Yearly Success and Progress Rates

National Student Clearinghouse™
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The national six-year college completion rate continues to grow. But there is a disadvantage in students who first enroll on a part-time basis, with elevated stop-out rates from the very first year.

This report shows that more than half of them (51%) stopped out by the end of year six, nearly two times larger than full-time starters (26%). The stop-out rate has gone up for part-time starters over the past years, while data shows it is down for full-time counterparts.

The *Yearly Success and Progress Rates* report goes beyond traditional student outcome measures by showing year-by-year rates of retention, persistence, transfer, completion and stop-out. The report is designed to help institutions and states better identify and inform effective intervention points to increase student success.

In this report, we examine yearly academic progress for approximately 2.3 million individuals who began college for the first time in fall 2013 with the intent to earn a credential. Academic progress is measured in each subsequent academic year for six years after entry. We show the highest level of academic progress made, broken out by the type of starting institution and enrollment intensity at entry (full-time vs. part-time). Please note that starting enrollment intensity is not a sole factor determining a student's outlook on college completion. Results do not account for enrollment status changes after entry.

In addition to the national-level outcomes summarized below, a 50-state data dashboard is available in the Appendix. The outcome categories are modeled after those used in the Student Achievement Measure (SAM), and can be used as national and state-level benchmarks for institutions participating in SAM. It is important to note that unlike in SAM reporting, undergraduate certificates are counted as completions in this report. More details on the cohort and outcome definitions can be found in the methodological notes at the end of the report.

Overall Progress and Success at All Institutions

Among first-time degree-seeking students enrolling full time in fall 2013, 45.4 percent had completed a postsecondary credential by the end of year four, while 22.4 percent were no longer enrolled. By the end of year six, 65.6 percent had graduated, while 26.1 percent had left college without earning a credential (**Figure 1**). The six-year graduation rate is 1.3 percentage points higher compared to the 2012 cohort.

For students entering part time, 21.3 percent had completed a postsecondary credential by the end of year four, while 45.3 percent were no longer enrolled. By the end of year six, 34.2 percent had graduated, while 51.2 percent had left college without earning a credential (**Figure 2**). The six-year graduation rate is 1.2 percentage points higher compared to the 2012 cohort.

For students entering full time, between year four and year five, an additional 15 percent had graduated, and from year five to year six, an additional five percent of them had earned a credential. There is the retention and persistence disadvantage in students entering part time. By year six, more than half of them had stopped out, nearly two times higher than full-time starters (51.2% and 26.1%, respectively). The gaps in stop-out performance start early in the students' academic career, with part-time entrants start stopping out immediately at a much higher rate. For example, by year two, 24.4 percent of part-time entrants stopped out compared to 13.1 percent for full-time counterparts. The gap increased

further by year three, with an additional 14.2 percent of part-time entrants stopping out, as opposed to only an additional 5.9 percent for full-time starters.

First-Time Degree-Seeking Students Fall 2013 (N=2.3M)

- **82 percent entering college full time**

- **Women**
  - **50% of entering fulll time population**
  - **51% of entering part time population**

