COLLEGE MILESTONES
COMPLETION OF GATEKEEPER MATH: UNITED STATES

Percentage of U.S. community college students who completed a gatekeeper math course within six years, by demographic and enrollment characteristics

GENDER

AGE WHEN FIRST ENROLLED

RACE/ETHNICITY
What Is Measured?
Percentage of students who completed a gatekeeper math course after six years

Who Is Counted?
First-time college students who first enrolled in U.S. community colleges in the 2003-04 academic year as of spring 2009

What It Tells Us
About two-fifths (44 percent) of U.S. community college students completed a gatekeeper math course within six years. Students in STEM majors were more likely to complete gatekeeper math than students in health, business, and social science majors (54 percent vs. 42–46 percent). About 45 percent of students who took a developmental math course enrolled in gatekeeper math compared with 43 percent of those who did not take a developmental math course, but this difference was not statistically significant.

Why It’s Important
There is general consensus that timely completion of gatekeeper courses, the lowest-level college-level courses in the core subjects of mathematics, reading, and writing, positively affects student outcomes such as attainment of certificates and degrees and transfer to a four-year institution (Roksa & Calcagno, 2008, table 4; Horn & Lew, 2007; Offenstein, Moore, & Shulock, 2010, figure 8). Completion of gatekeeper courses fulfills requirements for graduation and transfer as well as prerequisites for more advanced courses in various fields.

ABOUT THE DATA
Gatekeeper math course: defined as completion of any college-level math course.

Race/ethnicity: Other includes Native American, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and individuals who indicated Other or Two or more races. Race categories exclude Hispanic/Latino origin unless specified.

Income percentile rank: calculated separately for dependent and independent students and then combined. Each ranking thus compares the respondent only to other respondents of the same dependency status. Uses parents’ income if respondent is dependent and uses respondent’s own income if respondent is independent.

Social sciences and humanities: includes cultural and gender studies; visual and performing arts; English language and literature; family and consumer sciences; philosophy, theology, and religious studies; psychology; social sciences and history; and liberal arts, general studies, and humanities.

STEM: includes agricultural and natural resource studies; biological and biomedical sciences; computer and information sciences and support; engineering; mathematics and statistics; physical sciences; science technologies and technicians; and engineering technologies and related fields.

Full-time/part-time enrollment: indicates student’s cumulative enrollment through 2009. Full-time is defined as 12 or more credit hours per semester.

DATA SOURCE