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## ABSTRACT

Approximately 45% of first-time undergraduates in the United States attend public two-year colleges. These institutions serve many purposes, providing vocational training, offering an inexpensive method of completing lower division requirements before transferring to a four-year institution, and meeting avocational interests. According to United States Department of Education statistics, 37% of students who began their postsecondary education at a public community college in 1989-90 completed a degree at some institution by 1994, while 22% completed a certificate or associate degree at their original college. Moreover, 19% of these students transferred to a public four-year institution and 3% transferred to a private four-year institution, while 38% of these transfers had first completed an associate degree. By 1994, 26% of those who had transferred to four-year institutions had completed a bachelor's degree and 47% were still enrolled. Finally, for this group the higher a student's socioeconomic status (SES), the more likely that student was to transfer to a four-year institution, with 35% of high SES, 21% of middle SES, and 7% of low SES students transferring. (Author/AJL)

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# Community College Outcomes - Indicator of the Month

Office of Educational Research and Improvement  
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September 1996

**Community college outcomes**

About 45 percent of first-time undergraduates attend public 2-year colleges. These institutions serve many purposes: they provide vocational training and skill development; they offer an inexpensive way to complete lower division requirements before entering a 4-year institution; and they meet avocational interests. Examining outcomes for students who began their postsecondary education at public community colleges provides insight into how these diverse needs are being met.

- ◆ Among students who began their postsecondary education at a community college in 1989–90, 37 percent completed a degree at some institution by 1994; 22 percent of these students completed a certificate or an associate’s degree at their first institution. Those who did not complete an award at their first institution spent a substantial amount of time there—an average of 14 months of enrollment.
- ◆ Nineteen percent of 1989–90 community college beginners transferred to a public 4-year institution, and 3 percent transferred to a private 4-year institution. Of those who transferred to a 4-year institution, 38 percent completed an associate’s degree before transferring.
- ◆ By 1994, 26 percent of those who transferred to 4-year institutions had completed a bachelor’s degree, and 47 percent were still enrolled at a 4-year institution.
- ◆ The higher a student’s socioeconomic status (SES), the more likely that student was to transfer to a 4-year institution; 35 percent of high SES students transferred, compared to 21 percent of middle SES and 7 percent of low SES students.

**Among 1989–90 beginning students at community colleges, percentage distribution and average number of months enrolled at first institution, by attainment at first institution and 1994 attainment/enrollment status**

Selected characteristics	Attainment at first institution <sup>1</sup>			1994 attainment at any institution									
	None	Certi- ficate	Asso- ciate’s	Attained <sup>2</sup>						No degree			
				Certificate		Associate’s		Bachelor’s		Enrolled		Less- than- 4-year	Not en- rolled
				Not en- rolled at 4-year	Enrolled at 4-year	Not en- rolled at 4-year	Enrolled at 4-year	Enrolled at 4-year	Enrolled at 4-year	Total	4-year		
<b>Total</b>	<b>77.8</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>17.2</b>	<b>36.7</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>48.6</b>
Age as of 12/31/89													
18 years or younger	71.6	2.6	25.9	47.4	8.0	1.4	19.7	6.4	11.9	14.9	7.5	7.4	37.7
19 years	79.5	5.8	14.7	31.9	12.7	0.0	13.2	3.9	2.2	20.8	12.7	8.1	47.3
20–29 years	83.1	6.5	10.4	27.3	16.4	0.0	6.5	1.8	2.5	13.0	11.2	1.8	59.8
30 years or older	86.0	8.9	5.1	25.7	18.2	0.0	6.3	0.6	0.6	9.2	9.2	0.0	65.1
Enrollment status, first term													
Full-time	68.7	5.4	25.9	45.7	10.3	1.0	17.5	6.0	11.0	11.7	5.7	6.0	42.7
At least half, less than full-time	84.9	2.8	12.3	28.3	10.9	0.6	13.2	1.8	1.8	22.8	17.0	5.8	48.9
Less than half-time	87.7	6.6	5.8	27.1	16.9	0.0	6.7	0.6	2.2	13.0	9.3	3.7	59.9
First transfer													
Did not transfer	78.7	7.7	13.5	23.1	8.9	( <sup>3</sup> )	14.1	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	10.1	10.1	( <sup>3</sup> )	66.8
Transferred to less-than-4-year	93.8	2.2	4.0	47.2	32.8	0.0	13.8	0.0	0.6	16.3	16.3	0.0	36.6
Transferred to 4-year	61.2	0.7	38.1	59.5	0.6	2.8	12.3	18.3	25.6	25.9	2.8	23.2	14.5
Average number of months enrolled at first institution	14.2	15.5	28.3	20.4	11.9	( <sup>4</sup> )	25.6	26.2	22.5	24.8	27.3	20.2	11.4