- **Age 20 or younger**
  - **83% of entering full time population**
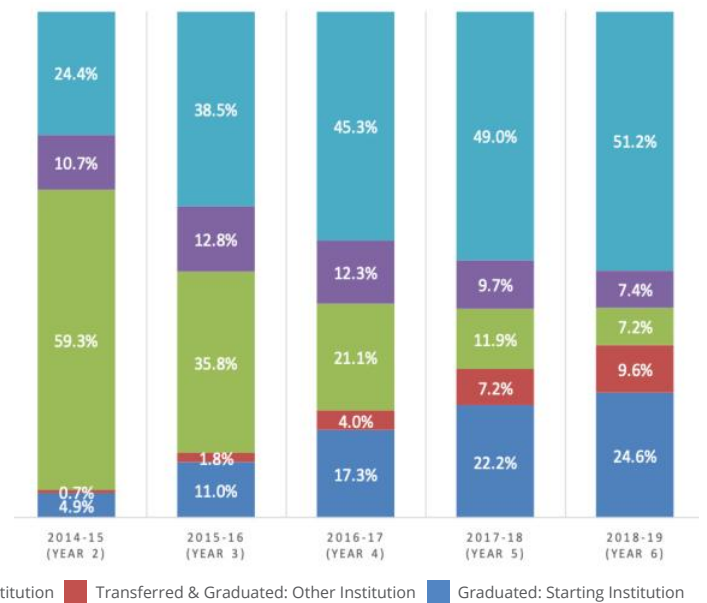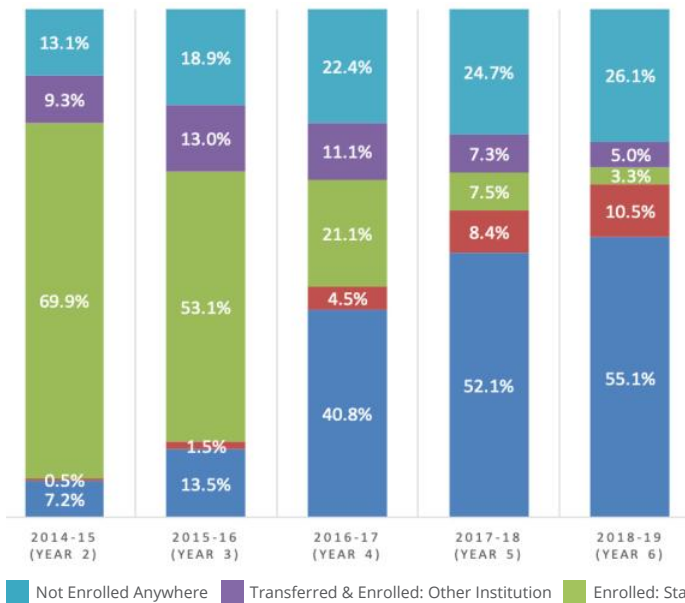 - **58% of entering part time population**

Starting at:

- **Public four-year (46%)**
- **Public two-year (33%)**
- **Private nonprofit four-year (20%)**
- **Private for-profit four-year (1%)**

Note: private two-year institution numbers are excluded.

Figure 1. First-Time, Full-Time Degree-Seeking Students at all Institutions (N= 1,875,001)

	2014-15 (YEAR 2)	2015-16 (YEAR 3)	2016-17 (YEAR 4)	2017-18 (YEAR 5)	2018-19 (YEAR 6)
Not Enrolled Anywhere	13.1%	18.9%	22.4%	24.7%	26.1%
Transferred & Enrolled: Other Institution	9.3%	13.0%	11.1%	7.3%	5.0%
Enrolled: Starting Institution	69.9%	53.1%	21.1%	7.5%	3.3%
Transferred & Graduated: Other Institution	0.5%	1.5%	4.5%	8.4%	10.5%
Graduated: Starting Institution	7.2%	13.5%	40.8%	52.1%	55.1%

Figure 2. First-Time, Part-Time Degree-Seeking Students at all Institutions (N= 401,469)

	2014-15 (YEAR 2)	2015-16 (YEAR 3)	2016-17 (YEAR 4)	2017-18 (YEAR 5)	2018-19 (YEAR 6)
Not Enrolled Anywhere	24.4%	38.5%	45.3%	49.0%	51.2%
Transferred & Enrolled: Other Institution	10.7%	12.8%	12.3%	9.7%	7.4%
Enrolled: Starting Institution	59.3%	35.8%	21.1%	11.9%	7.2%
Transferred & Graduated: Other Institution	0.7%	1.8%	4.0%	7.2%	9.6%
Graduated: Starting Institution	4.9%	11.0%	17.3%	22.2%	24.6%

