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Introduction

In 2009, Humboldt State University (HSU), as part of the California State University (CSU) Graduation Initiative set a goal of increasing the graduation rate for underrepresented minority (URM) students by 15% and 12% for all students by 2015 (http://graduate.csuprojects.org/campus_plans/humboldt-state-university?noCache=221:1351207381).

To reach these goals, it is imperative that we measure retention rates and progress on a yearly basis and look for discernible patterns in working towards achieving these goals. The current report is the third edition of this report and contains several insights into retention and graduation rates.

Measuring overall retention rates is important in monitoring trends in longitudinal data. It also allows us to see the results of initiatives implemented to promote student success and retention, yet it is equally as important to disaggregate retention data by gender as well as race and ethnicity to determine which students groups are succeeding and which are not.

Data analysis in this report benefited greatly from an improvement to how the CSU collects race/ethnicity data. In fall 2009, the CSU changed its guidelines to match the then new Federal guidelines, which allows students to self-identify as two or more races. Historically, HSU has had a large number of students who did not identify their race/ethnicity by selecting unknown or decline to state, sometimes reaching 29% of an incoming cohort. With the implementation of the new race/ethnicity data collection, the unknown category was immediately reduced to 7% for 2009 and is down to 4% for the 2012 first-time undergraduate (FTUG) cohort. This reduction allows HSU to better track the progress of all students going forward.

This report will primarily discuss the trends in one, two, and three-year retention rates of all first-time undergraduate (FTUG), lower division transfers (LDT), and upper division transfer (UDT) from 2002 to 2012. Detailed data tables can be found at the end of this report and on the HSU Institutional Research and Planning website at: http://pine.humboldt.edu/cgi-bin/cgiwrap/anstud/filter.pl?relevant=ft1yr_retention.out

In a few instances of small sample sizes the percentages were not accurate measures for year-to-year comparisons, therefore a five-year average was calculated and used throughout this report. Also, most charts are magnified to reduce unused space which sometimes makes small difference appear larger than they actually are.
Methodology

The data in this report was collected by the Humboldt State University Registers Office between 2002 and 2012. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning (IRP) at HSU conducted secondary analysis of this data.

Cohorts

Three unique cohorts of students, all beginning in the fall term were examined: first-time undergraduates (FTUG), lower division transfers (LDT), and upper division transfer (UDT). The FTUG student cohort is comprised of first-time-to-college undergraduates who were matriculated as fulltime students. Thus, exchange students, high-school concurrent, and non-matriculated students are excluded. Previous and similar reports have labeled this group First-Time Full-Time (FTFT) Fall-enrolled Freshman; however, FTUG is an emerging term that is more descriptive. Since some FTUG students are deficient in units (requiring remediation) while others possess enough units to begin college as sophomore; the defining characteristic of the cohort is that this is their first time in college. Similarly, transfer student cohorts are based on a set number of units earned at a previous institution before coming to HSU. Transfer cohorts also exclude non-matriculated students. All counts are based on the students enrolled at the official census date in the 4th week of classes.

With the passing of CA Proposition 30 in November 2012, HSU is on track to increase the FTUG cohort for Fall 2013. In 2010, an important policy change went into effect for LDT students which limited admission to only students who were admissable out of high school but did not come to HSU. To compensate for this loss of students, more UDT students were admitted.

FTUG Cohort Size (2002-2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>836</td>
<td>853</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>966</td>
<td>1,038</td>
<td>1,168</td>
<td>1,344</td>
<td>1,282</td>
<td>1,246</td>
<td>1,199</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

LDT Cohort Size (2002-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>216</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UDT Cohort Size (2002-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>672</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>805</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Retention Rate Trends for FTUG Students

The graph below examines year to year retention rates for first-time undergraduates (FTUG) cohorts at HSU from who started in fall 2002-2011. While yearly fluctuations in cohorts seem to echo through the first three years of retention rates, what remains constant is that almost half of the cohort is lost during the first three years, with the largest lost occurring after their first and second year.

