



Information BRIEF

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State University System Graduation and Retention Rates Are Nationally Competitive

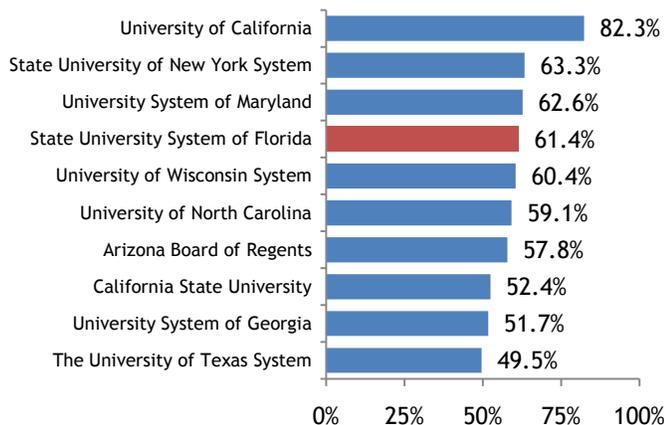
September 28, 2011

The State University System of Florida six-year graduation rate and second-year retention rate are strong compared to the ten largest public university systems (see Exhibits 1 and 2). Graduation rates for the System's minority students are also competitive, with rates for non-Hispanic Black students and Hispanic students ranked in the top 10 when compared to all four-year public institutions in other states (see Appendix 1).

GRADUATION RATES are used by prospective students, university administrators, and state and federal policymakers as a measure of student success and institutional effectiveness. The Board of Governors has recently adopted a process for State University System strategic planning, budgeting and accountability reporting that puts graduation rates among the key measures to inform policy decisions.

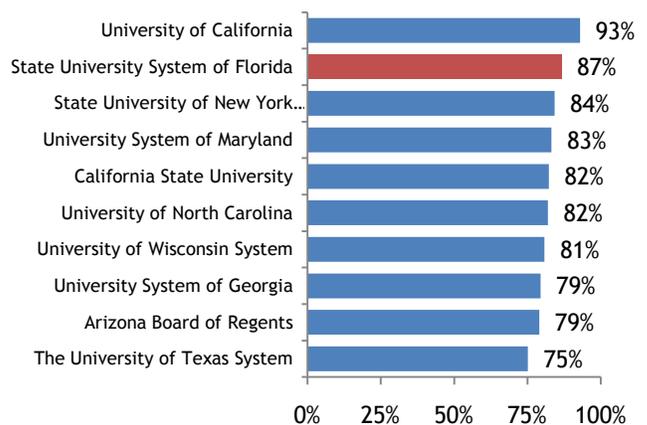
Despite Florida's competitive national standing for graduation rates among its public four-year institutions, the Board of Governors and University Boards of Trustees recognize that there is room for improvement. And although these national data are valuable because they allow comparisons among institutions and states, the methodology used in the federal calculation only provides a narrow view of a university's student population. The next section explains that the Board of Governors includes a much broader pool of students in its accountability metrics.

**Exhibit 1. SUS Graduation Rate is 4th
Among Ten Largest Public University Systems (2004-10)**



Source: IPEDS for full-time, First-time in College Students. Note: Top ten Systems based on 2009-10 Baccalaureate degrees.

**Exhibit 2. SUS Retention Rate is 2nd
Among Ten Largest Public University Systems (2009-10)**



Source: IPEDS for full-time, First-time in College Students. Note: Top ten Systems based on 2009-10 Baccalaureate degrees.

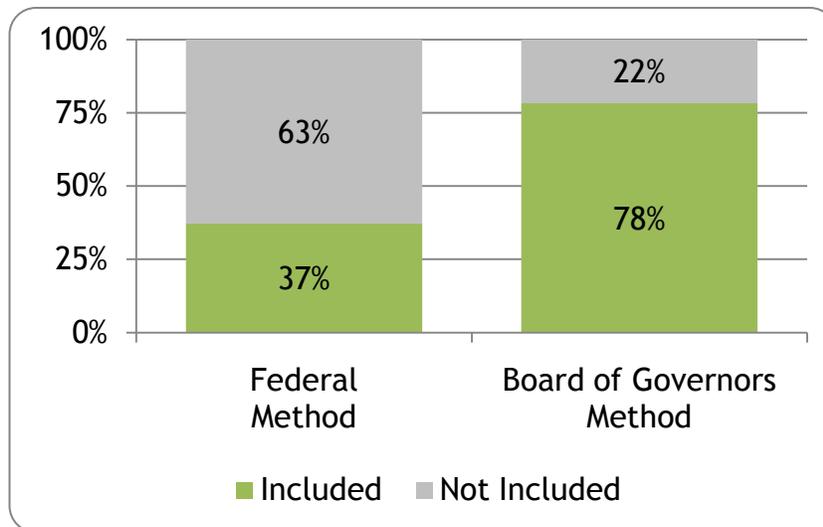
The State University System Monitors Graduation Rates for a Much Higher Proportion of Students than the Federal Approach. The Board of Governors annual accountability report includes data on student progression that identify three fall cohorts, including both full-time and part-time students: (1) first-time-in-college students; (2) AA transfers (entering the university with an associate in arts degree from a public Florida College); and (3) other transfers (those not falling in either of the other two groups). In addition to including more students, the State University System graduation rates also include students who transfer to (and graduate from) another institution within the System. Routinely, five percent of an entering freshman class ends up transferring to another institution within the System and graduating within six years. The ability of the Board of Governors to track student success for students who transfer to another institution within the System accounts for a majority of the difference between the federal and State University System graduation rates.