Legend: Not Enrolled Anywhere | Transferred & Enrolled: Other Institution | Enrolled: Starting Institution | Transferred & Graduated: Other Institution | Graduated: Starting Institution
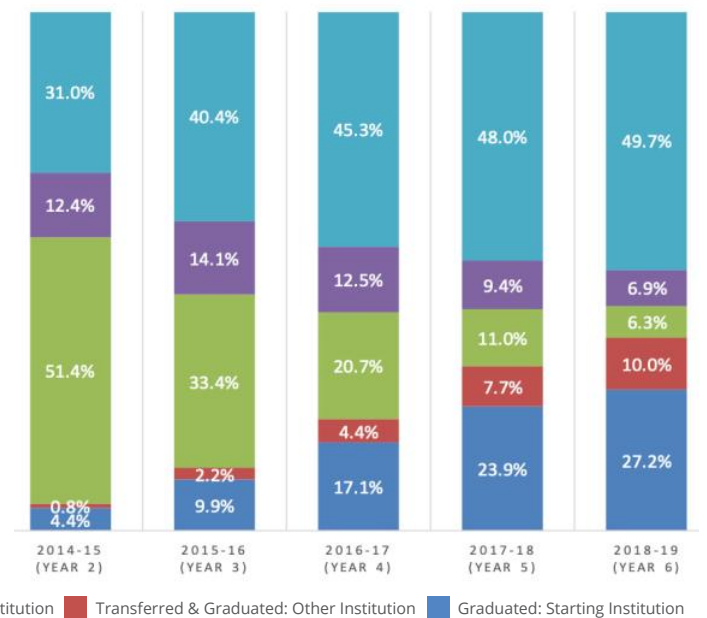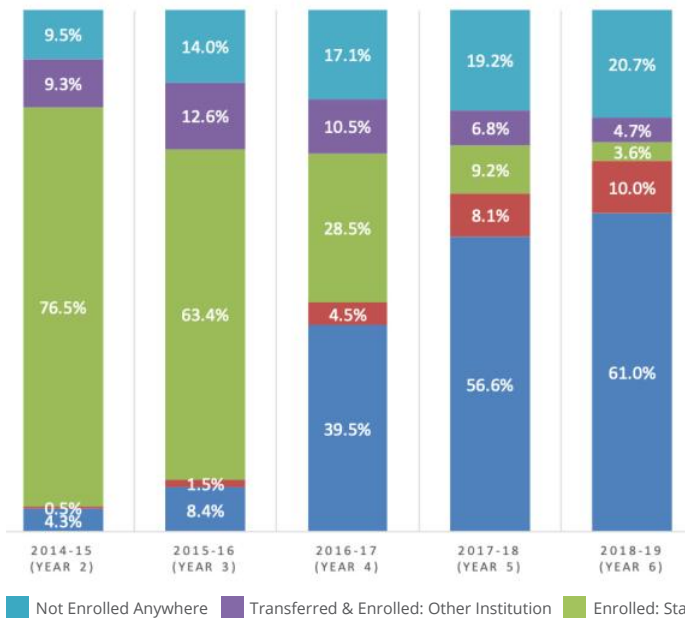
Starting at Public Four-Year Institutions

Among first-time degree-seeking students enrolling full time, 44 percent had completed a postsecondary credential by the end of year four, while 17.1 percent were no longer enrolled. This four-year completion rate is 1.8 percentage points higher than the 2012 cohort. By the end of year six, 71 percent had graduated, while 20.7 percent had left college without earning a credential (**Figure 3**).

For part-time entrants, 21.5 percent had completed a postsecondary credential by the end of year four, while 45.3 percent were no longer enrolled. By the end of year six, 37.2 percent had graduated, while 49.7 percent had left college without earning a credential (**Figure 4**). This six-year graduation rate is one percentage point higher compared to 2012.

Figure 3. First-Time, Full-Time Degree-Seeking Students at Public 4-Yr Institutions (N= 918,657)

	2014-15 (YEAR 2)	2015-16 (YEAR 3)	2016-17 (YEAR 4)	2017-18 (YEAR 5)	2018-19 (YEAR 6)
Not Enrolled Anywhere	9.5%	14.0%	17.1%	19.2%	20.7%
Transferred & Enrolled: Other Institution	9.3%	12.6%	10.5%	6.8%	4.7%
Enrolled: Starting Institution	76.5%	63.4%	28.5%	9.2%	3.6%
Transferred & Graduated: Other Institution	0.5%	1.5%	4.5%	8.1%	10.0%
Graduated: Starting Institution	4.3%	8.4%	39.5%	56.6%	61.0%

