



Students with Disabilities At Maryland Colleges And Universities

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This annual report provides information regarding students who registered with disability services¹ at Maryland colleges and universities. To better understand higher education outcomes for students with disabilities in Maryland, the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Disabilities and in partnership with the state's higher education institutions, created a survey administered to colleges and universities² to collect these data in aggregate form. The information may be used to improve policies and practices to support the success of students with disabilities.

As noted on the Maryland Department of Disabilities website, "Federal law (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act³) and Maryland state laws require that all students with disabilities be provided a 'free, appropriate public education' that helps them learn and prepares them for employment and daily living. This means local public school districts will provide individualized or special education and related services to students with disabilities from birth until they leave high school. Students who leave high school prior to their 22nd birthday will no longer be eligible for these services."

Higher Education in Maryland is held to several federal laws which dictate and mandate how colleges and universities interact with and provide services to students with disabilities. These laws include the Americans with Disabilities Act (as Amended in 2008), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and the Fair Housing Act. The ADA National Network website⁴ provides the following summary regarding a college or university's responsibility to students with disabilities:

Both public and private colleges and universities must provide equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities. Title II of the ADA covers publicly-funded universities, community colleges and vocational schools. Title III of the ADA covers privately-funded schools. All public or private schools that receive federal funding are required under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to make their programs accessible to students with disabilities.

All the programs of postsecondary institutions, including extracurricular activities, must be accessible to students with disabilities. The schools can do this in several ways: by providing architectural access to buildings, including residential facilities; by providing aids and services necessary for effective communication, like sign language interpreters, Braille or electronic formats and assistive listening devices; and by modifying policies, practices and procedures, such as testing accommodations and access to school facilities for service animals. Accommodations and program modifications should be individually designed to meet the needs of the student with a disability.

Accommodations and modifications of policies and practices are not required when it would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity or give rise to an undue financial or administrative burden.

¹ For the purposes of this report, the terms disability services and disability services office will be used throughout for consistency. It is important to note that the name of this office can vary from campus to campus.

² Surveys are administered annually to Maryland's 16 community colleges, 13 four-year public institutions, and 13 state-aided independent colleges and universities.

³ <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>

⁴ <https://adata.org/faq/what-are-public-or-private-college-universitys-responsibilities-students-disabilities>

Postsecondary institutions often have an office that coordinates accommodations for students with disabilities. The student should notify the appropriate person or institutional office well in advance of the needed modification or accommodation.”

Under these laws, students in higher education must self-identify as having a disability (with appropriate documentation) to receive necessary supports and accommodations. Evidence shows that less than a third of students who identify in K-12 school as having a disability go on to self-identify as such in post-secondary education⁵. As self-reporting is the only way to identify these students, **figures in this report should not be interpreted as representative of all students with a disability in higher education**⁶.

In fiscal year 2021, 15,937 undergraduate students and 2,024 graduate students were registered with their institutions’ disability services office as students with disabilities⁷, which represents **4.0% of all students enrolled in fiscal year 2021**, almost no change from the previous year. Specifically, this represents **4.5% of undergraduate students and 2.2% of graduate students enrolled**.

Four-Year Institutions⁸

In fiscal year 2021⁹, Maryland’s four-year public and state-aided independent institutions reported that 10,450 students were registered as students with disabilities with disability services. Four-year public institutions reported 5,368 undergraduate students and 927 graduate students, while state-aided independent institutions reported 3,058 undergraduate students and 1,097 graduate students (see [Appendix 1](#)). This is an increase of students over the past several years.

Maryland’s four-year public and state-aided independent institutions also reported on the second-year retention rates of the Fall 2020 cohort of first-time, full-time, degree- or certificate-seeking students who were registered with the disability services office. A student counts as retained if they return to the institution the following fall. [Appendix 2](#) shows the retention rates of the most recent undergraduate student cohort, as well as trend data for past cohorts.

Undergraduate students attending Maryland’s four-year public institutions and state-aided independent institutions who are registered with their disability services office have retention rates comparable to those for the general undergraduate population. Retention rates for students registered with disability

⁵ U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009 and Newman, Lynn, Mary Wagner, Anne-Marie Knokey, Camille Marder, Katherine Nagle, Debra Shaver, and Xin Wei. "The Post-High School Outcomes of Young Adults with Disabilities up to 8 Years after High School: A Report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2). NCSE 2011-3005." National Center for Special Education Research (2011). Retrieved September 14, 2017 from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncser/pubs/20113005/pdf/20113005.pdf>.

⁶ For citations and more complete background information on students with disabilities in Maryland and the nation, please refer to [previous MHEC reports on this subject](#). For a deeper discussion about data in these reports not representing all disabled students, please refer to our [2018 Report on Students with Disabilities at Maryland Colleges and Universities](#).

