



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.

- **Graduation Rates:** Students admitted as freshman and transfer students have high graduation rates at UC. Within 6 years of entering as freshman in 1996, 77.9 percent had graduated, up from 72.1 in 1986. 79.6 percent of transfer students who entered in 1997 graduate after attending UC for 4 years, up from 73.5 percent in 1986.
- **Persistence:** One-year persistence rates have been going up steadily at UC. As of 2001, the most recent year for which this data is available, 92.4 percent of freshman students persisted into their second year at UC, up from 88.9 percent in 1986. Transfer student also work hard during their first year, with 92.4 percent completing their studies and continuing at UC, up from 85.9 percent in 1986.
- **Time to Degree:** The average time to degree for first-time freshmen entering UC in Fall 1995 was 4.2 calendar years, down from 4.4 in 1986. For transfer students, the average time to degree for students entering UC in Fall 1995 was 2.4 calendar years, down from 2.6 in 1986.
- **Academic Performance:** Students attain high GPA levels at UC, averaging above a 3.0. Freshmen students achieved GPA levels of 3.15, while transfer students earned 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 freshmen continuing to their second year at UC have gone up, increasing from 84.5 percent for the entering class of Fall 1986 to 89.3 percent for those who entered in Fall 2001. Persistence rates for underrepresented transfer students also increased, from 79.9 percent in 1986 to 90.3 percent in 2001.

The graduation rates after six years for underrepresented freshmen in Fall 1986 was 56.1 percent, while for students entering in Fall 1996 it had gone up to 69.1 percent. Graduation rates after four years for underrepresented transfer students increased from 59.6 percent in 1986 to 74.8 percent for those entering in 1997.

- **Some Comparisons:** UC has better graduation rates and persistence than state and national averages. The Chronicle of Higher Education found that the average six-year graduation rate for freshmen who entered NCAA Division I universities in 1996 was 59 percent. At UC, 77.9 percent of freshmen who entered in Fall 1996 had graduated by 2001-02.

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.

- **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, 77.9 percent of UC students entering in 1996, the most recent year with data available, graduated after six years.