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

Assurance Evidence

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.

   The Plan for Improving Student Success. Beginning with the 2005-06 academic year, CSU’s Performance Contract with the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) set a six-year graduation goal of 63.6%. The University has exceeded that rate each year.

   ![Undergraduate Success Retention & Graduation Rates (FA06 FTFT Cohort)](chart)

   See data table for this chart.

   In 2006, CSU set specific goals for student success based on results of a task force study on the status of retention that was commissioned in response to CDHE requirements in our performance contract with the state. The resulting report, Plan for Excellence: Enhancing Undergraduate Education and Student Success (2006), reviewed national literature and best practices in the field, as well as new data on patterns of CSU student success, and made recommendations for improvements. The report proposed two goals: (1) at the point when all parts of the proposed retention/graduation plan were in place, the entering new freshman cohort would achieve a 70% six-year graduation rate, and (2) the graduation gap (the difference between the six-year graduation rate of minority students compared to that of nonminority students) would be eliminated, accounting for relevant student entering characteristics.

   In response to the report, the campus engaged in a comprehensive discussion and evaluation of the recommendations. The Provost/EVP appointed a Coordinating Committee on Undergraduate Student Success composed of campus leaders from Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Enrollment and Access with a charge of reviewing the recommendations and determining whether and how they should be implemented. Altogether, about 65 members of the campus community participated directly in these deliberations. The Coordinating Committee Report was subsequently presented to the Faculty Council and to the Board. At the end of this extensive deliberative process, a comprehensive plan, now known as the Student Success Initiatives (SSI) was developed and adopted. In this section of Component 4.C, we describe the goal-setting and specific strategic initiatives that were implemented to increase student persistence, graduation, and success. The second section highlights the ways the institution has improved its data collection and analytic systems to support this effort. The third section describes the ways CSU has demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement of SSI activities through data-informed decision-making.

   The SSI plan reflects the following characteristics:
   
   - The understanding that the quality of the undergraduate experience and the quality of
learning are the primary drivers of student retention and graduation.

- A comprehensive approach that includes multiple strategies designed to impact student learning and behavior in different ways and at different points in students’ undergraduate careers.
- Recognition that the diversity of the student population must be taken into account at the beginning of strategy development.
- The University’s commitment to sustained efforts over a multi-year period.
- Emphasis on the partnership between academic and student affairs that reflects the fact that student learning and development take place both in and outside the classroom.
- Attention to data to inform the plan, guide strategic adjustment and improvement, and assess accomplishments.

CSU recognizes that both the institution and its students must embrace change if goals for learning and success are to be fully achieved. In fact, SSI strategy is as much aimed at the behaviors, policies, procedures, and structures of the institution as it is on the expectations, behaviors and choices of students. The plan is founded on the premise that, when institutional culture and structure are most squarely aligned with our values for learning and student success, we will produce the most substantive and permanent change in both qualitative and quantitative outcomes related to retention and graduation. Several actions taken in relation to SSI reflect this emphasis on structure. For example:

- Accountability for accomplishment of the plan and increases in student success was jointly delegated to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs and the Vice President for Student Affairs.
- A new position of Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Special Advisor to the Provost for Retention (hereafter referred to as "the AVP for Retention") was created to facilitate the desired connections between Academic and Student Affairs, help lead SSI implementation, and coordinate the many different aspects of the SSI activities.
- Reconfiguration of the Committee of Assistant and Associate Deans into a new Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Affairs (ACUA) with the membership and purpose defined specifically to support the SSI. Leadership of ACUA by three co-chairs (Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs, Vice President for Student Affairs, and Vice President for Enrollment and Access) represents the cooperative and multifaceted character of SSI. The committee now operates with a number of subcommittees that are reflective of some of the functions of the SSI: Transfer Coordinating Subcommittee, Advising Subcommittee, Transitions Coordinating Subcommittee, and Undergraduate Affairs Data Analysis Subcommittee.

