

Completing College: A State-Level View of Student Attainment Rates

In the state supplement to our tenth Signature Report, a national study on college completion, we take a state-by-state look at the various pathways that students take to complete a college degree or certificate.

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About This Report

AUTHORS

National Student Clearinghouse Research Center

- Doug Shapiro
- Afet Dunder

Project on Academic Success, Indiana University

- Phoebe Khasiala Wakhungu
- Xin Yuan
- Angel Nathan
- Youngsik Hwang

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Among the study's findings:

- Nationally, the college completion rate for students who started in four-year public institutions declined from 2008 to 2009 by 1.7 percentage points, dropping to 61.2 percent from 62.9 percent. In 15 states, the direction of the change in the college completion rate was actually positive including four states (California, Connecticut, Iowa, and South Carolina) where the college completion rate for students who started in four-year public institutions increased by 1 to 2 percentage points.
- Nationally, about 13 percent of students who started at a four-year public institution, completed at a school other than the starting institution. In 21 states, students who started in four-year public institutions had a higher completion rate elsewhere, with Minnesota having the highest rate at 25 percent followed by Missouri with about 23 percent.
- The college completion rate for students who started at two-year public institutions also declined in the same period by one percentage point. In 12 states (Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Minnesota, Oregon, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and Texas), the college completion rate for students who started in two-year public institutions stayed nearly unchanged or went up.
- Thirty-two percent of students who started at two-year public institutions and completed did so at an institution other than the one where they first enrolled, nationally. In 10 states, over one-third of all completions for two-year public starters happened elsewhere. In California and Texas, more than 40 percent of all completions for students in this sector took place at an institution other than the one where they first enrolled.
- Nationally, 15.1 percent — a 1.1 percent decline from last year — of those who started at a two-year public institution completed at a four-year institution (with or without first receiving a credential at a two-year institution) within six years. In five states (Iowa, North Dakota, Virginia, Kansas, and Texas), 20 or more percent of two-year starters completed at a four-year institution. In five states (California, Connecticut, Maine, North Dakota, and Washington), this rate did not decline, staying nearly unchanged or going slightly up.
- The percentage of two-year starters who completed at a four-year institution within six years was higher among women than men, nationally: 16.9 percent and 13.9 percent, respectively. In 10 states (Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Virginia, Wyoming, Kansas, and Texas), at least one in five women who started at two-year public institutions completed at a four-year institution (with or without first receiving a credential at a two-year institution). This percentage did not reach 20 percent for men in any state.
- In 16 states, at least, one in five completions for those who started at a four-year private nonprofit institution happened elsewhere. In five states (Delaware, Missouri, Kentucky, North Dakota, and South

Dakota) at least one in four students who started at a four-year private non-profit institution and completed a degree did so at an institution other than the one where they first enrolled.

- In 20 states, more than five percent of the starting cohort at a four-year public institution completed in a state different than the starting institution's state. This was true for students who started at four-year private non-profit institutions in 30 states.

The Signature Report State Supplement includes detailed tables, providing a state-by-state overview of college completion outcomes within the four-year public, two-year public, and four-year private nonprofit sectors.

Introduction

As a supplement to *Completing College: A National View of Student Attainment Rates – Fall 2009 Cohort* (<https://nscresearchcenter.org/signaturereport10>) (2015), hereafter “Completing College,” this report focuses on six-year student success outcomes and college completion rates by state. The results are displayed in three sets of tables organized by institution type, showing each state's outcomes for students who started postsecondary education at four-year public institutions, two-year public institutions, and four-year private nonprofit institutions. Each set of tables provides state-level overviews of college completion outcomes.

Further results are included, showing state-level six-year outcomes for students:

- By enrollment intensity across the six-year study period—exclusively full time (Tables 2, 11, 20), exclusively part time (Tables 3, 12, 21), and mixed (Tables 4, 13, 22);
- By age at first entry to college—age 20 and younger (Tables 5, 14, 23), over age 20 through age 24 (Tables 6, 15, 24), and over age 24 (Tables 7, 16, 25);
- By gender—women and men who started at each institution type (Tables 8, 17, 26 and 9, 18, 27, respectively).