Figure 4. First-Time, Part-Time Degree-Seeking Students at Public 4-Yr Institutions (N= 118,711)

	2014-15 (YEAR 2)	2015-16 (YEAR 3)	2016-17 (YEAR 4)	2017-18 (YEAR 5)	2018-19 (YEAR 6)
Not Enrolled Anywhere	31.0%	40.4%	45.3%	48.0%	49.7%
Transferred & Enrolled: Other Institution	12.4%	14.1%	12.5%	9.4%	6.9%
Enrolled: Starting Institution	51.4%	33.4%	20.7%	11.0%	6.3%
Transferred & Graduated: Other Institution	0.8%	2.2%	4.4%	7.7%	10.0%
Graduated: Starting Institution	4.4%	9.9%	17.1%	23.9%	27.2%

Legend: Not Enrolled Anywhere | Transferred & Enrolled: Other Institution | Enrolled: Starting Institution | Transferred & Graduated: Other Institution | Graduated: Starting Institution

Starting at Public Two-Year Institutions

As shown in **Figure 5**, by the end of year three, 67.9 percent of full-time entrants had either completed a postsecondary credential (25.3%), were still enrolled in college (40.8%), or had transferred to a different institution before withdrawing (1.7%). The graduation rate of 25.3 percent is 1.7 percentage points higher compared to 2012.

As **Figure 6** shows, by the end of year three, 64.9 percent of those entering part time had either completed a postsecondary credential (12.1%), were still enrolled in college (50.5%), or had transferred to a different institution before withdrawing (2.3%). This graduation rate has barely changed from 2012.

Figure 5. First-Time, Full-Time Degree-Seeking Students at Public 2-Yr Institutions (N= 500,973)

Figure 6. First-Time, Part-Time Degree-Seeking Students at Public 2-Yr Institutions (N= 248,846)

Legend: Never Transferred and Not Enrolled | Transferred & No Longer Enrolled | Transferred & Enrolled: Other Institution | Enrolled: Starting Institution | Transferred & Graduated: Other Institution | Graduated: Starting Institution

Starting at Private Nonprofit Four-Year Institutions

Among students enrolling full time, 62.4 percent completed a postsecondary credential by the end of year four, while 12.5 percent were no longer enrolled. By the end of year six, 79.1 percent had graduated, while 15.6 percent had left college without earning a credential (**Figure 7**).

Among student entering part time, 29.6 percent had completed a postsecondary credential by the end of year four, while 42.8 percent were no longer enrolled. By the end of year six, 42.9 percent had graduated, while 46.2 percent had left college without earning a credential, the stop-out rate nearly three times higher than full-time counterparts, making it the largest performance gap of all institution types (**Figure 8**).