The goal of achieving a 70% six-year graduation rate was indeed ambitious. At the start, CSU was in the bottom quartile of its peer group for first-year retention, and at the top of the bottom third for six-year graduation rates (Plan for Excellence, p.80). At the same time, CSU was outperforming predictions based on the “quality” of its student population by six percentage points (Plan for Excellence, p. 77). Meanwhile, institutional peers achieving at or above the 70% level were receiving far more state financial support, and student quality indicators (ACT/SAT scores and class rank) suggested enrollment of students more likely to succeed than those of CSU. While CSU could not count on dramatic increases in state support and did not intend to retreat from its land-grant emphasis on access, we nevertheless committed to the 70% goal, believing that in the long-term, students are best served by the greater efforts and focus on learning and student success. The following graph demonstrates our success to date (Spring 2012).
Strategies within the plan were organized to correspond to a student’s path to and through the undergraduate experience at the University:

**PREPARING THE PIPELINE AND ASSURING ACCESS**

**PROMOTING SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS**

**ACADEMIC INITIATIVES: CURRICULUM**

**ACADEMIC INITIATIVES: ACADEMIC SUPPORT**

**Student success as a financial investment.** A 2006 estimate of the net annual tuition revenue increase that would result from increased retention of students could be as much as $8.6 million. The resource requirements of the program were estimated at an annual (base) amount of $3.8 million once the entire plan was in place. Within the plan, the greatest amount of resources were committed to the academic aspects of the plan, as shown in the chart below.

When first conceived, it was hoped that SSI would be fully funded over a relatively short period – perhaps three years. The downturn of the national economy and drastic tightening of state support made such rapid funding impossible. Nevertheless, the depth of institutional commitment has been apparent. New base funds have been allocated to SSI every single year, including the most difficult years of overall institutional financial reductions. A total of about $1.9 million in base funding had been allocated to the SSI through FY13, sufficient to implement about 50% of the original plan. Descriptions of progress and outcomes of the various initiatives are found in recent Progress Reports (February 2011; October 2012).
In Fall 2011, President Frank articulated new and even more ambitious goals as part of his CSU 2020 vision: 80% six-year graduation, 60% four-year graduation, and elimination of the difference between graduation rates of minority and nonminority students regardless of entering student characteristics. The University is now engaged in completing the most important parts of the original SSI plan while at the same time, evaluating the feasibility and considering strategies to implement the CSU 2020 vision.

**Preparing the pipeline and assuring access**

**Reach Out CSU.** The Reach Out program is providing early outreach to students in lower income communities and schools beginning in middle school. In its first year, the program involved about 1,500 middle and high school students in 23 schools, and 400 family members. Reach Out enlisted the time and resources of 79 undergraduate students, 76 secondary school faculty and staff, AmeriCorps VISTA personnel, and community volunteers. The program was named to the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll, the only Colorado institution to receive this national honor.

**Dream Project.** The Dream Project, a student-initiated and student-led program, was established to operate in partnership with two local high schools for the purposes of increasing underrepresented students’ level of information about college-going, expose them to campus and higher education opportunities, motivate them to prepare for and enter college, and develop a welcoming community for those who attend CSU. In carrying out program strategies, the program develops and employs the leadership skills of CSU undergraduates who are particularly committed to increasing access and success of students from underrepresented groups. In FY12, CSU students contributed 3,312 hours of service to students and schools through the project.

**Bridge Scholars Program.** With increased base funding, the Bridge Scholars Program, which provides intensive academic and transition support to first generation, low-income students, served an increased number of participants. Over the last five years, students completing the Bridge Scholars Program have persisted at the University at a rate of about 20% higher than the overall student population (see graph below).
Reconfiguring Financial Aid: Commitment-to-Colorado. Beginning in Fall 2010, the University implemented Commitment to Colorado as a financial aid program designed to encourage access by students from low- and moderate-income families (details in Component 3.D.1). An analysis of student retention for the 2010 cohort showed that in a year when tuition increased by a substantial amount, retention of low-income students actually increased, suggesting possible positive effects of Commitment to Colorado.

