

## Higher Ed Benchmarks

**Benchmark Research Study Conducted Fall 2010**

# Mid-Year Retention Indicators Report for Two-Year and Four-Year, Public and Private Institutions

To assist campuses with accurately forecasting student retention, and to help with increasing it, this report identifies early indicators of students' progress toward completing a degree and establishes benchmarks that campuses can use to evaluate their performance. The report is based on a Web-based survey of college and university officials in November 2010.

Among the highlights:

- First-year students at two-year and four-year institutions completed 77 to 93 percent of the credit hours they attempted (median rates), with the highest rates of completion reported among students at four-year private colleges.
- Between 9 and 19 percent of first-year students at the median failed to persist to the second term.
- Institutions with higher selectivity reported higher rates of persistence and retention.
- Between 7 and 14 percent of second-year students at the median failed to persist to the second term across institution types, and even more failed to return for their third year at four-year institutions.
- Fewer first-year students who were conditionally admitted persisted from the first to the second term compared to their non-conditionally-admitted counterparts.
- More first-year students were placed on probation during term one than during term two.

For guidance on using these benchmarks and on strengthening your institution's measurements of retention indicators, please see the concluding recommendations on pages 7 and 8. Noel-Levitz anticipates repeating this study every two years to continue to establish outcomes trends in these critical areas.

### About the data in this report

All of the data in this report are based on cohorts of entering, first-time, full-time-in-college, degree-seeking freshmen. Questions about this report may be directed to Tim Culver, Noel-Levitz vice president of consulting services, at [tim-culver@noellevitz.com](mailto:tim-culver@noellevitz.com) or by calling 1-800-876-1117.



How can you use the benchmarks in this report to improve student success and retention on your campus? See the Appendix on pages 7 and 8 for some suggestions.

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## First-year students complete 77 to 93 percent of the credit hours they attempt at the median; highest rates of completion reported at private colleges

The first benchmark in this study—the ratio of credit hours attempted to completed by first-year students after the first term and after the second term—varied considerably by institution type. As shown in Table 1, four-year private institutions reported the highest median ratio of credit-hours-attempted-to-completed at 92.9 percent during the second term of the 2009-2010 academic year, while two-year public institutions reported the lowest median ratio of 76.8 percent during the first term.

**Table 1: Credit Hours Attempted vs. Credit Hours Completed—  
First-Year Undergraduates, 2009-2010 Academic Year**

|  | Four-Year Private Institutions |              | Four-Year Public Institutions |              | Two-Year Public Institutions |              |
|--|--------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|--------------|
|  | Term 1                         | Term 2       | Term 1                        | Term 2       | Term 1                       | Term 2       |
| <b>Credit hours attempted</b>                                    |                                |              |                               |              |                              |              |
| 25th percentile  | 14.1                           | 14.4         | 13.7                          | 14.0         | 13.0                         | 12.0         |
| <b>Median</b>  | <b>15.0</b>                    | <b>15.0</b>  | <b>14.6</b>                   | <b>14.3</b>  | <b>13.7</b>                  | <b>13.0</b>  |
| 75th percentile  | 15.9                           | 15.7         | 15.2                          | 15.2         | 14.3                         | 14.0         |
| <b>Credit hours completed</b>                                    |                                |              |                               |              |                              |              |
| 25th percentile  | 12.9                           | 13.0         | 11.6                          | 11.5         | 8.8                          | 8.6          |
| <b>Median</b>  | <b>13.8</b>                    | <b>14.0</b>  | <b>12.4</b>                   | <b>12.6</b>  | <b>10.4</b>                  | <b>9.8</b>   |
| 75th percentile  | 14.6                           | 14.7         | 13.5                          | 13.5         | 11.3                         | 11.1         |
| <b>Ratio of credit hours completed to credit hours attempted</b> |                                |              |                               |              |                              |              |
| 25th percentile  | 88.2%                          | 88.2%        | 81.3%                         | 81.5%        | 70.4%                        | 69.5%        |
| <b>Median</b>  | <b>92.8%</b>                   | <b>92.9%</b> | <b>87.7%</b>                  | <b>87.7%</b> | <b>76.8%</b>                 | <b>77.3%</b> |
| 75th percentile  | 94.7%                          | 95.5%        | 92.0%                         | 92.4%        | 82.4%                        | 84.6%        |

**How does your institution's performance compare? The overall ratio of credit-hours-attempted-to-completed is an important early indicator of student success and persistence.**

With only minor exceptions, the rates at which first-year students completed their credit hours held steady between term one and term two at all three institution types examined.

Note: The credit hours reported above are based on official campus records of credit hours attempted as of the official census day for each term.

