

Examination of a Graduation Cohort as a Tool for Understanding Undergraduate Progress to Degree

When examining retention and graduation data, most analyses are conducted by tracking entering student cohorts (usually freshman) and monitoring progress forward. Common indicators are one-year persistence, quality of persistence and time-to-degree. The four and six year graduation rates are reported to federal agencies and in the media. It is also useful to examine cohorts of successful students – students who graduate – to learn from their path to degree completion. This brief looks at the graduation cohort of 2009-2010 academic year.

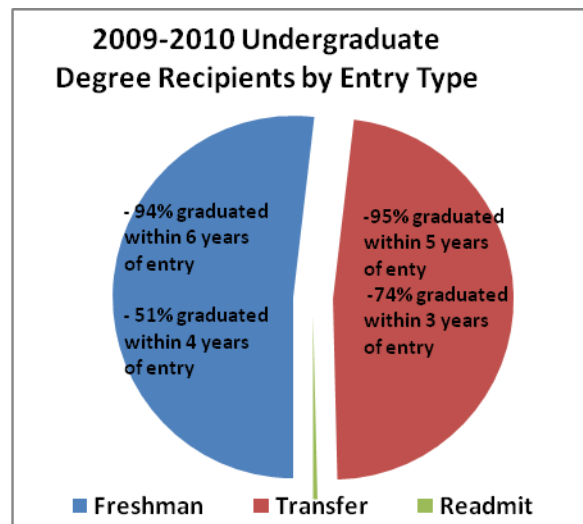
During the 2009-2010 academic year, 3431 undergraduate degrees were awarded to students at UIC. The degrees were awarded from the eight undergraduate colleges (see table below). Forty-eight students earned multiple degrees so the total number of degree recipients was 3383. This graduation cohort is racially and ethnically diverse. The second table below details the racial/ethnic composition of the 2009-2010 graduation cohort of degree recipients.

Afr Amer	211	6.2%
Asian	786	23.2%
Hispanic	484	14.3%
Caucasian	1668	49.3%
Other	234	6.9%
	<u>3383</u>	<u>100.0%</u>

CBA	645	18.8%
Education	49	1.4%
Engineering	319	9.3%
A & A	220	6.4%
LAS	1796	52.3%
Nursing	170	5.0%
AHS	204	5.9%
CUPPA	28	0.8%
	<u>3431</u>	<u>100.0%</u>

Understanding characteristics and enrollment patterns of these students who were successful in their quest for a degree may provide information to better define characteristics of these students as a guide for future students. A first level of analysis is to note how these students came to UIC -- just over half of the students (52%) entered UIC as freshmen (48% entered as transfer students).

So, what do we learn from this cohort? The following pages provide an overview of selected characteristics of the students – disaggregated by type of entry – as a new freshman or as a transfer student.



Degree Recipients who initially entered as Freshmen:

Students who entered as freshmen represent 52% of the graduation cohort. The terms of initial entry for these students range from prior to Fall 2000 (22 students) to as recent as Fall 2007 (90 students); however, 89% entered between Fall 2004 and Fall 2006.

Time to Degree:

- 94% of those who entered as freshmen graduated within 6 years of entry
- 51% graduated within 4 years of entry

- Of the graduates who entered as freshmen and graduated within **four** years of entry:
 - 81% initially entered and graduated from the same college;
 - 15% started in LAS, and graduated from a different college;
 - 4% started in a college other than LAS, and graduated from LAS.

- Of the graduates who entered as freshmen and graduated within **six** years of entry:
 - 75% initially entered and graduated from the same college;
 - 17% started in LAS, and graduated from a different college;
 - 6% started in a college other than LAS, and graduated from LAS.

Of the students in the graduation cohort, who entered as new freshmen and graduated within six years of entry.:

- We find that the road to degree completion is sometimes bumpy – over 30% of the students who entered as freshmen were on academic probation at least one term. This figure (probation status at some point) is 21% for students who completed their degree within four years of entry.

