

NATIONAL STUDENT CLEARINGHOUSE®

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College Completions Hold Steady in 2013, as Pathways to Completion Become More Diverse *First-Time Study of Dual Enrollment Students Reveal 66 Percent Completion Rate, 12 Percent Higher Than That of Non-Dual Enrollment Students*

Herndon, Virginia, December 16, 2013 – In its [second annual college completions report](#), the [National Student Clearinghouse® Research Center™](#) found that more than half, 56.1 percent, of first-time degree-seeking students who enrolled in fall 2007, completed a degree or certificate within six years, including 13.1 percent who completed at an institution other than the starting institution. Exclusively full-time students completed at a rate of 78 percent, with 67 percent graduating from the starting institution and 11 percent from somewhere else. Overall results were similar to the [2012 completions report](#) findings.

The report is based on student-level data voluntarily made available to the Clearinghouse by its more than 3,500 participating colleges and universities. In return, the Clearinghouse provides institutions with cost-saving education verification and reporting services. As a result, the Clearinghouse is uniquely able to perform analyses using student-level data, which overcomes the limitations of institution-based research.

This report focuses on first-time degree-seeking students who started their postsecondary education in fall 2007, and tracks their enrollments nationwide for six years, through the spring 2013. Nontraditional student pathways are included, giving a fuller picture of actual student behavior. For the first time, dual enrollment students, freshmen who entered college with prior experience in college-level courses obtained while they were in high school, are also included in the study. In another first, the 2013 report provides breakdowns by gender. Finally, the report acknowledges that nontraditional students often take longer to complete college through the inclusion of a supplemental feature that provides follow-up seven-year outcomes for the fall 2006 cohort (versus the traditional six-year length of study).

Findings in the 2013 report include:

- Nearly one in four students who completed a degree or certificate (23.4 percent) did so at an institution different than the one where they first enrolled.
- Completions beyond the starting institution raised the overall completion rate from 43 to 56 percent. Counting students who graduated somewhere other than at their starting institution increased the completion rate for every institution type and student subgroup studied.
- Total completion rates for students who started at each of the three largest institution categories ranged from 40 percent for students who started at two-year public institutions to 63 percent for those who started at four-year public institutions to 73 percent for students who started at four-year private nonprofit institutions.
- Gains from completions at institutions other than the starting institution were greater for students who were age 20 or younger when they first entered college than they were for older

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students: 14.7 percentage points, compared to 8.4 and 6.8 percentage points for the delayed entry (age 21-24) and adult learner (over age 24) groups, respectively.

- Six-year completion rates for the fall of 2007 national cohort showed a gender gap of 6.7 percentage points in favor of women.
- The completion rate for dual enrollment students was 66 percent compared to 54 percent for students with no prior dual enrollment experience.
- Seven-year outcomes for the fall 2006 cohort showed a 4 percentage point increase (from 54.1 to 58.1 percent) in total completions over the six-year rate reported in our [2012 completions report](#). Changes in percentages from the six- to seven-year outcome show the advantages of tracking college students for a longer period.
- Seventeen percent of two-year starters completed a four-year degree, and more than half of those did so without first receiving an associate's degree.

Because of the enhanced cohort, which includes former dual enrollment students, the results of the 2007 cohort are not directly comparable to those of the 2006 cohort presented in the [first completions report](#), released in November 2012. The [Signature Completions Extra](#), released in November 2013, provided six-year outcomes for the fall 2007 college-entering cohort (excluding former dual enrollment students), allowing an apples-to-apples comparison to the fall 2006 cohort of 2012, showing that completion rates remained steady.

“Conventional approaches fail to capture the complexity of student behavior because they look only at the starting institution where the student first enrolled. By adding the multiple institutions that an individual student may have attended, as well as gender, age, dual enrollments, and seven-year completion rates, we can see how each institution contributes in its own way to student outcomes,” stated Dr. Doug Shapiro, Executive Research Director, National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

About the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center

The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center is the research arm of the National Student Clearinghouse. The Research Center collaborates with higher education institutions, states, school districts, high schools, and educational organizations as part of a national effort to better inform education leaders and policymakers. Through accurate longitudinal data outcomes reporting, the Research Center enables better educational policy decisions leading to improved student outcomes. To learn more, visit <http://nscresearchcenter.org/>.

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