Assuring successful transitions
Community for Excellence (C4E). The Transitions Coordinating Subcommittee of ACUA, established in 2011, connected a number of pipeline, access, and scholarship and award programs to retention support, assuring a more effective hand-off between access and retention programs. The C4E program promotes a common set of experiences and expectations for students who enroll at CSU through pipeline and award programs with the objective of leveraging student behaviors associated with student success (for example: connection to staff mentors, connection to campus resources, familiarity with campus policies and procedures, engagement in a community of students with similar interests, monitoring of progress, and seeking and receiving early feedback). More than 900 underrepresented students are involved with C4E. Other campus programs that offer support services offices to students also use C4E's database to help ensure that each student has a primary point of support.

Augmenting Student Diversity Programs and Services’ Retention Capacity. A coordinator position in the Office of Vice President for Student Affairs now provides mentoring and support to students in the Denver Scholarship Foundation (DSF) Program. The position provides mentoring, monitoring of progress, and active outreach in support of those scholars. This position is parallel to those providing similar support to students in the Puksta Scholars, First Generation Award, and other scholarship and award programs. Students in the DSF Program were retained at 94% (Fall 2011 cohort), a rate higher than other CSU students and higher than any other DSF program in the state.

Transfer Transition. The participation of transfer students in Next Step Orientation increased from less than 50% to 90% (including both on-campus and online orientation experiences). A transfer mentoring program was established beginning in 2009 to provide outreach and support to new transfer students. A nonresidential learning community was designed and implemented for transfer students seeking admission to the controlled-admission business major.

Second-Year Initiatives. Second-year initiatives were formulated, beginning in 2009, to address the attrition of students in their second year, which accounts for the next-highest rate of attrition after the first year. While the first year accounts for 50% of all losses from attrition, the...
second year follows close behind with an additional 33% of all losses. A monthly electronic newsletter was developed to inform and engage second-year students. Second-year students, who tend to be less engaged in educationally purposeful activities than first-year students, were encouraged to participate in existing activities as well as activities specially tailored to sophomores. The Key Plus sophomore learning community was expanded. Key Plus students, who are highly diverse, persisted to the third year at rates 16 to 19 percentage points higher than those of other second-year students, despite lower Admission Index scores (a proxy measure for student preparedness). The Spring 2012 “Year 2 @ CSU” conference attracted 275 student participants and provided a combination of activities and support of varied intensity designed to influence students on the margin.

**Enriched Orientation Strategies.** Beginning in 2008, orientation was targeted as a critical factor for developing early student expectations for performance and connecting students to information and resources. Participation in orientation programs for new freshmen increased to 98% and for new transfers to 90%. The Orientation and Transitions Office involved 420 students in First-Year Mentoring Groups. Participation in the Mentoring Groups was associated with higher retention compared to non-participants.

**Early Warning, Early Grade Feedback, and Intervention Systems.** The Taking Stock at Mid-Semester Program involved 94% of on-campus students in Fall 2012. Students completed a self-assessment and met with residence hall staff for feedback and connection to campus support services and enrichment resources. Meanwhile, faculty in more than 200 course sections provided early grade feedback information for more than 8,000 students, allowing outreach and intervention with students whose early performance was below standard. In addition to outreach and intervention by advisors and residence hall staff, a “U Turn” event provided the opportunity for about 300 students to develop plans for academic improvement and connection with campus support services. New efforts are ongoing to develop information- and technologically-based systems that will allow monitoring of students’ progress and intervention throughout students’ careers.

**Academic initiatives: curriculum**

**Expansion of Residential Learning Communities (RLCs).** Participation in RLCs increased to 38% of first-year students by Fall 2012. Students in RLC’s were retained at higher rates with higher GPAs in the first year, as compared to students who did not participate. Students in the most comprehensive communities (Key Communities) were also retained at higher rates with higher GPAs and evidenced higher levels of engagement in learning despite lower average levels of preparation and substantially higher diversity (minority, low-income, and first generation backgrounds) than other first-year University students.