According to the outcomes presented in *Completing College*, the overall six-year completion rate for first-time-in-college degree-seeking students who started college in fall 2009 was 52.9 percent, including 12.4 percent who completed at an institution different from their starting institution. In other words, nearly one in four students who completed a degree did so at an institution other than the one where they first enrolled. The number was closer to one in three for those who started at two-year public institutions. Findings from *Completing College* also showed that gains from completions elsewhere were higher for traditional-age students than for delayed entry students (over age 20 through age 24 at first entry) and adult learners (over age 24 at first entry).

The total completion rates for students who started at each of the three largest institution categories ranged from 38.1 percent for students who started at two-year public institutions to 61.2 percent for those who started at four-year public institutions and 71.5 percent for students who started at four-year private nonprofit institutions (see Table i. below; see *Completing College* for further discussion). The overall proportion of students completing elsewhere, however, was roughly the same for students who started at any of these institution types — about 12 to 13 percent of the starting cohort.

Table i. Six-Year Outcomes by Starting Institution Type (N=2,911,898)

Institution Type	Total Completion Rate (%)	Completion at Same Institution (%)	Completion at Different Institution (%)		Still Enrolled (At Any Institution) (%)	Not Enrolled (At Any Institution) (%)
			Two-Year	Four-Year		
Overall	52.88	40.53	3.03	9.33	14.13	32.99
Four-Year Public	61.16	48.44	3.26	9.46	14.20	24.64
Four-Year Private Nonprofit	71.47	58.72	2.36	10.39	9.14	19.38
Four-Year Private For-Profit	32.75	23.88	1.93	6.94	11.11	56.14
Two-Year Public	38.14	26.00	3.18	8.96	16.60	45.27
Two-Year Private Nonprofit	45.07	31.69	3.41	9.97	14.58	40.34
Two-Year Private For-Profit	60.62	39.51	8.23	12.88	4.74	34.64

Building on the findings presented in *Completing College*, this follow-up report explores college completion rates for each state where the Clearinghouse historical data coverage¹ for the study cohort was 65 percent or higher. Both *Completing College* and this supplement report focus on the cohort entering college as first-time students in fall 2009, following them through May 31, 2015, and highlighting six-year student outcomes including degree and certificate completion and continuing enrollment (persistence). Completions were identified using a combination of degree/certificate award records submitted by institutions as part of their participation in DegreeVerify and StudentTracker. Details on weighting and the imputation of missing data can be found in Appendix A of *Completing College* available at <https://nscresearchcenter.org/signaturereport10/>.

¹ Due to the need to establish students' first-time status, only institutions that submitted enrollment data dating back to June 1, 2005 to the Clearinghouse are included in the report. Historical coverage rates are based on these institutions.

Cohort and Data Definitions

The cohort examined in this study is made up of first-time degree-seeking students who started their postsecondary studies in the fall of 2009, over 2.9 million students. Fall 2009 enrollments were defined as enrollment during any term beginning August 10 through October 31, inclusive: if the institution had no term begin date during this period, then between July 13 and August 9, 2009, inclusive. First-time status was established by confirming that a student (1) did not show any postsecondary enrollment record in the four years prior to summer 2009 and (2) did not receive a degree or certificate from any postsecondary institution prior to fall 2009, according to Clearinghouse data. Former dual enrollment students, first-time college students in fall 2009 who had taken college courses while still in high school were included in the study cohort.

Highlighting State-Level Results

This supplemental report presents student outcomes by the state of students' entering institution. Data coverage for the cohort identified in this study varies somewhat across states and across institution types within states (see Appendix A of this report for coverage by state and institution type). Accordingly, we have included state-by-state results for four-year public, two-year public, and four-year private nonprofit institutions, including under each of these categories only those states for which the historical data coverage for the cohort is 65 percent or higher. Using this approach, we produced tables showing results for 49 and 42 of the 50 states for four-year public and two-year public institutions respectively, and 40 states plus the District of Columbia for four-year private nonprofit institutions. **Table ii.**, below, shows the states included in the tables presented for each institution type in this supplement to the national report.