In contrast, the federal methodology¹ is limited because it excludes:

- Students who transfer into the institution;
- Students who enroll part-time in their first term; and
- Students who transfer to another SUS institution.

Exhibit 3 shows that only 37% of all newly enrolled SUS students in 2009-10 were included in standard federal reporting. The Board of Governors' methodology included 78% of all newly enrolled SUS students, or 23,000 more students than the federal methodology in 2009-10.

Exhibit 3. Board of Governors Tracks 41% More Students Than Federal Graduation Rate



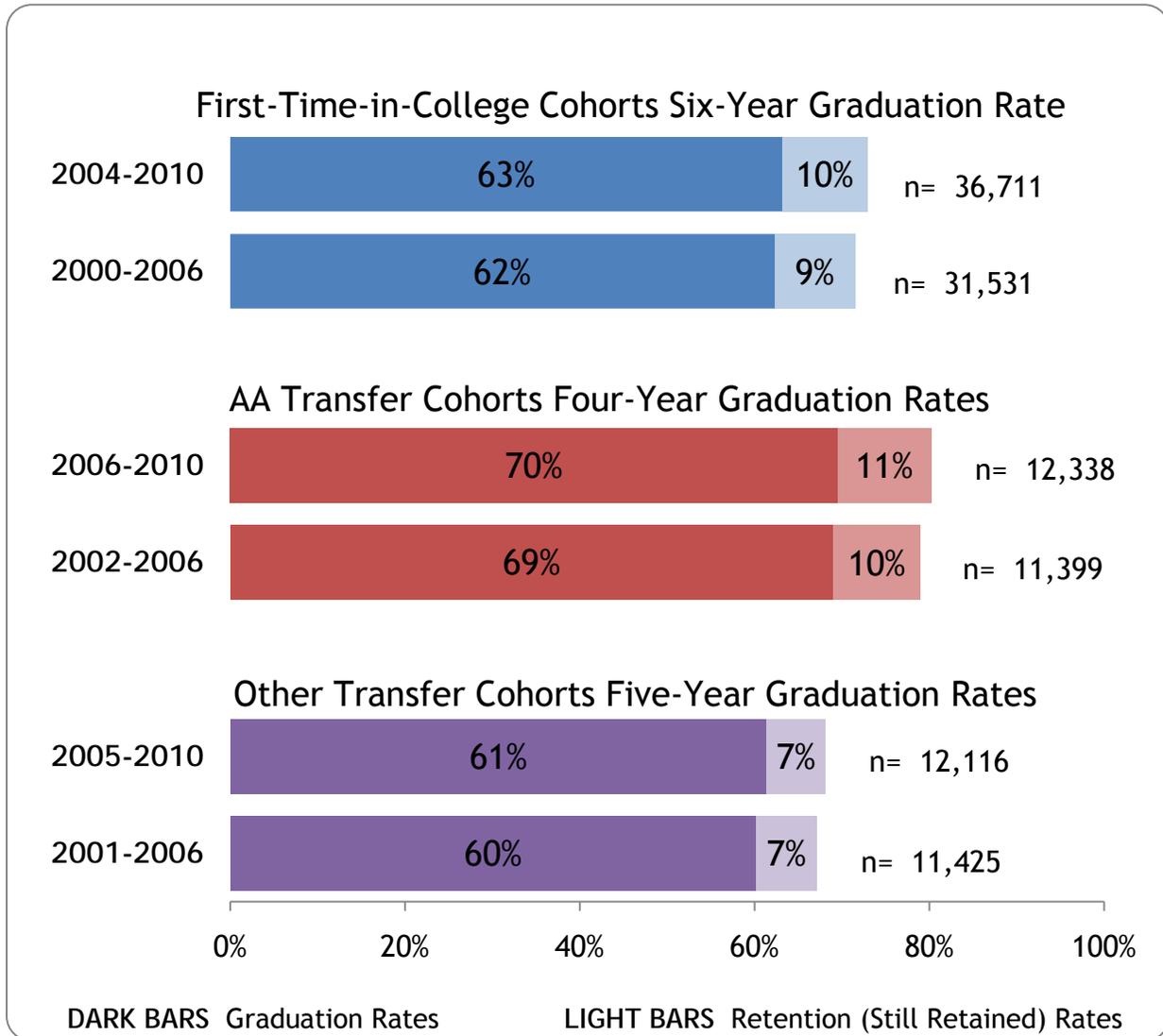
Source: Board of Governors (2009-10). Note: Neither method includes students who enter for the first time in the spring term. See Appendix 3 for university-level data.