**Course redesign.** With SSI support, The Institute for Learning and Teaching (TILT) has engaged faculty in redesigning approximately 130 courses, starting in 2007 through Fall 2011, to increase student engagement and learning. The course redesign initiative provides financial and expert pedagogical design support for faculty and departments in efforts to structure courses in ways that encourage active and experiential learning and produce better learning outcomes.

**Academic initiatives: academic support**

**Academic Support Coordinators.** The Academic Support Coordinator role provides advising support to emphasize transition and major exploration in students’ first two years, while providing active outreach and data-informed interventions. The University has provided support for the creation of 20 such coordinators in academic departments with a goal of funding 40 positions over the next 2-3 years. This SSI program was designed to substantially change and augment the ways academic guidance and student development support are provided in the context of academic programs of study.

**Advising and Intervention with Undeclared Students.** Undeclared students historically have the highest attrition rates and highest rates of academic probation. Through a variety of intervention strategies at the Center for Advising and Student Achievement (CASA), the retention gap between undeclared and declared students narrowed to 2 percentage points, while the probation rate gap narrowed from 6.8 percentage points for the Fall 2006 cohort to 0 percentage points for the Fall 2011 cohort. As a result of intentional outreach and intervention, the proportion of undeclared students who declare majors by the time they earn 45 credits

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*Colorado State University*
In 2012, Analysis of major changing behaviors as they relate to program completion and time to
56% of seniors worked on a research project with a faculty member. Of seniors participated in study abroad.
Of seniors rated their entire educational experience as good or excellent.
Institutional Commitment to Student Learning and Success

In support of the next level of student success goals, several efforts are already underway:
Sources

- Strategic Interventions with Particular Populations. As part of the SSI Plan, a new position within CASA, called the Collegiate Success Coordinator, was created in 2007 with a focus on using data to identify opportunities for strategic interventions. Some examples of interventions initiated and/or coordinated by the Collegiate Success Coordinator that were informed by data analysis include (see the CASA Annual report for details):

  * Assisting students who leave the University with 90 or more credits in good academic standing to return and complete degrees (Ram Grad Program);
  * Interventions with students earning low first-term GPA’s;
  * Interventions with students on academic probation with nine or fewer quality point deficiencies (Project Success);
  * Interventions with students evidencing precipitous single-semester GPA drop;
  * Assisting students who fail to register for classes by priority dates;
  * Assisting students who plan to leave the University for a period of time by providing an easier pathway for their return (Planned Leave Policy);
  * Interventions with students with dismissal appeals approved by the Scholastic Standards Committee;
  * Interventions with students who are re-admitted to the University on academic probation;
  * Interventions with undeclared students on academic probation (PEAK Program); and
  * Assisting students with foster care backgrounds (Fostering Success Program), among others.

2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs.

CSU recognizes the importance of collecting and analyzing information related to student retention, persistence, and program completion. Beginning in 2009, the Office of Institutional Research (IR) completed development of a retention database that provides increased accuracy, flexibility, and efficiency in reporting student success. This development (1) enhanced the analysis of cohorts beyond the measures recommended for Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data, (2) increased collaboration between the Director of IR and the AVP for Retention, and (3) integrated student success data into the online dynamic reporting tool for IR.

Going beyond the first-time, full-time freshman cohort, we now report annually to the campus on student success by a variety of demographic cohorts including by race/ethnicity, minority status, college, department, Pell Grant recipient status, first-generation status, gender, academic preparedness, residency, STEM major status, application type, and full-time/part-time status. In addition to these reports, the latest advancement in the presentation of data is the IR-Interactive tool which was developed to allow the end user to dynamically access official data online with hopes of better informing campus dialogues.

