

Trustee Information Program



*Degree Progress of Fall 2000 and Fall 2001
Entrants after Four Years*

*Office of Institutional Research and Analysis
Robert Lynch, Director
Prepared by Arlene Blaylock, Senior Research Analyst*

Degree Progress of Fall 2000 and Fall 2001 Entrants After Four Years

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To what degree does a student progress or persist (continue to enroll in courses) toward a degree and/ or prepare for transfer to a four-year college or university after four years of entering Montgomery College?

A cohort analysis of first-time full- and part-time students who entered Montgomery College in the fall semesters of 2000 and 2001 and who attempted 18 credits within the first two years was conducted to answer that question. The criterion of attempting 18 hours over a two year period is viewed as an indication that a student is earnest about pursuing a goal, be it a degree or the eventual transfer to a senior college or university. In that sense, this will be referred to as degree progress. Then, four years after entry, what is the collective success of students that met the 18 credit hour criterion? Examining the success of students from this perspective has been adopted by the Maryland Higher Education Commission and currently represents four indicators (10, 11, 17 and 18) in the 2006 Performance Accountability Report.

Upon entry to Montgomery College, some students are prepared to take on challenging courses and others require developmental coursework that delays access to college level courses. The degree progress model examines the success of: (1) all students (2) students who entered the college academically prepared for college level work, (3) students who needed and completed all recommended developmental course work, and (4) students who needed but did not complete all of the recommended developmental courses.

Analysis of the data revealed that after four-years of entry, 48 to 49 percent of all students in the cohort groups had graduated from Montgomery College and/or transferred to senior colleges and universities within four years of entering Montgomery College. The data also revealed that students who entered the College without developmental needs were more likely to graduate and/or transfer than students who were assessed with developmental needs. Students who were in need of developmental course work were much more likely to graduate and/or transfer when they completed the developmental sequence compared to students who did not complete developmental course work. Data by race revealed that White and Asian students were much more likely to graduate and/or transfer within four years of entry than African-American and Hispanic students.

As an interim measure of success, an analysis was also conducted on the cohort groups who had completed 30 credits or more with a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.0. In addition, a smaller number of students who did not meet the above criteria but were still enrolled during the analysis period were included in the analysis. When these measures were taken into account along with the graduation/transfer rates, it revealed that almost 75 percent of the 2000 cohort and almost 72 percent of the 2001 cohort continued to persist toward their goal after four years of entry. The data further suggested that students who completed their developmental course work had as good a chance at being successful as students who attended MC ready for college level coursework, while those who did not complete their developmental coursework were much less likely to be successful or persistent toward their educational goal. Data by race/ethnicity also revealed differences in the success of students. Compared to all students in the 2000 and 2001 cohort groups, respectively, Hispanic or Latino students persisted (59.9 and 64.4 percent) at a lower rate than did other student groups (65.1 and 70 percent for African American or Black students; 75.3 and 76.4 percent for Asian students; and 68.9 and 74.3 percent for White students).

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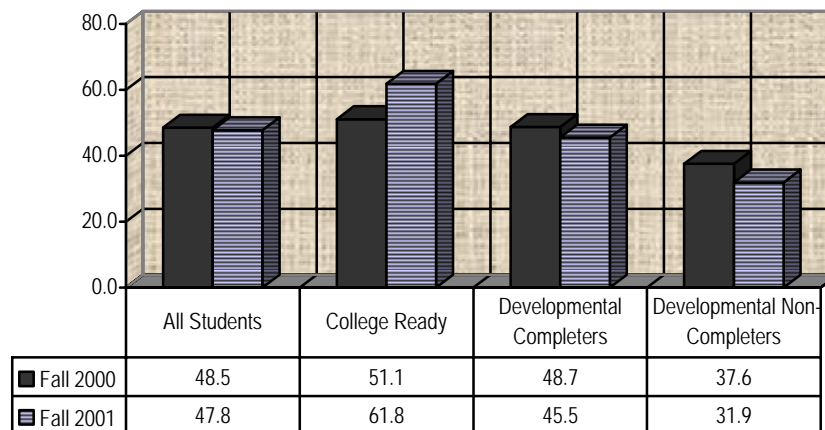
The reported success of community college students, assessed only by graduation and transfer rates, has been understated for many years; because the success of community college students goes well beyond those limited measures. Students attend Montgomery College for a multitude of reasons; and clearly, all students are not degree seeking. To obtain a more accurate measure, student success must be measured beyond the degree and transfer seeking perspective. A reasonable approach to assess the College on this measure is to examine persistence. In other words, to what degree does a student progress or persist (continue to enroll in courses) toward a degree and/ or prepare for transfer to a four-year college or university.

For the purpose of this report, a cohort analysis of first-time full- and part-time students who attempted 18 credits over two years is considered an indication of a student who is earnest about pursuing a degree or with a goal of eventually transferring to a senior college or university. In that sense, this will be referred to as degree progress. Then, four years after entry, what is the collective success of students that met the 18 credit hour criterion? This approach of examining students from this perspective has been adopted by the Maryland Higher Education Commission and currently represents four indicators (10, 11, 17 and 18) in the 2006 Performance Accountability Report.