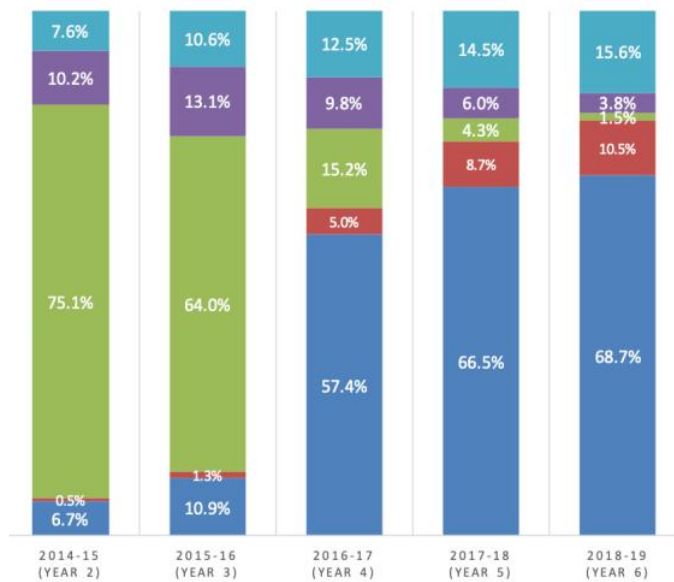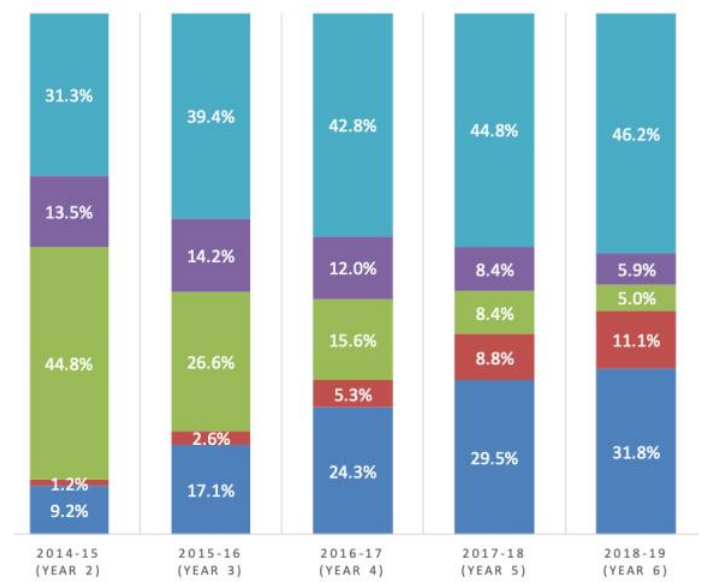## Figure 7. First-Time, Full-Time Degree-Seeking Students at Private, Nonprofit 4-Yr Institutions (N= 422,202)

	2014-15 (YEAR 2)	2015-16 (YEAR 3)	2016-17 (YEAR 4)	2017-18 (YEAR 5)	2018-19 (YEAR 6)
Not Enrolled Anywhere	7.6%	10.6%	12.5%	14.5%	15.6%
Transferred & Enrolled: Other Institution	10.2%	13.1%	9.8%	6.0%	3.8%
Enrolled: Starting Institution	75.1%	64.0%	15.2%	4.3%	1.5%
Transferred & Graduated: Other Institution	0.5%	1.3%	5.0%	8.7%	10.5%
Graduated: Starting Institution	6.7%	10.9%	57.4%	66.5%	68.7%

Figure 8. First-Time, Part-Time Degree-Seeking Students at Private, Nonprofit 4-Yr Institutions (N= 27,768)

	2014-15 (YEAR 2)	2015-16 (YEAR 3)	2016-17 (YEAR 4)	2017-18 (YEAR 5)	2018-19 (YEAR 6)
Not Enrolled Anywhere	31.3%	39.4%	42.8%	44.8%	46.2%
Transferred & Enrolled: Other Institution	13.5%	14.2%	12.0%	8.4%	5.9%
Enrolled: Starting Institution	44.8%	26.6%	15.6%	8.4%	5.0%
Transferred & Graduated: Other Institution	1.2%	2.6%	5.3%	8.8%	11.1%
Graduated: Starting Institution	9.2%	17.1%	24.3%	29.5%	31.8%

Not Enrolled Anywhere ■ Transferred & Enrolled: Other Institution ■ Enrolled: Starting Institution ■ Transferred & Graduated: Other Institution ■ Graduated: Starting Institution

Starting at Private For-Profit Four-Year Institutions

Among full-time entrants, 38.5 percent had completed a postsecondary credential by the end of year four, while 42.5 percent were no longer enrolled. By the end of year six, 47.2 percent had graduated, while 45.8 percent had left college without earning a credential (**Figure 9**). The six-year graduation rate is 5.6 percentage points higher compared to the 2012 cohort. This single-year increase was the largest of all institution types.

Among students entering part time, 27.5 percent had completed a postsecondary credential by the end of year four, while 51.4 percent were no longer enrolled. By the end of year six, 36 percent had graduated, while 55.7 percent had left college without earning a credential (**Figure 10**).

