

UW-Madison Undergraduate Transfer Students Retention and Graduation Rates TRANSFER AND CONTINUING STUDENTS

Summary

Transfer Students Enrollment. In 2001, UW-Madison enrolled 1718 new transfer students (23% of new undergraduates). By comparison, in 1992 UW-Madison enrolled 2069 new transfer students (30% of new undergraduates). In recent years about half of the new transfer students entered as sophomores and in 2001, 38% of new transfers were juniors. The rest entered at the freshman or senior academic level.

For this report, retention and graduation rates were calculated for fall entrance cohorts of new transfer students from 1991 to 2000. Progress in the first term enrolled (percent completing the first term, first term GPA, credit load) was evaluated for the 1995, 1998, and 2001 fall entrance cohorts.

Retention and Graduation Rates. Transfer juniors were retained and graduated at higher rates than transfer sophomores. Retention and graduation rates for transfer student cohorts were consistently below the rates for comparable cohorts of continuing students.

For recent cohorts of transfer students, about 86% were retained to the second year (junior or sophomore transfers). By comparison, 92% of a comparison cohort of continuing sophomores and 96% of continuing juniors were retained.

For the 1996 new transfer sophomore cohort, the 5-year graduation rate was 73%. (This is equivalent to the 6-year graduation rate widely used for new freshmen). For the comparison cohort of continuing sophomores, the 5-year graduation rate was 85%. The 4-year graduation rate for the 1997 transfer junior cohort was 72%, which is more than 20 percentage points lower than the rate for a comparison cohort of continuing juniors (93%).

Progress in First Term Enrolled. The average first-term GPA for transfer students was slightly less than the GPA of comparison cohorts of continuing students. Transfer students completed fewer GPA credits than comparison cohorts of continuing students.

For the 2001 cohort, the average first term GPA was 2.90 on 12.6 credits for transfer sophomores and 3.02 on 12.3 credits for transfer juniors. The average GPA for the comparison cohorts of continuing students was about 0.2 points higher on about one additional credit.

Part 1. Trends in Transfer Student Enrollment

In the 2001 academic year 1718 new transfer students enrolled, most of them (1261) in the fall term. New transfer student numbers increased in 2001 after more than a decade of decreases. Nearly three-quarters of the new transfer students were Wisconsin residents. In 2001, the majority of new transfer students entered at the sophomore (51%) or junior (38%) academic level (Table 1).

TABLE 1.

Trends in New Transfer Student Enrollments

	<u>Academic Year (Fall, Spring, Summer Terms)</u>									
	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Count of New Transfer Students	2069	2028	1957	1907	1851	1869	1742	1673	1650	1718
New Transfers as % of New Undergraduates	30	31	29	28	26	25	22	23	22	23
Percent of Transfer Students who are:										
Wisconsin Residents	70	68	68	69	68	70	70	69	72	74
Under 25 years of age	76	74	74	75	77	78	82	83	88	87
Targeted Minority	5.1	6.2	6.4	5.6	5.8	5.9	5.3	4.8	5.1	5.5
Academic Level:										
Freshman	10	9	9	8	8	6	3	5	4	4
Sophomore	45	45	46	45	44	46	49	50	54	51
Junior	34	34	34	36	39	38	39	36	35	38
Senior	11	12	11	11	9	10	9	9	8	7

Source: UW-Madison Retention Dataviews, May 2002.

Part 2. Retention and Graduation Rates

Retention and graduation rates were calculated for fall entrance cohorts of new transfer students from 1991 to 2000. For this analysis, new transfer sophomores and new transfer juniors were evaluated separately. Five-year graduation rates for transfer sophomores and four-year rates for transfer juniors are comparable to the standard 6-year graduation rate for new freshmen.

In summary, the retention and graduation rates of transfer students were consistently lower than those of comparable cohorts of continuing students (Table 2, 3, Graph 1).

On average, 86% of transfer students were retained to the second year. For the Fall 2000 cohort, 87% of transfer sophomores and 85% of transfer juniors were retained to the second year.

Historically, graduation rates of transfer sophomores were lower than those of transfer juniors. An analysis of the Fall 1985/1986/1987 transfer cohorts recorded a 5-year graduation rate for transfer sophomores of 67%, 9 percentage points below the 4-year graduation rate for transfer juniors (78%) (K. Hazelton 1993 data). This trend continued for the early 1990's transfer cohorts. For Fall 1991 transfer sophomore graduation rates were 7 percentage points lower than for transfer juniors (Table 2). This historically observed gap of graduation rates between transfer sophomores and transfer juniors appears to be closing. The 5-year graduation rate for new transfer sophomores increased from 69% for the 1991 cohort to 72.5% for the 1996 cohort. In contrast, the 4-year graduation rate for new transfer juniors decreased from 76.3% to 72.4 % over the same time period.