FTUG Cohort One, Two, and Three-year Retention Rates (2002-2012)

The largest decrease in retention occurred during the first and second year. Over the five years of data, an average of 27% of FTUG students left after their first year and an additional 13% left after only two years. With only 55% of the original FTUG cohorts returning for a third year of courses, it is not surprising that the average 6-year graduation rate for the last 10 years was only 42%. This data indicates that our greatest opportunity to increase retention and later graduation rates is by increasing the retention of students in the first two years.

Five-year Averages for 1, 2, and 3-Year FTUG Retention Rates (2005-2011)

The chart to the left displays a five-year average retention rate for FTUG Cohorts for one year (2007-11), two years (2006-10), and three years (2005-09).
Gender and Retention

When examining the 5-year average retention rates, females consistently had a 6% higher retention rate at one, two, and three years compared to males. The tables below show that while there are yearly fluctuations, both males and females are at the highest retention risk during the first and second years. Interestingly, 7% more males left during their first year than females suggesting that the first year of college is crucial for male retention.

Five-year Averages for 1, 2, and 3-Year FTUG Retention Rates by Gender (2005-2011)

![Bar chart showing retention rates by gender for 1, 2, and 3 years](image)

Changing Underrepresented Minority (URM) Reporting

In fall 2009, enrolled CSU students who were classified as race unknown were given the opportunity to correct their student data to align with new race categories. Thus the new race categorization used in 2009 allowed students to identify themselves into more meaningful groups of their choosing. For the 3 years (2006-2008) before 2009, about 19% of the FTUG Cohort was unknown, whereas afterwards only about 2% were unknown. Interestingly, both the URM (8%) and Non-URM (9%) categories increased at about the same rate.

Changes in the URM category overtime of the FTUG Cohort (2006-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 06</th>
<th>Fall 07</th>
<th>Fall 08</th>
<th>3-Yr Avg. Before</th>
<th>Fall 09</th>
<th>Fall 10</th>
<th>Fall 11</th>
<th>3-Yr Avg. After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not URM</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URM</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Underrepresented Minority (URM) and Retention

Nationally, non-URM students (Caucasian and Asian) have higher retention and graduation rates than URM students (African American, American Indian, Hispanic/Latino, Pacific Islander, etc.). At HSU, non-URM students and URM students have similar one-year retention rates. During the second year a 5% gap appears which remains through the third year.

\[ \text{Retention Rates and the impact of gender and URM} \]

During the first year, non-URM females are retained at about 4-7% higher rate than the other three groups – which are retained at about the same rate. During the second year a pattern develops that is seen in later retention and graduation rates. Females are retained more than males, and non-URM students are retained more than URM students. A cross tabs shows that URM males are most at risk and are retained at about 10% lower rate than non-URM females.

\[ \text{Retention Rates and the impact of grades during the first semester} \]

The five-year average retention rate for one year was 73% and two years was 60%. The chart below shows retention rates for students who were on probation during their first term at HSU. Only 46% were retained one year and that percentage dropped to 35%
for two years. This data suggest that a key to retention is ensuring students are prepared for college right from the start so that they do not go on probation.

*Five-year Averages for 1 & 2-Year Retention Rates by Standing After First Term (2005-2011)*

![Graph showing retention rates for good standing and probation for 1-year and 2-year retention. 1-Year Retention: 81% Good Standing, 46% Probation. 2-Year Retention: 68% Good Standing, 35% Probation.]

**Retention Rates and First Year Housing**

Living on campus during the first year allows students to easily socialize, access extra resources, and have some structure while being away from home. Students living on campus during their first year had a 5% high retention rate. Interestingly, these same students were retained 8% more than their peers living off campus three years later.

In the 2011 retention report, female students who lived on-campus were retained at an overall 12% higher rate than females who did not; while male students who lived on-campus were retained at only a 6% higher rate overall than males who did not. Adding URM status to the analysis of male students showed that living on-campus was most beneficial for non-URM males followed by unknown males, and URM males.

*Five-year Averages for 1, 2, and 3-Year Retention Rates by First Year Housing (2005-2011)*

![Graph showing retention rates for off campus and on campus for 1-year, 2-year, and 3-year retention. 1-Year Retention: 69% Off Campus, 74% On Campus. 2-Year Retention: 55% Off Campus, 61% On Campus. 3-Year Retention: 48% Off Campus, 56% On Campus.]
Retention Rates and Family Income

During the first two years, family income did not make a difference in retention rates. It wasn’t until the third year that we see a 4% lower retention rate for low income students.

