

Postsecondary Progression of 1993-94 Florida Public High School Graduates: 2002 Update



Council for Education Policy,
Research and Improvement

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Study Background and Purpose

This status report documents the postsecondary progress of the 1993-94 Florida public high school graduating class through the Spring term of 2001, or seven years after high school graduation. The two major outcomes addressed in this progress report were baccalaureate degree completion and the time/credit hours to baccalaureate degree completion. The study focused on 1993-94 public high school graduates who by Fall 1994 enrolled in baccalaureate degree programs or associate in arts or general freshman community college programs. Analyses examined the relationship between the outcomes of interest and a variety of factors, including pre-college student attributes, college student experiences, and institutional characteristics.

Findings—Cohort Overview

There were 90,072 graduates from Florida public high schools in 1993-94. Of these 82,787 (91.9 percent) had valid social security numbers for subsequent tracking.

Gender. The high school graduating cohort was 52.5 percent female. Among students who matriculated to a postsecondary institution in Fall 1994, females increased their share of the enrollment in all sectors. This increase was most pronounced in the independent sector.

Race/Ethnicity. When comparing the student enrollment distribution of public high school

graduates to that of students who matriculated to a postsecondary institution in Fall 1994:

- The enrollment share of white students increased among students who matriculated to the Community College System (CCS) and State University System (SUS).
- The enrollment share of black students decreased among community college and state university matriculants but increased among students who matriculated to one of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida (ICUF).

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**What Matters in
Bachelor's Degree
Completion?**



An internet-based application tool has been developed to demonstrate the interactive nature of the multivariate model derived to predict the likelihood of bachelor's degree completion within seven years. This tool calculates bachelor's degree completion probabilities based on a variety of user-designed scenarios. To specify scenarios of interest, visit the Council's website at <http://www.cepri.state.fl.us>

- The enrollment share of Hispanic students decreased among SUS and ICUF matriculants but increased slightly among CCS matriculants.

Family Income. From the available data, the estimated family income of students in the SUS cohort more frequently fell within the upper income ranges than did family incomes of students in the ICUF and CCS cohorts.

High School Academic Profiles. High school transcript analysis revealed that 43 percent of the 1993-94 graduates had completed the course distribution prescribed for SUS admission. Students matriculating at a state university were far less likely to require remediation and more likely to have gained credit through acceleration mechanisms such as dual enrollment and credit by examination.

Initial Postsecondary Sector Attended. Of the 82,787 1993-94 public high school graduates, 39,095 (47.2 percent) were found enrolled the following fall semester in institutions included in the cohort study database. An additional 10 percent were estimated to have enrolled at postsecondary institutions out of state, for an overall continuation rate of about 57 percent.

- 15 percent of the high school graduating class initially enrolled in the State University System.
- 28.8 percent enrolled at a community college.
- 3.4 percent enrolled at one of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida.

Part-Time and Full-Time Enrollment. Students in the SUS cohort were much more likely to enroll full-time (95 percent) in Fall 1994 than were students in the CCS cohort (66 percent).

Working While Enrolled. As students progressed through their postsecondary careers, the percentage working while enrolled in classes increased, from 25 percent in Fall 1994 to 72 percent in Fall 2000. Community college matriculants were more likely than their state university counterparts to work while attending college.

Financial Aid. Seventy-five percent of the SUS cohort received financial aid in Fall 1994, compared to 46 percent of CCS cohort.

- Whereas the majority of financial aid awarded to the CCS cohort was need-based throughout the seven-year tracking period, financial aid awarded to students in the SUS cohort in their first four years of enrollment was primarily non-need based. In both cohorts, the distribution of aid dollars awarded became decidedly more need-based over the course of the tracking period.
- Cumulative loan debt increased as students obtained higher levels of degrees. The accumulated debt burden was also generally higher for students with financial need. Among students whose highest level of educational attainment by Spring 2001 was a bachelor's degree, median cumulative debt was about \$14,000 for state university native students and \$10,000 for community college transfers.

Seventh Year Progression Findings

Highest Credential Held. As of Spring 2001, the vast majority (74.4 percent) of students in the cohort still had not earned *any* credential at a state university or community college, reflecting high school graduates' modest levels of initial postsecondary participation as well as the academic progression of matriculants to postsecondary education. Among the students who enrolled in college immediately following high school graduation, 62 percent of the CCS cohort

had no postsecondary credential by Spring 2001, compared to 28.7 percent of the SUS cohort.

