

*Committee on Measures of
Student Success: Progression
and Completion Workgroup*

Patrick Perry

Margarita Benitez

Wayne Burton

Tasks

- Prioritize major issues related to progress & completion measures
- Identify areas for potential recommendations

Domain

- Federal data collection instruments (IPEDS):
 - Graduation Rate Survey
 - Fall Enrollment Survey
 - Completions Survey
- All two-year institutions (public, private, for-profit)

Environmental Scan of Issues

- IPEDS Technical Review Panels
- Think Tank publications
- Foundation funded studies
- NPEC Study on GRS

Student Right To Know

- Federal/public accountability measure
 - Focused on rates (GRS), not on volumes (C)
 - SRTK conceived as “one size fits all” methodology across all sectors and segments
 - Greatest difficulty in measurement when applied to two-year college sector
 - Different missions, student intentions

IPEDS GRS

- The further away you get from “traditional” college populations, the less appropriate the instrument becomes
 - “traditional” = degree-seeking, full-time, starting in a fall term

GRS Issues

- First-time
- Starting term
- Degree-seeking
- Cohort identification
- Tracking term
- Outcomes hierarchy
- Reporting subpopulations

Other Progress/Completion Issues

- Intermediate Measures of Progress
- Institutional Comparisons

GRS: Who Gets Tracked?

- First-time, full-time degree-seeking students starting in fall (if on semesters, quarters) or year-round (if continuous enrollment)

GRS: Who Gets Tracked?

- Leaves out:
 - Students that are not full-time in first term
 - Non-Fall starters (for semester/qtr based schools)

GRS: Who Gets Tracked?

- Requires you to somehow determine:
 - Student degree-intent, generally based solely upon enrollment behaviors in first-term
 - Whether a student is truly first time in higher education

Workgroup Issue: Defining First-Time

- Clear by definition (first-time anywhere)
- Uneven in practice
- The higher the data aggregation level, the more opportunity an IPEDS respondent has to “match” and eliminate non-first-timers

Potential Suggestions

- *Promulgate a best practice of performing a Nat'l Student Clearinghouse (NSC) match to eliminate prior enrolled students*
- *Change the definition of first-time to “first-time at your institution only”*
- *Place a “stop-out” limit time period on “first-time” status (student is first-time if he/she was not enrolled anywhere for X yrs)*

Workgroup Issue: Defining Start Term

- *Fall term or full year?*
 - *Counting only Fall starts can leave out many students from the tracking cohort*
 - *Counting all starters in an academic year potentially adds reporting burden and complexity*

Defining Start Term

- Fall starters cohort:
 - Easily tracked; has discrete start and end points
 - Is it a representative sample?
- Full Year starters cohort:
 - Has multiple start points and multiple end points
 - Is the entire universe of students

Potential Suggestions

- *Test Fall starting cohort for “sample validity” of the universe (study).*
- *Include all terms in a year, and track each start term to its respective normal time to completion.*
- *Include all terms in a year, but keep a single end point.*

Workgroup Issue: Defining Degree-Seeking

- IPEDS Glossary: “student needs to be enrolled in courses creditable towards a degree”
- Since GRS currently only tracks those enrolled full-time as of start term, the “default” definition of “degree-seeking” is “attempted any 12 degree-applicable, transferrable, or remedial units in first term”.

Defining Degree-Seeking

- If GRS is recommended to include part-time students, “enrolled in courses creditable towards a degree” becomes far too low of a threshold for comparability
- The “common bar” needs to measure the same discrete population at each institution
 - Regardless of the % that represents

Potential Suggestions

- *Use Student self-stated intent.*
- *Use some unit threshold (commonly 12-18 units attempted or completed) over the course of the tracking period.*

Potential Suggestions

- *Use behavioral intent as defined by “gateway course” .*
 - *did student ever attempt collegiate/degree-applicable math or English; or*
 - *program “gateway” course; or*
 - *clearly vocational/occupational course that signifies behavioral intent.*

Workgroup Issue: Tracking Term

- Currently, students tracked to 150% and 200% “normal time to completion” (3/4 yrs)
- Somewhat assumes that a first-time starting cohort stays relatively full-time