¹ In 1990, Congress passed the Student Right to Know Act, which requires higher education institutions to report graduation data according to a federally standardized definition. That standard is a six-year graduation rate for the fall cohort of full-time (in their first term), first-time-in-college students.

SUS Retention and Graduation Rates are Nationally Competitive

Exhibit 4 shows that undergraduate graduation rates from the System have risen approximately one percentage point for first-time-in-college students, AA transfers, and other transfer students in the past five years. Although the system-wide graduation rates are relatively stable, seven universities have made significant progress in increasing their graduation rates – see Appendix 4. It is important to note that many first-time-in-college students still enrolled after six years continue pursuing a degree – ultimately pushing the 10-year graduation rate up to around 70%.

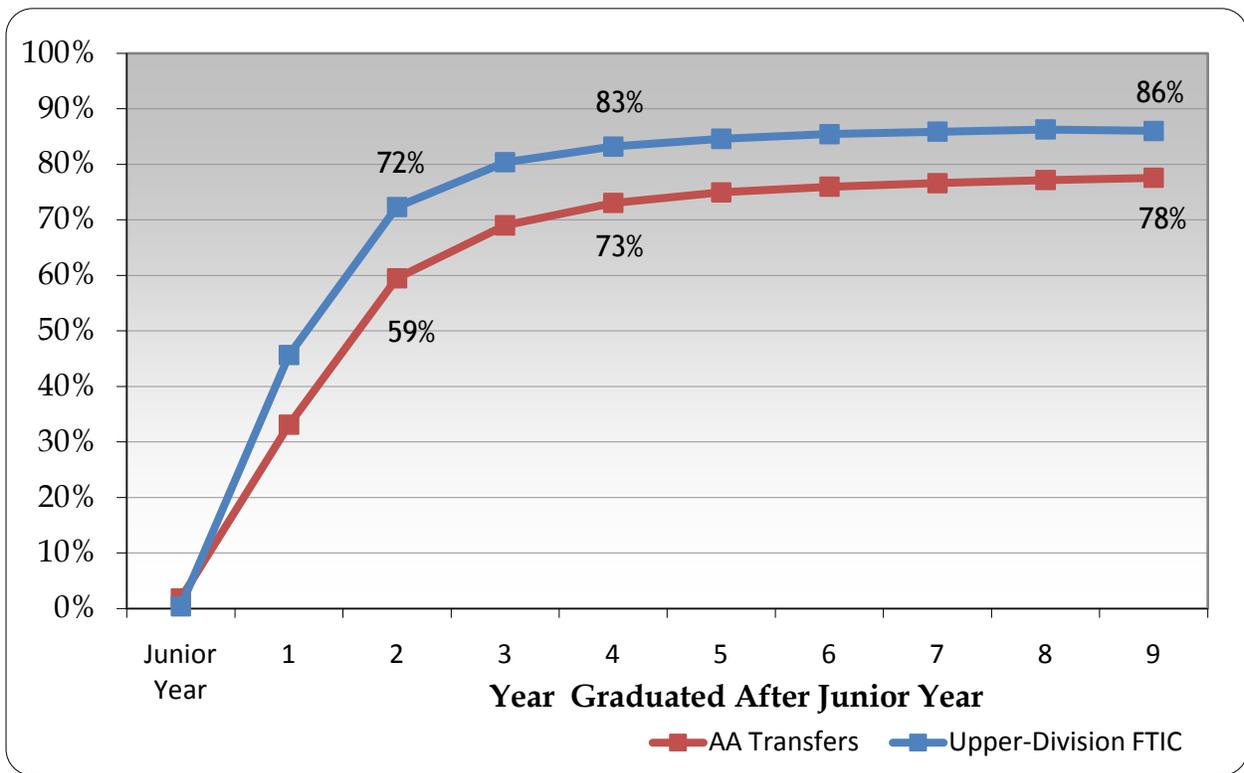
Exhibit 4. SUS Undergraduate Graduation Rates Are Stable



Source: Board of Governors. First-time-in-college (FTIC) cohort is defined as full- and part-time undergraduates entering in the fall term (or summer continuing to fall) with fewer than 12 hours earned since high school graduation. AA Transfer cohort is defined as undergraduates entering in the fall term (or summer continuing to fall) and having earned an AA degree from an institution in the Florida College System. Other Transfer cohort is defined as undergraduates entering in fall term or summer continuing to fall who are not FTICs or AA transfers. Cohorts include full-time and part-time students. All rates are based on System-level data, which includes results of students transferring within the System. See Appendix 4 for university-level data.

