What Is Measured?
Percentage of students still enrolled without a degree who have earned 30 or more credits

Who Is Counted?
First-time degree-seeking students who entered North Carolina Community Colleges in fall 2002

What It Tells Us
Among first-time degree-seeking students enrolled in North Carolina Community Colleges in fall 2002, about 5 percent had not attained a degree but were still enrolled six years later. In comparison, almost 9 percent had earned a certificate, and about 12 percent had earned an associate degree.

Why It’s Important
Traditionally, students must study full time for two years in community college to earn an associate degree or complete a lower-division curriculum for transfer to a four-year college (and usually less than one year to earn a certificate). But less than half of community college students enroll full time in their first term (Offenstein & Shulock, 2009), and even fewer enroll full time for two consecutive years (Clery, 2010). Because many part-time students enroll less than half time, and most must take at least one developmental education course that does not count toward a degree or transfer, some have argued that even six years is not sufficiently long for community students to meet their educational goals (Moltz, 2011). This measure represents the proportion of community college students who were not able to complete or transfer within six years but still may do so.

ABOUT THE DATA
Degree-seeking students: include students seeking associate degrees, certificates, or diplomas. All degrees and awards lower than an associate degree are included in the certificates category.

Data were obtained from Curriculum Registration, Progress, and Financial Aid Report files for the fall 2002 cohort. Enrollment status was determined at the time of fall registration. Certificates include any award earned below the associate degree level. The total completed or transferred estimate was calculated using data from the original source, but it does not appear as such in the original report.

DATA SOURCE