How do retention and graduation rates for transfer cohorts compare with rates for comparison cohorts of continuing students? To address this question, we compared new transfer sophomore cohorts with cohorts of continuing sophomores who were new freshmen at UW-Madison one year earlier (the previous fall term). Similarly, we compared new transfer juniors with cohorts of continuing juniors who were new freshmen at UW-Madison two years earlier (Table 3).

Retention rates for comparison cohorts of continuing students were consistently higher than for transfer students. For the 2000 cohorts, the retention rate of continuing sophomores (92%) was 5

percentage points higher than that for transfer sophomores. For continuing junior cohorts, the retention rate of 96% was 11 percentage points higher than for transfer juniors.

Graduation rates for continuing sophomores were consistently higher than those for transfer sophomores: for the fall 1996 cohort, 85% of continuing sophomores and 73% of transfer sophomores graduated in 5 years. The 4-year graduation rate for the Fall 1997 cohort of continuing juniors was 92.7 %, 21 percentage points higher than the rate for transfer juniors.

TABLE 2.

Retention and Graduation Rates of New Transfer Students

Fall Term	New Transfer Sophomores			New Transfer Juniors		
	After 1st Year	After 5th Year		After 1st Year	After 4th Year	
	Retained	Graduated	Retained	Retained	Graduated	Retained
1991	85.0	69.0	5.3	87.2	76.3	6.7
1992	84.1	70.8	4.5	88.4	76.5	6.7
1993	85.0	72.9	3.5	86.5	75.1	2.9
1994	85.1	71.8	3.1	87.5	76.5	5.1
1995	86.4	72.0	3.9	86.7	75.7	4.2
1996	88.1	72.5	3.8	84.3	72.4	3.0
1997	87.1			87.4	72.4	6.0
1998	84.7			87.4		
1999	84.0			84.1		
2000	86.5			85.0		

Source: Retention Dataviews, July 2002. See appendix for detailed tables.

TABLE 3.

Retention and Graduation Rates of Continuing Students who Started as New Freshmen

Fall Term	Continuing Sophomores			Continuing Juniors		
	After 1st Year	After 5th Year		After 1st Year	After 4th Year	
	Retained	Graduated	Retained	Retained	Graduated	Retained
1991	91.4	83.1	3.4	95.2	91.8	2.3
1992	91.4	83.9	2.5	95.8	92.1	2.5
1993	90.8	82.8	3.0	95.8	92.5	1.9
1994	91.1	84.3	2.4	95.4	91.6	1.7
1995	91.6	85.0	1.9	95.7	92.3	1.9
1996	91.7	84.9	2.0	96.2	92.6	1.5
1997	91.6			96.3	92.7	1.6
1998	92.9			97.4		
1999	91.4			96.3		
2000	92.0			96.2		

Source: Retention Dataviews, July 2002. See appendix for detailed tables.