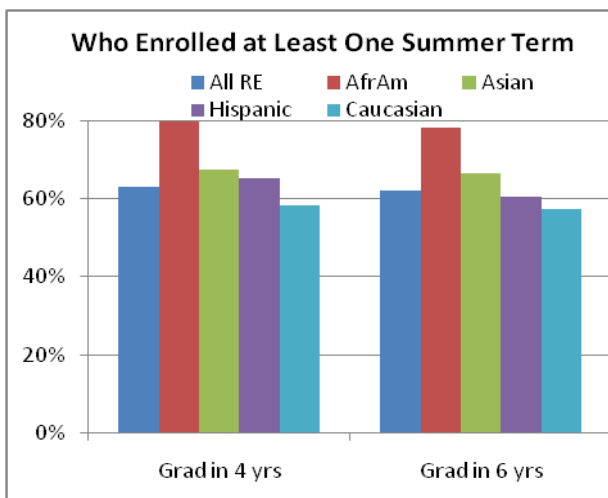
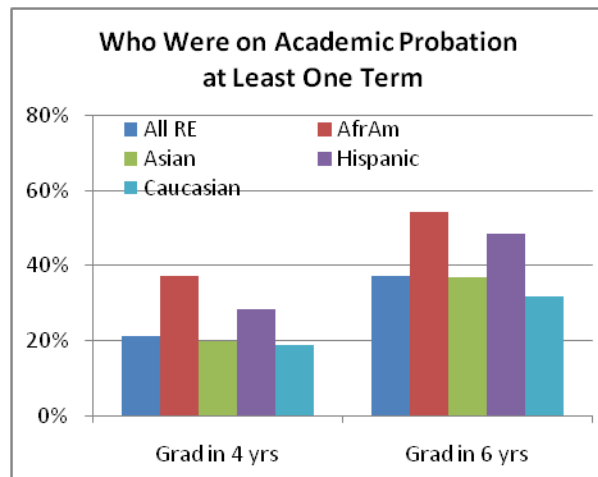
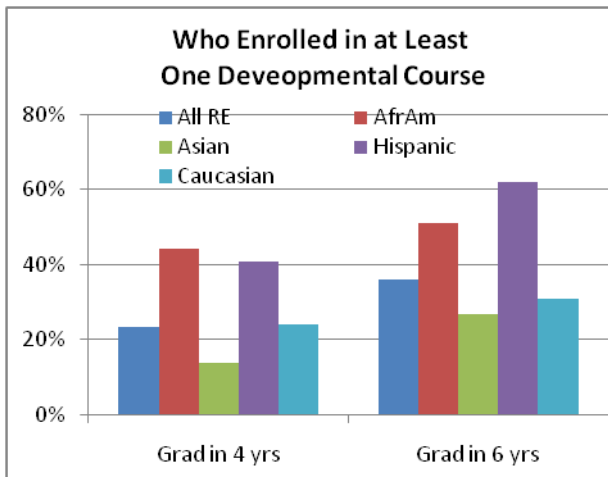
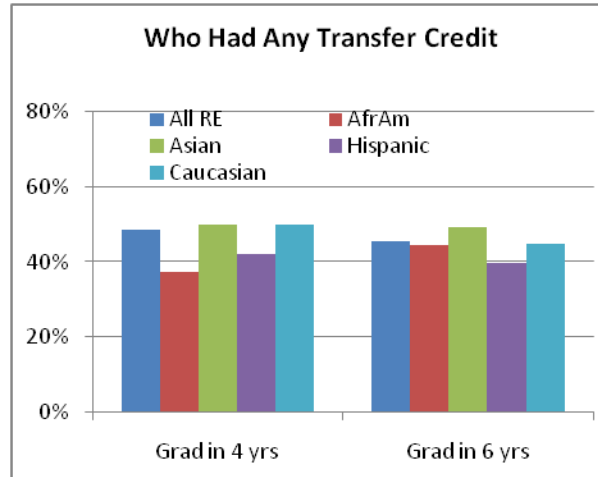
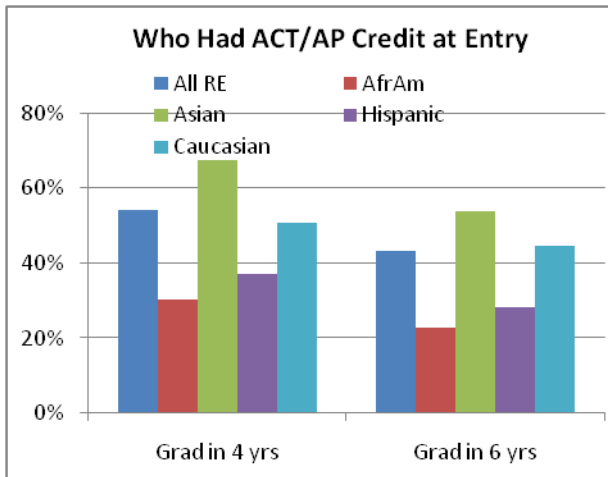
- The use of summer term appeared to be a tool to complete degrees in a timely fashion –63% of students who completed degrees within four years enrolled in at least one summer term. The figure is 62% for students who completed within six years of entry.

