

CSU Graduation Initiative Update September 2011

I. Executive Summary

As the CSU Graduation Initiative approaches its third year we report on progress to date, exemplary campus practices, and activity in the near-term future. The report highlights the following successes and challenges:

Successes:

- The CSU system 6-year graduation rate has improved consistently over the past four years.
- All student populations are doing better.
- Some non-Underrepresented Minority (non-URM) groups are way ahead of national averages.
- The number of Latino freshmen has doubled over the last eight years, and their retention and graduation rates are improving.

Challenges:

- The achievement gap continues to widen.
- Some student populations lag national graduation rate averages (both URM and non-URM groups.)

On this basis, we share some questions that the data raise and suggest actions for the year ahead.

II. Introduction

This report from the CSU Graduation Initiative team to our 23 campuses details progress toward our systemwide goals to raise six-year graduation rates and reduce the gap in those rates between students of color and other students.

The [Progress to Date](#) section considers multiple trends in the CSU's student demographics, persistence, and recent graduation rates to suggest our advances and setbacks so far, and closes with ideas of what we can do with the information. Detailed analysis from the department of Analytic Studies in the Office of the Chancellor informs this section and is provided in full in the [Appendix](#).

The next two sections, [Overview of Campus Visits](#) and [Campus Exemplary Practices](#), are drawn from our ongoing communication with the Graduation Initiative teams at each CSU campus, and from our visits to campuses in the 2010-11 academic year. Each visit lasted a day, and included meetings with students and faculty leadership, members of the campus Graduation Initiative teams, and the campus executive leadership (Vice Presidents of Academic and Student Affairs, and President).

The campus exemplary practices we name here are also listed in the online [database](#) maintained at the Office of the Chancellor. Readers of this report are encouraged to explore the database and see what's going on around the system. Most listings include URLs or contacts for further information. From the Office of the Chancellor we will continue to facilitate inter-campus communication at our regional workshops. The workshops and the database are our acknowledgement that the Graduation Initiative's

best chance for success lies not with us but with you: the expertise of the faculty, staff, and the student and academic affairs administrators on our campuses is our trump card. If we missed some aspect of your work that you want your colleagues to know about, please log in and add to what's there.

The closing section, [Near-Term Focus](#), projects our system-level activity for the 2011-12 academic year, the third year in a six-year project. It intentionally draws from the earlier sections of this report: what the systemwide data tell us, and what we've learned from you. We look forward to continuing our collaboration in the year ahead.

Ephraim Smith
Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer

Jeff Gold
Director, Academic Technology Services

Ken O'Donnell
Associate Dean, Academic Programs and Policy

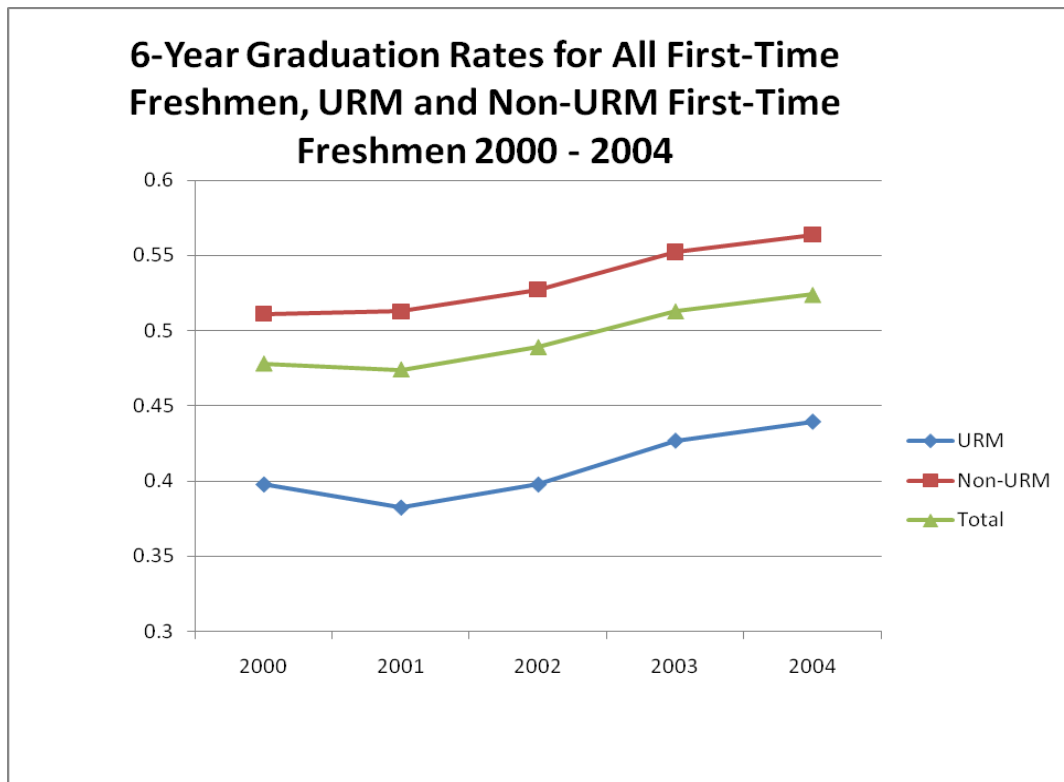
Robyn Pennington
Director, Quality Initiatives

III. Progress to Date

Student success efforts are complex and non-linear; no single trajectory of historical data tells us whether we'll meet our 2015 goals. But as we get closer to 2015, the complicated picture that emerges raises important questions about the factors that influence graduation rates, and how California State Universities might prioritize future work toward student success.

The bottom line: all groups are doing better, and the CSU is graduating more students within six years than ever before. However, the successes aren't evenly distributed: some URM populations lag national averages, and some non-URM populations are way ahead. The result is a persistent achievement gap that frustrates our attempts at equity.

A good place to begin the analysis is with the two major goals of the Graduation Initiative; increasing the percentage of first-time freshmen who graduate within 6 years, and closing the gap between students who come from underrepresented groups (URM) and students from non-underrepresented groups (Non-URM) in terms of their 6-year graduation rates. The baseline year for these goals was fall 2000.



There was an 11 percentage point difference in the 6-year graduation rates of the URM and Non-URM freshmen cohorts in the baseline year. The gap increased to 13 percentage points in 2001. With the exception of 2001, we have yet to make progress on increasing equity in graduation rates for all students.

In terms of reaching the overall graduation rate target of 54% for the 2009-2015 cohort, we see a mixed picture. Graduation rates have made steady upward progress in recent years, with the most recent data showing a 52% rate for the 2004-2010 cohort. According to an analysis conducted by CSUCO Analytic Studies, for the fall 2009 cohort to reach its 54% graduation rate target after six years, its second year continuation rate needs to be 77%. If the fall 2009 cohort follows the fall 2008 cohort continuation trajectory, the second year continuation rate might be around 73%. We are tracking our goal closely, but we do not have enough data yet to state confidently that we will meet our target.

Disaggregating the data based on race and ethnicity, we can see how individual groups of students are progressing toward degree:

URM Students

- Latinos: The number of Latino first-time freshmen has nearly doubled since 2002. This is particularly relevant when one considers the results of a recent Analytic Studies analysis which demonstrated that on average there is a 0.67 percentage-point rise in the 6-year graduation rate associated with every 10 point rise in the SAT composite score. If Hispanic students continue to have significantly lower SAT scores, this will adversely impact the progress toward an increased 6-year graduation rate.

Looking at recent cohorts of Latino students, one can see that in spite of not graduating in six years, these students have not left the University and many go on to graduate in seven or more years. Perhaps this information can be used to drive strategies that will encourage students to increase their unit load early on in order to accelerate their time to degree. However, this also raises some challenges, such as:

- How concerned should we be that many Latino students seem to be taking longer than six years to graduate, but are often persisting to graduate?
- If we advise Latino students to increase their unit load, would this facilitate time to degree or increase dropout rates?
- Knowing that Latino students are disproportionately represented in the group of students deemed not eligible for college-level work, will the EAP and Early Start help this group to graduate in the six-year time frame?
- Given the demographic trends, how can campuses begin to reach out to middle and high school Latinos to deliver targeted messages on the importance of graduating from college?
- African Americans: Roughly 7% of CSU students are African American. Over the past five years, their 6-year graduation rates have ranged from 31%-38%, well below their target, leading us to question:
 - What is responsible for the low 6-year graduation rates for African American students?
 - Which programs have proven most effective in promoting graduation among the African American population?
 - What can we learn from other institutions at the national level about facilitating graduation for African American students?

Non-URM Students

- Caucasians: White students graduate from the CSU at rates higher than the non-URM target, leading to an increased gap. Over the past five years, their 6-year graduation rates have ranged from 53%-59%, and have trended upward. We wonder:
 - Has the Graduation Initiative work to date been focused too narrowly on students with a particular background or learning style?
 - Is there anything we can learn from the academic behaviors of this group of students that might help in increasing the 6-year graduation rate of other groups?
 - What other factors are causing this trend?
- Asians: Asian students are graduating from the CSU at rates slightly lower than the non-URM target. Over the past five years, their 6-year graduation rates have ranged from 48%-53%, and have trended upward. Since California draws more students from Asian subpopulations such as Hmong, Filipinos, and Pacific Islanders, whose academic profiles are closer to traditional URM groups (i.e. African American, Latino/a, and Native American), we wonder:

- How much does this factor influence the overall graduation rate for Asian students?
- Should we be giving special consideration to these lagging groups?
- Do other states/systems have significant representation from these groups, and if so, how are they faring?
- As a general ethnic group, are Asian students leaving the CSU in good academic standing? If so, are they transferring to other 4-year institutions to complete their degrees?

The data we highlight above and provide in detail in the [Appendix](#) provide a mixed picture of the Graduation Initiative's prospects for reaching its goals for 2015 and beyond. As a system, the CSU seems to have turned a corner, incorporating student persistence and success into a new understanding of our mission and who we want to be. More of the students who come to us graduate in six years than ever before. This isn't by chance, but the result of ongoing, very hard work.

But beneath that success, we fail to facilitate the path to degree for students from varied cultural and academic backgrounds -- those who will comprise a greater and greater share of the state's population going forward. This isn't for lack of effort: especially in the offices of student affairs, CSU campuses devote at least as much attention to these groups as to the student body in general.

In terms of context, it is important to note that the parameters for the Graduation Initiative were set through our partnership with the national Access to Success project. Some parameters are arbitrary: which cohort to begin with, how to define the URM population, what timeframe to use when calculating graduation rates, whether or not to include successful transfers to and graduation from other 4-year institutions and within the system, etc. In spite of the debatable nature of these guidelines, they provide us a context for evaluating and comparing the success of our efforts to facilitate graduation and close gaps.

