

Findings from Cohort Milestone Tracking Research (Higher Bar for English and Math Variation)

Research has been conducted to follow entering cohorts of first-time-to-college students for up to six years to determine the percentage of the cohort that achieves various milestones and when students do so on the path to completion (of a degree, certificate, or transfer). The findings of the tracking analyses provided in this packet are based on tracking fall entering cohorts of students, term by term, who have an Enrollment Status of first-time to college. The present cohorts include both students who have a Matriculation Status of “Matriculated” as well as those who may be “Exempt.” Previous First-time College cohort tracking research, which was *not* term by term, excluded Exempt students from the initial cohort. While approximately 15% of the present cohorts are Exempt and hence are not identical to cohorts of previous research, it has been found that including Exempt students does not materially affect general findings and patterns. Thus, it is not clear what an Exempt status means at entrance. This tracking can, however, be easily re-run to exclude Exempt students if desired.

The “Higher Bar” in the title refers to shifting the methodology of the study from *passing* college level math and English with a D grade or better to *successfully completing* college level math and English with a C grade or better. This affects the college level math and English milestones rates as well as the rates involved in Transfer Ready status which require the math and English milestones plus passing 60 or more college level units.

Except for the page 3, the packet consists of the milestone outcomes for the Fall 2004 First-time College Cohort at Laney College tracked term by term for six years.

Highlights of Findings:

- The data on page 3 shows that there has been little variation in term to term persistence for First-time College Fall cohorts entering from 2002 to 2006.
- 59% of the cohorts’ students persist to spring, meaning that 41% of the students fail to persist to spring, their second term (page 4).
- Only 45% persist to the following fall. By the third fall 70% of the cohort is no longer enrolled though a few (about 3%) have completed by then (page 4).
- Certificate and degree awards numbers become relatively significant by the end of the second year and continue to accumulate over the next four years though at a third of the rate in the sixth year (page 4).
- By the end of the sixth year, 7% of the cohort has earned a certificate or associate’s degree (page 3). (Available data does not enable term by term tracking for transfer but previous tracking studies show that about 8% of this cohort will transfer within six years.)
- By the end of the sixth year, 10% of the cohort continues to persist (page 4).
- By the end of the sixth year, 42% of the cohort has earned 12 or more college level (CL) units. 12 or more CL units are earned by 21% of the cohort within the first two years, strongly indicating that if not earned within two years, it will not be earned. The great majority achieving this milestone do so in the first year (page 7).
- By the end of the sixth year, 25% of the cohort has earned 30 or more college level units. 30 or more CL units are earned by 36% of the cohort within the first three years, strongly indicating that if not earned within three years, it will not be earned. The great majority achieving this milestone do so in the first second year (page 8).
- By the end of the sixth year, 26% of the cohort has successfully completed (C or better) a college level English course. 60% who do so achieve this milestone within the first year (page 9).