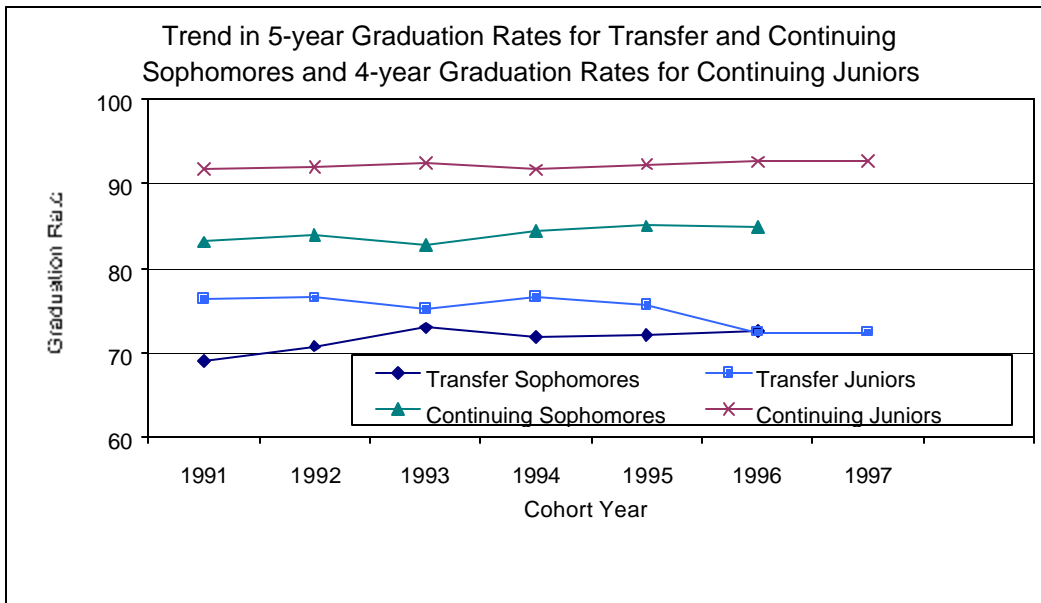
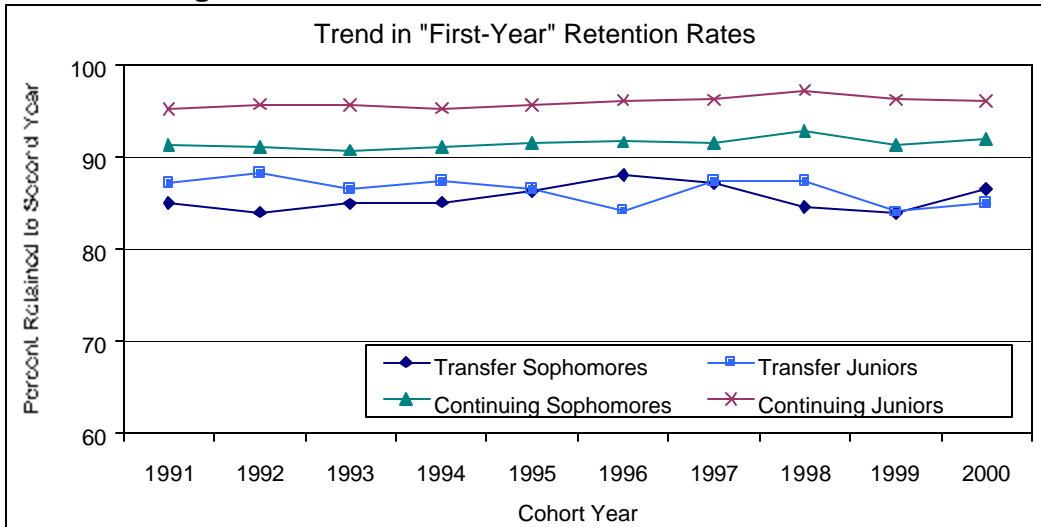
Continuing Sophomores - continuing students who started as new freshmen one year earlier and were enrolled as sophomores in the given fall term.

Continuing Juniors - continuing students who started as new freshmen two years earlier and were enrolled as juniors in the given fall term.

In summary, the retention and graduation rates of transfer students were consistently lower than those for comparison cohorts of continuing students. Transfer sophomores and juniors were retained at similar rates. A historically observed gap between the graduation rates of transfer juniors and transfer sophomores appears to be closing.

CHART 1.

UW-Madison Retention and Graduation Rates for Transfer and Continuing Student Cohorts



Source: Retention_Semester_History and Retention_Awards_Main Data views.

The 5-year graduation and retention rates for sophomore cohorts and the 4-year graduation and retention rates for junior cohorts are a proxy for the 6-year graduation rates for new freshmen in the same cohort year.

The new transfer cohort who entered as sophomores are compared with the cohort of continuing sophomores who entered as new freshmen the year before. The new transfer cohort who entered as as juniors are compared with the continuing juniors who entered as new freshmen two years earlier.

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Part 3. Progress in First Term Enrolled

Table 4 describes transfer student progress in the first term enrolled for three cohorts, Fall 1995, Fall 1998, and Fall 2001. The average transfer GPA for these cohorts is also included in this table. The transfer GPA is calculated by Admissions and is based on transferable academic course work. The transfer GPA, rather than the GPA calculated by the sending institution, is one of several factors used in the admissions decision. It is one indicator of academic preparedness available for transfer students.

TABLE 4.