As shown above, differences between term one and term two were minimal, with these exceptions: Students at public institutions, especially those at two-year public institutions, attempted slightly more credit hours in term one than term two at the median. In addition, students at four-year public and private institutions completed slightly more credit hours in term two than in term one at the median, while students at two-year institutions completed slightly more median credit hours in term one than in term two. Note that these findings are generally consistent with the means reported by Noel-Levitz in a parallel study conducted in 2008.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Noel-Levitz (2008). Mid-year retention indicators report: Findings from the first Noel-Levitz survey of retention indicators for four-year and two-year institutions. Coralville, IA: Author. Retrieved from [www.noellellevitz.com/benchmarkreports](http://www.noellellevitz.com/benchmarkreports).

## Between 9 and 19 percent of first-year students at the median fail to persist to the second term; institutions with higher selectivity see higher persistence

An additional early indicator of retention—persistence of first-year students from term one of their first year to term two of their first year—varied considerably based on institutional type and, for four-year institutions, based on institutional selectivity. As shown in Table 2, four-year institutions, private and public, reported nearly identical 91 percent median rates of persistence for first-year students from term one to term two compared to 81 percent at two-year public institutions. In addition, four-year private and public institutions with higher selectivity reported 95 percent median rates of persistence, while four-year private and public institutions with lower selectivity reported 86 and 90 percent, respectively.

**First-year students persisted from the first term to the second term and were retained to the subsequent year at lower rates than their second-year counterparts (see next page for comparison data from the second year in Table 3).**

**Table 2: Term-to-Term Persistence and Fall-to-Fall Retention Rates—First-Year Undergraduates, 2009-2010 Academic Year**

|   | Four-Year Private Institutions |                                       |  | Four-Year Public Institutions |                                       |  | Two-Year Public Institutions |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
|   | All                            | Institutions With Lowest Selectivity* | Institutions With Highest Selectivity* | All                           | Institutions With Lowest Selectivity* | Institutions With Highest Selectivity* | All                          |
| <b>Persistence Rates From Term 1 to Term 2 of 2009-2010 Academic Year</b> |                                |                                       |  |                               |                                       |  |                              |
| 25th percentile   | 87.5%                          | 73.2%                                 | 92.7%                                  | 88.3%                         | 84.3%                                 | 92.4%                                  | 77.0%                        |
| <b>Median</b>   | <b>91.2%</b>                   | <b>86.4%</b>                          | <b>94.6%</b>                           | <b>91.1%</b>                  | <b>90.0%</b>                          | <b>94.8%</b>                           | <b>81.2%</b>                 |
| 75th percentile   | 94.0%                          | 92.4%                                 | 96.1%                                  | 93.7%                         | 91.9%                                 | 97.0%                                  | 84.3%                        |
| <b>Retention Rates From Fall 2009 to Fall 2010</b>                        |                                |                                       |  |                               |                                       |  |                              |
| 25th percentile   | 67.9%                          | 54.3%                                 | 79.1%                                  | 68.8%                         | 67.6%                                 | 81.6%                                  | 49.8%                        |
| <b>Median</b>   | <b>75.6%</b>                   | <b>64.2%</b>                          | <b>85.1%</b>                           | <b>73.8%</b>                  | <b>71.5%</b>                          | <b>84.3%</b>                           | <b>55.2%</b>                 |
| 75th percentile   | 83.0%                          | 71.1%                                 | 88.4%                                  | 82.5%                         | 79.7%                                 | 92.7%                                  | 63.2%                        |

Attrition at the median was less between the first term and the second term of the first year than it was between the beginning of the second term and the beginning of the second year (see example in the text below).

Note: The persistence and retention rates shown above are based on the enrollment of first-year undergraduates on the official census day of the fall term of the 2009-2010 academic year compared to: 1) enrollment on the official census day of the second term of the 2009-2010 academic year; and 2) enrollment on the official census day of the fall term of the 2010-2011 academic year.

As can be seen above, attrition was greater between the beginning of the second term and the beginning of the second year than it was between the first term and the second term of the first year. For example, at four-year private institutions, 8.8 percent of first-year students at the median left by the second term (inverse of 91.2 percent shown in the table) versus a drop of 15.6 percent that followed, down from the median rate of 91.2 percent to the median rate of 75.6 percent.

\* Breakdowns by selectivity for four-year public and private institutions are reported in Tables 2 and 3 in this report to explain large variations we observed within these sectors in the persistence and retention rates of first-year and second-year students. For each of these sectors, we found persistence and retention to be highly correlated with selectivity. We defined selectivity using the median composite ACT scores from IPEDS (or the equivalent in SAT using a concordance table from the College Board) for institutions in the sample. In Tables 2 and 3, institutions with the highest selectivity are those with a median composite ACT  $\geq 25$  for private institutions and a median composite ACT  $\geq 24$  for public institutions. Institutions with the lowest selectivity are those with a median composite ACT  $\leq 20$  for private institutions and a median composite ACT  $\leq 21$  for public institutions.