Most Students Who Enroll in a State University in Their Junior Year Will Earn a Degree. Often, observers make apples-to-oranges comparisons between graduation rates of first-time-in-college students from their initial entry as freshmen, and rates of transfer students from the time they enter the university as juniors. However, a more appropriate comparison between the two groups is from the point at which they enter the upper division (i.e., juniors and seniors). Exhibit 5 shows that once first-time-in-college students progress to their junior year (defined in this analysis as the cohort starting the academic year with 60-75 credit hours), they have an 83% graduation rate within four years, and 86% eventually graduate (by the tenth year). By comparison, 73% of AA transfers graduate within four years of entering, eventually rising to 78%.

Exhibit 5. 80% of Upper-Division FTIC Students Graduate in Four Years

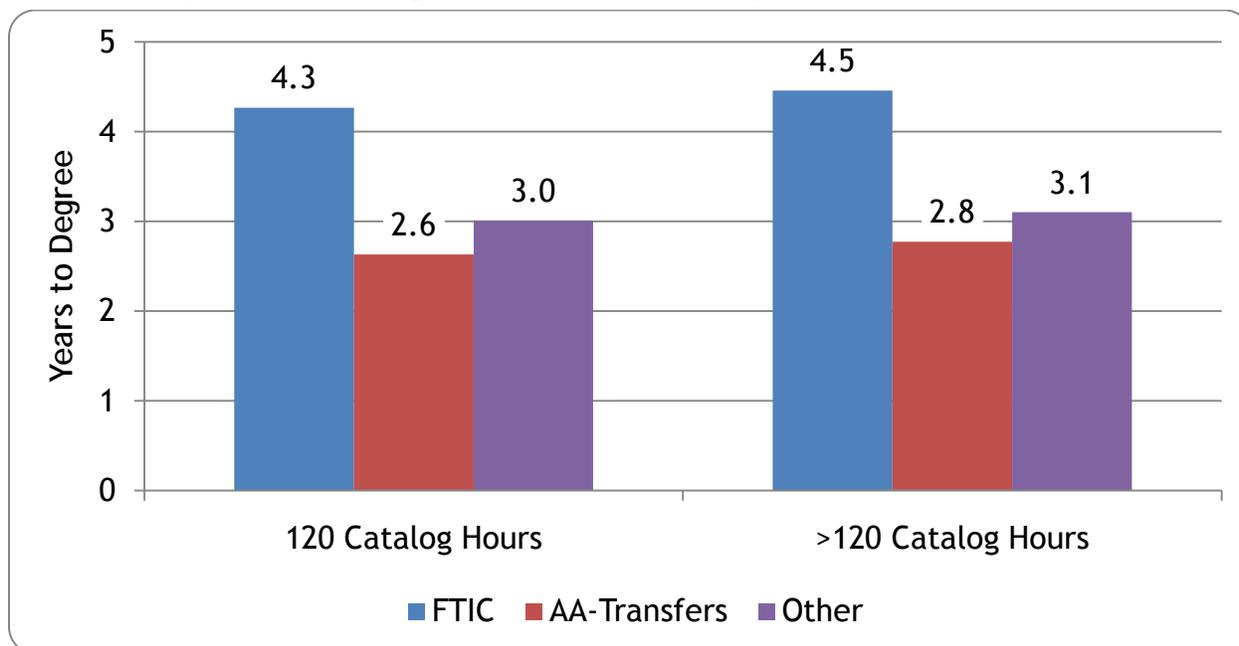


Source: Board of Governors (1999 cohort).

Note: FTIC upper-division students are defined as those who start the year with 60-75 credit hours.

Time to Complete a Degree Can Be An Indicator of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success. Whether by choice or necessity, many students attend university part-time, change majors, or temporarily stop out of college. These decisions limit the students' ability to earn a bachelor's degree in the traditionally expected four years. Yet, faster degree completion can mean less need for financial aid while enrolled and an earlier jump in earning potential for the student. Exhibit 5 shows that first-time-in-college (FTIC) students who graduated with a baccalaureate degree during the 2009-10 academic year were enrolled, on average, for 4.3 years. And, AA transfer students who graduated with a baccalaureate degree during the 2009-10 academic year were enrolled, on average, for 2.6 years.²

Exhibit 5: Average Time to Complete the Bachelor's Degree in the SUS is Less Than 4 ½ Years



Source: Board of Governors (2009-10 data).

Note: During Fall 2009, 137 SUS programs (or 19% of all baccalaureate programs) required more than 120 credit hours (e.g., engineering, architecture, and some health-related programs).

² See Information Brief 2004-#4, ("How Long Do Students Take to Graduate in the State University System?") for more on this topic.

