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# EDUCATION WEEK



## Broader Analysis Shows Higher College-Completion Rates

By [Caralee Adams](#) on November 15, 2012 9:26 AM

The college-completion picture looks much better when researchers look beyond the typical federal reporting performance of first-time, full-time freshmen who graduate from the same institutions where they start.

A new [National Student Clearinghouse Research Center report](#) released today includes transfer, part-time, and adult students, boosting the six-year completion rate for degrees and certificates to 54 percent, up from 42 when those students are not counted.

The traditional graduation-rate calculations by the [National Center on Education Statistics](#) does not include the one in five students who completes a degree at a school other than the one where they started. Typically, the data used in graduation-rate calculations are institution-based and reflect institutional retention and not student persistence.

The clearinghouse report shows 75 percent of full-time students complete a degree within six years. [Figures from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System \(IPEDS\)](#) reflect a 58 percent college-completion rate in this year's report.

"Our report reveals the full range of pathways that today's college students take. We counted student completions anywhere, beyond institutional boundaries, across state lines, and over time," said Doug Shapiro, executive research director of the research center in a statement.

In this new environment, the report encourages states to have funding formulas that provide incentives for institutions to retain and graduate these nontraditional students—those attending part-time, mixed-enrollment students, and adult learners.

The study follows college-enrollment trends from 2006 through 2012, focusing on first-time, degree-seeking students. The clearinghouse is a nonprofit organization. The report is based on student-level data from 3,300 participating colleges and universities, which enroll nearly 97 percent of students attending public and private nonprofit postsecondary institutions.