## Between 7 and 14 percent of second-year students at the median fail to persist to the second term; even more fail to return for their third year at four-year institutions

Similar to their first-year counterparts, persistence of second-year students from term one to term two of their second year varied considerably based on institutional type and based on institutional selectivity, as did fall-to-fall retention. Second-year students at four-year private institutions with higher selectivity persisted at the highest rates (96 percent at the median), followed by students at the more-selective public institutions. Also similar to the first-year student findings, two-year institutions reported significantly less persistence and retention than did four-year institutions.

**Table 3: Term-to-Term Persistence and Fall-to-Fall Retention Rates—  
Second-Year Undergraduates**

|   | Four-Year Private Institutions |                                      |                                       | Four-Year Public Institutions |                                      |                                       | Two-Year Public Institutions |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
|   | All                            | Institutions With Lowest Selectivity | Institutions With Highest Selectivity | All                           | Institutions With Lowest Selectivity | Institutions With Highest Selectivity | All                          |
| <b>Persistence Rates From Term 1 to Term 2 of 2009-2010 Academic Year</b> |                                |                                      |                                       |                               |                                      |                                       |                              |
| 25th percentile   | 91.1%                          | 84.5%                                | 94.9%                                 | 90.6%                         | 89.1%                                | 92.5%                                 | 82.7%                        |
| <b>Median</b>   | <b>94.2%</b>                   | <b>91.2%</b>                         | <b>96.3%</b>                          | <b>93.0%</b>                  | <b>91.5%</b>                         | <b>95.3%</b>                          | <b>85.7%</b>                 |
| 75th percentile   | 96.1%                          | 94.2%                                | 97.1%                                 | 95.2%                         | 93.9%                                | 98.0%                                 | 91.0%                        |
| <b>Retention Rates From Fall 2009 to Fall 2010</b>                        |                                |                                      |                                       |                               |                                      |                                       |                              |
| 25th percentile   | 76.0%                          | 63.3%                                | 85.4%                                 | 77.1%                         | 76.2%                                | 86.1%                                 | NA                           |
| <b>Median</b>   | <b>83.7%</b>                   | <b>75.3%</b>                         | <b>91.0%</b>                          | <b>83.3%</b>                  | <b>80.3%</b>                         | <b>89.7%</b>                          | NA                           |
| 75th percentile   | 88.9%                          | 80.1%                                | 93.2%                                 | 87.4%                         | 84.0%                                | 94.3%                                 | NA                           |

Compared to first-year students, second-year students persisted from the first term to the second term at higher rates at the median. In addition, at four-year institutions, second-year students were retained to the third year at higher median rates than their first-year counterparts were retained to the second year.

Note: The second-year undergraduate cohort shown in Table 3 is the subcohort of the fall 2008 freshman class that began fall 2009 as second-year students. The persistence measures for this group indicate the rates at which these second-year students persisted to the second term of their second year, while the group's retention rates indicate the proportion of the students that returned for their third year in fall 2010.

The importance of continuing retention efforts beyond the first term is clear. As shown above, attrition was less for second-year students between their first term and second term than it was between the beginning of the second term of the second year and the beginning of the third year. (Table 2 documents this same difference for first-year students.)

The retention rates shown in Tables 2 and 3 are generally consistent with comparable rates published by ACT. (See the latest ACT reports at [www.noellevitz.com/ACTnorms](http://www.noellevitz.com/ACTnorms)).

## Conditionally admitted first-year students persisted to the second term at lower rates

As shown in Table 4, 82 percent to 88 percent (median rates) of conditionally admitted students persisted from the first to the second term for four-year private and public institutions, respectively. These median persistence rates were lower than the median persistence rates of the students' non-conditionally-admitted counterparts. This was especially true at private institutions, where the median persistence rate was 9.6 percent higher for non-conditionally-admitted students (92 percent) versus 82 percent for conditionally admitted students.

**Table 4: Persistence Rates of Conditionally Admitted vs. Non-Conditionally-Admitted First-Year Undergraduates, Term 1 to Term 2, 2009-2010 Academic Year**

|                 | Four-Year Private Institutions                   |                                       | Four-Year Public Institutions                    |                                       | Two-Year Public Institutions |
|-----------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
|                 | Conditionally Admitted First-Year Undergraduates | Non-Conditionally-Admitted First-Year | Conditionally Admitted First-Year Undergraduates | Non-Conditionally-Admitted First-Year | NA                           |
| 25th percentile | 69.9%  | 88.1%                                 | 78.8%  | 88.2%                                 | NA                           |
| <b>Median</b>   | <b>82.4%</b>                                     | <b>92.0%</b>                          | <b>88.3%</b>                                     | <b>90.1%</b>                          | NA                           |
| 75th percentile | 90.8%  | 94.5%                                 | 94.5%  | 92.6%                                 | NA                           |

Compared to non-conditionally-admitted students, conditionally admitted students persisted at lower rates.

