MOMENTUM
CREDITS EARNED WITHIN ONE YEAR: CALIFORNIA

Percentage of first-time degree-seeking California Community College students enrolled in 2000-01 who earned at least 20 credits in their first year

What Is Measured?
Percentage of students earning 20 or more credits within one year

Who Is Counted?
First-time degree-seeking California Community College students enrolled in 2000-01

What It Tells Us
Among first-time degree-seeking California Community College students enrolled in 2000-01, slightly less than one-quarter (24 percent) earned a total of 20 or more credits within one year.

Why It's Important
Researchers generally agree that students need to earn a certain number of credits during their first year to gain momentum toward completion and transfer. Although the probability of completing a certificate or degree increases almost linearly with the number of first-year credits completed (Offenstein et al., 2010, figure 11), the indicators in this measure specify a particular threshold number of credits in the first year. Community college students who earn at least 20 credits in their first year are more likely to complete a certificate or associate degree (Offenstein et al., 2010, figure 12) and to earn a bachelor's degree than those who do not (Adelman, 2005, table 42). Policies that encourage full-time and summer enrollment in the first year can facilitate early credit accumulation.

ABOUT THE DATA
Degree-seeking students: include students who enrolled in more than six units during their first year.

Estimates are from student records data available in the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office Management Information Systems. The initial analysis group was restricted to students who enrolled in one or more credit-bearing courses during the 2000-01 academic year, excluding noncredit students and students concurrently enrolled in high school. The sample was then further restricted to degree-seeking students, who accounted for 63 percent of the initial sample.

DATA SOURCE