Figure 9. First-Time, Full-Time Degree-Seeking Students at Private, For-Profit 4-Yr Institutions (N= 28,078)
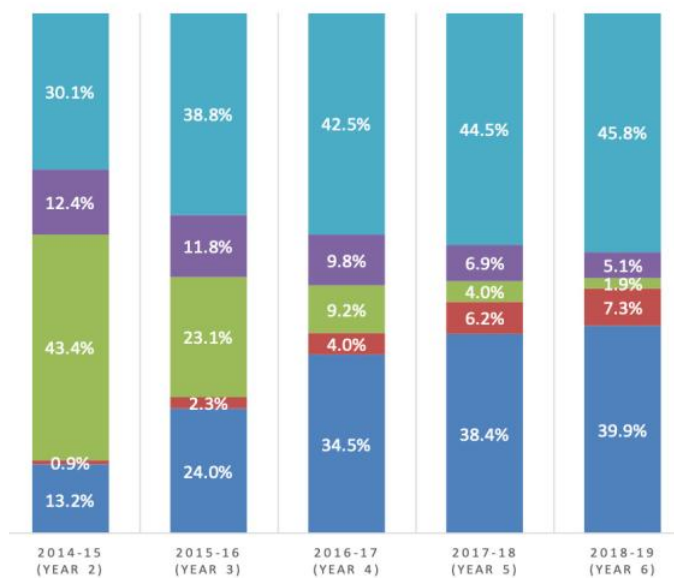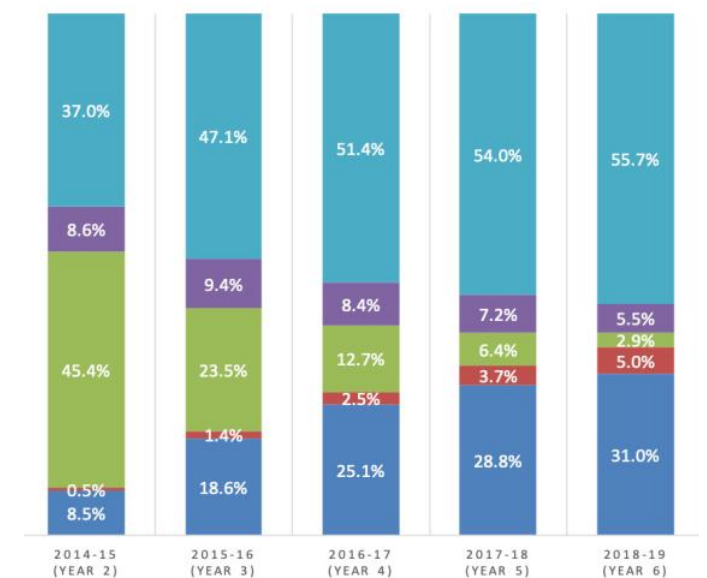

	2014-15 (YEAR 2)	2015-16 (YEAR 3)	2016-17 (YEAR 4)	2017-18 (YEAR 5)	2018-19 (YEAR 6)
Not Enrolled Anywhere	30.1%	38.8%	42.5%	44.5%	45.8%
Transferred & Enrolled: Other Institution	12.4%	11.8%	9.8%	6.9%	5.1%
Enrolled: Starting Institution	43.4%	23.1%	9.2%	4.0%	1.9%
Transferred & Graduated: Other Institution	0.9%	2.3%	4.0%	6.2%	7.3%
Graduated: Starting Institution	13.2%	24.0%	34.5%	38.4%	39.9%

Figure 10. First-Time, Part-Time Degree-Seeking Students at Private, For-Profit 4-Yr Institutions (N= 6,067)

	2014-15 (YEAR 2)	2015-16 (YEAR 3)	2016-17 (YEAR 4)	2017-18 (YEAR 5)	2018-19 (YEAR 6)
Not Enrolled Anywhere	37.0%	47.1%	51.4%	54.0%	55.7%
Transferred & Enrolled: Other Institution	8.6%	9.4%	8.4%	7.2%	5.5%
Enrolled: Starting Institution	45.4%	23.5%	12.7%	6.4%	2.9%
Transferred & Graduated: Other Institution	0.5%	1.4%	2.5%	3.7%	5.0%
Graduated: Starting Institution	8.5%	18.6%	25.1%	28.8%	31.0%

Not Enrolled Anywhere ■ Transferred & Enrolled: Other Institution ■ Enrolled: Starting Institution ■ Transferred & Graduated: Other Institution ■ Graduated: Starting Institution

Cohort Trends

Over the past five cohort years, 2009-2013, the college completion rate has steadily increased among students who first enrolled on a full-time basis. The largest increase was observed in the five-year completion rate, an increase of seven percentage points, from 53.6 percent to 60.5 percent (see **Table 1** in the Appendix). The four-year and the six-year completion rates also grew significantly for these students.