Within that systemwide framework, the real work of the Graduation Initiative is happening on our campuses. While the aggregated data provide an annual snapshot of progress, they stop short of giving us a full picture of work on the ground. To get a glimpse into this work, the CO Graduation Initiative team conducted a round of campus visits. The next two sections reflect what we saw.

IV. Overview of Campus Visits

The CO Graduation Initiative team conducted site visits to each of the twenty-three campuses beginning in fall 2010 and ending in spring 2011. The goal was to meet with a variety of campus stakeholders, track progress, reinforce the importance of the initiative, and maintain momentum. Meetings with campus presidents, provosts, administrators, faculty, staff, and students gave us first-hand accounts of CSU campus efforts to improve student success.

While there were clear differences between approaches, campus plans for improving graduation rates and closing achievement gaps bore many similarities. As a result of the Graduation Initiative, most campuses:

- Appreciated the “goal-oriented” approach of the initiative that respected individual campus strategies for meeting their goals;
- Formed a steering committee or other cross functional team that met regularly to implement strategies, gauge progress and make policy recommendations;
- Increased their focus on data to make strategic decisions and to funnel statistical analyses throughout the campus;
- Had good momentum increasing the 6-year graduation rate and year-to-year retention rates;
- Faced obstacles closing persistent achievement gaps;
- Reported interest in collaborating more intensely with sister CSU campuses.

Many campuses reported that they successfully linked their Graduation Initiative work into efforts that had been underway for many years. We heard accounts of how campus Graduation Initiative plans were integrated with WASC visits, grant proposals, and ongoing research endeavors. We were also told that the Graduation Initiative reenergized the work campuses had been doing in this arena and reinforced the sustained focus on student success.

Although our visits were short and allowed for only a brief glimpse of how the Graduation Initiative had been embedded into campus culture, there were several characteristics of campuses that had made good progress. These include:

- **Presidential Leadership** – Presidents were deeply engaged in all facets of the Graduation Initiative. In conversations throughout the day of our visit, administrators, faculty, staff, and students all identified the president’s leadership, vision, and continued involvement as critical to success.
- **Intra-Departmental Collaboration** – Meetings were co-hosted by the Provost and Vice President of Student Affairs, whose staff worked together seamlessly to foster student success.
- **Campus Culture of Graduation** – While hard to define, several campuses successfully created cultures of graduation where this focus penetrated every corner of the university. Examples include flagpole signs reading “Graduation Begins Today” and janitorial staff who communicated their pride in helping to improve campus climate leading to an increase in graduation rates.
- **Faculty Focus on High-Impact Practices** – Faculty demonstrated their commitment to promote student learning through interactive experiential practices such as internships, undergraduate research, and learning communities.
- **Student Engagement and Connection to Campus** – Students communicated feeling “at home” on campus, as a result of participating in meaningful activities connected to their course of study and career interest.

In the May Board of Trustees meeting, we shared video clips which convey many of the positive attributes described above. These videos can be viewed by clicking the still frames below.



V. Campus Exemplary Practices

During our campus visits, we noted a number of exemplary practices (a comprehensive list can be found below with more information on each located in our online [GI Website Database](#)). Many were substantiated with data; others were too new to be backed by quantitative evidence but had anecdotal support. Those with the greatest potential for systemwide adoption had potential for scalability, sustainability and were deemed to be cost-effective. Some promising candidates worthy of consideration for adoption by other campuses include: Using Data Analytics to Strategically Target Student Interventions (San Diego State); Peer Mentoring (CSU East Bay); Early Start Programs (CSU Bakersfield); Math Boot Camp (Monterey Bay); Year-by-Year Strategic Focus (CSU Fresno); and the Academic Recovery Program (CSU Stanislaus).

All of the exemplary practices noted during our campus visits have been added to our online collaboration website ([GI Website Database](#)).

The screenshot shows the CSU Graduation Initiative website. At the top is the CSU logo and the text "The California State University GRADUATION INITIATIVE". Below this is a banner image of graduates with the text "CSU Graduation Initiative". A navigation bar contains links for Home, Campus Plans, Calendar, Resources, About, and Campus Collaboration. The "Campus Collaboration" section is active, featuring a mouse cursor icon and the heading "Campus Collaboration". The main content area includes a welcome message: "Welcome to the CSU Campus Graduation Initiative Plan Database. This tool provides a glimpse of what campuses are doing to raise graduation rates and lower achievement gaps, and highlights exemplary practices that have proven to be successful." Below the text is a form with a "Focus Area:" label and a dropdown menu containing "Advising", "Curriculum Pathways", "Degree Requirements", "Faculty Development", and "Research and Evaluation". A "View Report" button is positioned below the dropdown. To the right of the main content is a "Log In" section with the text: "If you are a Graduate Initiative team member, please log in below to enter or edit your campus information." This section includes input fields for "Username" and "Password", and a "login" button.

Highlights of each practice can be found in the table below:

Exemplary Practice	Campus
Early Warning - To ensure that students persist through their academic career, particularly in the first year, CSUB is piloting the Hobsons EMT Retain to help identify and address students at risk for attrition.	Bakersfield
Degree Audit - CSUB has course-by-course articulations with every one of the 112 California Community Colleges and conducts course-by-course articulations for every student regardless of the US university (ies) they have attended.	Bakersfield
Early Start Program - CSUB offers remedial classes in Math and English at two levels. Students are placed in the appropriate remedial level based on their respective test scores on the Entry Level Math (ELM) exam and English Placement Test (EPT).	Bakersfield
Early Assessment Program (EAP) - In partnership with local schools, CSUB has launched an aggressive campaign to increase the number of students participating in the EAP and taking the test.	Bakersfield
Data Driven Decision Making - CSUB adopted the web-based TaskStream Assessment Management System (AMS) to provide a streamlined, accessible environment for collecting and organizing plans for assessment of student learning outcomes, and reporting assessment findings and actions taken.	Bakersfield
University Experience Program - First Year Seminar students will begin to engage in an e-portfolio reflection in a “My Mission-based Learning” portal with open-ended questions on the relationship of their course work.	Channel Islands
Undergraduate Research - A course based on faculty research is offered to groups of 4-6 students. These students learn to do research while working with the faculty member on his or her research.	Channel Islands
“Professionalized” University Advisement Center - DH has staffed its advising center with professional advisors (as opposed to faculty). This appears to have been effective in increasing retention and decreasing time to graduation.	Dominguez Hills
Peer Mentoring - Sophomore students connect personally to freshmen in course-embedded, learning centered relationships. Those sophomores who excel at the work train subsequent cohort sophomores, further reducing cost, and earn a certificate in Leadership.	East Bay
Year by Year Strategic Focus - Fresno very intentionally started with a focus on Freshmen support services, institutionalized promising practices and then began focus on sophomores, with the goal of connecting this class to their major. Departments are responsible for connecting with these students and reporting back to the provost.	Fresno

Exemplary Practice	Campus
Super Seniors - Students who have completed more than 150 earned units were required to meet with an advisor and file a graduation plan.	Fresno
Academic Success Course - Freshmen whose first semester (Fall) GPA falls below 2.0 are expected to participate in a 1 unit academic success course in Spring. The course focuses on time management, study skills, academic/career advising, information competency, campus resources, etc.	Fresno
Mandatory Advising Checkpoints - Students must see an advisor before being allowed to enroll for their third semester. Students must declare a major by their 60th unit. Students must review their degree roadmap with an advisor by their 75th unit.	Fresno
Student Government Programs - Student government programs focusing attention on improving the graduation rate. REACT (Resilient, Engaged, Advised, Connected, Tutored) encourages student involvement through a poster campaign.	Fresno
Personal Librarian - Students in the Academic Success Course (about 230 freshmen) were offered a “personal librarian” who can respond to any request they might have. Librarians presented the program, have interacted with the students via email, and are working with them on an information competency exercise in the course.	Fresno
Freshman Connect - Peer coaches use email, Facebook and some face-to-face meetings to help 120-160 freshmen learn key strategies for student success, navigate the campus, develop a sense of belonging, and become more engaged with campus activities and resources.	Fresno
Train your Brain Campaign - Posters across campus encouraging students to study 2-3 hours outside class per hour in the classroom.	Fresno
Improve Hispanic Grad Rates - Improve the Hispanic student four and five year graduation rates by working with faculty to create innovative and enhanced learning environments and by providing students with professional, career, advising and coaching support.	Fresno
Improve Student Writing Initiative - Used ETS software (Criterion) to improve student writing. Participants had higher scores on the CLA and showed more improvement from first to last papers submitted; faculty reported that students' writing assignments were easier to grade.	Fresno
Interventions with First-term Students who did not Register for the Following Semester - During the first registration period interventions were made. Many first-termers were unsure or unaware of the need to participate in the first wave of registration.	Fullerton
Determining Reasons for Graduation Deferrals - Practices were identified that result in barriers to on-time degree completion such as confusion on the general education program, major courses not taken, and upper division writing requirements not met.	Fullerton

Exemplary Practice	Campus
Identify Administrative/Bureaucratic Impediments to Registration/Degree Check/Degree Conferral - Consider mandatory degree check at 80 units at no charge with assignment of anticipated completion term based on findings.	Fullerton
Graduation Greenlight - Based on batch runs of student records, triage into on-track (no intervention needed), moderately off track (intervene quickly), and way off track (refer to more intensive interventions).	Long Beach
Probation Workshops - Proactively reach out to students nearing or on probation to provide guidance regarding how to get or remain academically qualified.	Long Beach
Beach Learning Community - Uses intensive advising, supplemental instruction, cohort-led classes, for the most academically challenged triple pre-baccalaureate students. Have three years of data showing gains in completing remedial work and retention.	Long Beach
Supplemental Instruction - Cal State LA has a long history of providing effective supplementary instruction in a variety of disciplines. Click the URL for an overview of various supplemental instruction programs and evidence of their success.	Los Angeles
Social Burden In College Students - Cal State LA has developed and validated an instrument that measures college students' academic and social burdens.	Los Angeles
Learning Communities in Composition - Preliminary data show that Cal State LA's composition learning communities are improving student success in these courses.	Los Angeles
Stretch Composition English - This highly successful model allows Cal State LA's developmental students to complete their developmental coursework within the first year and would achieve at rates similar to non-developmental students.	Los Angeles
Math Boot Camp - Students needing Math Remediation sign up for intensive, peer driven math courses in sections of up to 90 students.	Monterey Bay
Stretch English Program - Based on successful pilots, Northridge will move entirely to Stretch Writing in Fall 2012. Students have experienced higher success and lower cost in these programs, and Northridge projects that it will save \$465,000 by making this transition.	Northridge
ChAMPS (Choosing A Math Path to Success) Program - Combines a low-cost online, self-paced math tutorial with optional on-campus tutoring, and reduces the need for developmental math in Fall.	Northridge
Super Seniors - As a result of the PeopleSoft-driven Super Senior Program at Cal Poly Pomona, the number of seniors with more than 100% of the units needed for graduation who have outstanding requirements has decreased 49% university wide from 398 in 2010 to 204 in 2011.	Pomona