Table ii. Representation of Each State in Results Tables by Institution Type

State	Four-Year Public	Two-Year Public	Four-Year Private Nonprofit
Alabama	X		X
Alaska	††		*
Arizona	X		*
Arkansas	X	X	X
California	X	X	X
Colorado	X	X	X
Connecticut	X	X	X
Delaware	*		X
District of Columbia			X
Florida	X	X	X

Georgia	X	X	X
Hawaii	X	X	
Idaho	X	X	*
Illinois	X	X	X
Indiana		X	X
Iowa	X	X	X
Kansas	X	X	
Kentucky	X	X	X
Louisiana	X		
Maine	X	X	X
Maryland	X	X	X
Massachusetts	X	X	X

Michigan	X	X	
Minnesota	X	X	X
Mississippi	X	X	
Missouri	X	X	X
Montana	X	X	X
Nebraska	X	X	X
Nevada	X	*	
New Hampshire	X	*	X
New Jersey	X	X	X
New Mexico	X		
New York	X	X	X
North Carolina	X	X	X

North Dakota	X	X	X
Ohio	X	X	X
Oklahoma	X		
Oregon	X	X	X
Pennsylvania	X	X	X
Rhode Island	*	*	X
South Carolina	X	X	X
South Dakota	X	X	X
Tennessee	X	X	X
Texas	X	X	X
Utah	X	*	X
Vermont	X	*	X

Virginia	X	X	X
Washington	X	X	X
West Virginia	X		
Wisconsin	X	X	X
Wyoming	*	X	

X Included in report

** Fewer than three institutions*

(blank) Lower than 65% coverage

†† Results are not reported because the cohort includes both two-year and four-year enrollments.

To further guide readers regarding coverage, and consequently the relative confidence with which results should be interpreted, we grouped the states according to the following three levels of coverage:

- Low coverage: States with coverage between 65 and 79 percent
- Medium coverage: States with coverage between 80 and 89 percent
- High Coverage: States with coverage of 90 percent or higher

Results

Download Results data tables (xlsx) at <https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/Signature10SS-Results.xlsx>

Appendix A

Download Appendix A coverage (xlsx) at https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/Signature10SS_AppendixA.xlsx

Appendix B: Unique Student Headcounts by State and Institution Type

Appendix B provides unique student headcounts by state for each institution type. The final data set was created, drawing from the full cohort of all students enrolled in each sector and state, selecting out students identified as first-time-in-college, and finally excluding students identified as nondegree-seeking and applying a few other conditions. (For further detail on the definition of degree-seeking status and other exclusions applied, please see *Completing College: A National View*, Appendix A at Signature Report 10 available at <https://nscresearchcenter.org/signaturereport10/#AppendixA>.) Counts from the final data set (Fall 2009 First-Time Degree-Seeking Cohort) are further broken out by student enrollment status, age at first entry, and gender.

Table B1. Total Counts for Students Who Started at Four-Year Public Institutions by Origin State

State	Fall 2009 Cohort								
	Total	Exclusively Full-Time Students	Exclusively Part-Time Students	Mixed Enrollment Students	Age 20 or Younger at First Entry	Over Age 20-24 at First Entry	Over Age 24 at First Entry	Women	Men
States with High Historical Coverage (90% or higher)									
Alabama	23,898	9,883	1,029	12,982	19,230	1,309	3,355	12,176	9,928
Alaska	††	††	††	††	††	††	††	††	††
Arizona	20,954	9,913	601	10,435	18,435	968	1,540	10,535	9,019
Arkansas	17,511	6,238	1,198	10,073	14,130	1,077	2,299	9,171	7,522
California	84,950	38,024	1,406	45,517	78,484	2,109	4,284	43,777	32,562
Colorado	26,079	11,312	1,212	13,546	22,519	937	2,613	12,214	11,359
Connecticut	9,496	5,873	306	3,317	8,619	221	655	4,654	4,033
Delaware	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Florida	104,627	21,803	16,463	66,348	77,645	7,843	19,131	57,250	43,758
Georgia	37,734	14,345	1,103	22,284	32,956	1,465	3,311	19,002	15,507
Hawaii	3,913	1,734	352	1,828	2,993	265	656	1,989	1,606
Idaho	9,717	3,152	718	5,845	7,566	607	1,542	4,813	4,018
Illinois	25,206	15,254	555	9,395	21,850	1,129	2,156	12,403	10,939
Iowa	9,898	6,394	200	3,303	8,905	401	567	5,028	4,751
Kansas	12,647	5,895	595	6,153	10,232	941	1,473	6,159	5,618
Kentucky	19,512	9,235	753	9,514	17,069	644	1,798	10,383	8,255
Louisiana	25,761	9,065	1,169	15,522	21,908	1,070	2,781	13,707	10,326
Maine	5,617	2,221	484	2,911	4,338	262	1,012	3,083	2,527