UW-Madison New Undergraduate Transfer Students Progress in First Term Enrolled by Fall Entrance Cohort

NEW TRANSFER STUDENT COHORTS

Fall Term	Cohort Headcount	Average Transfer GPA	Percent Completing First Term	Average First Term GPA	Average First Term GPA Credits
Transfer Students who Entered as Sophomores					
1995	558	3.33	96.1	2.99	12.6
1998	606	3.33	95.0	2.90	12.8
2001	735	3.37	96.6	2.90	12.6
Transfer Students who Entered as Juniors					
1995	502	3.27	94.6	3.11	12.4
1998	413	3.26	95.6	3.03	12.3
2001	435	3.27	96.8	3.02	12.3

CONTINUING STUDENT COHORTS

Fall Term	Cohort Headcount	Avg Prior Spring Term GPA	Percent Completing Fall Term	Average Fall Term GPA	Average Fall Term GPA Credits
Continuing Sophomore Cohort					
1995	3735	3.02	98.4	3.02	13.8
1998	4597	3.04	98.6	3.07	14.0
2001	4475	3.09	98.4	3.11	13.9
Continuing Junior Cohort					
1995	3035	3.09	95.8	3.17	13.8
1998	3625	3.12	97.5	3.18	13.9
2001	3724	3.15	97.0	3.22	13.8

Source: Retention_Semester_History and Retention_Transfer_Student_(History) Dataviews.

Students are counted as having completed the term if they completed 1 or more credits.

Transfer GPA is not available for the Fall 1999 and Fall 2000 cohorts.

Continuing Sophomores - continuing students who started as new freshmen one year earlier and were enrolled as sophomores in the given fall term.

Continuing Juniors - continuing students who started as new freshmen two years earlier and were enrolled as juniors in the given fall term.

For Fall 2001, 97% of transfer sophomores and transfer juniors completed their first term. The average first term GPA of transfer sophomores was 2.90 for 12.6 credits. For transfer juniors, the average first term GPA was 3.02 for 12.3 credits. The average GPA of continuing student

cohorts was about 0.2 points higher on about 1 additional credit compared with the transfer student cohorts.

Previous analysis indicated that, for the most part, transfer students and students who started as new freshmen complete similar academic majors. Except for a few curricular areas where transfer students are proportionally under-represented (communications, foreign languages, biology and life sciences) or over-represented (Education, philosophy, visual and performing arts, the health professions), the proportions of transfer and native students are similar in most areas. Thus, differences in average GPA are unlikely to be explained by choice of major.

Why do transfer students complete fewer GPA credits than continuing students? The GPA credit count includes only the credits that are used to calculate the GPA. Some elective or non-degree credits may be excluded. The number of GPA credits for transfer students may indicate that a higher portion of them are enrolled part-time, or they may be taking the same number of total credits and fewer of them count in the GPA credit total. This question requires more analysis.

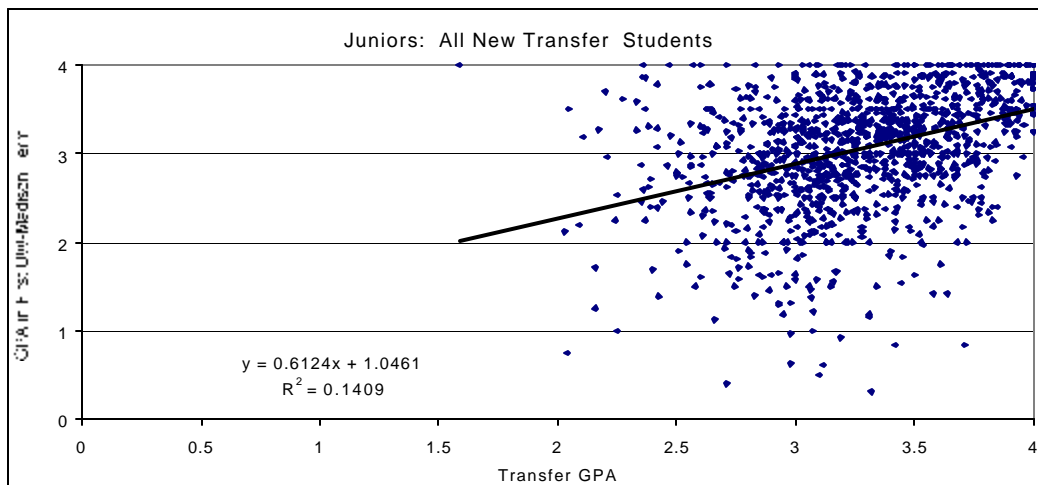
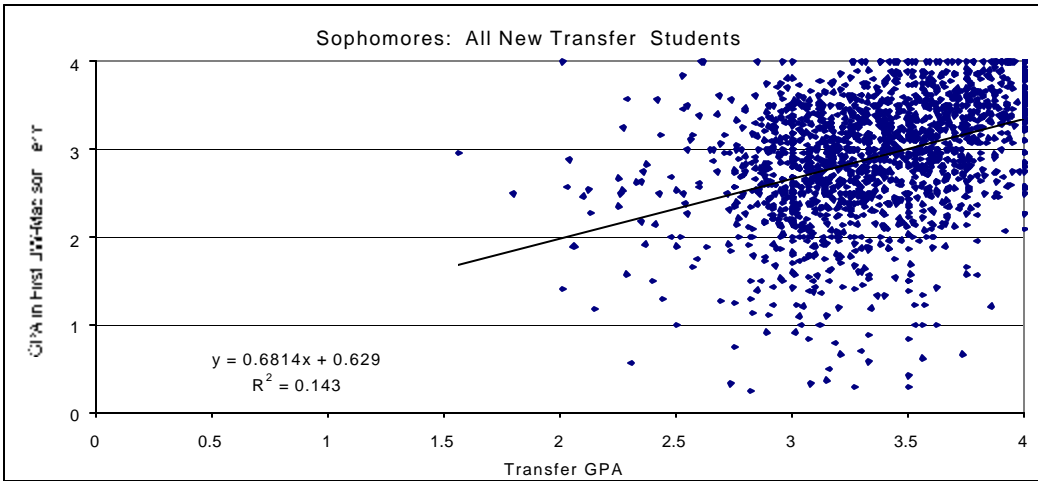
How does the transfer GPA compare with the first term GPA? For transfer students, the first term GPA tends to be lower than the transfer GPA (Table 4). For example, Fall 2001 transfer sophomores had an average transfer GPA of 3.37 and an average first term GPA of 2.90. Transfer juniors had an average transfer GPA of 3.27 and an average first term GPA of 3.02.