Exemplary Practice	Campus
Data Driven Decision Making - Retention Reporting & evidence-based, data-driven decision making; university-wide retention tracking tool; university scorecard to track progress on the initiative.	Sacramento
Retention Ambassador Program - Creation of ambassador program to help with retention.	Sacramento
College Advising Centers - Development of College Advising Centers.	Sacramento
Supplemental Instruction for Gateway Courses - Addition of supplemental instruction for gateway courses.	Sacramento
Online Roadmaps - Creation of online advising roadmaps to promote timely graduation.	Sacramento
Second Year Probationary Advising - Offering advising to second year students on probation.	Sacramento
Peer Tutoring - Development of peer tutoring and study centers to reinforce academics through the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP).	Sacramento
First Year Experience Program - Creation of a FYE program.	Sacramento
Mentoring Program - Establishment of a university-wide mentoring program.	Sacramento
Alumni - Incorporation of alumni in retention and student success efforts.	Sacramento
Recruit-Back Strategies - Employment of recruit-back strategies to increase retention through enrollment campaigns, messaging, and student follow-up.	Sacramento
Academic and Student Affairs - Integrated approach led by both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs leadership; integrative Academic Affairs/Student Affairs planning at all levels.	Sacramento
Intensive Mathematics Program (IMP) - CSUSB created an intensive, accelerated program for bringing incoming freshmen up to college level proficiency in mathematics prior to their matriculation in the fall.	San Bernardino
Reading Enhancement Program (REP) - CSUSB developed a program to remediate students who have adequate writing skills but get placed into developmental writing courses on the basis of their reading skills.	San Bernardino
Using Data Analytics to Strategically Target Student Interventions - San Diego State leadership and staff regularly meet to evaluate which populations are served by its range of interventions.	San Diego
Unit Load - Insist that Students Enroll in 15 hours per semester.	San Diego
Develop On-Line Tools so Students see on Entry what Courses they Need.	San Diego

Exemplary Practice	Campus
Tutoring Center - Pilot a Writing and Tutoring Center to support more writing activity throughout the curriculum.	San Diego
Curriculum Pathways - Remove institutional barriers to student progress.	San Luis Obispo
Block Scheduling - Institute block scheduling to ease curriculum pathways.	San Luis Obispo
EOP Academy - Sonoma's EOP learning communities have increased both retention and time to graduation rates for EOP students.	Sonoma
Peer Advising - Advising and Career Services at SSU use Peer Advisors to meet on a drop-in basis with undergraduate students to assist them in academic advising issues and basic career issues.	Sonoma
Supplemental Instruction - SSU has been growing its Supplemental Instruction program for the last four or five years, and students appear to want more. Sonoma's program targets high enrollment, low GPA courses.	Sonoma
Academic Recovery - At the end of each semester, Enrollment Services identifies students with less than a 2.0 GPA and places them on academic probation. A hold is placed on their records and they are contacted to participate in a workshop.	Stanislaus

VI. Near-Term Focus

Information from three perspectives has suggested how the CSU Graduation Initiative can make progress in the year ahead. Aggregated data from the system perspective tells us that results so far are mixed. All groups of students are likelier to graduate in six years than ever before, but achievement gaps persist and may be widening.

Our campus visits indicate that colleagues around the CSU are already engaged in best practices, many of them catalogued in the preceding section. This raises a natural question: if there's so much good work out there, why aren't the numbers better? And behind that, is there anything we can do from the system office to help?

We posed those questions to the teams we met on the campuses, and to an informal advisory group invited to the Chancellor's Office in April for a strategic planning session. It included a campus provost, a vice president of student affairs, faculty leadership, and a couple of students. The candid feedback we received from them and from campus teams provided a perspective for systemwide efforts moving forward.

Two recommendations came up more often than others:

1. **Reflect back to the campuses the data you already gather in the Chancellor's Office.** As the individual universities of the CSU examine the gaps in their graduation rates, we know from our visits that the shortcomings and target populations will vary from campus to campus. This makes systemwide interventions less promising than local ones. An appropriate role for the system office may be to help campuses prioritize their own actions, by providing you with the best data we can about what's going on locally, benchmarked against system aggregates.

In response, Analytic Studies, the CO Graduation Initiative team, and Special Consultant Desdemona Cardoza are working with two pilot campuses to develop a prototype “data dashboard.” The framework for this project comes from the Education Trust Project *Advancing by Degrees: A Framework for Increasing College Completion* (Offenstein, Moore & Shulock, 2010). This report identifies a series of indicators from the research that point to college completion in a timely manner. These consist of *milestones*, which are measurable educational achievements that students reach along the path to degree completion and *on-track indicators*, which are measurable academic and enrollment patterns that, if followed, give students a good chance of reaching key milestones and earning a degree.

Milestones include:

- Retention
- Completion of needed remediation
- Transition to college-level coursework
- Completion of general education (GE)
- Earning one year of college-level credits

On-Track Indicators include:

- Begin remediation coursework in first term
- Complete remediation within one year
- Complete college-level math/English in first or second year (depending on remediation status)
- Complete a college success course
- High rate of course completion (80 percent or better)
- Complete 20-30 credits in the first year
- Earn summer credits
- Enroll full-time
- Enroll continuously, without stop outs
- Maintain adequate academic performance

By monitoring on-track indicators, it is our hope that Provosts and other institutional leaders can better understand not only which milestones students are failing to reach, but why they are not reaching them. It can also help campuses to design interventions or policy changes to increase student success and to gauge the impact of interventions.

The data dashboard project is intended to help leaders understand the problem of low graduation rates, diagnose the reasons behind the problem and target their responses based on what they discover. The purpose of the pilot data dashboard project is to test the predictive power of these leading indicators. In other words, does achieving the milestone or on-track indicator increase the likelihood of graduation within six years for all students?

Eventually, we hope it will compile campus data that the CO already collects, and present it back to campus users who can:

- disaggregate by major discipline, student demographics, and cohort year
- compare campus performance against systemwide benchmarks for each group

2. **Go beyond the presidents and provosts.** We heard more than once that, while the accountability and visibility of involvement at the highest levels was valuable at the outset, we needed to reach further. On campus visits, we saw many successful interventions targeting at-risk groups, and -- on those campuses making the most progress -- we also saw tight partnerships between academic and student affairs, to bring those interventions into the classroom.

In response, the Graduation Initiative will focus this year on the different ways students engage with those they interact with every day, student affairs professionals and faculty in the classroom.

This year's fall workshops will host George Sanchez and Vincent Tinto, two educators whose classroom teaching is informed by their nationally recognized work on the personal and emotional connections that keep students invested in their own success. Each workshop will be open to twice the number of delegates from each campus as before (from five to ten), so that more faculty and staff can benefit.

At the same time, the Graduation Initiative is continuing to support faculty adoption of high-impact educational practices like learning communities, internships, peer mentoring, and service learning. By highlighting the value and relevance of college, these practices may help the CSU engage students with a wider range of cultural backgrounds and learning styles, improving our ability to close achievement gaps across the board.

One appeal of this focus is that we saw many campuses doing this well already. What seems to be the next step is scale: finding ways to push our best educational practices outward to all our students, and down into the lower division, before they drop out. To this end, the Graduation Initiative supported campus participation in the AAC&U Institute on High-Impact Practices and Student Success, held last summer. In December, 2011, we will continue our regional workshop series with a faculty focus, and invited national consultants who can lead discussions on how to propagate and scale up the best of our educational practices.

In the Office of the Chancellor, the initiative will strengthen connections to the departments supporting undergraduate research, service learning, and learning communities -- three high-impact practices that in the CSU are particularly widespread.

Finally, in the second half of the Graduation Initiative we want to expand our focus from freshman to include transfer students, who comprise the majority of CSU graduates. This year the CSU will admit a high number of the transfer students we want graduating in 2015. We want to know what they find when they arrive, and how we can improve their chances for success.

The Graduation Initiative remains a work in progress, and subject to swings in state funding and other external factors that could force us to change our priorities, even before the close of the coming academic year. But as of this writing, these two activities seem like promising ways to direct our best resource, the time and attention you devote to student success.

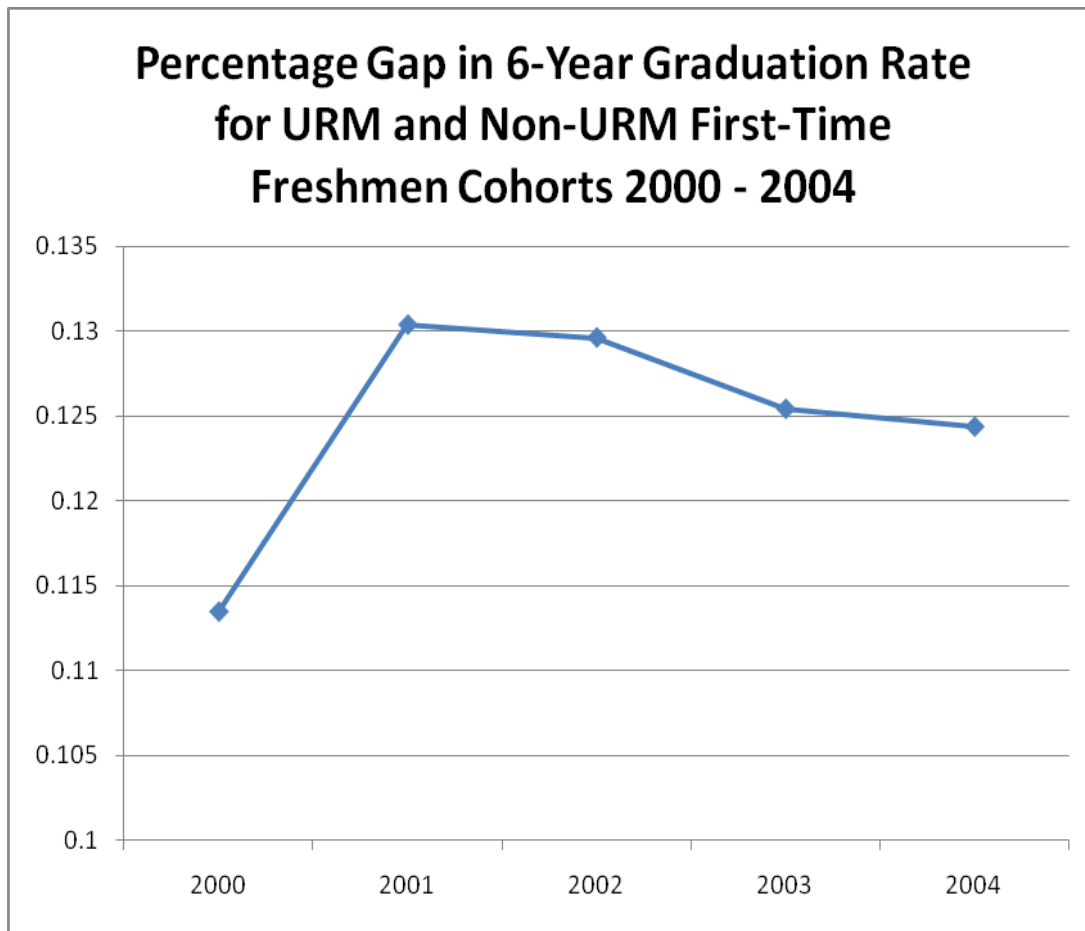
CSU Graduation Initiative Team 2011-2012 Activity Timeline

