Attained associate's degree or certificate	4.8	5.3	7.0	4.3	3.1	3.6	‡
No degree, enrolled at a 4-year institution	11.9	14.6	16.3	13.7	7.2	7.2	7.1
No degree, enrolled at a less-than-4-year institution	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.0	2.4	1.2
Left postsecondary education	18.3	20.3	25.2	17.6	14.7	17.2	10.1

‡Reporting standards not met (too few cases).

NOTE: Only those students with a bachelor's degree goal are included. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 1996/01 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:96/01).

Institutional Retention and Student Persistence at 4-Year Institutions

Table S20. Standard errors for the percentage distribution of 1995–96 first-time beginning students at 4-year institutions according to their enrollment status or degree attainment at the first and at all institutions attended as of June 2001

Enrollment status or degree attainment	At first institution	Anywhere	Transfers
Transferred from first institution	0.8	†	†
Left postsecondary education	0.7	0.7	0.4
Enrolled at less-than-4-year institution	†	0.3	0.3
Enrolled at 4-year institution	0.5	0.6	0.4
Attained associate's degree or certificate	0.2	0.4	0.3
Attained bachelor's degree	1.2	1.2	0.4

†Not applicable.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 1996/01 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:96/01).

Institutional Retention and Student Persistence at 4-Year Institutions

Table S20-1. Standard errors for the percentage distribution of 1995–96 first-time beginning students at 4-year institutions according to highest degree attained and 6-year retention and transfer status at the first and at all institutions attended as of June 2001, by first institution type

Enrollment status or degree attainment	All 4-year beginners	First 4-year institution type and highest offering					
		Public 4-year institution			Private not-for-profit 4-year institution		
		Total	Nondoctorate granting	Doctorate granting	Total	Nondoctorate granting	Doctorate granting
Retention and attainment at the first institution attended							
Total	†	†	†	†	†	†	†
Attained bachelor's degree	1.17	1.42	2.02	1.87	1.81	2.74	1.70
Attained associate's degree or certificate	0.21	0.29	0.62	0.30	0.21	0.32	‡
No degree, still enrolled at first institution	0.46	0.65	1.12	0.82	0.54	0.71	0.78
Left postsecondary education from first institution	0.65	0.85	1.34	1.10	0.92	1.38	0.75
Transferred from first institution	0.75	0.94	1.41	1.19	1.24	1.84	1.25
Persistence and attainment anywhere							
Total	†	†	†	†	†	†	†
Attained bachelor's degree	1.15	1.39	2.06	1.83	1.75	2.67	1.56
Attained associate's degree or certificate	0.39	0.52	0.93	0.60	0.46	0.65	‡
No degree, enrolled at a 4-year institution	0.56	0.76	1.17	1.00	0.74	1.02	0.95
No degree, enrolled at a less-than-4-year institution	0.28	0.40	0.55	0.53	0.36	0.53	0.38
Left postsecondary education	0.74	0.95	1.52	1.20	1.13	1.74	0.93

†Not applicable.

‡Reporting standards not met (too few cases).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 1996/01 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:96/01).