Maryland	22,989	9,992	3,375	9,611	14,324	2,265	6,396	10,026	10,723
Massachusetts	17,224	10,074	966	6,182	14,591	676	1,946	8,379	7,468
Michigan	39,036	18,107	1,124	19,801	34,816	1,470	2,749	20,489	16,728
Minnesota	23,189	8,923	657	13,610	20,737	958	1,472	12,108	9,982
Mississippi	9,018	4,848	262	3,904	7,787	369	863	4,920	3,694
Missouri	25,939	9,739	937	15,258	23,244	803	1,891	14,248	10,864
Montana	6,829	3,364	313	3,151	4,915	604	1,310	3,083	3,215
Nebraska	8,994	4,070	287	4,638	8,201	252	539	4,365	4,014
Nevada	17,084	2,606	4,302	10,171	10,436	1,483	5,113	8,751	7,619
New Hampshire	5,938	4,262	226	1,450	5,271	215	452	3,039	2,522
New Mexico	10,482	4,625	890	4,963	8,373	568	1,539	5,472	4,472
North Carolina	34,042	19,419	576	14,044	30,796	978	2,265	17,503	13,456
North Dakota	6,949	3,091	337	3,519	5,894	306	749	3,093	3,270
Ohio	61,162	26,357	2,787	31,995	50,894	3,266	6,994	31,230	26,558
Oregon	12,428	2,830	452	9,141	10,895	445	1,086	6,095	5,363
Pennsylvania	50,884	32,871	1,290	16,716	45,877	1,597	3,393	25,198	23,271
Rhode Island	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
South Carolina	17,814	10,987	303	6,520	16,736	372	703	9,694	7,315
South Dakota	5,322	2,346	337	2,640	4,427	282	611	2,664	2,339
Tennessee	23,005	10,292	906	11,806	19,587	923	2,495	11,609	9,563
Texas	70,730	22,656	3,421	44,647	59,966	3,414	7,346	35,960	30,990
Utah	27,497	6,174	3,013	18,296	22,073	2,181	3,243	13,345	12,438

Vermont	4,363	3,040	108	1,215	4,010	150	203	2,298	2,041
Virginia	30,998	20,096	933	9,969	27,957	866	2,171	15,786	12,822
Washington	30,292	9,894	2,579	17,814	23,124	1,699	5,440	15,129	13,232
West Virginia	13,165	6,521	606	6,036	10,541	845	1,776	6,257	6,238
Wisconsin	30,623	15,958	1,481	13,177	26,548	1,261	2,814	15,333	13,176
Wyoming	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
States with Medium Historical Coverage (80% ~ 89%)									
New Jersey	20,042	12,878	689	6,476	17,638	642	1,758	9,885	9,370
New York	55,586	28,452	2,973	24,146	45,959	2,532	5,723	26,750	22,695
States with Low Historical Coverage (65% ~ 79%)									
Oklahoma	16,387	4,924	2,071	9,388	11,425	1,598	3,339	8,101	7,128

NOTE: Counts represent unique students.

** Fewer than three institutions.*

†† Results are not reported because the cohort includes both two-year and four-year enrollments.