Month	Activity
August	Campus Bi-Monthly Report Due
September	(CO Team) Provide Graduation Initiative Update to Campuses
October	Data Dashboard Demo at Academic Council
November	(CO Team) National Access to Success Meeting
December	North/South Student Success Workshop (Dec 1 & 2)
January	AACU Workshop: Vision for Student Learning (Jan 25-28)
February	(CO Team) National Access to Success Meeting
March	AACU Workshop: Student Success (Mar 22-24)
April	(CO Team) National Access to Success Meeting
May	North/South Workshop (topic TBD)
June	Webinar (topic TBD)
August	Campus Bi-Monthly Report Due
September	
October	High Impact Practices Webinar (Oct 20)
November	
December	Campus Bi-Monthly Report Due
January	Board of Trustees Update
February	Campus Bi-Monthly Report Due
March	
April	Campus Bi-Monthly Report Due
May	
June	Campus Bi-Monthly Report Due

VII. Appendix

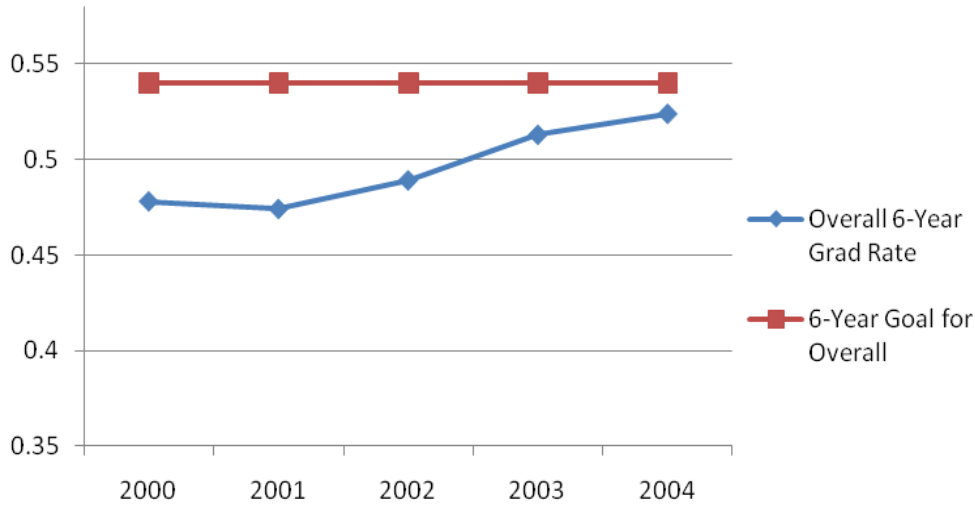
The following graphs resulted from an analysis of systemwide data from the Consortium of Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE). Full-time first-time freshmen cohorts from 2000 through 2009 were used for the various analyses presented in this appendix. The purpose of this presentation of data is to provide some background to the development of the 2015-16 6-year graduation and gap closing goals. Additionally, we would like to present some information on how we have been progressing toward these goals as well as shed some light on where some potential problems might lie and allow us to focus on those areas as we move toward goal attainment.

There are two major goals of the CSU Graduation Initiative. The first is to increase the percentage of first-time freshmen who graduate within 6 years. The second is to begin to close the gap between students who come from underrepresented groups (URM) and students from non-underrepresented groups (Non-URM) in terms of their 6-year graduation rates. At the time of the baseline year there was an 11 point difference in the 6-year graduation rates of URM and Non-URM freshmen cohorts.



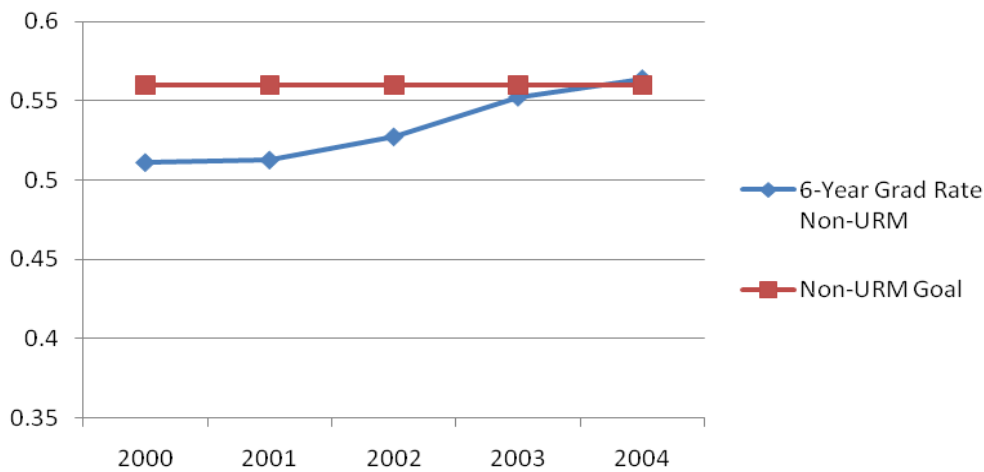
This graph shows that the gap increased to 13 percent in 2001. The gap has been decreasing each year since then; however it was still above 11 percent in 2004.

6-Year Graduation Rates for All Degree-Seeking First-Time Freshmen 2000-2004



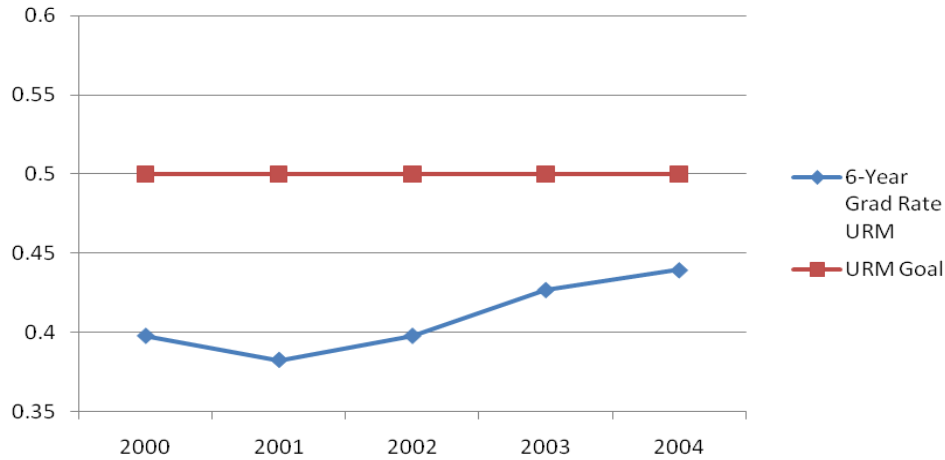
This graph shows the 6-year graduation rates for all degree-seeking first-time full-time freshmen cohorts from 2000 to 2004 plotted against the established 2015-16 6-year graduation goal.

6-Year Graduation Rates for Non-URM First-Time Freshmen 2000-2004



This graph shows the 6-year graduation rates for all Non-URM first-time full-time freshmen cohorts from 2000 to 2004 plotted against the established 2015-16 goal.

6-Year Graduation Rates for URM First-Time Freshmen 2000-2004

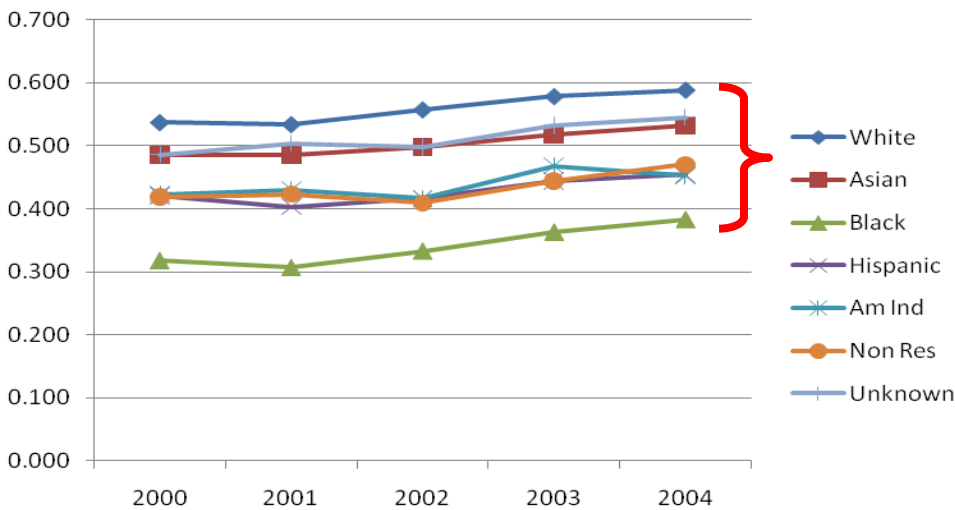


This graph shows the 6-year graduation rates for all URM first-time full-time freshmen cohorts from 2000 to 2004 plotted against the established 2015-16 goal.

Analyzing the Gap

In order to get a better understanding of the gap in 6-year graduation rates between URM students and non-URM students it is helpful to examine the groups by ethnicity. The following graphs have broken out the 6-year graduation rates by ethnicity.

