

4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Argument

4.C.1. The Division of Academic Affairs has established Divisional Goals that align with the Board and University strategic plans. Division Goal #1 specifically addresses retention and completion: *"Recruit and retain all learners by continuously improving their educational experience, leveraging new technology and pedagogy, and preparing graduates for successful careers and lives as critically thinking citizens."* To measure progress towards this goal [Key Progress Indicators](#) (KPIs) have been developed. For each of the KPIs there are specific measures and targets identified. The Division [monitors the progress of each KPI at the college and university level](#). The table below provides the KPI, measure and target for the three retention/completion KPIs and the most current measures for the KPIs.

Key Progress Indicator	Metric	Target	April 2015 University Status
1. Timely graduation of undergraduate students across the university (a Board measure).	Measure the trend data for the percent of students in each year's cohort who graduate within four years.	Increase the four-year graduation rate to the median of ISU's peer group by 2016. Target base year is 2009-2010 for the entering class of 2006.	Increased from 38.6% to 43.2%

2. Success of minority undergraduate students across the university (a Board measure).	Measure the trend data for the percent of minority students in each year's cohort who graduate within six years, compared to non-minority students, using a three-year rolling average.	Close the gap by 50% between the six-year graduation rates of minority students and non-minority students by 2016. Target base year is 2009-2010 for the entering classes of 2002, 2003, and 2004.	Gap has increased by 2.2 percentage points from 7.8% to 10%.
3. First year retention of undergraduate students across the university.	Measure the trend data for first year retention rate at ISU, using a three-year rolling average.	Increase the first year retention rate by 3 percentage points by 2016 over the base year of 2008.	Increased from 85.9% to 86.4%

For KPI's where progress is not being made, the University is investing time and resources to better understand the reasons for lack of progress and to make institutional changes to address those. For example, the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs and the Student Success Council have both been investigating the differences between various sub-populations to better understand the reasons behind the lack of progress with minority student graduation rates. This past spring a survey was conducted to examine how a student's sense of belonging was impacting his/her success rate. Follow-up focus groups are planned for this year.

4.C.2. ISU's Office of Institutional Research (IR) annually collects and summarizes information on [student retention, persistence, and degree completion](#) for both first-time first-year students and transfer students. For the Fall 2003 - Fall 2013 cohorts of first-year students, the average one-year retention rate was 85.3%, the 4-year graduation rate was 37.6%, and the 6-year graduation rate was 68.8%. For transfer students entering over the same time period, the 1-year retention rate was 79.6%, 4-year graduation rate was 60.6% and 6-year graduation rate was 67.4%. IR also disaggregates the [data by sub-populations](#) (e.g., ACT range, race/ethnicity).

IR tracks [degree awarded](#) by college and department. In FY2014, ISU awarded 5,385 bachelor's degrees, 837 master's degrees, 347 Ph.D. degrees, and 147 DVM degrees.

ISU also provides an annual [Retention and Graduation Report](#) to the Board that includes numerous [supporting tables](#) that analyze data for various subpopulations. Graduation and retention highlights are shared in the presentation of this report to the Board.

4.C.3. The University uses data to improve student success in many ways, from significant institutional efforts to efforts within individual units. A few of these initiatives are highlighted below.

Student Success Council

The Student Success Council, a long-term collaborative effort of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, analyzes numerous data sets to determine ways the University can improve student success. The Council coordinates with several student success-oriented initiatives and campus committees,

with subcommittees working on success of special populations, transfer students, second-year students, and high D/F/Withdraw courses. The Council is committed to student success through the effective utilization of data analytics and predictive modeling approaches. In April 2014, the Student Success Council hosted a campus-wide [Student Success Summit](#). Over 200 participants attended the summit, which focused on enhancing success of at-risk undergraduate students.

EAB SSC

ISU is implementing the Education Advisory Board Student Success Collaborative (EAB SSC), which uses data analytics to identify key courses and success markers, and assigns risk levels to student populations. Through an analysis of 10 years of historical data, and current student information, the system provides real-time risk indicators for students, allowing advisers to proactively outreach to them to improve student success. ISU is in the pilot phase of implementation in fall 2015.

