



CU-Colorado Springs

Research Brief: Freshmen Retention Rates

University of Colorado at Colorado Springs' freshmen retention rates were examined by comparing those with traditional characteristics to those who entered with more non-traditional characteristics.

The traditional group included those who attended full-time in the fall following their high school graduation, stated they intended to complete their degree at UCCS, declared a major, were less than 20 years old, and were white.

Non-traditional students included those who were first-time freshmen, but did not meet one or more criteria used to identify the traditional freshmen.

Three cohorts were used in the analyses. They included those entering in 1994, 1995 and 1996.

Both groups excluded members of the military, regular university employees and Olympic athletes.

Persistence patterns were tracked for all the students in the three cohorts and are displayed on the charts and graphs that follow.

After four and six years, graduation and enrollment patterns differed for those in the traditional and non-traditional groups. In particular, graduation rates from UCCS were higher for those who were in the traditional group (35%).

However, overall graduation rates were higher for those in the non-traditional group in which many students completed at other institutions (41%). Also, 8% of the non-traditional students were still enrolled after 6 years, whereas only 3% of the traditional students were still enrolled.

Persistence Pattern after 6 th Year		
	Traditional	Non-Traditional
Enrolled	3%	8%
Dropped-out	60%	50%
Stopped-out	2%	1%
Graduated from UCCS	35%	27%
Graduated from other Colorado Colleges	N/A	14%

Since the pattern after the 6th year only includes those who began in 1994, it is also useful to examine the persistence patterns after the 4th year when all three cohorts can be examined.

Persistence Pattern after 4 th Year		
	Traditional	Non-Traditional
Enrolled	24%	24%
Dropped-out	56%	55%
Stopped-out	2%	4%
Graduated from UCCS	18%	14%
Graduated from other Colorado Colleges	N/A	3%

At the fourth year after initial entry, persistence patterns look very similar between the groups, especially when

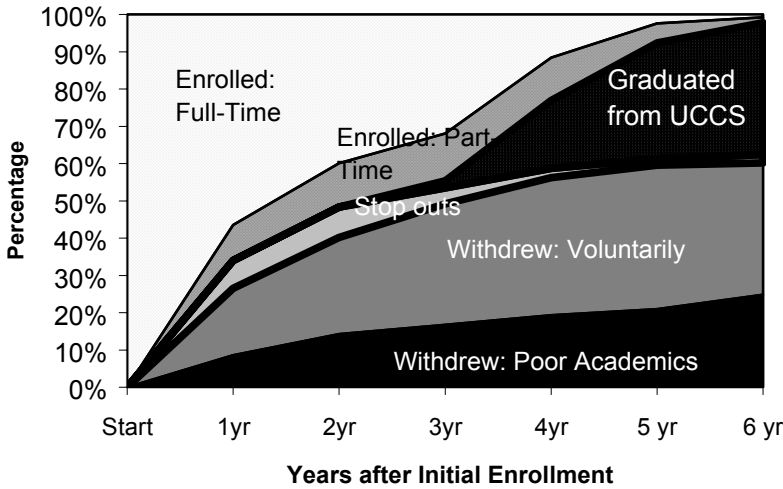
graduation from other Colorado colleges is included in the comparison.

studies at similar institutions and at national levels.

In particular, a study of Wichita State University's graduation rates (Chambers and Sanjeev, 1997) indicated that their 6-year graduation rates were 29% for traditional students and 24% for non-traditional students. UCCS' 35% for traditional students and 27% for non-traditional students indicates UCCS students fare well.

Clifford Aldeman, a nationally reknown authority on college persistence issues, indicates in his study *Answers in the Tool Box: Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor's Degree Attainment* (1999), "When nearly 60 percent of undergraduates attend more than one institution and 40 percent of this group do not complete degrees, institutional graduation rates are not very meaningful. It is not wise to blame a college with superficially low graduation rates for the behavior of students who swirl through the system."

Traditional Freshmen Enrollment and Graduation Patterns



These patterns can further be illustrated by comparing the trends on the following graphs.

As these graphs indicate, though there are differences in persistence rates for those who start-out as traditional students and those who start-out as non-traditional students, there are generally "low" graduation rates regardless of student circumstances when they begin college. These findings are not surprising given previous findings from

Non-Traditional Freshmen Enrollment Pattern

