



UC Graduation Rates, Retention and Academic Performance

Overall rates of persistence, graduation and time to degree have improved at the University of California over the past decade – even as its enrollment has grown substantially. Enhancing retention and graduation rates is a cornerstone of UC’s commitment to student success.

Below, the term “persistence” refers to a student’s continued enrollment at the university one year or two years after entering. “Graduation rates” track the number of students who obtain a degree within a certain number of years after enrolling. “Time to degree” refers to the number of years or academic quarters it takes an average student to obtain a bachelor’s degree. All statistics are for regularly admitted students.

- **Graduation Rates:** Students admitted as freshman and transfer students have high graduation rates at UC. Within 6 years of entering as freshman, 77 percent graduate, up from 72.9 in 1985. 78.6 percent of transfer students graduate after attending UC for 4 years, up from 72.9 percent in 1985.

Once students reach their junior year of study, their graduation rates improve further. The vast majority of students graduate from UC within four years of becoming juniors, with 89 percent of students admitted as freshman and 78 percent of transfer students completing their degrees.

- **Retention:** 1-year persistence rates have been going up steadily at UC. As of 1999, the most recent data available, 92.4 percent of freshman students persist into their second year at UC, up from 89.1 percent in 1985. Transfer student also remain committed their first year, with 91.4 percent completing their studies and continuing at UC, up from 86.3 percent in 1985.
- **Time to Degree:** The average time to degree for first-time freshmen is 4.2 calendar years, up from 4.4 in 1985. For transfer students, the average time to degree is 2.4 calendar years after enrolling at UC, up from 2.6 in 1986.

After becoming juniors, students continue to graduate on time, with students admitted as freshmen averaging 2.2 years and transfer students averaging 2.3 years to complete their degrees.

- **Academic Performance:** Both students admitted as freshmen and transfers attain high GPA levels at UC, averaging above a 3.0. Freshmen students achieve GPA levels of 3.15, while transfer students earn a 3.05 average.
- **Underrepresented Students:** Improvements in persistence and graduation have been even more significant for underrepresented minority students (African American, American Indian and Chicano/Latino students). Persistence rates for underrepresented students continuing through to their third year at UC have gone up, increasing from 68.5 percent for the entering class of Fall 1983 to 80.9 percent for those who entered in Fall 1996.

The graduation rates after 6 years for underrepresented freshman in Fall 1983 was 56.7 percent, while in Fall 1994 it had gone up to 67.2 percent. Graduation rates for underrepresented transfer students increased from 63.3 percent to 71.4 percent in the same time period.

- **Some Comparisons:** UC has better graduation rates and persistence than state and national averages. In statistics collected by the Chronicle of Higher Education, the average six-year graduation rates at NCAA Division I universities for freshmen in 1994 were 57 percent. At UC, 77 percent of freshmen who entered in Fall 1994 graduated by 2000.

Graduation rates at all UC campuses were substantially higher than at any other public NCAA Division I institution in California. UC campuses such as UC Berkeley, UCLA, UC Davis and UC San Diego also rank well above many of California's private institutions, including Pepperdine University, USC and Loyola Marymount.

- **Historical Perspective:** The proportion of entering freshmen graduating from the University of California is higher than ever. UC Berkeley students entering in 1907 graduated at a rate of 50.8 percent. Berkeley students entering in 1960 graduated at a rate of 51 percent. Systemwide, 77 percent of UC students entering in 1994, the most recent year with data available, graduated after six years.