

Counting It Right: National Student Clearinghouse® Research Center™ Releases Third Annual State-Level College Completions Numbers

Substantial Decrease in College Drop-Out Rate When Count Those Who Finish Elsewhere

Herndon, Virginia, February 24, 2015 – The just-released [Signature Report 8 State Supplement](#) from the [National Student Clearinghouse® Research Center™](#) continues demonstrating the value of counting student completions that happen at schools different from those where students started. The state-specific results show that, in the majority of states, not tracking completions elsewhere would have resulted in reporting at least one-third of students who started in four-year public institutions as drop-outs. The supplement is a state-level look at the Research Center’s recent report on graduation rates for [students who entered college during the Great Recession](#).

The Research Center’s fall 2014 report, which was the first study of graduation rates for students who began college during the Great Recession, found that, nationally, while a larger number of students enrolled during this period, completion rates declined. The new state supplement, and all Research Center reports, are based on student-level data made available to the Clearinghouse by its more than 3,600 participating colleges and universities, which tracks 96 percent of college enrollments nationwide.

The state supplement focuses on first-time degree-seeking students who entered colleges and universities in fall 2008, following them through May 31, 2014. It highlights six-year student outcomes, including degree/certificate completion and continuing enrollment. The reports look at students by enrollment intensity (full-time, part-time or mixed), by age at first entry to college, and by gender.

In 11 states, at least one in five women who started at two-year public institutions completed at a four-year institution. Only in two states did at least 20 percent of men who started at a two-year public institution complete at a four-year institution. Additionally, in most states, traditional-age students starting at four-year public institutions had higher completion rates than the delayed entry (age 21-24) and adult learner (over age 24) groups. In six states (Arizona, California, Iowa, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina), delayed entry students had a higher completion rate than traditional-age students.

In only five states, at least one in three exclusively part-time students at four-year public institutions received a credential (compared to 21 percent nationally). In 21 states, more than 70 percent of students in this category had not received a credential and were not enrolled at the end of six years (compared to 68 percent nationally).

Other findings include:

- Nationally, 13 percent of students who started at a four-year public institutions, completed at a school other than the starting institution. In almost half of the states (24), students who started at four-year public institutions had a higher completion rate

elsewhere, with Minnesota having the highest rate at 25 percent followed by Missouri with 24 percent.

- In 16 states, for students who started at four-year private nonprofit institutions, the completion rate was over 74 percent, the overall U.S. completion rate for students who started in this sector. In all but one of those 16 states, one in 10 completions happened at an institution other than the starting institution. In two states (Minnesota and New York), one in five students who started at four-year private non-profit institutions and completed a degree did so at an institution other than the one where they first enrolled.
- Nationally, one in three students who started at two-year public institutions completed at an institution other than the one where they first enrolled. In seven states, more than 40 percent of all completions for two-year public starters happened elsewhere.
- In 22 states, more than five percent of the starting cohort in four-year public institutions completed in a state different than the starting institution's state. This was true for students who started at four-year private non-profit institutions in 33 states.
- In five states (Iowa, North Dakota, Virginia, Kansas, Texas), more than 20 percent of the students who started at two-year public institutions completed at a four-year institution (with or without first receiving a credential at a two-year institution) within six years. Kansas had the highest rate at 25 percent followed by Virginia at 23 percent (compared to 16 percent nationally).

About the National Student Clearinghouse® Research Center™

The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center is the research arm of the National Student Clearinghouse. The Research Center collaborates with higher education institutions, states, school districts, high schools, and educational organizations as part of a national effort to better inform education leaders and policymakers. Through accurate longitudinal data outcomes reporting, the Research Center enables better educational policy decisions leading to improved student outcomes.

To learn more, visit <http://research.studentclearinghouse.org>.

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