Appendix 1 – 2004-2010 National Graduation Rates (for full-time, First-Time-in-College Students in Public Universities)

RANK	STATE	TOTAL			WHITE		BLACK		HISPANIC		WHITE-BLACK		WHITE-HISPANIC	
		SCHOOLS	COHORT	GRAD %	GRAD %	RANK	GRAD %	RANK	GRAD %	RANK	% GAP	RANK	% GAP	RANK
1	Delaware	2	4,135	70.8%	78.3%	1	43.9%	16	68.0%	2	34.4%	50	10.3%	29
2	Iowa	3	9,308	69.4%	70.4%	4	52.1%	6	58.4%	7	18.4%	25	12.0%	35
3	Washington	8	13,642	68.9%	68.7%	6	57.0%	2	63.7%	5	11.7%	7	5.0%	9
4	Virginia	15	27,481	68.4%	71.5%	3	50.8%	8	64.2%	4	20.7%	35	7.3%	14
5	New Jersey	14	15,703	66.5%	69.7%	5	53.0%	4	56.8%	11	16.7%	20	12.9%	38
6	New Hampshire	5	4,584	65.4%	65.5%	9	52.7%	5	64.5%	3	12.8%	11	1.0%	4
7	California	33	67,924	65.1%	68.2%	7	47.3%	10	54.0%	14	21.0%	37	14.2%	43
8	Vermont	4	2,950	63.2%	63.7%	13	60.7%	1	58.6%	6	3.0%	3	5.1%	10
9	Pennsylvania	35	38,551	62.7%	65.3%	10	44.6%	15	55.7%	13	20.7%	36	9.6%	27
10	Illinois	12	25,202	62.5%	67.9%	8	38.8%	23	45.3%	28	29.2%	46	22.7%	49
11	Maryland	14	14,763	62.3%	73.2%	2	38.6%	24	70.0%	1	34.6%	51	3.2%	6
12	Florida	11	34,627	61.4%	64.6%	12	52.0%	7	56.8%	10	12.5%	9	7.8%	17
13	Michigan	15	36,862	60.7%	63.5%	14	33.3%	34	58.2%	8	30.2%	49	5.4%	12
14	Wisconsin	13	23,720	60.4%	62.2%	16	32.3%	35	47.4%	25	29.9%	48	14.8%	45
15	Connecticut	10	8,716	60.2%	62.0%	17	43.2%	17	50.4%	18	18.7%	28	11.6%	33
16	North Carolina	16	28,682	59.1%	64.7%	11	44.7%	14	57.1%	9	20.0%	32	7.6%	16
17	South Carolina	13	14,830	59.1%	61.8%	18	48.1%	9	50.8%	17	13.6%	14	11.0%	31
18	New York	35	33,557	58.6%	63.0%	15	45.3%	13	44.3%	29	17.8%	22	18.7%	48
19	Rhode Island	2	3,524	57.8%	58.4%	22	46.8%	11	46.3%	27	11.7%	6	12.2%	36
20	Arizona	3	14,675	57.8%	60.4%	19	41.4%	19	51.1%	16	19.0%	29	9.3%	24
21	Massachusetts	13	13,015	56.4%	58.0%	23	40.6%	20	43.9%	30	17.4%	21	14.1%	42
22	Minnesota	12	16,488	56.4%	57.7%	24	37.9%	27	51.6%	15	19.7%	30	6.1%	13
23	Nebraska	7	7,015	55.7%	56.8%	26	31.4%	39	48.4%	24	25.4%	42	8.4%	20
24	Ohio	17	37,209	55.5%	58.7%	20	31.7%	38	50.2%	19	27.1%	44	8.5%	21
25	Missouri	13	17,251	54.5%	57.5%	25	31.2%	40	49.5%	20	26.3%	43	7.9%	19
26	Kansas	7	11,575	54.3%	56.7%	27	38.2%	26	43.2%	33	18.6%	27	13.5%	40
27	Oregon	9	9,281	54.2%	55.4%	30	35.5%	28	43.2%	34	19.9%	31	12.2%	37
28	Colorado	13	20,265	53.3%	55.6%	29	39.4%	22	39.7%	38	16.1%	19	15.9%	46
29	Wyoming	1	1,496	53.0%	53.1%	34	46.7%	12	49.1%	22	6.4%	4	4.0%	7
30	Indiana	14	26,584	52.6%	53.8%	33	35.4%	29	42.4%	35	18.4%	26	11.4%	32
31	Georgia	21	24,412	51.7%	54.1%	32	40.6%	21	56.1%	12	13.5%	13	-2.1%	2
32	Mississippi	9	7,982	49.9%	58.4%	21	38.4%	25	48.6%	23	20.1%	33	9.8%	28
33	Texas	41	57,940	49.0%	56.6%	28	31.9%	37	39.2%	40	24.8%	41	17.4%	47
34	Maine	8	3,706	48.5%	50.2%	35	28.6%	45	25.9%	47	21.7%	38	24.3%	51
35	North Dakota	6	5,312	48.2%	49.5%	36	20.3%	48	42.0%	36	29.2%	47	7.5%	15
36	South Dakota	6	4,205	48.0%	49.3%	38	31.0%	41	25.0%	48	18.3%	24	24.3%	50
37	West Virginia	10	9,166	47.8%	48.8%	39	30.9%	42	49.5%	21	18.0%	23	-0.7%	3
38	Utah	5	5,587	47.5%	47.9%	41	53.5%	3	43.6%	32	-5.6%	2	4.3%	8
39	Alabama	14	17,110	47.5%	55.2%	31	30.7%	43	47.3%	26	24.5%	40	7.9%	18
40	Hawai'i	3	2,304	47.3%	35.4%	49	42.3%	18	43.9%	31	-6.9%	1	-8.5%	1
41	Kentucky	8	15,311	46.6%	47.7%	42	35.0%	30	38.3%	43	12.7%	10	9.4%	25
42	Oklahoma	13	13,331	45.7%	48.4%	40	34.1%	31	38.8%	41	14.3%	16	9.6%	26
43	Tennessee	9	17,500	45.5%	49.3%	37	33.4%	33	38.4%	42	15.9%	18	10.9%	30
44	Nevada	3	5,299	43.8%	45.6%	44	33.6%	32	36.3%	45	11.9%	8	9.3%	23
45	Montana	6	4,788	42.7%	43.9%	47	15.2%	50	41.5%	37	28.8%	45	2.4%	5
46	New Mexico	7	6,426	40.6%	46.2%	43	32.0%	36	37.1%	44	14.2%	15	9.1%	22
47	Arkansas	9	9,833	40.1%	45.4%	45	22.2%	47	32.2%	46	23.3%	39	13.3%	39
48	Louisiana	16	22,404	38.8%	44.8%	46	24.1%	46	39.5%	39	20.7%	34	5.4%	11
49	Idaho	4	4,287	37.8%	39.2%	48	30.4%	44	24.7%	49	8.8%	5	14.5%	44
50	Alaska	3	1,510	26.6%	30.5%	50	16.0%	49	16.7%	50	14.5%	17	13.8%	41
51	Washington, DC	1	246	7.7%	20.0%	51	7.1%	51	8.3%	51	12.9%	12	11.7%	34