<sup>1</sup> For students who earned more than one award at the first institution, the first award they earned.

<sup>2</sup> Highest degree attained at any institution. Students who have attained may also be enrolled.

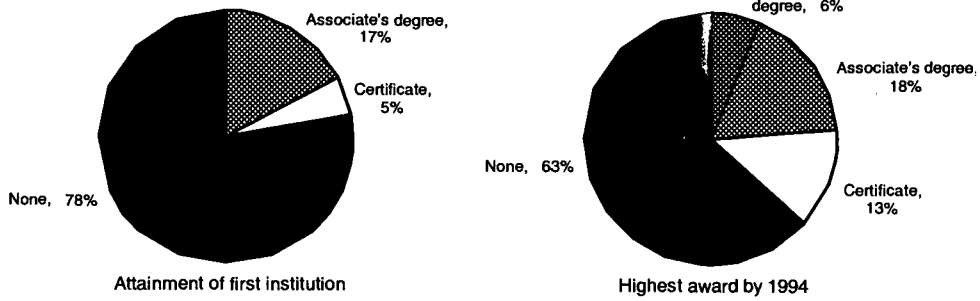
<sup>3</sup> Not applicable.

<sup>4</sup> Too few sample observations for a reliable estimate.

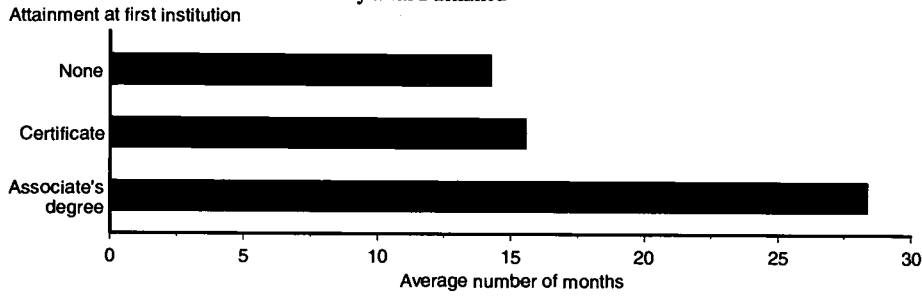
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, Second Follow-up (BPS:90/94).

# Attainment and enrollment among 1989-90 community college entrants: 1994

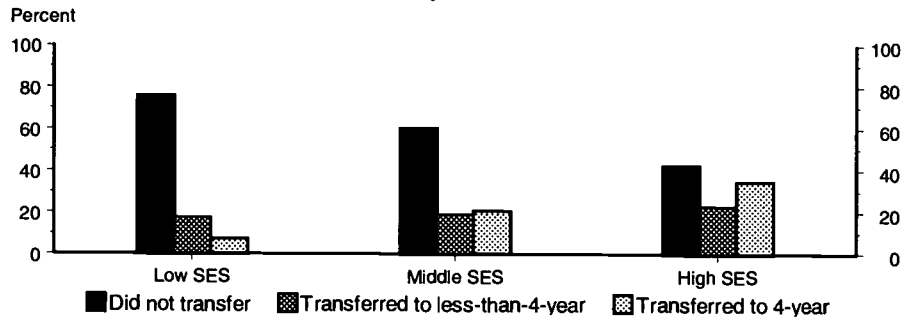
Percentage distribution of attainment outcomes



Average number of months enrolled at first institution, by award attained



First transfer, by socioeconomic status



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, Second Follow-up (BPS:90/94).

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