## More students on probation during term one than during term two

Across institution types, more first-year students were on probation during term one than during term two. In general, fewer students were on probation at private colleges compared with public institutions.

**Table 5: Changes in Probation for First-Year Undergraduates, Term 1 vs. Term 2, 2009-2010 Academic Year**

|   | Four-Year Private Institutions |                                      |                                       | Four-Year Public Institutions |                                      |                                       | Two-Year Public Institutions |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
|   | All                            | Institutions With Lowest Selectivity | Institutions With Highest Selectivity | All                           | Institutions With Lowest Selectivity | Institutions With Highest Selectivity | All                          |
| <b>Percentage of Students on Probation During Term One, 2009-2010 Academic Year</b> |                                |                                      |                                       |                               |                                      |                                       |                              |
| 25th percentile   | 5.6%                           | 7.3%                                 | 3.3%                                  | 9.1%                          | 1.1%                                 | 8.9%                                  | 4.7%                         |
| <b>Median</b>   | <b>9.6%</b>                    | <b>15.3%</b>                         | <b>6.2%</b>                           | <b>16.9%</b>                  | <b>16.0%</b>                         | <b>11.1%</b>                          | <b>16.2%</b>                 |
| 75th percentile   | 15.1%                          | 23.2%                                | 10.7%                                 | 21.3%                         | 25.5%                                | 19.9%                                 | 23.2%                        |
| <b>Percentage of Students on Probation During Term Two, 2009-2010 Academic Year</b> |                                |                                      |                                       |                               |                                      |                                       |                              |
| 25th percentile   | 2.9%                           | 3.4%                                 | 1.6%                                  | 7.2%                          | 7.5%                                 | 6.8%                                  | 4.7%                         |
| <b>Median</b>   | <b>6.3%</b>                    | <b>8.7%</b>                          | <b>4.1%</b>                           | <b>12.9%</b>                  | <b>15.1%</b>                         | <b>9.1%</b>                           | <b>12.7%</b>                 |
| 75th percentile   | 9.9%                           | 18.7%                                | 6.7%                                  | 18.3%                         | 22.6%                                | 14.4%                                 | 24.9%                        |

The percentage of students on probation was significantly lower at private colleges than at public institutions.

## Appendix: How to use the benchmarks in this report

Colleges and universities have historically waited to evaluate retention performance using lagging indicators that they typically collect and report annually when they submit data to IPEDS, the postsecondary education data collection program administered by the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics. With the data in this report, however, institutions can plan more effectively using key leading performance indicators which can be collected and assessed at mid-year. Below are several specific recommendations for using the benchmarks in this study. The recommendations are presented in two sections: *Institutional goal setting* and *Strategy development*.

### Institutional goal setting

#### Identify your key leading retention performance indicators

In this report, we have identified several persistence and progression key leading performance indicators which can guide your retention committee's planning efforts. Charge your committee with identifying your indicators and assessing your performance as compared to these national benchmarks. Place the report's benchmarks alongside your institution's own trend data to identify strengths and challenges/opportunities and to keep building more efficient and effective programs for student success and retention. Strategy development occurs more naturally when these types of data are available for planning groups.

#### Establish goals for your key leading performance indicators

As noted above, persistence and progression are the two major leading indicators of retention and completion. Using data benchmarked against these poll findings, your retention committee should establish goals and track performance for both persistence and progression. Persistence is defined as term-to-term enrollment and should be tracked weekly from the first date of registration and until your census date. This analysis allows you to better predict return rates for subsequent terms. Progression is defined as successful persistence and can be measured using the indicators identified in this study. Course completion and course success are the two major leading indicators for progression.

#### Predict retention and graduation rates earlier—and their associated revenues

Using the available data and information that you know about your students, we encourage institutions to calculate correlations with retention and graduation rates and to identify their expected retention rates well in advance of IPEDS submissions. The available data and information you examine should include, as a base, the information you know about your students at the time of admission, assessment data collected during the first semester and at mid-year, persistence behavior, and course completion and success rates. For assistance in calculating retention revenue, see our Retention Revenue Estimator at [www.noellevitz.com/calculator](http://www.noellevitz.com/calculator). An important, additional factor worth considering is the cost and course management complications of re-offering courses to students who do not complete them.



## Strategy development

### **Make early alert and early intervention a priority**

Traditionally, early-alert-and-intervention programs have relied upon mid-term grades and/or referrals made by faculty and staff. At that point in the semester it may be too late to intervene appropriately. More effective early-alert plans can be developed using data known about the student at the time of admission, historical persistence patterns, first-semester and mid-year assessments, and course completion and success rates. For example, if you're serving a four-year private college and your conditionally-admitted students aren't persisting at the benchmarks indicated in this report, then further early-alert-and-intervention strategy development may be worthwhile.