Less than 2.0

The Enrollment Research Team (ERT) within the Division of Student Affairs created a project called [“Less than 2.0”](#) with the goal of improving student success and degree completion. Institutional data was used to develop a multi-dimensional statistical model to identify students at risk of earning below a 2.0 GPA in their first semester of college. Results of the model are available for advisers as they meet with students during New Student Orientation. Multi-year analyses illustrate the model can be used effectively to predict students who would earn less than a 2.0 GPA. Of students predicted to earn a 2.0 GPA or higher in their first term, 89% and 87% actually did in 2012 and 2013, respectively. Of nearly 10% of the students predicted to earn below a 2.0 GPA in their first term, 44% and 52% actually did so. The ERT provides the list of students predicted to earn below a 2.0 GPA to each college for dissemination/use within the college. Additional analyses demonstrate a relationship between predicted and actual first semester GPA and retention rates.

MAP-Works®

ISU adopted MAP-Works® (Making Achievement Possible) early alert system for all new direct-from-high-school students in 2008. MAP-Works® provides student self-reported data early in their first semester that faculty and staff can use to provide proactive advising/outreach efforts. [Since implementation](#), the first semester GPA has increased from 2.65 in 2008 to 2.79 in 2013 with even greater difference between survey non-respondents and respondents who averaged a first semester GPA of 2.44 and 2.86 respectively. Similarly, first-to-second year retention rates have also increased from 83.9% in fall 2009 to 86.5%% in fall 2014. With 85% of our freshmen voluntarily taking MAP-Works® this has become an effective and broad-reaching tool to assist faculty and staff in their retention efforts.

ISU Learning Communities

The ISU learning community (LC) initiative, as described in 4.B., continues to enhance student success. The [one-year retention rate and six-year graduation rate for LC participants is higher](#) than non-LC participants by 5.6 and 9.3 percentage points respectively.

Department of Residence

The Department of Residence assessment staff continuously [conducts analyses](#) that document the positive outcomes from living on campus. In fall 2013, students living on campus recorded

significantly higher GPAs than their off-campus peers. On-campus freshmen achieved a grade point average of 2.75 as compared to 2.35 for their off campus counterparts; sophomores achieved a 2.90 vs. 2.70; juniors a 3.02 vs. 2.85, and seniors a 3.14 vs. 3.05. [Analysis of one- and four-year retention rates](#) show that students living on-campus their first year have significantly higher retention compared to students living off-campus.

4.C.4. ISU follows [IPEDS guidelines and definitions](#) to calculate retention and graduation rates. ISU establishes a cohort of first-time full-time freshman every fall on census day; cohorts are followed to the subsequent fall semesters to determine the percentage of cohort students are retained each year and the percentage who graduate. This same type of tracking is done for transfer students. Each cohort is tracked for a 10-year period.

IR generates reports on these metrics by ethnicity, gender, age, residency, College, Department, ACT scores, high school rank, and as well as multiple combinations of those categories. Results are shared with the University community and public via the ISU Fact Book. Specific college- and department-level information are sent to colleges and departments for inclusion in their own reporting.

Statistical methods to analyze retention and success data vary based on the situation, ranging from simple descriptive statistics (e.g. averages), to correlations, to regression analysis. Teams also have ventured into using new analysis techniques such as a Social Network Analysis, which was used by the Department of Residence and Multicultural Student Affairs to analyze the interactions of multicultural student engagement within the University.

Sources

- BOR Graduation and Retention Report March 2015
- BOR Graduation and Retention Tables 2015
- Degrees Awarded
- Dept of Residence Grade Reports
- Dept of Residence Retention Reports
- Key Progress Indicators - Academic Affairs
- KPI_SP Data by College All_April 2015
- Learning Communities Retention Graduation Rates
- Less Than 2 Point Assessment Project
- MAP Works Report
- Retention & Graduation Rates
- Retention & Graduation Rates by Groups
- Retention and Graduation Rate Methodology
- Student Success Summit Program