Do continuing student cohorts, like transfer student cohorts, show a decrease in their fall term GPA compared with their cumulative GPA from the preceding spring? No. For continuing student cohorts, the average fall term GPA was similar to or a little higher than the cumulative GPA from the previous spring (Table 4).

The transfer GPA is one of only several factors used by Admissions to evaluate prospective transfer students, and it is one of the few numerical indicators of academic preparation available for transfer students. The relationship of transfer GPA to the GPA in the first term enrolled is plotted in Chart 2 (1995, 1998, and 2001 transfer student cohorts). Consistent with standards for admission, transfer students with a transfer GPA below 2.5 are rarely admitted.

CHART 2.

**UW-Madison Transfer Students who Enrolled in Fall 1995, Fall 1998 and Fall 2001
Transfer GPA and GPA in First Term Enrolled**



Source: Retention_Semester_History and Retention_Transfer_Student_(History) Dataviews.
Includes new transfer student cohorts for Fall 1995, 1998 and 2001.
Students who had no transfer GPA on record or did not complete the first term (completed no credits)
are not included.

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Retention and Graduation Rates of New Transfer Students by Fall Entrance Cohort

Transfer Sophomores

Fall Term	Cohort Head- count	Retention Rate After First Year	Cumulative Graduation / Retention Rates									
			After 2nd Year		After 3rd Year		After 4th Year		After 5th Year		After 6th Year	
			Graduated	Retained	Graduated	Retained	Graduated	Retained	Graduated	Retained	Graduated	Retained
1991	642	85.0	2.3	76.0	31.9	43.8	60.7	13.6	69.0	5.3	71.8	2.8
1992	602	84.1	4.0	75.7	35.4	41.0	61.6	12.8	70.8	4.5	73.1	2.3
1993	606	85.0	4.1	76.9	33.3	44.9	64.2	12.2	72.9	3.5	74.8	1.0
1994	579	85.1	1.6	78.2	35.4	42.5	63.4	13.0	71.8	3.1	73.9	1.6
1995	558	86.4	2.3	77.4	36.9	39.6	65.2	11.3	72.0	3.9	74.0	3.4
1996	582	88.1	3.8	75.8	35.1	41.2	64.4	11.9	72.5	3.8		
1997	591	87.1	2.0	78.8	32.8	43.7	64.3	12.2				
1998	606	84.7	0.7	76.7	32.3	42.4						
1999	712	84.0	2.2	73.7								
2000	638	86.5										