Five-year Averages for 1, 2, and 3-Year Retention Rates by Family Income (2005-2011)

Retention Rates and First Generation

Much like family income, first generation did not show a difference until three-year retention. First generation students had a 5% lower three year retention rate than their counterparts with at least one parent graduating from college.

Five-year Averages for 1, 2, and 3-Year Retention Rates by First Generation (2005-2011)
Student Groups: Gender and Ethnicity

By examining retention rates over the past 7 years of data, some expected overall trends emerged such as female students doing better than male students and non-URM students doing better than URM students. Further, when examining gender by URM we found that non-URM females do better than URM females followed by non-URM males, and URM males.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-URM students</th>
<th>URM students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female students</td>
<td>High success</td>
<td>Moderate success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male students</td>
<td>Moderate success</td>
<td>Low success</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Protective and Risk Factors for Retention

Protective factors are factors that put students at an advantage to graduate while risk factors are factors associated with lower retention rates. The table below summarizes the preceding information into protective and risk factors. The greatest loss of students occurs during the first three years, depending on which factors you look at. For instance, it takes three years to see a difference in low income and first generation whereas good standing, admit status, and living on-campus affect retention rates immediately.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protective factors of retention</th>
<th>Risk factors of retention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good standing during first semester</td>
<td>Probationary standing during first semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family is not low income</td>
<td>Family is low income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living on-campus during the first year for non-local students</td>
<td>Living off-campus during the first year for non-local students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least one parent went to college</td>
<td>First generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularly admitted students</td>
<td>Exceptionally admitted students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Retention Rate Trends for Transfer Students

Transfer students are typically retained and subsequently graduate at higher rates than FTUG students for a variety of reasons. The most prominent reason is college exposure. The greatest loss of students occurs during a student’s first two years ever in college. Transfer students go through this attrition process at another college or university making their HSU one year retention really their 2nd, 3rd or 4th year retained in college.

The graphs below examine year to year retention rates for lower division transfer students (LDT) and upper division transfer students (UDT) at HSU from who started in fall 2002-2011. The charts show the percentage of the original fall cohort who returned or graduated after 1, 2 and 3 years. Unlike FTUG students, the greatest loss of students occurs only after the first year.

Interestingly, the LDT 2008 cohort had a two-year retention rate of 48% and a three-year retention rate of 57%. This indicates that at least 8% of the cohort took time off and then graduate or came back.
Gender and Retention

When examining the 5-year average retention rates for LDT students, females consistently had a higher retention rate at one, two, and three years compared to males. Two and three year retention were about the same, indicating that the greatest loss of students occurred during the first and second year.

Five-year LDT Cohort Averages for 1, 2, and 3-Year Retention Rates by Gender (2005-2011)

When examining the 5-year average retention rates for UDT students, females and males had similar retention rates until the third year, then females were 5% more likely to be retained or graduate. Two and three year retention were about the same for females, but not for males. Male students continued to leave college after 3 years.

Five-year UDT Cohort Averages for 1, 2, and 3-Year Retention Rates by Gender (2005-2011)
Underrepresented Minority (URM) and Retention

Five-year LDT Cohort Averages for 1, 2, and 3-Year Retention Rates by URM (2005-2011)

When examining the 5-year average retention rates for LDT students, URM students had a slightly higher retention rate than Non-URM students until the third year in which the gap increased to 13%.

Five-year UDT Cohort Averages for 1, 2, and 3-Year Retention Rates by URM (2005-2011)

When examining the 5-year average retention rates for UDT students, URM students maintain a slightly higher retention rate than Non-URM students.

Retention Rates and the impact of gender and URM

Unlike FTUG students, transfer students do not show the same gender by URM success pattern until the 3-year retention rate. For LDT students, non-URM females had an 18% greater retention rate than URM males. For UDT students the difference was 11%.

Five-year Averages for 1, 2, and 3-Year Retention Rates by URM and Gender (2005-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1-year Retention</th>
<th>2-year Retention</th>
<th>3-year Retention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>URM</td>
<td>Not-URM</td>
<td>URM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>70%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>