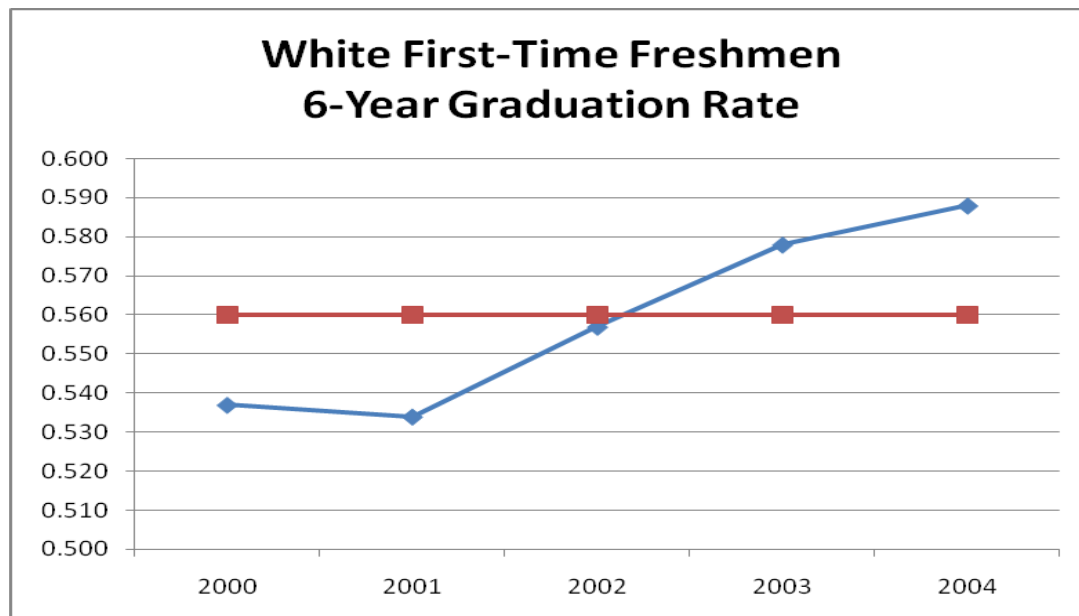
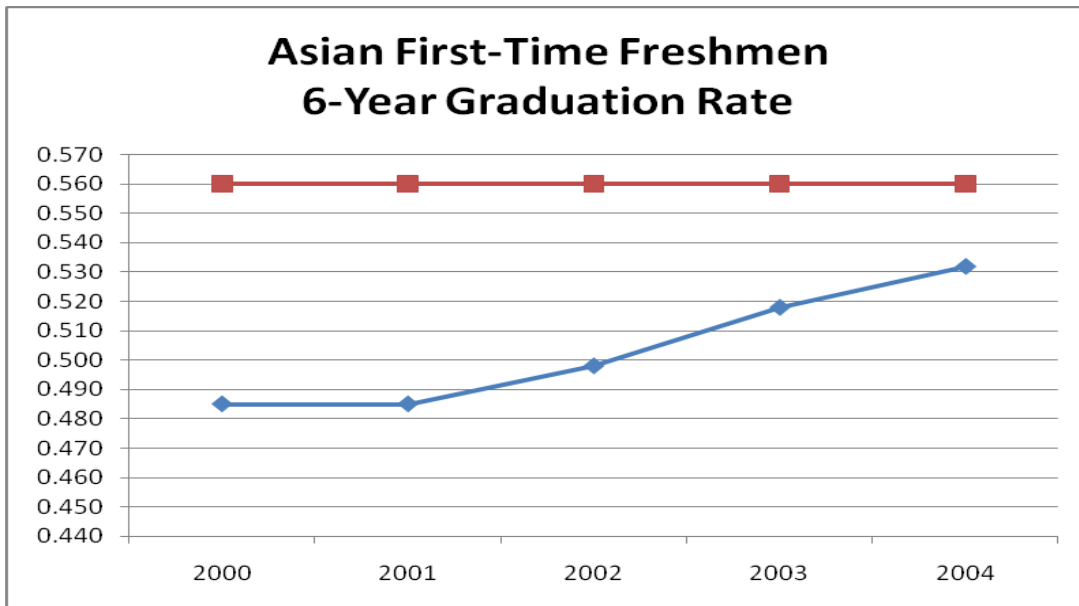
6-Year Graduation Rate for all Groups 2000 - 2004

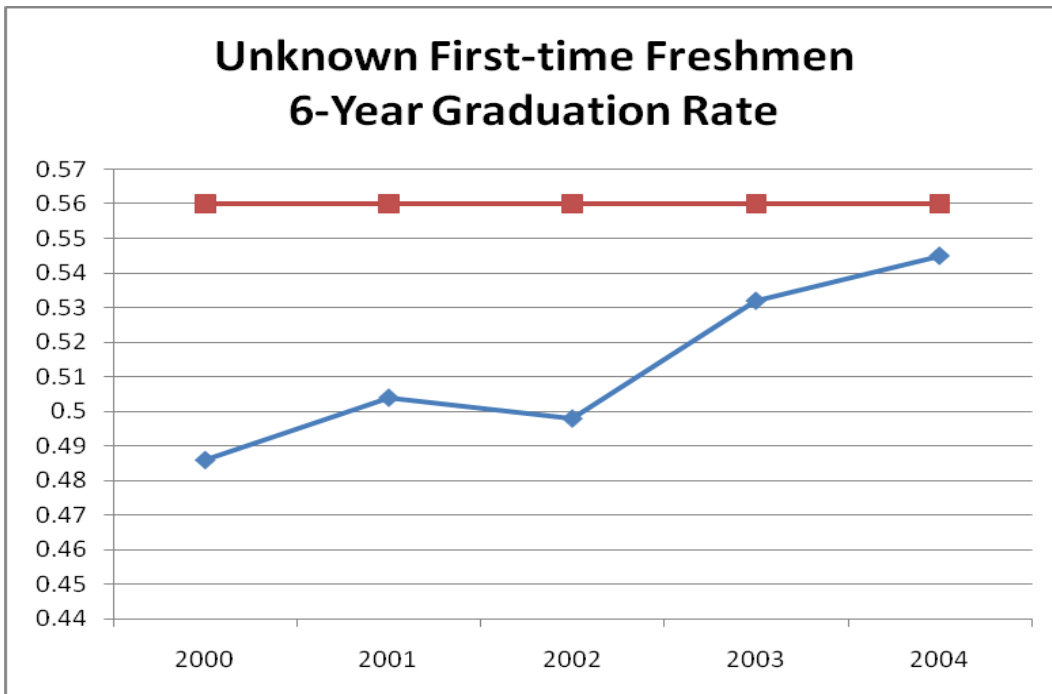
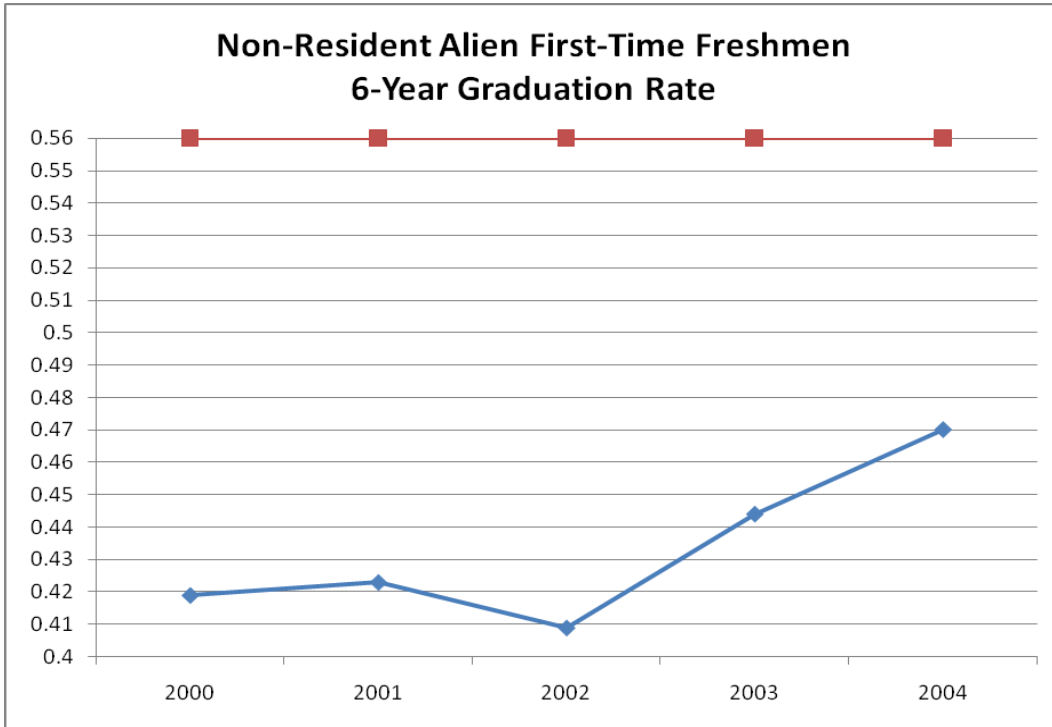