The highest degree held for 14.5 percent of the cohort overall was a bachelor's degree, while 7.9 percent held an associate degree. Among students who enrolled in college immediately following high school graduation:

- A bachelor's degree was the highest credential held for 58 percent of the students.

- An associate's degree was the highest credential held for 18.6 percent of the students. Another 15.6 percent had obtained a baccalaureate degree, and 0.8 percent had obtained a post-baccalaureate degree.

Paths to the Baccalaureate Degree. For students who had earned a bachelor's degree at a state university by Spring 2001, the most prevalent degree path was that of the native state university student who never transferred out of the SUS. This route was taken by nearly 57 percent of bachelor's degree earners. The two-plus-two transfer model was a distant second, accounting for about 26 percent of all bachelor's degree earners.

Graduation Rates. The overall seven-year baccalaureate attainment rate for the cohort was 39.9 percent, compared to the six-year graduation rate of 35.7 percent. The seven-year rate was 63.9

percent for the SUS cohort and 21.3 percent for the CCS cohort. Other highlights through the Spring term of 2001:

Seven years following their high school graduation, the vast majority of students — 74.4 percent — still had not earned any postsecondary credential at a state university or community college.

- Graduation rates increased with high school academic preparation and performance, family income, and full-time attendance.
- Multiple transfers, as measured by the number of unique institutions attended over the tracking period, were generally associated with lower graduation rates.
- The graduation rate was higher for females (42.8 percent) than for males (35.9 percent).

- Graduation rates were higher for Asian and white students (about 46 percent) than for black and Hispanic students (about 29 percent).

Multivariate Analyses

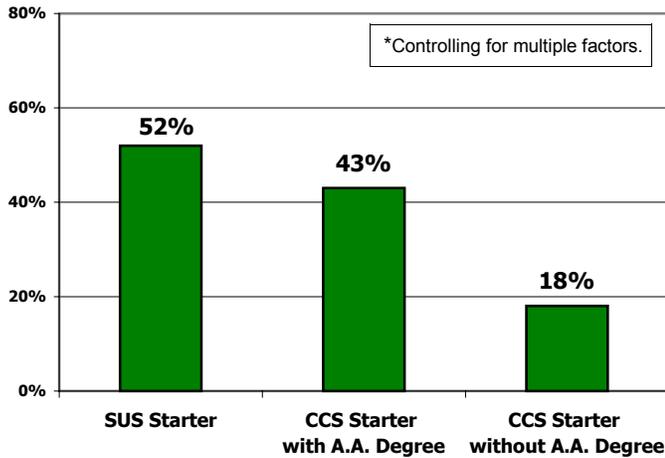
Multivariate analyses were conducted in order to determine the impact of a given variable, in the presence of other factors, on (1) the likelihood of bachelor's degree completion and (2) time to degree.

Factors Predicting Bachelor's Degree Completion. The following conclusions were drawn from the multivariate analysis of the likelihood of baccalaureate degree completion within seven years:

- High school academic preparation and achievement matter. Among student demographic and secondary performance factors, high school grade point average had the strongest effect on baccalaureate degree completion. Although community college matriculants were predicted less likely to earn a bachelor's degree in a seven-year period, community college starters with better high school grade point averages reduced the gap on students who started at a state university.
- Although where a student initially enrolls may be dictated by academic, financial, or geographical considerations, there are things students can do to enhance the likelihood of completing the bachelor's degree. Among the postsecondary enrollment factors, starting at a state university, full-time enrollment, and postsecondary first-term grade point average appeared to have the strongest effect on the likelihood of earning the degree within seven years. Also, the more a student changes institutions, the less likely he or she is to earn a baccalaureate in the time frame specified here.
- For community college matriculants, earning an associate's degree more than doubled the likelihood of earning a bachelor's degree within seven years. Though a difference remained, the likelihood of baccalaureate degree completion for students from the community college cohort who completed an associate's degree approached that of state university native students.

Factors Explaining First Bachelor's Time-to-Degree. The following conclusions were drawn from

Estimated Chance of Bachelor's Degree Completion within Seven Years*



the multivariate analysis of time to degree completion. Given the limited seven-year tracking period:

- The number of terms needed to earn the first bachelor's degree was decreased the most by the student's high school grade point average.
- Conversely, time to degree increased most as a result of pursuing a longer-than-average academic major and the number of "stopouts" in attendance.
- Beginning enrollment at a state university as opposed to a community college decreased the time to degree; however, controlling for other variables in the model, time to degree decreased by only half of one semester for students in the SUS cohort.

Please visit our website at <http://www.cepri.state.fl.us> for the full report