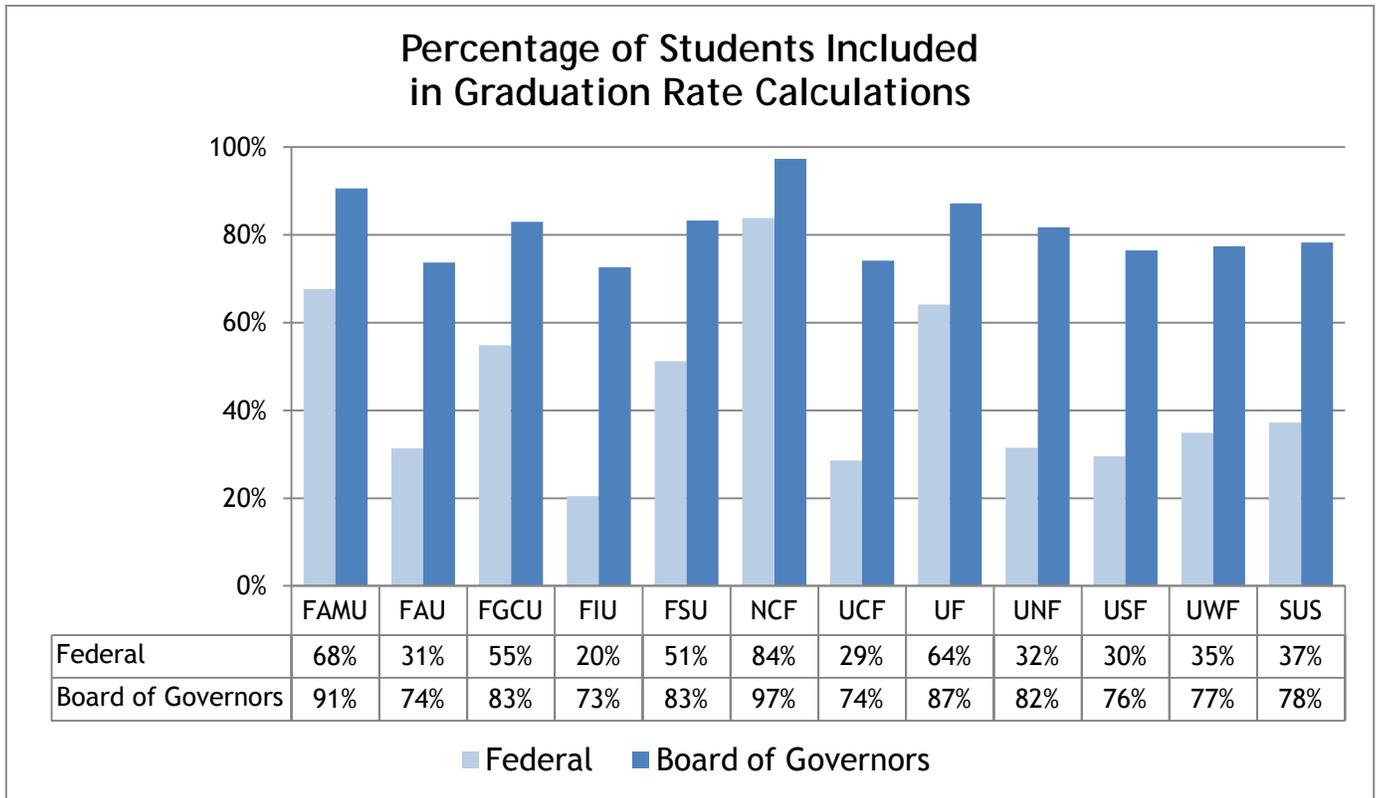
Source of graduation rate data: US Department of Education. IPEDS. Graduation Rate Survey (2010). Note: Fall 2004 Full-time, First-time Bachelor's-degree seeking student cohort from primarily baccalaureate-granting public 4yr institutions (n=574). Note: the Board of Governors 2010 Annual Report includes results of students transferring within the System, which increases the 2004-2010 System-wide graduation rate to 64.4%.