Table B2. Total Counts for Students Who Started at Two-Year Public Institutions, by Origin State

Fall 2009 Cohort									
State	Total	Exclusively Full-Time Students	Exclusively Part-Time Students	Mixed Enrollment Students	Age 20 or Younger at First Entry	Over Age 20-24 at First Entry	Over Age 24 at First Entry	Women	Men
States with High Historical Coverage (90% or higher)									
Arkansas	9,659	3,178	905	5,571	4,775	951	3,460	5,071	3,752
California	189,444	22,408	19,862	146,876	141,032	13,741	34,090	91,094	82,396
Colorado	17,435	4,297	2,440	10,696	10,007	1,881	5,546	8,199	7,581
Connecticut	10,294	1,645	1,709	6,940	6,790	1,072	2,430	5,022	4,182
Florida	38,117	7,523	4,677	25,903	26,951	3,399	7,688	20,650	15,967
Georgia	33,134	8,615	2,611	21,903	13,864	4,834	14,436	17,288	12,697
Hawaii	4,854	1,135	538	3,180	3,414	450	990	2,189	2,039
Idaho	4,432	1,329	402	2,691	2,475	526	1,431	2,138	1,948

Illinois	57,265	14,667	5,905	36,595	40,098	4,802	12,345	28,535	25,010
Indiana	3,413	420	741	2,248	1,484	498	1,430	1,855	1,403
Iowa	21,124	7,401	1,278	12,430	14,472	1,639	5,002	10,416	9,811
Kentucky	16,237	4,193	1,929	10,070	9,051	1,652	5,535	9,383	6,854
Maine	3,007	1,013	272	1,721	1,793	331	881	1,389	1,583
Maryland	26,021	6,149	2,465	17,394	18,213	2,240	5,566	12,972	10,194
Massachusetts	18,111	3,881	2,521	11,703	11,496	2,162	4,441	8,964	7,695
Michigan	45,216	8,772	5,723	30,664	28,324	3,848	13,032	22,607	19,880
Minnesota	25,234	7,530	2,077	15,620	15,750	2,807	6,659	12,463	12,767
Mississippi	16,998	6,775	632	9,581	10,807	1,837	4,352	9,195	6,474
Missouri	21,040	5,525	1,989	13,506	13,396	1,977	5,665	11,380	8,822
Nebraska	8,167	2,485	563	5,111	5,318	739	2,108	4,137	3,719

Nevada	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
New Hampshire	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
New Jersey	36,538	10,960	2,533	23,040	25,635	3,720	7,127	17,933	16,035
New York	66,684	24,443	2,861	39,355	47,370	6,913	11,161	31,629	28,398
North Carolina	46,733	13,184	3,670	29,854	26,517	4,311	15,887	24,853	19,971
North Dakota	1,206	611	**	565	944	105	157	501	591
Ohio	36,637	7,690	3,946	24,970	19,689	3,990	12,953	19,656	15,038
Oregon	19,362	3,736	1,718	13,872	9,643	1,920	7,793	9,164	8,516
Pennsylvania	29,421	8,294	2,837	18,278	18,859	3,201	7,326	14,972	12,044
Rhode Island	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
South Carolina	21,381	5,339	2,025	13,992	13,251	2,065	6,052	11,839	8,637

Tennessee	19,232	4,474	2,000	12,753	11,341	2,012	5,879	10,573	7,094
Vermont	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Virginia	31,957	6,043	3,778	22,132	21,966	2,691	7,300	16,369	13,355
Washington	33,457	10,355	1,336	21,756	21,107	2,846	9,494	16,221	14,007
Wisconsin	19,098	7,098	1,770	10,212	10,417	1,948	6,726	8,431	9,245
Wyoming	4,101	1,813	224	2,061	2,847	406	846	2,066	1,728
States with Medium Historical Coverage (80% ~ 89%)									
Kansas	13,374	4,519	889	7,957	9,410	1,128	2,814	6,655	5,888
Montana	1,618	742	90	786	833	180	605	779	754
South Dakota	1,559	1,068	**	462	866	209	479	607	799
Utah	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
States with Low Historical Coverage (65% ~ 79%)									

Texas	95,676	16,693	10,025	68,891	64,730	9,027	21,914	49,677	40,309
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* Fewer than three institutions.

