TRANSFER AND COMPLETION
SIX-YEAR COMPLETION RATES: CALIFORNIA

Percentage of degree-seeking students who entered California Community Colleges in 2003-04 who completed or transferred within six years, by race/ethnicity

What Is Measured?
Percentage of students who completed a certificate or associate degree or transferred to a university by 2008-09

Who Is Counted?
Degree-seeking students who entered California Community Colleges in 2003-04

What It Tells Us
About one-third of 2003-04 degree-seeking California Community College students had completed a certificate or associate degree or had transferred within six years. Some 5 percent completed a certificate, and 11 percent completed an associate degree. White students had the highest rate of completion among all racial/ethnic groups shown, and Hispanic/Latino students had the lowest (37 percent vs. 22 percent).

Why It’s Important
At community colleges, graduation means attainment of a certificate or associate degree. However, many students attend community colleges to take lower-division courses for a bachelor’s degree, and some transfer to a four-year institution without obtaining a credential. From the perspective of the community college, these students have finished a curriculum that prepared them for transfer and, therefore, should be considered as having completed. Some states even track and report which community college students graduate from other institutions. Most sources, however, do not specify what proportion of transfer students have finished the coursework required for upper-division standing at the four-year college, and research suggests that many students transfer without reaching this threshold (Moore, Shulock, & Offenstein, 2009, table 3). A completion rate that combines transfer and degree attainment is sometimes referred to as a “success rate.”

ABOUT THE DATA
Degree-seeking students: include students who enrolled in more than six units during their first year. About two-thirds of the 2003-04 cohort met this criteria. Noncredit students and high school students concurrently enrolled in community college were excluded.

Student unit records were obtained from the Chancellor’s Office Management Information Systems and include demographic information, course-taking records, and records of degrees and certificates earned and transfers to four-year universities. Transfer data are based on matches to the California State University, the University of California, and the National Student Clearinghouse.

Caveat: Students with multiple types of completion earning a certificate, earning a degree, and transferring are counted once in each category.

DATA SOURCE