- Overall, over 40% of degree recipients had credit from AP (or ACT subscores) at point of entry as a freshman. This figure jumps to over 50% when looking just at students who completed in four years. It is interesting to note dramatic differences in this figure across racial/ethnic group a far greater proportion of Asians and Caucasians entering with credit than African American or Hispanic students. Of the students who had graduated within six years of entry, the proportion who had received college credit from AP or ACT scores was: 23% for African American students, 28% for Hispanic students, 45% for Caucasian students, and 54% for Asian students.

The graphs on the following page show the proportion of graduates who entered as freshmen and had ACT/AP credit; had any type of transfer credit, enrolled in at least one developmental course, were on academic probation at least one term, and enrolled in at least one summer term during their enrollment at UIC.

The table on page 4 provides more detailed information about these students with the average ACT scores at entry, GPAs upon degree completion, number of transfer credits, number of courses with a 'W', and number of terms on academic probation.

2009-2010 Graduates Who Entered as Freshman:



2009-2010 Graduation Cohort					
Only Students who Entered as Freshman (N=1754)					
	All RE	Afr Am	Asian	Hispanic	Caucasian
Average ACT Composite Score					
Grad in 4 Yrs	25.1	22.4	25.9	22.7	25.2
Grad in 6 Yrs	24.0	21.9	24.7	21.4	24.6
Average GPA at Graduation					
Grad in 4 Yrs	3.2	3.0	3.3	3.1	3.2
Grad in 6 Yrs	3.1	2.9	3.1	3.0	3.1
Average Number of Transfer Credits					
Grad in 4 Yrs	14.9	9.2	18.3	12.2	12.7
Grad in 6 Yrs	13.2	9.6	15.7	11.6	11.9
Average Number of Enrolled Terms					
Grad in 4 Yrs	8.7	9.2	7.7	8.8	8.6
Grad in 6 Yrs	9.6	10.4	9.5	10.2	9.4
Average Number of Courses with 'W'					
Grad in 4 Yrs	1.5	1.9	1.6	1.2	1.4
Grad in 6 Yrs	2.0	2.3	2.1	2.2	1.9
Average Number of Terms on Academic Probation					
Grad in 4 Yrs	1.6	2.0	1.4	1.8	1.6
Grad in 6 Yrs	2.1	2.3	2.1	2.2	2.0

Degree Recipients who initially entered as Transfer Students:

Students who entered as freshmen represent 48% of the graduation cohort. The terms of initial entry for these student range from prior to Fall 2000 (19 students) to as recent as Fall 2009 (6 students); however, 87% entered between Fall 2006 and Fall 2008.

Time to Degree:

- 95% of those who entered as freshmen graduated within 5 years of entry
- 74% graduated within 3 years of entry

Other characteristics of graduates who entered as transfer students:

→ The vast majority of students entered at sophomore (38%) or junior (43%) standing – the tendency to transfer at advanced standing is found across racial/ethnic groups .

	Fr/Soph	Jr/Sr
Afr Amer	31%	68%
Asian	42%	58%
Hispanic	45%	55%
Caucasian	43%	57%
All	42%	58%

- On average, the graduates who entered as transfer students transferred with 70 credit hours and earned another 75 credit hours at UIC.
- Additional characteristics are detailed in the table below.

	All RE	Afr Am	Asian	Hispanic	Caucasian
Average GPA at Graduation					
Entered at Fr/Soph Standing	3.1	2.9	3.1	3.1	3.2
Entered at Jr/Sr Standing	3.2	3.0	3.2	3.1	3.3
Average Number of Transfer Credits					
Entered at Fr/Soph Standing	54.8	52.8	54.5	53.3	54.9
Entered at Jr/Sr Standing	81.3	81.9	83.8	79.7	80.9
Average Number of Enrolled Terms (at UIC)					
Entered at Fr/Soph Standing	6.7	7.3	6.7	7.2	6.4
Entered at Jr/Sr Standing	6.0	6.7	6.1	6.5	5.8
Average Number of UIC Hours					
Entered at Fr/Soph Standing	80.6	85.5	82.2	83.2	79.4
Entered at Jr/Sr Standing	70.5	70.6	71.8	72.3	69.8
Average Number of Terms on Academic Probation					
Entered at Fr/Soph Standing	2.0	2.8	2.0	2.1	1.8
Entered at Jr/Sr Standing	2.4	2.9	2.6	2.9	2.0

Closing Thoughts

We know that a graduation cohort represents only a portion of the students who enrolled – the UIC six year graduation rate for new freshmen is about 54%. The five year graduation rate for transfer students is 71%. This analysis highlights characteristics of students who were successful in earning a degree – within a range of timelines. While the analysis of entry cohorts allow for a better understanding of the paths and enrollment patterns of both the students who are successful and those who are not, analysis of graduation cohorts can inform the work of campus enrollment management and retention efforts .