** Fewer than 50 students in subgroup.

Table B3. Total Counts for Students Who Started at Four-Year Private Nonprofit Institutions, by Origin State

Fall 2009 Cohort									
State	Total	Exclusively Full-Time Students	Exclusively Part-Time Students	Mixed Enrollment Students	Age 20 or Younger at First Entry	Over Age 20-24 at First Entry	Over Age 24 at First Entry	Women	Men
States with High Historical Coverage (90% or higher)									
Alabama	4,424	2,312	102	2,009	3,736	189	496	2,431	1,755
Alaska	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
California	23,276	15,398	538	7,337	19,447	1,110	2,704	12,338	9,214
Colorado	2,433	1,336	180	915	1,713	84	634	1,403	979
Connecticut	7,918	6,256	151	1,512	7,342	183	391	4,240	3,297

Delaware	1,343	402	185	755	820	134	384	680	655
District of Columbia	8,806	5,847	363	2,596	7,561	300	935	4,651	3,374
Georgia	9,987	5,485	201	4,299	8,751	332	904	5,670	3,571
Idaho	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Illinois	24,676	15,764	821	8,086	21,012	971	2,677	13,045	9,958
Iowa	8,307	5,305	239	2,759	7,173	319	808	4,251	3,704
Maine	3,412	2,509	117	786	2,918	122	366	2,050	1,311
Maryland	6,302	4,761	293	1,248	5,324	189	788	3,410	2,336
Massachusetts	32,305	23,754	1,287	7,261	27,371	1,263	3,602	17,373	12,446
Minnesota	10,731	6,425	265	4,041	9,540	328	841	5,728	4,531
Missouri	16,247	7,266	1,731	7,242	9,787	1,163	5,282	8,533	7,043
Nebraska	4,080	2,694	111	1,274	2,716	132	1,229	2,132	1,783

New Hampshire	3,998	2,553	171	1,274	3,212	179	598	2,105	1,611
New Jersey	7,916	5,143	429	2,341	6,428	330	1,092	4,199	3,236
New York	66,997	43,118	2,017	21,852	57,416	2,891	6,622	35,132	27,242
North Carolina	12,411	8,422	215	3,773	11,019	384	1,004	6,600	4,986
Ohio	22,505	13,817	783	7,897	19,671	676	2,133	11,209	10,171
Oregon	3,963	2,492	100	1,371	3,556	100	306	2,138	1,497
Pennsylvania	43,996	31,099	1,474	11,422	39,249	1,157	3,529	23,240	17,982
Rhode Island	4,800	3,649	56	1,095	4,130	280	389	2,217	2,355
Texas	16,991	9,620	741	6,629	14,483	604	1,879	9,022	7,059
Utah	6,577	2,967	85	3,524	5,371	326	879	3,268	2,988
Vermont	2,411	1,661	74	676	2,155	80	174	997	1,371
Virginia	15,099	7,631	1,208	6,253	10,666	610	3,822	7,951	6,400

Washington	5,467	3,821	72	1,575	4,952	116	397	3,150	2,024
Wisconsin	8,582	5,423	330	2,829	7,517	222	840	4,686	3,336
States with Medium Historical Coverage (80% ~ 89%)									
Arkansas	2,300	1,454	95	750	2,025	70	203	1,261	948
Florida	12,478	7,211	588	4,642	9,277	655	2,530	6,791	5,074
Indiana	11,223	7,462	231	3,436	9,296	298	1,613	5,916	4,862
Kentucky	5,477	2,555	167	2,751	4,837	141	499	2,958	2,280
North Dakota	625	380	**	236	520	**	82	333	283
South Carolina	5,568	3,454	110	2,003	4,991	217	352	3,130	2,118
Tennessee	10,594	6,161	284	4,148	9,330	331	904	5,644	4,289
States with Low Historical Coverage (65% ~ 79%)									
Arizona	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Montana	685	394	**	254	587	**	73	366	283
South Dakota	1,272	488	**	736	1,154	**	93	698	539

* Fewer than three institutions.

** Fewer than 50 students in subgroup.