

College Completion

Students Getting Through College Successfully

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Project on Academic Success



INDIANA UNIVERSITY
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Setting the Context for the Conversation

- Restore America's Leadership in Higher Education
 - 5th in percentage of 25 – 64 year olds with a degree (40%)
 - 12th in percentage of 25 – 34 year olds with a degree (40%)
 - To be at the top we must have at least 55% with a college degree.
- Other non-profit groups have made it their goal to meet this challenge
 - Lumina Foundation – 60% by 2025
 - College Board – 55 % by 2025

Who is being counted and why are they not completing?

- Student variables explain a large portion of any institutions graduation rate.
- The federal graduation rate only counts first-time, full-time students. It does not count transfer students or part-time students.
- Most policy makers pay close attention to the margins and little attention to the large number of students in the middle.
 - Merit aid for high achieving students
 - Funding for developmental education for low achieving students

Research that can inform the conversation

- National Survey of Student Retention Practices
 - Actionable Institutional Practices/Policies
 - Retention coordination with authority to make programmatic decisions
 - Orientation
 - Academic Advising
 - Early Warning
 - Student – Faculty Interaction
 - Research and Assessment
 - Strongest effect on retention
 - Authority of the retention coordinator to enact programmatic changes to improve retention
 - Extensiveness of structures to improve retention of students of color

Research that can inform the conversation

- Mobile Working Student Collaborative
 - For many students working is not for luxury items, but for necessities.
 - Dependable transportation is a necessity because of the lack of public transportation
 - Cost of attending (books, fees, etc.)
 - Catch-22: financial aid policies discourage part-time course taking.
 - Working 30 hours a week or more and attending full-time affects student success.

General Recommendations

- Provide more need-based grant aid and simplify the financial aid process.
- Re-consider restrictions on grant aid for part-time attendance.
- Keep tuition cost affordable.
- Provide higher education opportunities for those in adult education programs.
- Consider an alternative graduation rate formula that does not penalize institutions serving the majority of college students.

Alternatives to traditional graduation rates

- To hold institutions accountable consider asking if the graduation rate is above or expected values.
- To set an expected graduation rate consider:
 - Institutional type
 - SAT score for students at the 75th percentile at the institution.
 - Percentage of students receiving federal grant aid (need based)
 - Percentage of minority students
 - Percentage of students 25 years and older

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engaging in practice- and policy-oriented research on academic success with emphasis on factors influencing persistence in and access to higher education