### **Plan for academic recovery**

The data in this report indicate that fewer students are placed on probation during term two compared to term one. Effective programs which require students to participate in the development of their own academic recovery should be implemented at the end of term one. The programs can come in the form of courses, individual counseling, academic support, TRIO programs, or a combination of these services. If a student isn't earning the required GPA to graduate at the end of term one, then immediate participation in such academic recovery programs must be expected.

### **Keep focusing on the first year, but also put some of your effort on the second year as well**

Although the first year has been a historic focus of student retention programs, as this is where the greatest loss of students occurs, the findings show that significant losses of students also occur during the second year, so it is important to pay attention to both years. In addition, the data show that attrition continues during the second term of the first and second year, so it is important to provide ongoing and relevant student transition support beyond the first terms. Research shows that the needs and interests of students change as time progresses.

For first-year students, even at four-year public campuses with higher selectivity, where some may assume that students do not require supplemental support such as learning communities or first-year experience courses, much more needs to be done to support students. Before first-year students withdraw from a course, effective processes, systems, and strategies must be in place to aid students in completing courses. In addition, institutions that are losing students during the first term at higher rates may need to: examine admissions practices to ensure that incoming students are an appropriate match for the institution; strengthen course selection, registration, and advising processes; revisit courses offered during the first term; use their most student-centered faculty to teach these courses; and identify proactive, non-punitive ways to support and engage entering students who are less prepared or needing remediation early in the first term.

In addition, for all institutions, and especially among those with lower selectivity, more must be done to engage students during the second year to increase overall enrollments and completion rates. Assessing the needs of second-year students, developing "sophomore slump" strategies, re-orienting these students to available support services, and assisting second-year students with integrating career decisions and choosing a major are all important components of a successful overall retention program.

Analyzing these data along with data on the amount of time students spend working, the number of classes they are enrolled in at other institutions, current GPA, and the amount of time they spend studying can inform appropriate strategy development and highlight potential impacts on student success.

**Questions? Want to discuss your retention strategy? Please contact Tim Culver, Noel-Levitz vice president of consulting services, at [tim-culver@noellevitz.com](mailto:tim-culver@noellevitz.com) or by calling 1-800-876-1117.**



## Responding institutions

Representatives from 254 U.S. colleges and universities participated in Noel-Levitz's national electronic survey of undergraduate student retention indicators which was distributed to all two-year and four-year degree-granting institutions in November of 2010. The respondents included 139 four-year private institutions, 55 four-year public institutions, and 60 two-year public institutions.

### Four-year private institutions

Note: a few two-year private colleges are included among the four-year private institutions