The largest completion rate increase for part-time starters occurred at year four, a three percentage-point increase from 18.2 percent to 21.3 percent, 2009-2013. However, the six-year completion rate declined almost equally, 2.5 percentage points from 36.7 percent to 34.2 percent.

As we mentioned earlier, the gap in stop-out rates by starting enrollment intensity began to occur early on, and grew wider in each subsequent academic year. And **Table 2** further illustrates the persistence disadvantage in students who first enrolled part time. From the 2009 to 2013 cohort years, the six-year stop-out rate increased significantly for these students (44.8% to 51.2%), while this rate declined for full-time starters (29.7% to 26.1%).

Implications for Institutions

Taking a full-time course load is often the focus of efforts to increase student success. Without financial aid or support services like childcare, some of these students may not be able to make the transition to full-time enrollment. This report has shown an increased stop-out rate over the past few years among part-time starters. In addition to encouraging more students to enroll full time, it is important to use early interventions to stop students from leaving college without earning a credential only to return when it is more convenient.

Suggested Citation

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Methodological Notes

Definition of *First-Time* Student

The current report is focused on all first-time degree-seeking students who began postsecondary education in fall 2013. Students are considered first-time if they met all of the following conditions:

1. Enrolled in a Title IV, degree-granting U.S. institution, excluding territories outside the U.S. (e.g. Guam, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands)

2. Did not have a previous enrollment record in the Clearinghouse data prior to the first date of enrollment, unless the previous enrollment record was before the student turned 18 years old.

3. Did not receive any degree or certificate from a postsecondary institution prior to the first date of enrollment.

Definition of Progress and Success

Students are counted in only one outcome category per year. Where the student is counted is based on a hierarchical order of outcomes listed below. For example, if a student completed a credential from the starting institution, then that outcome was rolled over for each subsequent academic year, regardless of any subsequent enrollment or completion the student may have achieved. Academic years run from July 1st through June 30th.

Graduated from Starting Institution – Students received a certificate or degree from the same institution in which they started college. Once a student completes a credential at the starting institution, the student will be counted in this category across all subsequent years, even if the student continued their education elsewhere.

Transferred and Graduated from Other Institution – Students did not receive a certificate or degree from the starting institution but did receive a certificate or degree from a different institution. Students will be counted in this category in all subsequent years unless the students eventually complete a credential at their starting institution, in which case, they will only be counted as completing at the starting institution for the applicable year, and each subsequent year.

Enrolled at Starting Institution – Students have not yet received a certificate or degree but are still enrolled at the starting institution.

Transferred and Enrolled at Other Institution – Students have not yet received a certificate or degree but are still enrolled at an institution other than the starting institution.

Not Enrolled – Students had no enrollments during the academic year in question. This is not a terminal outcome. In other words, a student can be counted as "not enrolled" in one academic year, but then counted as "enrolled" in a subsequent year if the student returns to college.

For two-year institution starters only, the "not enrolled" category is further disaggregated into the following two categories:

Transferred and No Longer Enrolled – Students had no enrollments for the academic year in question, but in a previous academic year, had transferred to an institution other than the starting institution.

Never Transferred and Not Enrolled – Student had no enrollments during the academic year in question, and had never transferred to an institution other than the starting institution.

Completion of Certificates

Unlike the Student Achievement Measure, the graduate headcounts in the current report account for undergraduate certificates. The inclusion of certificates increases graduate headcounts by 14.6 percent at public two-year institutions, 5 percent at private for-profit four-year institutions, 1.6 percent at public four-year institutions, and 0.7 percent at private non-profit four-year institutions.