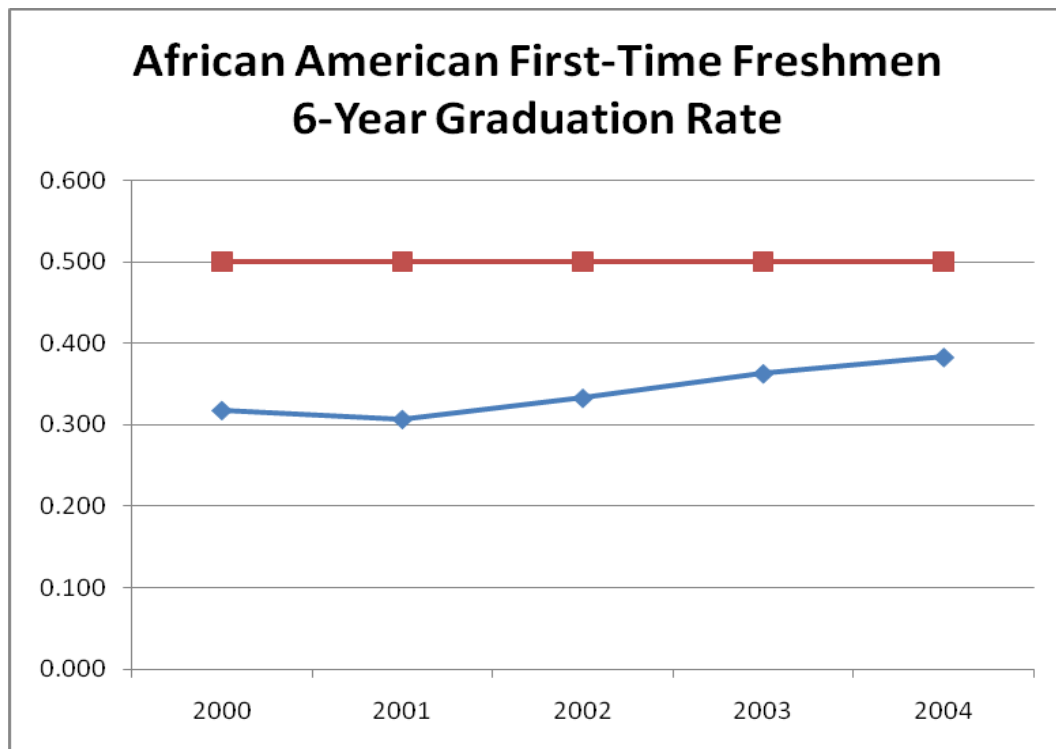
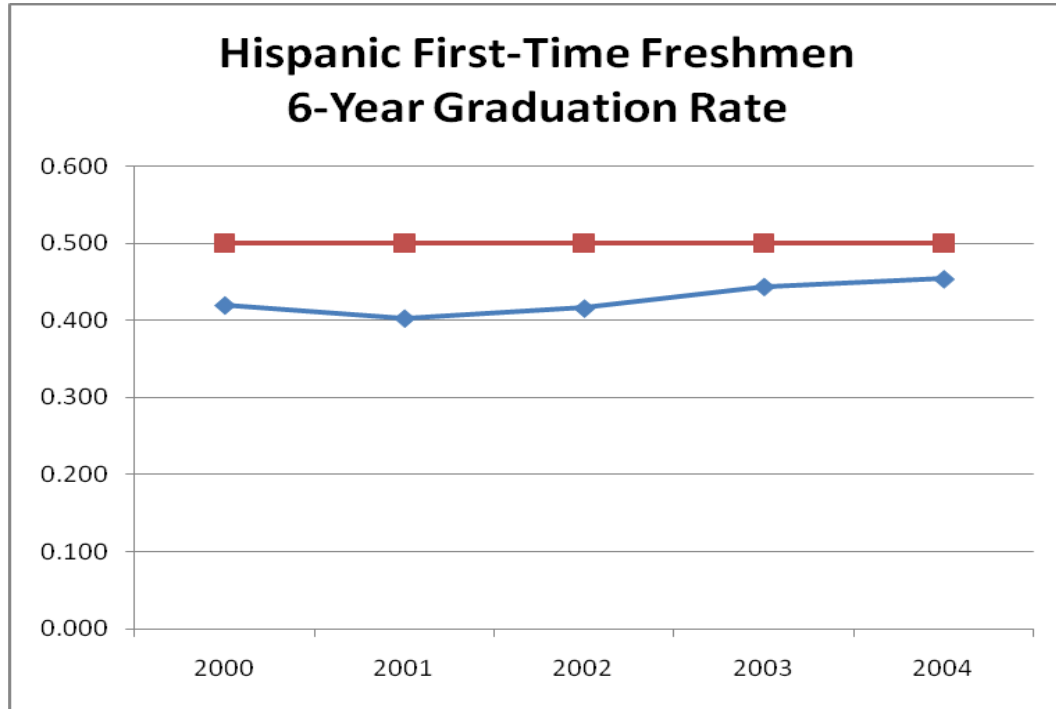
As can be seen in the graph to the left, the largest gap across all of the years is between Black/African American and White students.

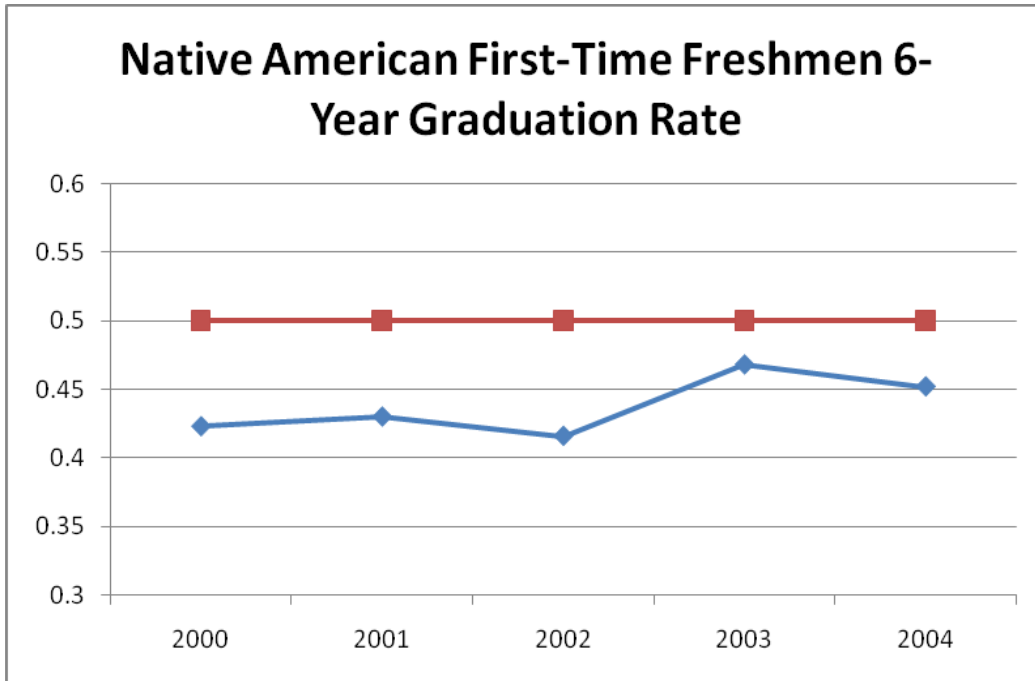
It is important to analyze the group differences individually to really get an understanding of where the gap lies. The following graphs show the 6-year graduation rate for individual racial/ethnic groups for five cohorts plotted against the associated 2015-16 goal.

- Included in the Non-URM group are the following: White; Asian/Pacific Islander; Non-Resident Aliens; Unknown students.
- Included in the URM group are the following: Black/African American; Hispanic/Latino; American Indian/Alaska Native students.





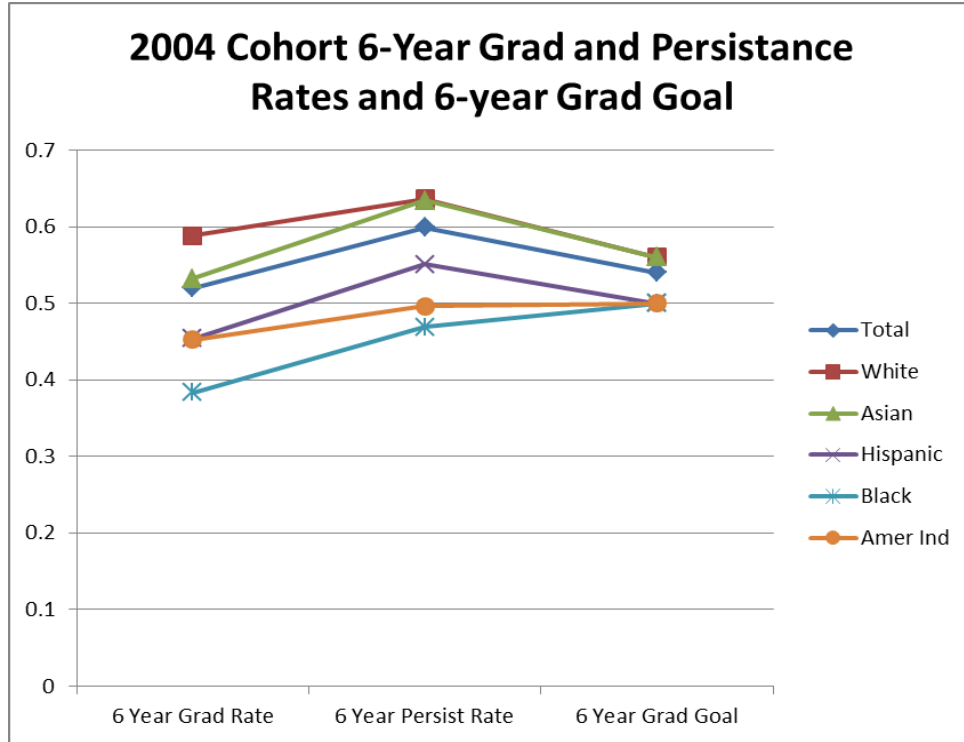




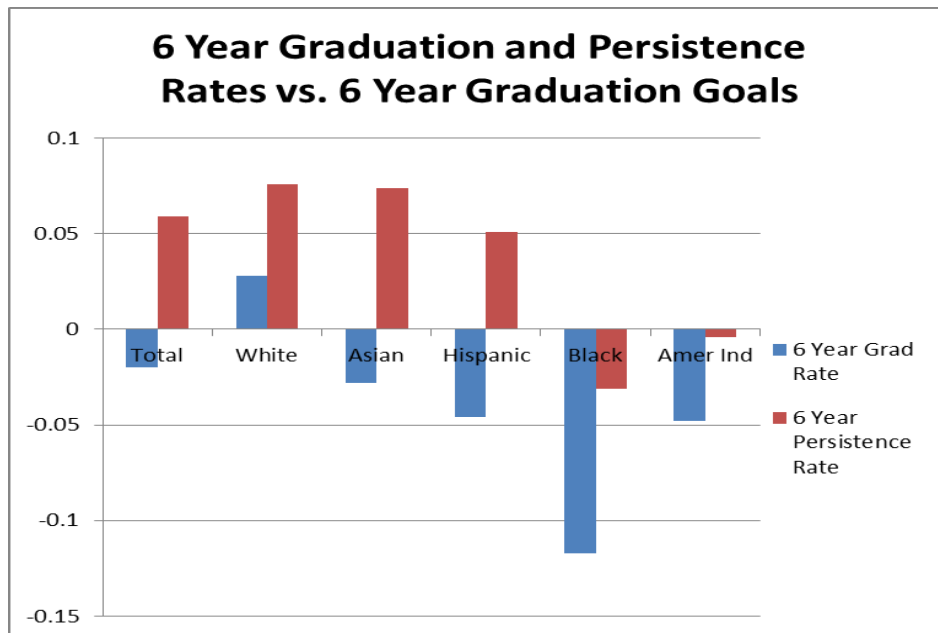
As shown in the graphs above, the group that has the largest distance between the 2004 6-year graduation rate and the goal is the Black/African American cohort.

