COLLEGE MILESTONES
PERSISTENCE TO SECOND, FOURTH, AND SIXTH YEAR: UNITED STATES

Persistence to the second, fourth, and sixth year among U.S. community college students who did not attain a credential as of spring 2009

AGE, FIRST YEAR ENROLLED

OVERALL

DEGREE OR CERTIFICATE PROGRAM WHEN FIRST ENROLLED
**What Is Measured?**
Persistence to second, fourth, and sixth year among students who did not attain a credential within six years.

**Who Is Counted?**
First-time college students who first enrolled in U.S. community colleges in the 2003-04 academic year and did not complete a certificate or degree as of spring 2009.

**What It Tells Us**
Of community college students who did not attain a certificate or degree within six years, 64 percent had persisted to their second year, about one-third (34 percent) were still enrolled in their fourth year, and 30 percent were still enrolled after six years. Students with mixed full- and part-time attendance over the course of their enrollment were more likely to still be enrolled after six years than students who attended only full time or only part time (42 percent vs. 21 percent and 15 percent, respectively).

**Why It's Important**
Persistence generally refers to the duration of enrollment maintained by students as they pursue a degree or transfer, whether from term-to-term or year-to-year. Some indicators of persistence, such as the one-year persistence rate reported by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, only count students who remain enrolled at the community college where they first enrolled, while sources such as the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study also measure persistence for students who transfer institutions. Persistence to the second year appears to be the most pivotal indicator of success, since community college students are more likely to drop out in their first year than during any of the next five years (Skomsvold, Radford, & Berkner, 2011, table 5.1-B). Since most associate degree and transfer programs require the equivalent of two years of full-time enrollment, and longer for part-time enrollment, persistence to the second year and beyond is essential for many students to achieve their goals.

**ABOUT THE DATA**
Persistence in a given year: indicates students' persistence at the end of a given academic year.

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

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.
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; 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.

Type of associate degree: A.A.S. includes occupational or technical associate degrees, and A.A. or A.S. includes general education or transfer associate degrees.

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

DATA SOURCE