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Abilene Christian University (TX)                      | Fordham University (NY)                        | Saint Joseph College (CT)                         |
| Agnes Scott College (GA)                               | Franciscan University of Steubenville (OH)     | Saint Joseph Seminary College (LA)                |
| AIB College of Business (IA)                           | Freed-Hardeman University (TN)                 | Saint Louis University (MO)                       |
| Albertus Magnus College (CT)                           | Friends University (KS)                        | Saint Mary's College (IN)                         |
| Anderson University (IN)                               | George Fox University (OR)                     | Saint Vincent College (PA)                        |
| Art Center College of Design (CA)                      | Grand View University (IA)                     | School of the Art Institute of Chicago (IL)       |
| Ashland University (OH)                                | Hampden-Sydney College (VA)                    | Shorter University (GA)                           |
| Assumption College (MA)                                | Hartwick College (NY)                          | Southeastern University (FL)                      |
| Augustana College (SD)                                 | Hood College (MD)                              | Southern Virginia University (VA)                 |
| Aurora University (IL)                                 | Houston Baptist University (TX)                | Southwestern Assemblies of God University (TX)    |
| Avila University (MO)                                  | Howard University (DC)                         | Southwestern College (KS)                         |
| Bacone College (OK)                                    | Indiana Institute of Technology (IN)           | Spring Arbor University (MI)                      |
| Baptist Memorial College of Health Sciences (TN)       | International Baptist College (AZ)             | St. Catharine College (KY)                        |
| Becker College - Worcester (MA)                        | John Brown University (AR)                     | St. Catherine University (MN)                     |
| Bellevue University (NE)                               | Juniata College (PA)                           | St. John Fisher College (NY)                      |
| Bennett College for Women (NC)                         | Kentucky Wesleyan College (KY)                 | St. John's University (NY)                        |
| Berry College (GA)                                     | Kilian Community College (SD)                  | St. Mary's University (TX)                        |
| Bethel College (IN)                                    | King College (TN)                              | Susquehanna University (PA)                       |
| Bethel University (MN)                                 | Liberty University (VA)                        | Texas Lutheran University (TX)                    |
| Bethune-Cookman University (FL)                        | Lourdes College (OH)                           | Texas Wesleyan University (TX)                    |
| Boston University (MA)                                 | Madonna University (MI)                        | Thomas More College (KY)                          |
| Bridgewater College (VA)                               | Malone University (OH)                         | Transylvania University (KY)                      |
| Burlington College (VT)                                | Manhattan Christian College (KS)               | Trinity Christian College (IL)                    |
| Cabrini College (PA)                                   | Marietta College (OH)                          | Trinity International University (IL)             |
| Carson-Newman College (TN)                             | Marquette University (WI)                      | Trinity Lutheran College (WA)                     |
| Cedar Crest College (PA)                               | Marymount Manhattan College (NY)               | University of Charleston (WV)                     |
| Clark Atlanta University (GA)                          | Marywood University (PA)                       | University of Dallas (TX)                         |
| Clarkson College (NE)                                  | Menlo College (CA)                             | University of Dayton (OH)                         |
| Coe College (IA)                                       | Mercy College of Northwest Ohio (OH)           | University of La Verne (CA)                       |
| College of Menominee Nation (WI)                       | Meredith College (NC)                          | University of Mary (ND)                           |
| College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University (MN) | Messiah College (PA)                           | University of San Francisco (CA)                  |
| College of St. Joseph (VT)                             | Millikin University (IL)                       | University of St. Thomas (TX)                     |
| Concordia University Chicago (IL)                      | Misericordia University (PA)                   | University of the Pacific (CA)                    |
| Concordia University, St. Paul (MN)                    | Mississippi College (MS)                       | Upper Iowa University (IA)                        |
| Corban University (OR)                                 | Montreat College (NC)                          | Vaughn College of Aeronautics and Technology (NY) |
| Creighton University (NE)                              | Newberry College (SC)                          | Wabash College (IN)                               |
| Crown College (MN)                                     | Oklahoma Baptist University (OK)               | Warner University (FL)                            |
| Culver-Stockton College (MO)                           | Oklahoma Christian University (OK)             | Warren Wilson College (NC)                        |
| Dillard University (LA)                                | Oklahoma City University (OK)                  | Wartburg College (IA)                             |
| Doane College (NE)                                     | Ottawa University (KS)                         | Webber International University (FL)              |
| Drew University (NJ)                                   | Paul Smith's College of Arts and Sciences (NY) | Webster University (MO)                           |
| East Texas Baptist University (TX)                     | Pfeiffer University (NC)                       | Whitworth University (WA)                         |
| Elizabethtown College (PA)                             | Philadelphia Biblical University (PA)          | Wilkes University (PA)                            |
| Eureka College (IL)                                    | Pikeville College (KY)                         | William Jessup University (CA)                    |
| Florida Institute of Technology (FL)                   | Rochester Institute of Technology (NY)         | Wilson College (PA)                               |
|  | Rockhurst University (MO)                      | Xavier University (OH)                            |
|  | Rocky Mountain College (MT)                    | Young Harris College (GA)                         |

**A special thank you to those who participated.**

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#### **4-year public institutions**

Albany State University (GA)  
 Arkansas Tech University (AR)  
 Bemidji State University (MN)  
 Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania (PA)  
 Cameron University (OK)  
 Christopher Newport University (VA)  
 City University of New York Brooklyn College (NY)  
 City University of New York Hunter College (NY)  
 Clemson University (SC)  
 Coastal Carolina University (SC)  
 College of Charleston (SC)  
 Emporia State University (KS)  
 Fairmont State University (WV)  
 Fort Lewis College (CO)  
 Georgia State University (GA)  
 Grand Valley State University (MI)  
 Humboldt State University (CA)  
 Louisiana Tech University (LA)  
 Mayville State University (ND)  
 Miami Dade College (FL)  
 Minnesota State University, Mankato (MN)  
 Montana Tech of The University of Montana (MT)  
 North Carolina State University (NC)  
 Oakland University (MI)  
 Prairie View A & M University (TX)  
 Rogers State University (OK)  
 Saginaw Valley State University (MI)  
 Sam Houston State University (TX)  
 Shepherd University (WV)  
 Southeast Missouri State University (MO)  
 Southern Polytechnic State University (GA)  
 Tarleton State University (TX)  
 Texas A & M University - Corpus Christi (TX)  
 Texas State University - San Marcos (TX)  
 Texas Tech University (TX)  
 The University of Akron, Main Campus (OH)  
 The University of South Dakota (SD)  
 United States Coast Guard Academy (CT)  
 University of Colorado Denver (CO)  
 University of Delaware (DE)  
 University of Hawaii at Hilo (HI)  
 University of Hawaii at Manoa (HI)  
 University of Houston - Downtown (TX)  
 University of Illinois at Springfield (IL)  
 University of Massachusetts Amherst (MA)  
 University of North Carolina at Pembroke (NC)

