

Defining Persistence and Retention

Every year, College Futures Foundation (Foundation) matches its student data with the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) to obtain individual-level enrollment records. The NSC uses full names and birth dates to conduct the data match. The Foundation sends all students' data whether or not a particular student is a current scholarship recipient. Since 2009, the rate at which its student data matched with NSC has increased. The latest match was performed in early 2015, and the match rate to individual student records was 85%.

Cohort

The Foundation calculates persistence and retention by high school graduating class (cohort). Each cohort is determined by the number of students in a high school graduating class that is matched with the NSC's enrollment records. This is what the Foundation identifies as its **matched** students and is the denominator used to calculate matriculation, persistence and retention and graduation rates.

Matriculation

The Foundation defines successful matriculation when the matched students complete their first fall (or spring) term immediately after high school graduation. Those who enroll at least a year after their high school graduation is not captured in the matriculation or persistence/retention rates.

Persistence

Aligning with the Department of Education's, NCAN's and other college success organizations' definitions, the Foundation defines persistence as continuous fall-to-fall enrollment. The Foundation considers a student to have successfully persisted a year if he completed the fall term of the next academic year. For example, a student is considered to have persisted for one year (1-year persistence) if she successfully matriculated and completed the fall term of the second year.

Retention

Retention rates are calculated the same way as persistence rates with the exception of only including students who matriculated and remained enrolled in the same *type* of postsecondary institution, which includes the University of California (UC), California State University (CSU), California Community College (CCC), private in-state (PCA), and out-of-state (OOS) institutions. For example, if a student persisted for one year at a UC but enrolled in a CCC their second year, that student will not be captured in the 1-year retention rate for students who started at a UC institution. (However, that student will be captured in the 1-year *persistence* rate if the student completed the second fall term at the CCC.)

When assessing **community college students'** performance, the Foundation considers transfers into 4-year institutions as one marker of their success. Therefore, the Foundation expects to see decreased 2-year retention rates for students starting at community colleges.

Notes

The Foundation currently does not take into consideration of students who **stop out** and re-enroll in another term or year in its calculation of persistence, retention or graduation rates.

An easy way to distinguish the two different perspectives on student success is the following statement: "Students persist; institutions retain students."