The Completion Arch: Measuring Community College Student Success

Enrollment—Annotated Bibliography


Author abstract: [This publication] offers a series of transcript-based portraits of traditional-age community college students. As of 2001, students under the age of 22 constituted 42 percent of all credit-seeking students in community colleges and those under the age of 24 constituted nearly three-fourths of first-time community college students. As the baby-boom echo continues to play out with larger high school graduating classes, and as national and state policies focus even more intensely on the intersection between secondary and postsecondary education, this group is of increasing importance to community colleges. The three portraits offered here are designed to help community college administrators and faculty, along with state higher education officers, in developing responsive indicators of institutional performance. They may also prove useful to researchers in refining and refreshing the questions they ask and the variables they employ when exploring similar terrain.


After being assessed, many students entering community colleges are referred to one or more levels of developmental education. While the need to assist students with weak academic skills is well known, little research has examined student progression through multiple levels of developmental education and into entry-level college courses. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the patterns and
determinants of student progression through sequences of developmental education starting from initial referral. Our results indicate that fewer than one half of the students who are referred to remediation actually complete the entire sequence to which they are referred. About 30 percent of students referred to developmental education do not enroll in any remedial course, and only about 60 percent of referred students actually enroll in the remedial course to which they were referred. The results also show that more students exit their developmental sequences because they “did not enroll in” the first or a subsequent course than because they “failed or withdrew from” a course in which they were enrolled. We also show that men, older students, African American students, part-time students, and students in vocational programs are less likely to progress through their full remedial sequences. (Contains 10 tables.) (An earlier version of this article is available at http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Publication.asp?UID=812.)


Author abstract: Higher education is a mixed sector. It includes many public institutions as well as many independent colleges and universities. It also includes some for-profit enterprises. Data resources for the study of higher education are generally very good. This is particularly true for studies of students, faculty, institutional quality, and financial resources. This article provides a catalog of existing data resources, including comments about limitations in the quality of some data sources. The article also discusses data resource needs for the future. These needs will focus on key challenges in higher education: the rise of for-profit enterprises and private resources, new markets for postsecondary education, new instructional technologies, and changing social partnership activities. The article concludes by describing a number of studies that could be conducted using data on higher education to address issues high on the agenda of students of the nonprofit sector.


involved some significant changes from the previous releases by dividing Associate’s colleges into subcategories and using a multi-measure research index to classify doctorate-granting institutions. The 2010 update retains the same classification structure as the 2005 edition. Please see the Basic Classification Methodology for details regarding how this classification is calculated. The Basic Classification Categories are as follows: Associate’s Colleges, Doctorate-granting Universities, Master’s Colleges and Universities, Baccalaureate Colleges, Special Focus Institutions, and Tribal Colleges.


ERIC abstract: Community college students take circuitous routes through their education; very few enroll full-time and continue until they graduate. Erratic enrollment patterns have been negatively linked with academic progress and eventual credential completion—students enrolled continuously and on a full-time basis are more likely to attain their academic goals than those not enrolled continuously or who drop to part-time status. Using data from Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count, this analysis followed students through three regular academic years to identify their varying attendance patterns. Determining students’ reasons for changing their enrollment status may help colleges become more sensitive to how they might help students who are intent on their goals, but inconsistent in their pursuit of education. The analysis suggests that, in addition to leaving college without credentials, students often shift among full-time, part-time, and non-attendance. Measuring persistence simply by determining if a student enrolls over successive enrollment periods misses the complexity indicated by these data, as community college students take many diverse paths to achieve their goals.


Miami-Dade Community College will soon start offering bachelor’s degrees as part of a policy to increase the number of four-year degrees awarded in the state. As part of the change, it will drop the word “Community” from its name. Community colleges in several other states have also started awarding bachelor’s degrees or are proposing to do so in the future.

Author abstract: In early 2000, Florida’s work force wasn’t keeping pace with demand. The state decided that a then-novel credential, a bachelor’s degree from a community college, was the solution. Nationwide, 17 states now allow community colleges to award baccalaureate degrees, whether bachelor’s of science or bachelor’s of applied science. Some community colleges have become four-year institutions. Other states, like California, are considering community-college baccalaureates. Florida leads the way with 19 community colleges authorized to award bachelor’s degrees, in fields as varied as cardiopulmonary sciences, interior design, banking, fire-science management and digital media.


Among other provisions, established the Higher Education General Information Survey and most postsecondary student financial aid programs.


Author abstract: This report assesses the quality of some IPEDS data collected during the 2002–03 academic year. The evaluation used information originally collected from Title IV institutions in 2002–03 and new or modified information collected in 2003–04 using the Prior Year Data Revision System. Additionally, the evaluation used information from the Thomson Corporation to assist in the assessment of the quality of some of the 2002–03 data. The study was initiated by the National Center for Education Statistics within the U.S. Department of Education with the intent of helping improve their ability to judge IPEDS data quality and to develop more effective strategies to improve this quality.


The number of FTE students is calculated based on fall student headcounts as reported by the institution on the IPEDS Enrollment component.

This annual component of IPEDS collects data on the number of students enrolled in the fall at postsecondary institutions. Students reported are those enrolled in courses creditable toward a degree or other formal award; students enrolled in courses that are part of a vocational or occupational program, including those enrolled in off-campus or extension centers; and high school students taking regular college courses for credit.


One of nine institutional categories resulting from dividing the universe according to control and level. Control categories are public, private not-for-profit, and private for-profit. Level categories are 4-year and higher (4 year), 2-but-less-than 4-year (2 year), and less than 2-year. For example: Public, 4-year is one of the institution sectors.


The sum of students enrolled for credit with each student counted only once during the reporting period, regardless of when the student enrolled.


This table shows the number and percent of students enrolled at Title IV postsecondary institutions in the United States in fall 2008. Enrollment is shown by enrollment characteristics and student demographic characteristics.

This table shows the number of unduplicated student enrollments at Title IV postsecondary institutions in the United States in the 2008–09 academic year. Enrollment is shown by enrollment characteristics and student demographic characteristics.


Author abstract: This Special Supplement to The Condition of Education 2008 provides a descriptive profile of community colleges in the United States, examines the characteristics of students who entered community college directly from high school, and looks at rates of postsecondary persistence and attainment among community college students in general. It also compares the characteristics of these institutions and of the students who enroll in them with those of public and private 4-year colleges and universities.


These Web Tables present data on the enrollment experiences of a nationally representative sample of 2003–04 first-time postsecondary students over a period of 6 academic years, from 2003–04 to 2008–09. Tables include students’ certificate or degree attainment and persistence at their first institution and at any institution; withdrawal from both first institution and from postsecondary education without a degree or certificate; characteristics of first transfer among students who transferred; and 4-, 5-, and 6-year bachelor’s degree completion rates. Results are shown by students’ demographics, enrollment characteristics, and persistence risk factors.

Author abstract: The 46th in a series of publications initiated in 1962, the Digest’s primary purpose is to provide a compilation of statistical information covering the broad field of American education from prekindergarten through graduate school. The Digest contains data on a variety of topics, including the number of schools and colleges, teachers, enrollments, and graduates, in addition to educational attainment, finances, and federal funds for education, libraries, and international comparisons.