Transfer Juniors

Fall Term	Cohort Head- count	Retention Rate After First Year	Cumulative Graduation / Retention Rates									
			After 2nd Year		After 3rd Year		After 4th Year		After 5th Year		After 6th Year	
			Graduated	Retained	Graduated	Retained	Graduated	Retained	Graduated	Retained	Graduated	Retained
1991	477	87.2	22.4	60.4	62.1	20.8	76.3	6.7	80.1	2.7	82.2	0.6
1992	481	88.4	25.6	58.4	62.8	20.2	76.5	6.7	80.7	2.5	82.1	1.0
1993	446	86.5	30.0	50.2	61.9	17.0	75.1	2.9	77.1	1.3	77.6	1.6
1994	473	87.5	24.1	59.4	66.2	16.1	76.5	5.1	79.9	2.1	80.8	1.5
1995	502	86.7	26.5	54.8	64.7	15.5	75.7	4.2	78.1	1.8	79.1	1.2
1996	471	84.3	28.9	48.4	61.1	15.7	72.4	3.0	74.3	2.8		
1997	453	87.4	24.5	55.8	62.7	14.8	72.4	6.0				
1998	413	87.4	28.8	51.1	62.5	15.7						
1999	422	84.1	22.7	54.7								
2000	447	85.0										

Source: Retention_Semester_History and Retention_Awards_Main Data views.

The 5th year graduation and retention rates for sophomore transfers and the 4th year graduation and retention rates for junior are a proxy for the 6th year graduation rate for new freshmen in the same cohort year.

Retention and Graduation Rates of Continuing Students by Comparison Fall Term Cohort

Continuing Sophomores who Entered as New Freshmen One Year Earlier

Fall Term	Cohort Head-count	Retention Rate After First Year	Cumulative Graduation / Retention Rates									
			After 2nd Year		After 3rd Year		After 4th Year		After 5th Year		After 6th Year	
			Graduated	Retained	Graduated	Retained	Graduated	Retained	Graduated	Retained	Graduated	Retained
1991	3743	91.4	0.4	88.7	37.1	50.3	75.2	11.1	83.1	3.4	85.0	1.7
1992	3768	91.2	0.5	88.2	39.2	47.8	76.7	9.5	83.9	2.6	85.4	1.2
1993	3626	90.8	0.4	88.4	39.8	46.9	75.7	9.9	82.8	3.0	84.6	1.8
1994	3741	91.1	0.6	88.5	43.0	44.4	78.3	8.5	84.3	2.4	85.6	1.5
1995	3735	91.6	0.6	89.3	43.3	44.7	79.4	8.0	85.0	1.9	86.1	1.2
1996	4166	91.7	0.3	89.0	44.8	43.1	79.5	7.2	84.9	2.0	86.0	1.5
1997	4298	91.6	0.4	89.9	45.0	43.2	81.0	6.4				
1998	4597	92.9	0.4	89.8	44.9	43.9						
1999	4420	91.4	0.2	89.1								
2000	4378	92.0										

Continuing Juniors who Entered as New Freshmen Two Years Earlier

Fall Term	Cohort Head-count	Retention Rate After First Year	Cumulative Graduation / Retention Rates									
			After 2nd Year		After 3rd Year		After 4th Year		After 5th Year		After 6th Year	
			Graduated	Retained	Graduated	Retained	Graduated	Retained	Graduated	Retained	Graduated	Retained
1991	3175	95.2	46.7	46.9	84.8	8.5	91.8	2.3	93.0	1.1	93.4	0.9
1992	2922	95.8	45.3	48.7	84.9	9.2	92.1	2.5	93.6	1.4	94.3	0.6
1993	3004	95.8	47.2	46.4	86.1	7.6	92.5	1.9	93.6	0.9	94.0	0.6
1994	2882	95.4	48.3	45.2	85.4	8.0	91.6	1.7	93.1	1.0	93.3	0.5
1995	3035	95.7	50.5	43.6	87.0	7.5	92.3	1.9	93.3	1.2	93.8	0.6
1996	3083	96.2	50.7	43.9	88.0	6.0	92.6	1.5	93.4	0.9		
1997	3476	96.3	52.1	42.9	87.8	6.3	92.7	1.6				
1998	3625	97.4	52.0	42.9	89.4	5.1						
1999	3943	96.3	51.0	43.7								
2000	3788	96.2										

Source: Retention_Semester_History and Retention_Awards_Main Data views.

The 5th year graduation and retention rates for the continuing sophomore cohort and the 4th year graduation and retention rates for the continuing junior cohort are a proxy for the 6th year graduation rate for new freshmen in the same cohort year.