Appendix 2 – 2009-2010 2nd Year Retention Rates for First-Time-in-College Students in Public Universities

RANK	STATE	TOTAL			RANK	STATE	TOTAL		
		SCHOOLS	COHORT	GRAD %			SCHOOLS	COHORT	GRAD %
1	Delaware	2	4,550	87.8%	27	Nevada	3	5,419	77.8%
2	California	33	83,592	86.6%	28	Mississippi	9	8,873	77.6%
3	Florida	11	35,660	86.5%	29	Ohio	17	42,116	77.2%
4	Virginia	15	30,117	86.0%	30	Colorado	13	21,991	76.7%
5	Iowa	3	10,241	85.5%	31	Alabama	14	20,854	76.6%
6	New Jersey	14	18,303	85.3%	32	Kansas	7	11,827	76.2%
7	Washington	8	15,480	84.3%	33	North Dakota	6	5,434	75.2%
8	New York	35	44,094	84.2%	34	Hawai'i	3	2,297	75.2%
9	Connecticut	10	9,033	84.0%	35	Texas	41	64,178	75.1%
10	Maryland	14	15,760	83.1%	36	Missouri	13	19,470	75.1%
11	New Hampshire	5	5,042	83.0%	37	Tennessee	9	19,780	74.5%
12	Michigan	15	39,202	82.1%	38	Maine	8	3,954	74.5%
13	North Carolina	16	31,806	82.0%	39	Utah	5	7,735	73.8%
14	Pennsylvania	35	43,488	81.8%	40	Kentucky	8	16,454	73.8%
15	Wisconsin	13	25,562	80.8%	41	Wyoming	1	1,567	73.5%
16	Illinois	12	25,439	80.8%	42	South Dakota	6	4,407	73.3%
17	Vermont	4	3,805	80.2%	43	Louisiana	16	20,183	72.8%
18	Massachusetts	13	15,216	79.6%	44	New Mexico	7	7,495	72.6%
19	Oregon	9	11,032	79.5%	45	Arkansas	9	10,619	72.2%
20	Georgia	21	30,677	79.5%	46	Alaska	3	1,521	72.1%
21	Arizona	3	18,363	79.1%	47	West Virginia	10	10,337	72.1%
22	Nebraska	7	7,971	78.9%	48	Oklahoma	13	13,005	71.6%
23	Minnesota	12	16,926	78.7%	49	Montana	6	4,622	70.7%
24	Rhode Island	2	4,135	78.6%	50	Idaho	4	4,927	70.6%
25	Indiana	14	30,627	78.3%	51	Washington, DC	1	125	53.6%
26	South Carolina	13	16,656	77.9%		National Total	574	921,967	79.9%

SOURCE: Source: US Department of Education. IPEDS. Enrollment Survey (2010). Full-time, First-time-in-college students, from primarily baccalaureate-granting public 4yr institutions, who started college in Fall 2009 and were still enrolled Fall 2010. NOTE: This retention rate is lower than what is reported for the System in the Board of Governors 2010 Annual Report because the Annual Report metric includes the results of students transferring within the System.