Retention and Persistence Rates

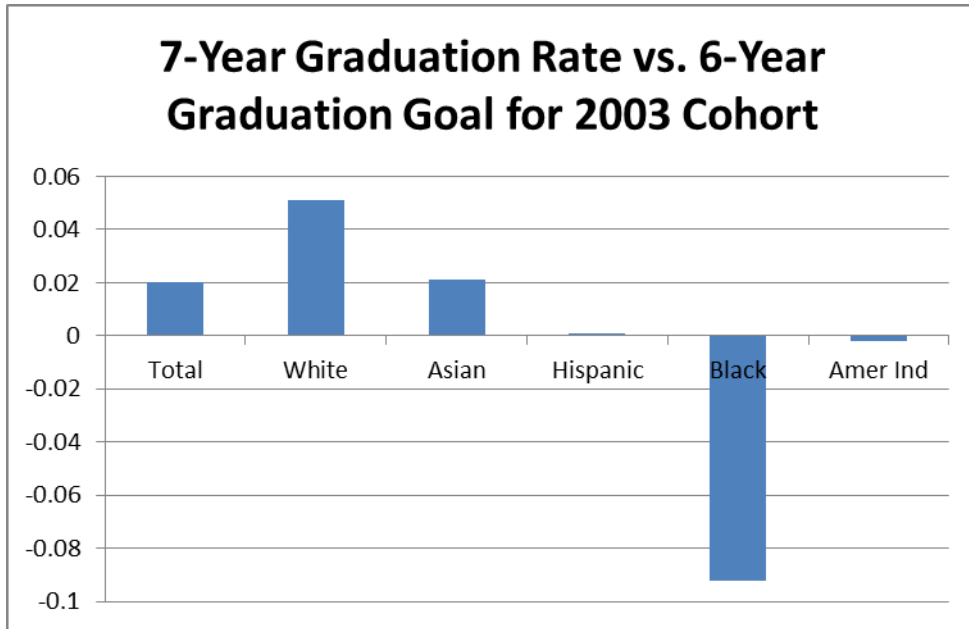
An important aspect of understanding graduation rates as a measure of success is to examine retention and persistence rates. The graph on the following page shows that for the Fall 2004 cohort (the latest that we have with 6-year graduation data) the white students were the only group that exceeded the 2015-16 6-year graduation goal. However, the persistence rate (graduation rate plus continuation rate) shows that Asian and Hispanic student in this cohort are still persisting at higher rates than the 6-year graduation goals for their groups. This is also true for the total group.



The graph below depicts this where the zero point on the graph represents the goal. American Indian and Black students however, have lower persistence rates.

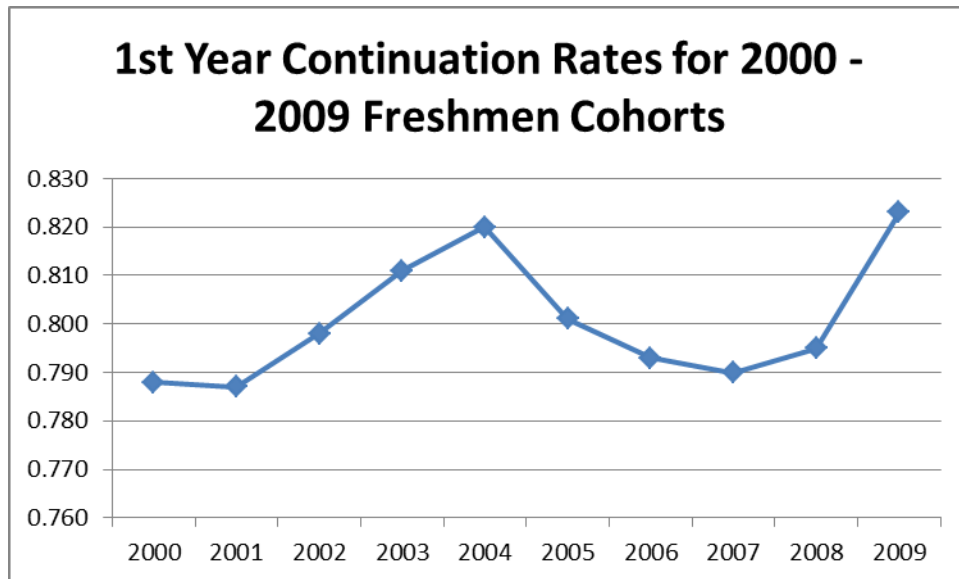


The graph below demonstrates for the 2003 cohort that most students will reach the 6-year graduation rate goal by their 7th year. The group that probably deserves focus is Black/African American students. This group has significantly lower retention rates resulting in lower graduation rates.

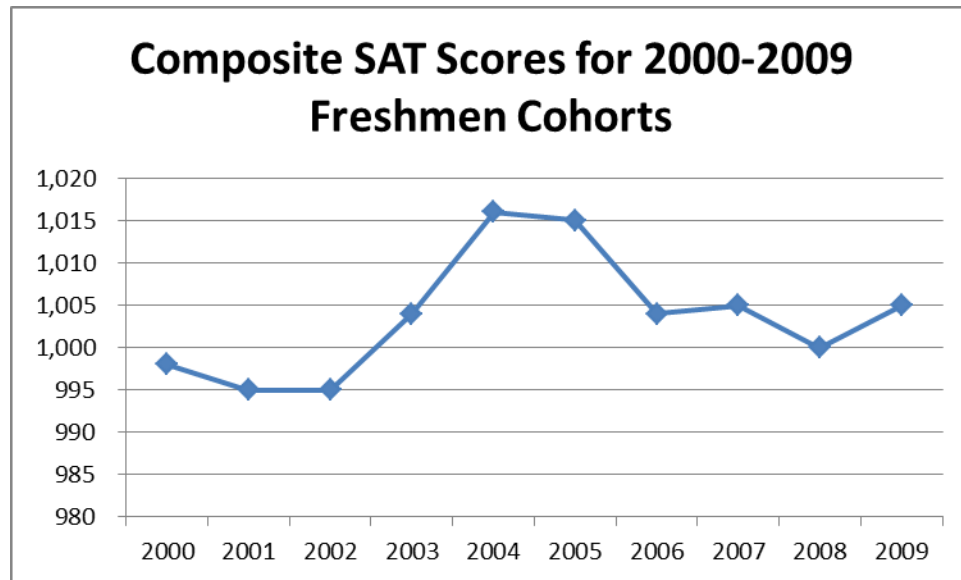


First Year Retention and Level of Preparation

Research has demonstrated that there are a number of factors that contribute to a student's success in obtaining a college degree. Two very important factors are first year continuation rates and level of preparation. The following graph shows the first-year retention rates for the 2000 through 2009 first-time freshmen cohorts.



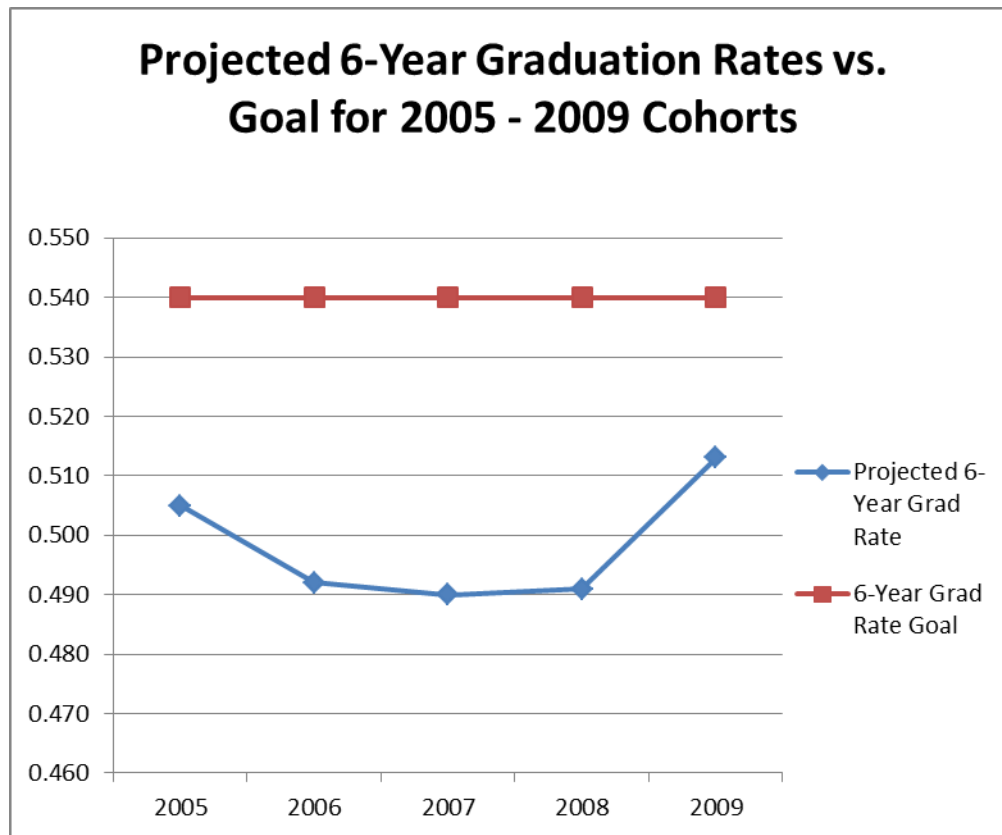
The level of preparation that a student comes to the university with is one very important variable. The following graph shows the Composite SAT scores for the 2000 – 2009 Freshmen cohorts.



Analytic Studies conducted a series of studies examining the best predictors of student success defined by a 6-year graduation rate. A multiple regression analysis was conducted using historical data from fall 1997 to fall 2003 cohorts. Using SAT scores and first year continuation rates as predictor variables, 75 percent of the variance was explained in the outcome variable (6-year graduation rate).

The following results were reported. There is, on average, a .69 percentage point rise in the six-year graduation rate associated with every 1 percentage point rise in the first year continuation rate. There is, on average a .67 percentage point increase in the 6-year graduation rates associated with every 10 point increase in the SAT Composite score.