⁷ Students registered with their institutions’ disability services office in this report’s analysis include those who have permanent or temporary disabilities.

⁸ The Four-Year Institution data does not include all 26 institutions. Coppin State University did not provide retention or graduation data for reporting year 2022 but did provide overall totals of undergraduate and graduate students registered with disability services. In addition, the University of Maryland, Baltimore is not included in the retention and graduation rate data because it does not enroll first-time, full-time undergraduate students and therefore cannot report on the outcomes of those students.

⁹ July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

services at four-year institutions appear to be improving slightly over time, despite a drop for the 2019 cohort during the height of COVID-19 pandemic. At both four-year public and state-aided independent institutions, the most recent is the highest retention rate out of the last four cohorts, at 85.8% and 86.5%, respectively.

For the 2022 reporting year, MHEC collected graduation rate data for students enrolled in the state's public and state-aided independent four-year institutions. Specifically, institutions reported on the six-year graduation outcomes of the first-time, full-time cohort who first enrolled in Fall 2015. That data reveal that among the first-time, full-time students who started in Fall 2015 and registered with disability services, 65.7% graduated within six years. This rate is 3.6 percentage points lower than the 69.3% six-year graduation rate of *all* first-time, full-time undergraduate students from the Fall 2015 cohort^{10 11}.

Community Colleges

In fiscal year 2021, 7,511 undergraduate students registered with the disability services office of their community college campus. This has remained stable at approximately 5% of the total undergraduate enrollment at Maryland's community colleges over the past 6 years (see [Appendix 1](#)).

Maryland's community colleges report outcome data for undergraduate students registered with the disability services office using the Degree Progress Analysis model¹². [Appendix 3](#) compares outcomes between all students starting in Fall 2017, and the subset of this group who registered with disability services. It also shows the same comparison for the previous two cohorts. The Degree Progress Analysis shows that 47.2% of the undergraduate students registered with disability services offices either graduated or transferred within four years after initial enrollment. The rate is 6.6 percentage points lower than the statewide graduation/transfer rate of 53.8% for the Fall 2017 cohort. However, this progress gap has decreased for three consecutive cohorts, going from a 9.9 point gap for the 2015 cohort, to 8.1 points for the 2016 cohort, to 6.6 points for the 2017 cohort.

As also seen in [Appendix 3](#), undergraduate students registered with disability services offices have a successful persister rate of 75.3%, comparable to the statewide rate of 72.7%. A successful persister rate is a rate which includes students within the cohort who, within four years, graduate or transfer, are still enrolled at the institution, or who complete at least 30 credits or more with a GPA of 2.00 or better¹³.

Although there was an 8.6% increase in the number of students registered with disability services between Fall 2016 and Fall 2017, students in both groups persisted in their studies at similar rates at the four-year mark.

¹⁰ *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)*, U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC. Retrieved February 2023 from <http://nces.ed.gov>.

¹¹ Due to an incomplete data submission to MHEC, data for Coppin State University are not included in these 2015 cohort graduation figures for all undergraduates and those registered with disability services.

¹² The Degree Progress Analysis is a cohort model used to report the progress toward degree completion of community college students. It incorporates measures of success including completion and transfer rates to other institutions and successful persisting as indicators of progress. Specifically, the measure tracks the success of first-time full- and part-time students over four years who have attempted at least 18 credit hours within the first two years of initial enrollment.

¹³ Students included in the graduation/transfer rate are also included in the successful persister rate.

Conclusion

The percentage of students who registered for disability services has remained stable in recent years. Undergraduates who registered for disability services have similar retention rates compared to the overall undergraduate population. Their retention data suggest a slight improvement over the last four student cohorts, despite a drop for the 2019 cohort during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a slightly lower six-year graduation rate for students who registered for disability services compared to the overall undergraduate population at four-year institutions. The four-year graduation/transfer rate of undergraduate students at community colleges who registered with disability services offices is lower than their peers overall, but the gap has decreased for three consecutive cohorts. Undergraduate students at community colleges who registered with disability services offices have slightly higher rates of successfully persisting after four years compared to the overall undergraduate population.

Students with disabilities are a unique population. There are segmental graduation gaps at four-year institutions and graduation/transfer gaps at community colleges between all students and students that register with disability services. Despite these gaps, undergraduate students are seeking accommodations for their disabilities and are obtaining the support needed to successfully persist in their studies.