University of Southern Mississippi (MS)  
 University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (TN)  
 University of Tennessee at Martin (TN)  
 University of Virginia (VA)  
 University of West Georgia (GA)  
 Washburn University (KS)  
 West Texas A & M University (TX)  
 West Virginia University (WV)  
 Westfield State University (MA)

#### **2-year public institutions**

Alabama Southern Community College (AL)  
 Arkansas Northeastern College (AR)  
 Bay de Noc Community College (MI)  
 Beville State Community College (AL)  
 Blackhawk Technical College (WI)  
 Butler Community College (KS)  
 Carl Sandburg College (IL)  
 Casper College (WY)  
 Central Lakes College (MN)  
 Central Maine Community College (ME)  
 City University of New York Borough of Manhattan Community College (NY)  
 Clackamas Community College (OR)  
 Columbia-Greene Community College (NY)  
 Dabney S. Lancaster Community College (VA)  
 Delgado Community College (LA)  
 Eastern New Mexico University-Roswell (NM)  
 Edison State Community College (OH)  
 El Paso Community College (TX)  
 Elgin Community College (IL)  
 Glendale Community College (AZ)  
 Greenville Technical College (SC)  
 Gwinnett Technical College (GA)  
 Harper College (IL)  
 Horry-Georgetown Technical College (SC)  
 Howard Community College (MD)  
 Hutchinson Community College and Area Vocational School (KS)  
 Illinois Central College (IL)  
 Isothermal Community College (NC)  
 James A. Rhodes State College (OH)  
 Kellogg Community College (MI)  
 Kilgore College (TX)  
 La Guardia Community College/City University of New York (NY)  
 Lake Region State College (ND)  
 Lewis and Clark Community College (IL)  
 Lincoln Land Community College (IL)  
 Marion Military Institute (AL)  
 McHenry County College (IL)

Mount Wachusett Community College (MA)  
 Nash Community College (NC)  
 New Mexico State University at Carlsbad (NM)  
 North Dakota State College of Science (ND)  
 North Idaho College (ID)  
 Northern Wyoming Community College District (WY)  
 Northwest Technical College (MN)  
 Owensboro Community and Technical College (KY)  
 Pennsylvania Highlands Community College (PA)  
 Piedmont Community College (NC)  
 Pierpont Community and Technical College (WV)  
 Pratt Community College (KS)  
 Raritan Valley Community College (NJ)  
 Richland Community College (IL)  
 Santa Fe Community College (NM)  
 South Arkansas Community College (AR)  
 South Plains College (TX)  
 Southern Arkansas University Tech (AR)  
 Southwestern Oregon Community College (OR)  
 Trinity Valley Community College (TX)  
 Tyler Junior College (TX)  
 Wayne Community College (NC)  
 West Virginia Northern Community College (WV)

## For further reading:

**NOEL-LEVITZ WHITE PAPER**

Because measuring retention and graduation rates—on their own—isn't enough

### A New Way to Measure Student Success

Introducing the Student Success "Funnel"—a Valuable Tool for Retention Planning and Goal-Setting

For decades, the major focus of those working in the areas of student success and retention has been to raise overall retention and graduation rates. While these continue to be the most critically important measures, this paper argues that the traditional measures of fall-to-fall retention and graduation rates within "x" number of years are insufficient on their own.

What is also needed is a more systematic, complementary approach to measurement that puts educators in closer contact with students—an approach expressed by a new paradigm: the student success funnel.

This paper describes the student success funnel and shows how to use it to monitor students' progress, more precisely set goals, and plan more effectively.

By Tim Culver, Noel-Levitz Vice President for Consulting Services

Noel-Levitz

### Read this white paper: A New Way to Measure Student Success

[www.noellevitz.com/StudentSuccessFunnel](http://www.noellevitz.com/StudentSuccessFunnel)

Learn about a new paradigm for monitoring student success: the "continuing student funnel."

### National Collegiate Retention and Persistence to Degree Rates

Since 1983, ACT has collected a comprehensive database of first- to second-year retention rates and persistence to degree rates. These rates provide national benchmarks for institutional type and level of selectivity. Data are compiled by ACT from the ACT Institutional Data Questionnaire, an annual survey of information collected from two-year and four-year postsecondary institutions.