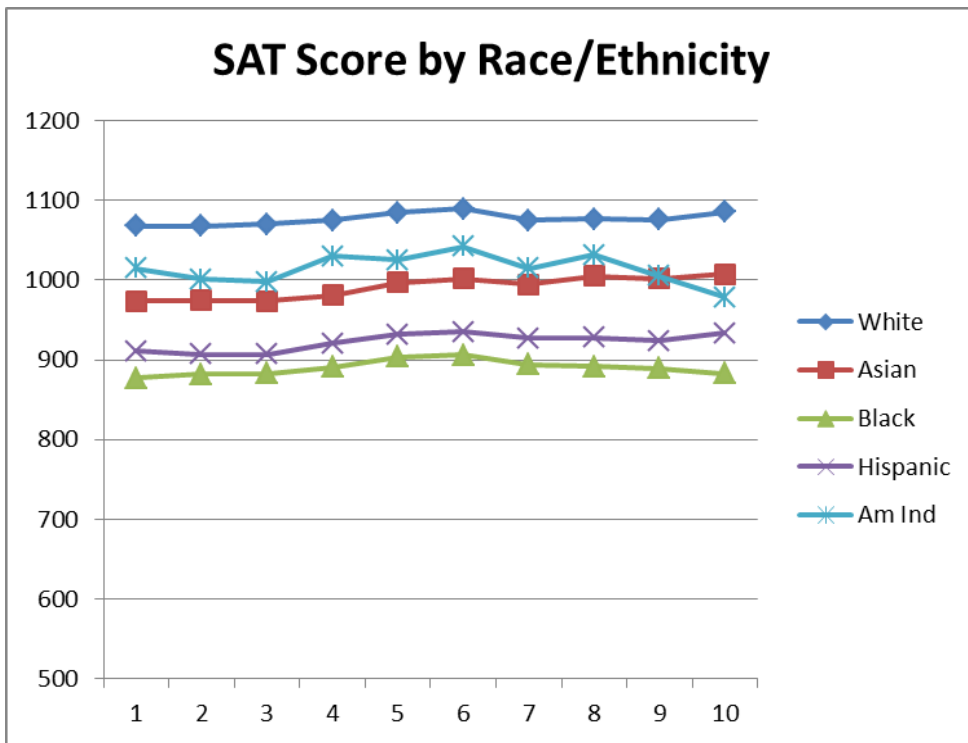
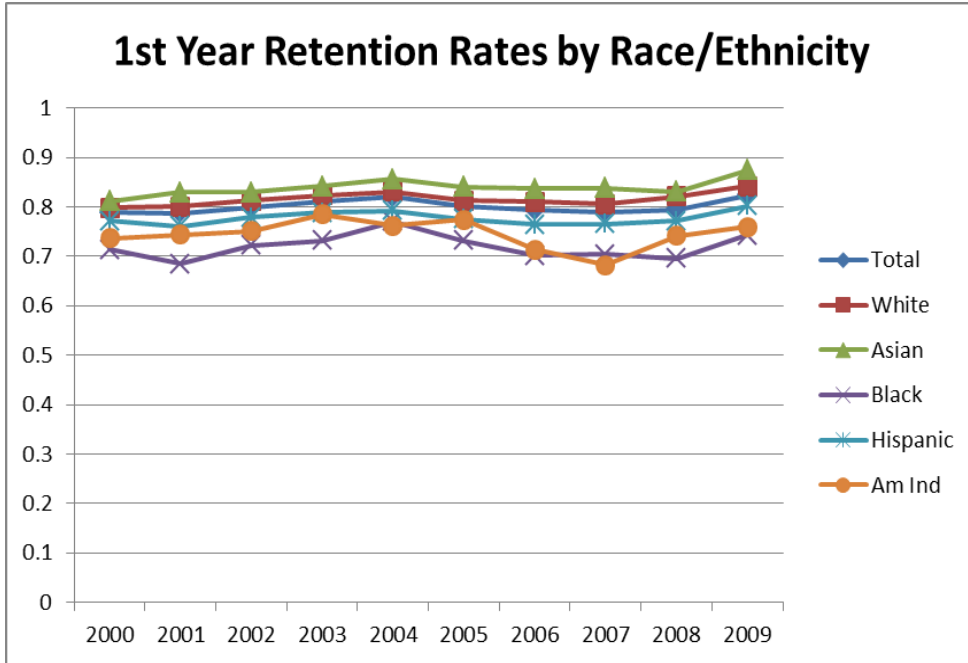
Using these results, the following are the projected 6 year graduation rates for the 2005-2009 cohorts plotted against the overall 2015-16 6-year graduation goal.



As can be seen, the 2009 cohort is projected to fall 3 percentage points below the stated goal for this group.

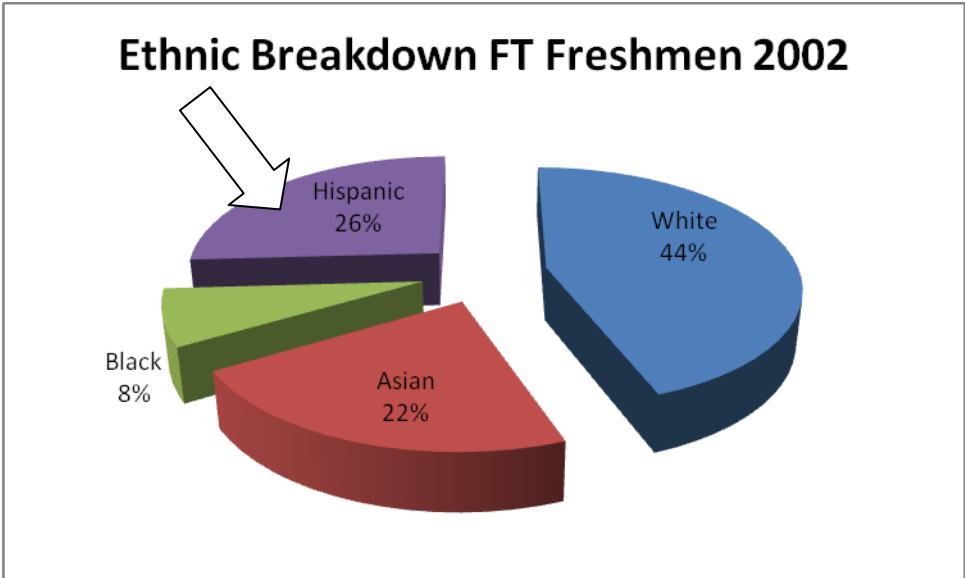
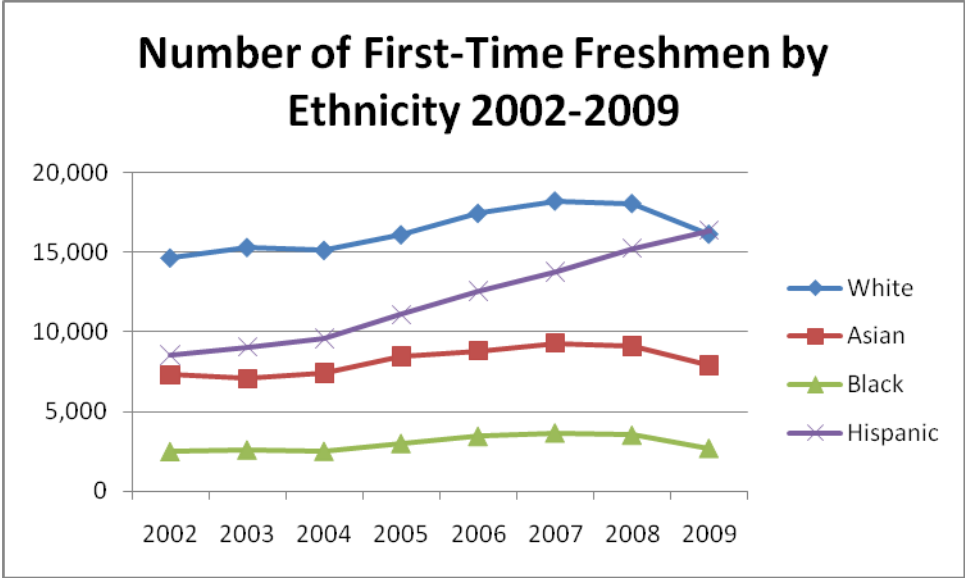
Ethnic/Racial Differences on Predictor Variables

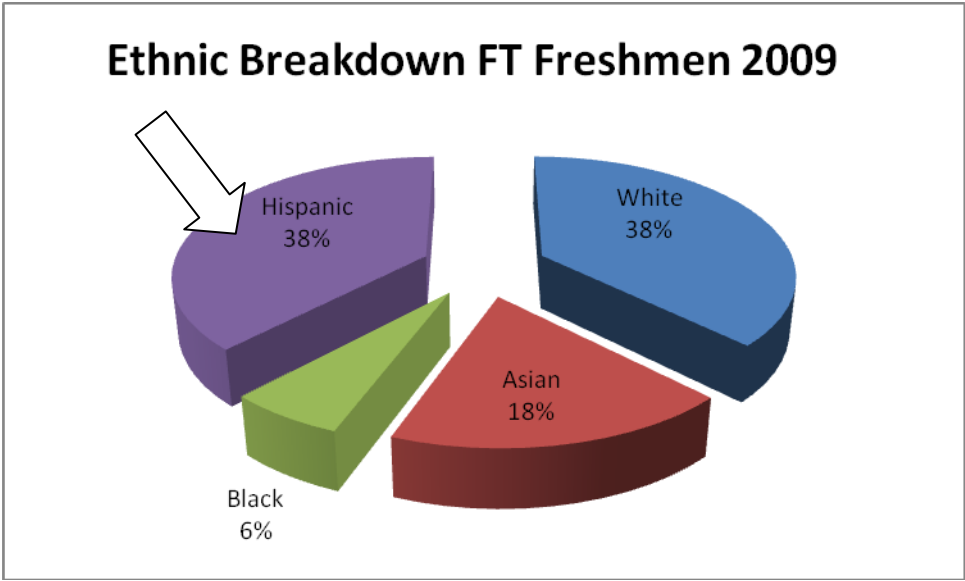
As we examine factors that impact the 6-year graduation rate, it is important to look at differences between various ethnic/racial groups on these variables. The chart below indicates that although there is some variation between the groups, the differences are not large at this point. This might indicate that there are other factors that are contributing to the lower 6-year graduation rate for URM students. There are, however, fairly significant differences in level of preparation as measured by Composite SAT scores. Although SAT scores for incoming freshmen have remained fairly constant over the past 10 years, it is important to note the scores for Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American first-time freshmen.



A Word about Sample Sizes

The growth patterns for Whites, Asians and Black seem to reflect a slight upward growth beginning in 2005 and then dropping off. However for the Hispanic group, the growth has been increasing significantly, nearly doubling from 2002 to 2009.





Regression Statistics Predicting a 6-Year Graduation Rate from a 2-Year Continuation Rate

Variable	<i>Parameter Estimate</i>	X	bX
Intercept	-0.56037	1	-0.56037
SAT	0.00066956	1005	0.672908
2YR Cont	0.69864	0.73	0.510007
HSGPA	-0.03498	3.28	-0.11473

Expected Graduation Rate = 51%

Variable	<i>Parameter Estimate</i>	X	bX
Intercept	-0.56037	1	-0.56037
SAT	0.00066956	1005	0.672908
2YR Cont	0.69864	0.77	0.537953
HSGPA	-0.03498	3.28	-0.11473

Desired Graduation Rate = 54%