Potential Suggestions

- *If part-time students are added to the cohort, lengthen the tracking period to 6 years.*
- *Track cohorts to multiple end points (3, 6 and 10 years ; each GRS report would have 3 cohorts reported on.)*

Workgroup Issue: Tracking Cohort

- Accountability emphasis is placed upon the tracking of a small and non-representative cohort of students
- This cohort also has the highest likelihood of eventual success (rate inflation)

Potential Suggestions

- *Include all students, regardless of units attempted in first-term.*
 - *Should K-12 concurrently enrolled students be included?*
- *Set a lower units attempted threshold on the starting cohort (6?)*

Potential Suggestions

- *If a full-year cohort is being tracked, set a minimum units attempted threshold of units attempted in the first year.*

Potential Suggestions

- *Do not designate full-time/part-time status in the cohort as many students move between these statuses during their academic history.*
- *Increase the tracking period to accommodate all students' progress.*

Workgroup Issue: Outcomes

- GRS does not differentiate outcomes hierarchy of 4-yr institution vs 2-yr institution
 - Currently:
 - Degree/certificate attainment or “prepared to transfer” (AA equivalent)
 - If no degree, transfer anywhere (upward or lateral)
 - Also dictates a proper NSC match for xfer

Outcomes

- Many 2-yr institutions view upward (2 yr to 4 yr) transfer as a very high order outcome and a primary mission
 - Is there a “threshold” of transfer?
- “Lateral” (2 yr to 2 yr) transfer is not high order (and in many cases is just “swirl”) and should not be claimed as progress

Outcomes

- Students are encouraged to get BOTH an AA/AS/certificate AND transfer
 - These are separate functions, and not hierarchical

Potential Suggestions

- *Count outcomes separately and independently*
 - *AA/AS/Certificate*
 - *Transfer to 4-yr institution (NOT lateral)*
 - *Transfer-Prepared*
 - *Transfer to other institution (lateral)*
- *Students earning multiples can be counted in each*

Potential Suggestions

- *Create a single “higher order” outcomes “Achievement Rate”*
 - *Student earned ANY of the following:*
 - *AA/AS/Certificate; or*
 - *Transfer-Prepared; or*
 - *Transfer to 4-yr institution*
- *Any of these outcomes is counted only once in the achievement rate*
- *Eliminate separate grad/transfer rates*

Potential Suggestions

- *Create separate reporting group for “lower-order” outcomes:*
 - *Lateral transfer*
 - *Still enrolled*
- *[Cohort]-[exemptions] = [high-order outcomes] + [low-order outcomes] + [noncompleters]*

Workgroup Issue: Subpopulation Crosstabs

- Many rate “cuts” desired
 - Race/eth, gender only ones currently available
- Desired:
 - Fin Aid status (Pell), remedial/collegiate status, socioeconomic status, first gen status, student age upon entry, distance education program status...and more
- All crosstabbed against each other

Potential Suggestions

- *Add age group to gender/ethnicity*
 - [*<24, 25+*] or [*<20, 21-39, 40+*]; broadly; or
- *Add detailed age group as separate table*
- *Add remedial status: separate cohort into [remedial/collegiate upon entry] groups*

Potential Suggestions

- *FinAid status: [Pell/No Pell] or other locally defined “need-based” fin aid*
- *Socioeconomic/First Gen status: would need federal guidelines to define*

Workgroup Issue: Intermed. Measures of Progress

- Only current one in IPEDS domain is “Retention Rate” in Fall Enrollment Survey
- Should IPEDS be a collector of “momentum points”?

Potential Suggestions

- *Retained until end of first term enrolled (EF)*
- *Unit threshold achievement: completed 12, 30 or some other level of units (GRS)*
- *Completed remedial thresholds (completed sequence)*
- *Wage outcomes studies or employment studies (gainful employment)*

Workgroup Issue: Institutional Comparisons/Peering

- Outcome rates are highly correlated with things outside an institutions control
 - Academic preparedness of students
 - Socioeconomic/first gen status of service area
- We need a better way to compare and isolate the institutional effect on outcomes and create true “peers”

Potential Suggestions

- *In IPEDS-EF, instead of collecting headcount by State, collect student headcount by zipcode, thus creating a linking field to census/ACS data*
- *From this, create service area indices that isolate factors out of the campus' control, and use for peering, comparison, and participation rates*