#### First- to Second-Year Retention Rates

Table 1. Summary Table: National First- to Second-Year Retention Rates by Institutional Type  
Table 2. First- to Second-Year Retention Rates for Two-Year Colleges by Admission Selectivity  
Table 3. First- to Second-Year Retention Rates for Four-Year Public Colleges by Admission Selectivity  
Table 4. First- to Second-Year Retention Rates for Four-Year Private Colleges by Admission Selectivity

#### Persistence to Degree Rates

Table 5. Summary Table: National Persistence to Degree Rates by Institutional Type  
Table 6. Persistence to Degree Rates for Two-Year Colleges by Admission Selectivity  
Table 7. Persistence to Degree Rates for Four-Year Public Colleges by Admission Selectivity  
Table 8. Persistence to Degree Rates for Four-Year Private Colleges by Admission Selectivity

For more information, contact ACT Educational Services at 319/241-2275 or go to our website: [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

**ACT**

### Compare your outcomes to ACT's Collegiate Retention and Persistence to Degree Rates

[www.noellevitz.com/ACTnorms](http://www.noellevitz.com/ACTnorms)

This report from ACT is a great starting point for benchmarking year-to-year retention and degree completion rates.

### Higher Ed Benchmarks

#### Noel-Levitz Report on Undergraduate Enrollment Trends

## 2010 Admissions Funnel Benchmarks for Four-Year Public and Private Institutions

To assist campuses with accurately forecasting enrollment, this report continues Noel-Levitz's long-standing research into admissions funnel conversion and yield rates. The report is based on a Web-based survey of college and university admissions officials in September and October, 2010, in which respondents reported fall 2010 and fall 2009 data. For context, data from previous Noel-Levitz surveys are offered for comparison. Among the highlights:

- Yield rates (from admit to enroll) for first-year and transfer students continued their downward trend for private colleges, while yield rates for public universities are either leveling off or following no noticeable trend lines.
- The rising "secret shopper" applicant trend reported earlier by Noel-Levitz—and the corresponding rise in inquiry-to-applicant conversion rates for first-year and transfer students—continued to gain steam. For fall 2010, fully one-third of first-year applicants and approximately half of transfer applicants did not identify themselves to their chosen institution(s) until they submitted an application.
- Admitted, first-year applicants who applied online continued to yield at lower rates than mail-in admitted applicants, while first-year, in-state admitted applicants continued to yield at higher rates than out-of-state and international admitted applicants.
- Up to 22 percent of first-year students failed to complete their applications, led by online applicants at private colleges.

Readers are encouraged to use the benchmarks in this report to more accurately predict enrollment yields, to set accurate goals, and more. For guidance on how to use the benchmarks, see page 12 and additional resources at [www.noellevitz.com/HigherEdBenchmarks](http://www.noellevitz.com/HigherEdBenchmarks).

What is an admissions funnel? For those who are unfamiliar, an admissions funnel is a precise set of metrics for forecasting enrollment yields. The funnel captures the rates of movement of prospective students toward enrollment at key intervals, such as the percentage of admitted students who enroll. See more examples inside.

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### Visit our Benchmark Poll Report Series

[www.noellevitz.com/BenchmarkReports](http://www.noellevitz.com/BenchmarkReports)

### Additional resources

#### National Student Satisfaction-Priorities Reports

[www.noellevitz.com/SatisfactionBenchmarks](http://www.noellevitz.com/SatisfactionBenchmarks)

#### National Freshman Attitudes Reports

[www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanAttitudes](http://www.noellevitz.com/FreshmanAttitudes)

#### Retention Revenue Estimator

[www.noellevitz.com/calculator](http://www.noellevitz.com/calculator)

### Begin a conversation

Readers are invited to contact Noel-Levitz to schedule a complimentary, 30-minute consultation by telephone with an experienced student retention consultant. We'll listen carefully to your questions and situation and share insights based on our consulting work with campuses nationwide. To schedule an appointment, contact us at 1-800-876-1117 or [ContactUs@noellevitz.com](mailto:ContactUs@noellevitz.com).



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**Please watch for  
Noel-Levitz's next  
National Survey of  
Retention Indicators  
in fall 2012.**

## Questions about this report?

We hope you found this report to be helpful and informative. If you have questions or would like more information about the findings, please contact Tim Culver, Noel-Levitz vice president of consulting services, at 1-800-876-1117 or [tim-culver@noellevitz.com](mailto:tim-culver@noellevitz.com).

## About Noel-Levitz and our higher education research

A trusted partner to higher education, Noel-Levitz focuses on strategic planning for enrollment and student success. Our consultants work side by side with campus executive teams to facilitate planning and to help implement the resulting plans.

For more than 20 years, we have conducted national surveys to assist campuses with benchmarking their performance. This includes benchmarking marketing/recruitment and student success practices and outcomes, monitoring student and campus usage of the Web and electronic communications, and comparing institutional budgets and policies. There is no charge or obligation for participating and responses to all survey items are strictly confidential. Participants have the advantage of receiving the findings first, as soon as they become available.

For more information, visit [www.noellevitz.com](http://www.noellevitz.com).

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