There have been several special projects led by the AVP for Retention. Examples, in brief, include but are not limited to:

  * Participation in Access to Success, a project of the National Association of System Heads (NASH) and The Education Trust.
  * A variety of gap analyses including both main and interaction effects.
  * Leading indicators of student success (demographics, 30+ credits in the first year, composition and mathematics foundational courses in the first year, unsuccessful course completion, etc.).
• Comparative analysis of student success for participants in Key Communities and other high impact programs to the general student body.
• Analysis of outstanding balances (debts) for non-matriculating students.
• Analysis of student performance in high-risk courses, and effects on student persistence and graduation.
• Analysis of probation students' course taking patterns and matriculation.
• Development of a Student Success Milestone tool to allow faculty/staff to assess progress toward retention goals.
• Identification of students who experience a precipitous GPA drop (defined as nine quality points or more) to receive intervention services as needed.
• Analysis of major changing behaviors as they relate to program completion and time to completion.
• Analysis of the factors of GPA and credit completion as early (first-term and first-year) predictors of retention and graduation success.

The collaboration of Institutional Research with student success efforts is pervasive and increasingly structural:

• The Director of Institutional Research and the AVP for Retention meet monthly to discuss and plan data projects related to student success, and they co-chair the Undergraduate Affairs Data Analysis Subcommittee of ACUA.
• The Director of Institutional Research has been named a permanent member of ACUA.
• The Director of Institutional Research is also a member of the Course Capacity Committee, a group composed to assure the institutional capacity to meet demand for courses in order to facilitate students’ efficient course-taking and progress to degree.
• The Office of Institutional Research has created a Learning Research Analyst position that will apply current learning/cognition, development theory to provide research design and analysis support to student learning and success on campus.

3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
Prior to the adoption of the SSI, first-year retention rates had been essentially flat for decades. Six-year graduation rates had risen during a period of increasing student preparation levels (cohorts entering between 1990-1994 and graduating between 1996-2000), but had since plateaued.

We have concluded that two of the adjustments that institutions commonly use to improve retention and graduation rates are not available to us: (1) correcting a glaring problem that affects student progress, and (2) altering the nature of the student population. As a land-grant institution, CSU remains committed to the principle of access by students of talent and motivation, so making dramatic changes to admissions requirements in order to change the profile of students is not the best means to improving student success. Research has not revealed glaring problems in CSU’s policies or procedures for which changes would produce sudden upward rate increases; indeed, CSU has been shown to already be outperforming its predicted graduation rate (Plan for Excellence, p. 77). The institutional strategy, then, is to make steady progress in improving policies and practices that produce greater student engagement in learning so that when all phases of the SSI are implemented, the cumulative effect will be evident in increases in graduation rates and efficiency in time to graduation. Although the SSI measures are still new, there is already evidence of improved outcomes.

As described in the prior section (4.C.2), CSU enhanced its data analytic methods, connected the data more closely to the student success effort, and produced analyses that are increasingly actionable. Responsiveness to the implications of data has been one of the most important institutional changes associated with the SSI. Some examples help to illustrate the ways data have been used to inform institutional action. These examples are intended to be illustrative and not exhaustive.
In 2012, 94% of seniors spent at least 6 hours per week participating in community service or volunteer work. Steady and steep rise in probation rates from Fall 2001 to 56%, Group Learning Experiences. 74% of students who do not attend orientation participate in some form of University orientation perform poorly with respect to the retention. There are not apparent differences in prior preparation between the two groups. A powerful statistical relationship was discovered between completion of foundational math and composition and 30 or more credits in students’ first year. Initiatives undertaken to develop awareness of this relationship by students, parents, faculty, and staff, with particular focus on academic advisors; course capacity was increased in C010 courses with the addition of 30 new sections. Fall 2012 results show sharp increase in completion of foundational math and composition.

Retention. Coinciding with the implementation of the first SSI activities in 2006-07, first-year student retention (measured as the return of cohort members to the second fall) has reached historic high points in two of the last three years. (The exception was for the Fall 2010 cohort, probably a result of that cohort experiencing a 22% cost increase, resulting from the combination of tuition rate increase and closure of the credit-hour gap). The retention rate improvement has occurred during years when CSU has also achieved its historic high rates for enrollment in three population categories: nonresident students, minority students, and low-income students, populations that are traditionally retained at substantially lower rates than other students.
First-year student probation rates. First-term GPA has been shown in logistic regression analyses to be strongly associated with student retention and graduation (Factors in Student Success, Part I, 2007). The rates at which first-year students are placed on academic probation at the end of their first term rose dramatically from 14% in Fall 2000 to 20% in Fall 2007. Coinciding with the implementation of SSI strategies beginning in FY07, including several aimed at improved student orientation, advising, early feedback, early intervention, and academic support, probation rates have declined from 20% (2007) to 14% (2012).