Appendix 3 -Comparison of Graduation Rate Methodologies by University

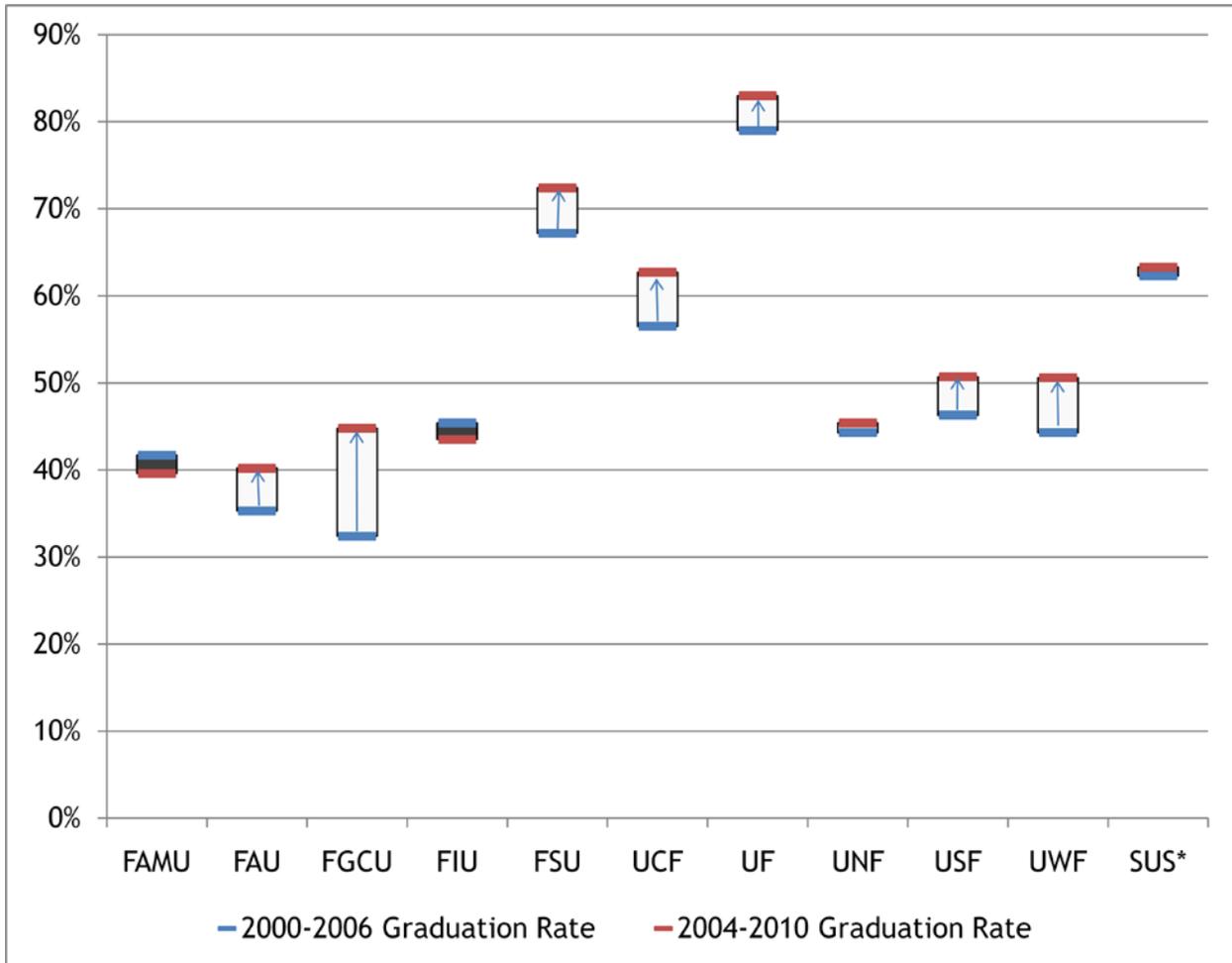


Source: Board of Governors (2009-10).

Note: Neither method includes students who enter for the first time in the spring term.

Appendix 4 - Six-Year Undergraduate Progression and Graduation Rates by University

Changes in Six-Year Undergraduate Progression and Graduation Rates for First-Time-in-College (FTIC) Students based on the SUS Definition



	FAMU	FAU	FGCU	FIU	FSU	UCF	UF	UNF	USF	UWF	SUS*
2000-2006	41.7%	35.3%	32.4%	45.4%	67.2%	56.5%	79.0%	44.3%	46.3%	44.3%	62.3%
2004-2010	39.6%	40.2%	44.8%	43.5%	72.4%	62.7%	83.0%	45.4%	50.7%	50.6%	63.3%

Source: Board of Governors - 2010 Annual Report.

Note: Cohorts include full-time and part-time students who enter in the fall term (or summer continuing to fall). University rates are from the same institution. SUS rates are System-level, which includes results of students transferring within the System. Since degrees can be awarded after the last semester of coursework, the 2004-2010 cohort data in this table provides preliminary graduation rate data that may change with the addition of "late degrees". Late degrees reported in conjunction with the IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey due in mid-April will be reflected in the following year.