

5 Insights to Increase Student Retention and College Completion Rates

Year after year, student attrition takes an enormous toll on higher education:

\$10 MILLION DRAIN

ANNUALLY IN REVENUE AND ENROLLMENT FROM THE AVERAGE FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY

(according to Educational Policy Institute)

\$3 BILLION DRAIN

OVER A FIVE-YEAR PERIOD, SPENT BY STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ON COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO DID NOT RETURN FOR A SECOND YEAR

(according to AIR - American Institutes for Research)

TAKEAWAY

Ask your Chief Fiscal Officer to confirm. For most institutions, student attrition has a substantial financial impact each year. Quantifying financial losses is a good first step to build institutional commitment to improve.

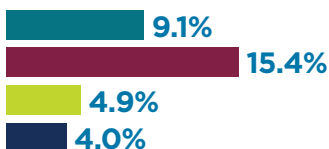
Use different interventions for different terms

WHEN DO FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS LEAVE?*

FIRST- AND SECOND-YEAR MEDIAN ATTRITION LOSSES (2014-15 FTIC COHORT)



FOUR-YEAR
PRIVATE
INSTITUTION
RESPONDENTS



(source of data—see below)

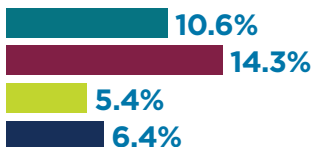
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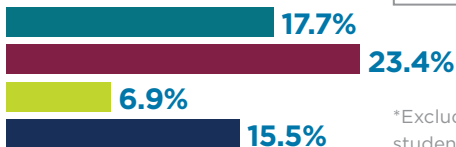
FTIC = First Time in College first-year students



FOUR-YEAR
PUBLIC
INSTITUTION
RESPONDENTS



TWO-YEAR
PUBLIC
INSTITUTION
RESPONDENTS



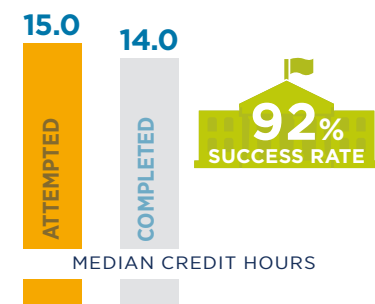
*Excludes completers, students who graduated

TAKEAWAY

Break the problem into pieces by knowing your students' attrition trends and their financial impact throughout the first four terms. Because attrition is still substantial in year two, best practice is to develop a first- through fourth-term completion plan with different interventions each term.

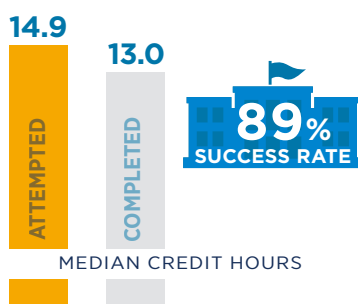
Set your sights on on-time completion

CREDIT HOURS ATTEMPTED VS. CREDIT HOURS COMPLETED IN TERM ONE (2015-16 FTIC COHORT)



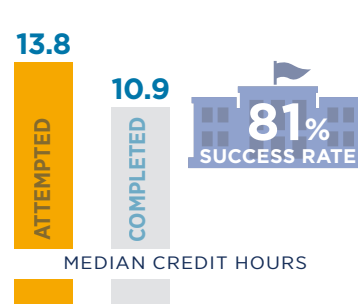
MEDIAN CREDIT HOURS

FOUR-YEAR **PRIVATE**



MEDIAN CREDIT HOURS

FOUR-YEAR **PUBLIC**



MEDIAN CREDIT HOURS

TWO-YEAR **PUBLIC**

TAKEAWAY

To optimize efficiency, more and more institutions track on-time completion rates for each term. To take the next step, assess your students' credit-hour completion rates by program and subpopulation (see next point).

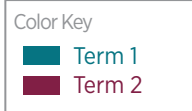
Identify unique populations with higher and lower persistence rates

WHEN DO TRANSFER STUDENTS LEAVE?*

NEWLY-ARRIVED TRANSFER STUDENTS' (2014-15 COHORT) MEDIAN ATTRITION



**FOUR-YEAR
PRIVATE
INSTITUTION
RESPONDENTS**



*Excludes completers, students who graduated



**FOUR-YEAR
PUBLIC
INSTITUTION
RESPONDENTS**



**TWO-YEAR
PUBLIC
INSTITUTION
RESPONDENTS**



TAKEAWAY

Which populations are at risk? Cost calculations and differentiated interventions for completion must be identified not only for each term, for students in general, but also for specific subpopulations that require special attention.

Notice when individuals and unique groups “raise their hands” for help—and anticipate

FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE

MEDIAN RATES FOR 2015-16 FTIC COHORT:



9%

of students on academic probation at the end of term one



7%

of students on academic probation at the end of term two

FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC

AVERAGE (MEAN) RATES FOR 2016 ENTERING FRESHMEN:*



30%

want help with reading skills



49%

want help with writing skills



48%

want help with math skills

TWO-YEAR & FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS, 2016

FIRST-GEN FRESHMEN:*



29%

plan to work more than 20 hours a week while in college



38%

have financial problems that are very distracting and troubling

TAKEAWAY

Students' needs surface at different times—but best practice is to watch for early warning signs. This should be done holistically, because reasons for leaving college are usually multi-faceted.

Primary source of data for infographic: Ruffalo Noel Levitz Benchmark Poll Report: 2017 Student Retention Indicators: Benchmarks for First-Year, Second-Year, and Transfer Students. [Visit RuffaloNL.com/Benchmarks](http://RuffaloNL.com/Benchmarks)

Educational Policy Institute source: Raisman, Neal A. (2013). *The cost of college attrition at four-year colleges & universities: an analysis of 1669 US institutions.*

American Institutes for Research source: Schneider, M., & Yin, L. (2011). *The hidden costs of community colleges.*

*Additional data source: 2017 RNL Research Report: National Freshman Motivation to Complete College

BENCHMARK TAKEAWAYS IN GENERAL

- Set realistic goals by comparing your term-to-term persistence and other retention indicators against historic campus trends and current external benchmarks.
- Pay attention not only to persistence and retention, but also to indicators of progression—any activity that correlates with persistence, such as course completion and academic probation rates.

RUFFALO
NOEL LEVITZ

Call **800.876.1117** today to discuss your retention and completion strategy or email ContactUs@RuffaloNL.com

Learn more: RuffaloNL.com/CompleteEnrollment