Minority graduation gap. One of the two goals of the SSI was to eliminate the graduation gap between minority and non-minority students accounting for differences in entering student preparation levels. Regression analysis by the Office of Institutional Research (November 2010) showed that accounting for entering preparation (using the Admissions Index as a proxy for prior preparation), there is no significant difference in graduation probability. The goal has been met.
Transfer retention. The SSI plan identified transfer-student support as an area needing focused attention. As part of the SSI effort, the University has initiated a Transfer Center for prospective and entering transfer students, enriched transfer orientation, and established a transfer mentoring program and a small transfer nonresidential learning community. While transfer retention phenomena are more difficult to assess, given the greater variety of factors connected with transfer students (range of credits transferred in, differences in prior two-year or four-year institutional experience), the rate of return of transfer students to their second year increased to an historic high for the cohort entering in Fall 2009. Although the rates for the last two cohorts have not been sustained at that level, rates are still higher than previously observed.

First-Year Retention for Transfer Students (All transfers entering fall)

Nonresident retention. Nonresident students are one of the groups at high risk for attrition. The rate of retention for nonresidents (returning to the second year), however, is trending upward, and the gap between nonresident students and all students has closed from 7.3 percentage points (FA07) to only 1.2 percentage points in FA11 (compare the following chart to the First-Year Retention chart -- third chart above).
Persistence beyond the first year for new freshmen. Data in the SSI plan highlighted the importance of the retention of students who enter as new freshmen to their third year. Of those who will leave from a given cohort, about half will leave before their return to their second year, but an additional third will leave before their third year. This awareness produced recommendations in the original report and implementation of SSI initiatives aimed at increasing student retention to the third year, including expansion of the Key Plus sophomore learning community, Second Year @ CSU Conference and activities, academic support coordinator strategies, efforts with undeclared student major declaration, and more. Data show that recent cohorts are persisting at higher rates. These higher persistence rates promise increased four-year graduation rates, with higher overall six-year graduation rates also possible.

Student engagement in learning. Fundamental to the approach of the SSI is the notion that student engagement in learning drives the likelihood of retention and graduation. Strategies associated with SSI, therefore, are aimed at increasing engagement. The NSSE, described in Component 4.B.2 in detail, offers a measure of institutional progress in engaging students in learning. NSSE scores for CSU freshmen and seniors showed substantial increases over the 2007-2012 period, coinciding with the implementation of a significant portion of the SSI. The gains were most impressive for first-year students.
Continuing Challenges. While the indicators reviewed above show a pattern of increasing student success, challenges are evident as well. Some of the greatest challenges are those of narrowing and eliminating gaps between the rates of graduation for underrepresented students as compared to other students. Institutional studies (Factors in Student Success, Part 1, 2007; IR Regression Study August 2012) have shown that, controlling for other factors, first-generation and family income (using Pell eligibility as proxy) status are strongly related to student success. While there is a downward trend in the gap for students receiving Pell, the gap for first-generation students has persisted (see charts below). As the planning to meet the President’s CSU 2020 student success goals proceeds, attention to gaps in these two areas will be particularly important.

The Student Success Effort: Looking Ahead
The SSI is playing an important part in the life of the University. Not only is it helping to produce positive retention and graduation outcomes, it is focusing our attention on learning and the quality of the undergraduate experience. Indeed, the focus on learning that is at the core of the SSI has helped it become a major driver of educational quality improvement.