Upon entry, students enroll at Montgomery College with a wide range of academic skills – some students enter well prepared to take on challenging courses, while others require developmental coursework that delays access to college level courses. With that in mind, the degree progress data examines the success of: (1) all students (2) students who entered the college academically prepared for college level work, (3) students who needed and completed all recommended developmental course work on which they were assessed, and (4) students who did not complete all of the recommended developmental courses on which they were assessed. A selective examination of the data is presented below.

Figure 1 (Indicator 11) shows that within four years of entry, 48 to 49 percent of all students in the cohort groups had graduated from Montgomery College and/or transferred to senior colleges and universities. When data were examined by degree of academic preparation prior to attending MC, the data clearly show that college ready students, those who entered the College without developmental needs, were more likely to graduate and/or transfer than students who were assessed with developmental needs. Students who were in need of developmental course work were much more likely to graduate and/or transfer when they completed the developmental sequence compared to students who did not complete developmental course work.

Figure 2: Graduated- transfer rate four years after entry



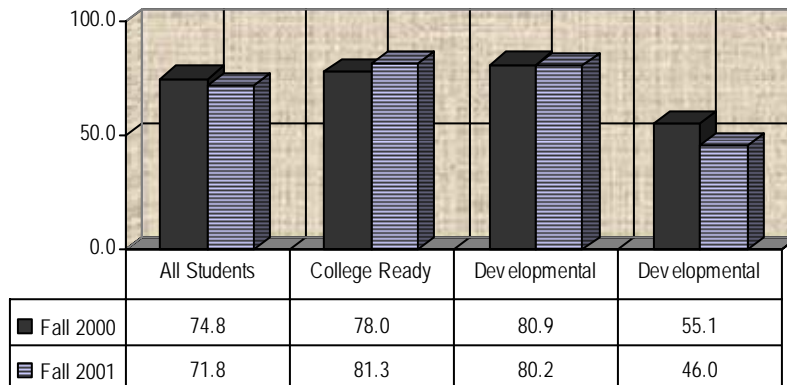
When data for all students were examined by race (Indicator 18), which included students with and without developmental needs, differences in success emerged. Table 1 shows that White and Asian students were much more likely to graduate and/or transfer within four years of entry than African-American and Hispanic students. The success of Hispanic students is particularly disturbing in that they were far less likely to graduate and/or transfer (36.4 to 38.1 percent) than other student groups (45.8 to 53.3) within four years of entry.

Table 1: Graduation/transfer rate after four by race/ethnicity

	African-American	Asian	Hispanic	White	All Students
Fall 2000	45.8	51.2	38.1	52.9	48.5
Fall 2001	46.1	53.3	36.4	51.6	47.8

However, not all students graduate or transfer within four years. Persistence denotes continuation on the path of success for a longer stretch of time beyond the four year mark. An interim measure of success is the completion of 30 credits or more with a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.0. This measure of success characterizes students who are persisting toward a goal in earnest. A smaller number of students who did not meet the above criteria but were still enrolled during the analysis period were also considered to be persisters. When these measures were taken into account along with the graduation/transfer rates (Figure 2), it reveals that almost 75 percent of the 2000 cohort and almost 72 percent of the 2001 cohort continued to persist toward their goal after four years of entry (Indicator 10). Figure 2 also shows that students who complete their developmental course work have as good a chance at being successful as students who attended MC ready for college level coursework, while those who did not complete their developmental coursework were much less likely to be successful or persistent toward their educational goal.

Figure 2: Successful-persister rate after four years



When data are disaggregated by race/ethnicity (Indicator 17), differences in the success of students emerge. Compared to all students in the 2000 and 2001 cohort groups, respectively, Hispanic or Latino students persisted (59.9 and 64.4 percent) at a lower rate than did other student groups (65.1 and 70 percent for African American or Black students; 75.3 and 76.4 percent for Asian students; and 68.9 and 74.3 percent for White students).

Table 2: Successful-persister rate after four years

	African-American	Asian	Hispanic	White	All Students
Fall 2000	65.1	75.3	59.9	68.9	74.8
Fall 2001	70.0	76.4	64.6	74.3	71.8

Discussion and Implications

One must take into account the many factors that impact students' success. For example, almost two thirds of students attend the College on a part-time basis. Many students must address developmental needs before they can move forward. The demands of employment and family responsibilities create obstacles to success for some students. In light of these factors, four years is not necessarily enough time for some students to complete their goal, and consequently, persistence beyond that four-year mark is not uncommon for many community college students.

Two years of data does not provide enough information to draw meaningful conclusions and it was difficult to set goals for these indicators in the Performance Accountability Report. However, the disparity in graduation, persistence and transfer rates between student groups should not be ignored and some commitment on the part of the College must be made to close the apparent performance gaps. Over the next four years, the College has set benchmarks for improvement in those rates for African American and Hispanic students. As stated in the 2006 Performance Accountability report, additional programmatic initiatives will be identified and implemented in an effort to achieve the goals that have been set for aforementioned performance measures. It has been four months since that statement was made: at this juncture, what has programmatic initiatives has the College identified for implementation to affect the success of future cohort groups?