Appendix 1

Students Registered with Disability Services at Maryland Colleges and Universities: FY2016-2021 Enrollment Trends

Four-Year Public Institutions

	FY2016		FY2017		FY 2018		FY 2019		FY 2020		FY 2021	
	UG	GR	UG	GR	UG	GR	UG	GR	UG	GR	UG	GR
12-month enrollment	163,047	53,990	169,986	52,422	172,181	52,911	174,660	52,080	176,058	51,493	172,668	50,027
Registered with disability services office	3,480	467	4,300	692	4,567	680	4,961	776	5,141	809	5,368	927
Percent of enrollment	2.1%	0.9%	2.5%	1.3%	2.7%	1.3%	2.8%	1.5%	2.9%	1.6%	3.1%	1.9%

State-Aided Independent Institutions

	FY2016		FY2017		FY 2018		FY 2019		FY 2020		FY 2021	
	UG	GR	UG	GR	UG	GR	UG	GR	UG	GR	UG	GR
12-month enrollment	30,740	32,138	29,277	34,224	29,121	35,713	29,223	36,638	29,073	36,565	28,020	40,805
Registered with disability services office	2,359	356	2,692	447	2,926	493	2,830	641	2,827	659	3,058	1,097
Percent of enrollment	7.7%	1.1%	9.2%	1.3%	10.0%	1.4%	9.7%	1.7%	9.7%	1.1%	10.9%	1.1%

Community Colleges

	FY2016	FY2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
12-month enrollment	179,824	172,695	165,375	163,749	159,058	152,468
Registered with disability services office	7,723	7,837	7,809	8,023	7,905	7,511
Percent of enrollment	4.3%	4.5%	4.7%	4.9%	5.0%	4.9%

Notes:

The trend data (Maryland and IPEDS data) does not include the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) for FY 2018 and FY 2019. In Spring 2020, MHEC was notified that the University's data were incorrect for the three years of submissions; therefore, MHEC removed the institution's data from analysis, which results in different totals and subtotals than previously published reports. FY 2020 data once again include UMES.

Data include counts of students registered with disability services office from the Maryland Survey and total 12-month enrollment from *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System* (IPEDS), U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC. FY 2021 data retrieved January 2023 from <http://nces.ed.gov>.

Appendix 2

Retention Rates for First-time, Full-time Undergraduate Students Registered with Disability Services at Maryland Four-Year Colleges and Universities, 2017-2020 Cohorts

Four-Year Public Institutions

	Cohort			
	2017	2018	2019	2020
All undergraduates	84.9%	85.8%	84.9%	84.8%
Registered with disability services office	83.4%	85.5%	84.4%	85.8%

State-Aided Independent Institutions

	Cohort			
	2017	2018	2019	2020
All undergraduates	84.8%	84.8%	81.8%	83.0%
Registered with disability services office	82.8%	85.4%	82.8%	86.5%

Notes:

Retention rates at four-year colleges and universities give the percentage of a given cohort of first-time, full-time undergraduate students who returned to the same institution for the following fall.

The University of Maryland Baltimore and the University of Maryland Global Campus do not serve first-time full-time undergraduates and are therefore not included in these figures.

Due to an incomplete data submission to MHEC, data for Coppin State University are not included in the 2020 cohort retention figures for all undergraduates and those registered with disability services.

Data for the University of Maryland Eastern Shore is not in the trend data for the 2017 and 2018 cohorts due to the institution's inability to accurately or appropriately retrieve the data. Their data has been removed from the students with disabilities data and from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data which makes this report have different data from previous reports.

Statewide retention rates are obtained from *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)*, U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC. Fall 2020 cohort data retrieved January 2023 from <http://nces.ed.gov>.

Appendix 3

Degree Progress Analysis Rates Four Years After Initial Enrollment, Maryland Community Colleges, 2015-2017 Entering Cohorts

	2015 cohort		2016 cohort		2017 cohort	
	Students Registered with Disability Services	Statewide	Students Registered with Disability Services	Statewide	Students Registered with Disability Services	Statewide
Graduated and/or Transferred	42.3%	52.2%	44.5%	52.6%	47.2%	53.8%
Successful Persister	72.0%	71.6%	73.9%	71.3%	75.3%	72.7%

Notes:

Cohort includes full- and part-time students who complete at least 18 credits within the first two years of entry to the institution; a cohort year is determined based on the year of entry as a first-time student.

Graduation/Transfer Rate – this includes students who have graduated with a degree or certificate or transferred within four years. All transfer values are based upon student movement across institutions and represent a change of institution in which a student is enrolled. This does not necessarily represent formal transfer activity (e.g., where academic credits are recognized between institutions).

Successful Persister Rate – this includes students who, within four years, graduate or transfer, are still enrolled at the institution, or who complete at least 30 credits or more with a GPA of 2.00 or better. Note that all students included in the Graduation/Transfer Rate are also included in the Successful Persister Rate.