President Frank’s new and higher CSU 2020 goals of (1) achieving a six-year graduation rate of 80% and a four-year rate of 60%, and (2) eliminating the absolute graduation gap between minority and nonminority students by for 2020 for the University’s 150th birthday will require even greater focus and attention to the quality of the learning experience. One might expect that goal achievement will not just be accompanied by, but driven by enrichment of curricular and co-curricular design to produce higher quality learning. This new vision will certainly challenge the creativity and dedication of faculty, staff, and students in ways that can only improve the educational quality of all programs.

In support of the next level of student success goals, several efforts are already underway:

- Access to Success Initiative (A2S). In Fall 2011, the CSU System joined the national A2S Initiative, sponsored by the National Association of System Heads (NASH) and the Education
In 2012, 66% of seniors spent at least 6 hours per week preparing for class.

Of seniors, 96% rated their entire educational experience as good or excellent.

Retention.

Attrition of students and not exhaustive.

Probation rates and not exhaustive.

First year.

Second year (32%)

Interventions with students who are re-admitted to the University on academic probation;

Interventions with students evidencing precipitous single-semester GPA drop;

Assisting students who leave the University with 90 or more credits in good academic standing.

PhD Completion

The institutional focus on student success is not exclusive to the undergraduate experience. The Graduate School shares these values as evidenced by completion rates that exceed those of
other research institutions. Overall at CSU, as illustrated in the table below, 60.9% of students admitted to doctoral programs complete their program of study within 10 years. However, behind these overall rates, there is significant variation by college. Ten-year completion rates range from 71.4% in Agricultural Sciences to 54.3% in the Humanities to 48.6% in Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. The average completion rates in all STEM fields combined is noticeably higher than that of non-STEM fields (reflecting national data). Program specific rates are available online and are used in the program review process. These results compare very favorably with results from 30 research universities with very high research activity (RU/VH). At the aggregate level, approximately 57% of the doctoral candidates at the participating institutions completed their degree programs within a 10-year time span. Ten-year completion rates range from about 63% for Engineering and Life Sciences to approximately 49% for Humanities.

### Ph.D. Completion Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civil Year</th>
<th>PhD Cohort</th>
<th>Withdrawn in Year</th>
<th>Withdrawn No Reasons</th>
<th>Abandoned</th>
<th>2-Year</th>
<th>3 Years</th>
<th>4 Years</th>
<th>5 Years</th>
<th>6 Years</th>
<th>7 Years</th>
<th>8 Years</th>
<th>9 Years</th>
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<th>10-YearRate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
<td>62.3%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
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<td>2007-08</td>
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<td>13.4%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
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<td>2008-09</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
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<td>64.9%</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
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<td>20.2%</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
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### Master’s Completion

With respect to completion of master's programs, 77% of students complete their program of study within six years as illustrated in the table below. In the past 10 years, this rate has increased by more than four percentage points and is on target for the FA08 cohort, which already has a five-year completion rate of 84.8%. Again, there are differences by college (available online) that are important in the program review process. There is very little comparative data available on completion rates for master's programs – about five national publications in the past 15 years have looked at completion rates for individual programs and universities or in specific majors. The Council of Graduate Schools* has conducted the only recent study that would provide a hint of what a national benchmark might be for master's degree completion rates in the US. Five universities reported data (4 public research universities and 1 master’s-focused institution). It appears we would be relatively safe in saying that the 6 year completion rate for students in master’s programs at Public Research Universities is about 73% (based on 20,010 students at three institutions).

### Masters Completion Rates

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<th>Cohort Year</th>
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<th>Wknd/avr</th>
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<th>5 Years</th>
<th>6 Years</th>
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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.)

The University has reviewed its methodology for reporting enrollment, retention, and graduation data and has made adjustments to better reflect the CDHE and IPEDS definition of an entering cohort. As a result, there may be small differences between figures reported here for prior years and those reported previously. Enrollment figures are those recorded at semester census dates.

**Sources**

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- Retention Study Fall 2012
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- The Science of Learning and CSU's 2020 Graduation Goals
- Undergraduate Success and Progress Rates FA06 Cohort (NSC data)