- By the end of the sixth year, 25% of the cohort has successfully completed (C or better) a college level math course. Again, 60% who do so achieve this milestone within the first year (page 10).
- By the end of the sixth year, 9.0% of the cohort has achieved Transfer Ready status (page 11). Transfer Ready is defined liberally for this study as only requiring the successful completion (C or better) of at least one CL English, one CL math course, and earning 60 or more CL units (regardless of GPA).
- The data of pages 12 and 13 show that gender is unrelated to achieving the milestones of earning 12 or more or 30 or more college level units.
- Page 14 shows that gender has a relationship with achieving Transfer Ready status as females achieve this status at 10.3% rate compared to males 8.0% rate. The female rate is 28% higher than the male rate.
- The data of pages 15, 16 and 17 show that ethnicity is related to achieving the milestones of earning 12 or more or 30 or more college level units and of achieving Transfer Ready status. Asian/PI's achieve these milestones at the highest rate by far, followed in order by Whites, Latinos, and African-Americans.
- Only 32% of new African-American students earn 12 or more CL units within six years compared to 42% for the entire cohort and 58% for Asian/PI's (page 15).
- Only 16% of new African-American students earn 30 or more CL units within six years compared to 25% for the entire cohort and 40% for Asian/PI's (page 16).
- African-Americans achieve Transfer Ready status a 3.5% rate, whites at a 6.5% rate, and Latinos at 6.6% rate. Asian/Pacific Islanders achieve Transfer Readiness status a 18.9% rate, three times the rate of the next best achieving ethnic group.
- The data of pages 18, 19, and 20 show that age is related to achieving the milestones of earning 12 or more or 30 or more college level units and of achieving Transfer Ready status.
- Young students (ages 17 to 25) achieve the milestone of 12 or more CL units at a rate 50% higher than older students. 58% of those ages 16-18 and 41% of those ages 19-24 achieve this milestone within six years compared to 33% for those older than 25 (page 18).
- Young students (ages 16 to 24) achieve the milestone of 30 or more CL units at a rate 75% higher than older students. 39% of those ages 16-18 and 22% of those ages 19-24 achieve this milestone within six years compared to about 17% for those older than 25 (page 19).
- Young students (ages 16 to 24) achieve the milestone of Transfer Ready status at a rate about three times the rate of than older students. 16.6% of those ages 16-18 and 8.6% of those ages 19-24 achieve this milestone within six years compared to about 3.5% for those older than 25 (page 20).
- The Fall 2004 cohort consisted of 2,458 students. 512 or 21% were full-time and 1,946 or 79% were part-time during their first semester. (Summary milestone matrix of page 2)
- Full-time students persisted to the next semester (spring) at an 83% rate compared to 51% for part-time students (pages 2 and 5).
- Full-time students persisted to the next fall (their third semester) at a 60% rate compared to 38% for part-time students (pages 2 and 5).
- Full-time students earned 98 degrees or certificates (awards) over the six-year tracking period, the majority of which were earned at the end of two years and the during their third year. This is a 19% rate of earning an award within six-years (page 5).
- Part-time students earned 75 awards over the six-year tracking period, a significant number at the end of four years. This is a 4% rate of earning an award within six years (pages 2 and 6).
- Thus, while full-time students were only 20% of the cohort, they earned 57% of the awards.
- 6% of full-time students were persisting at the end six years while 11% of part-time students were persisting at that point (pages 5 and 6).

- Nearly two-third (57%) of full-time students passed a college level English course over the six-year tracking period compared to just about a fifth (18%) for part-time students (page 21).
- Two-thirds (63%) of full-time students passed a college level math course over the six-year tracking period compared to 15% for part-time students (page 22).
- 94% of full-time students earned at least 12 college level units over the six-year tracking period. 74% achieved that milestone in the first semester (page 23).
- 29% of part-time students earned at least 12 college level units over the six-year tracking period. About half achieving that milestone did so by the end of their second semester. It took five more years to achieve other half (page 23).
- 65% of full-time students earned at least 30 college level units over the six-year tracking period. 75% achieving that milestone did so by the end of their third semester (page 24).
- 14% of part-time students earned at least 30 college level units over the six-year tracking period. About half achieving that milestone did so by the end of their fourth semester. It took four more years to achieve other half (page 24).
- 27% of full-time students achieved Transfer Ready status over the six-year tracking period. 85% achieving that milestone did so by the end of their third year (page 25).
- Only 4.4% of part-time students achieved Transfer Ready status over the six-year tracking period. Of those achieving this milestone, 40% did so within three years (page 25).

This research confirms yet again that the first two semesters of college are far and away the most important semesters. This has been recognized nationally by the expansion of the First-Year Experience program across the country first developed and fostered by the University of South Carolina. If students don't experience success and achieve significant milestones within their first term or year, they are highly unlikely to ever achieve them, particularly such more demanding milestones as successfully completing a college level math or English course and of earning 30 or more college level units.

This research displays in dramatic terms that those entering on a part-time basis are highly at risk of failing to succeed. Only 38% are even retained to the following fall term. Only 19% ever pass (D or better grade) a college level English course. Only 16% ever pass a college level math course. Only 3.9% earn an award and only 4.5% achieve Transfer Ready status (and these last two outcomes probably greatly overlap). Yet 80% of our entering students begin their college careers on a part-time basis.

This means that either we need to find a way to enable more students to attend full-time especially during their first four semesters of college, or we need to find dramatically more powerful ways of supporting part-time students in achieving key milestones (and celebrating those achievements) on the way to completion.

Note that 10% of the cohort is still persisting after six years. This group of students would appear to benefit from support to complete. If all of them did complete it would double the completion rate of the cohort.

The template used for this research can identify individual students at each milestone. Appropriate support for students at the various milestones on their path could have a huge impact on progress.