

Trustee Information Program

Degree Progress of
Fall 2001 and Fall 2002
Four Years after Entering Montgomery College



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Degree Progress of Fall 2001 and Fall 2002 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 2001 and 2002 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 2007 Performance Accountability Report (PAR).

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, 47 to 48 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; and this conclusion was true across all areas of academic preparedness.

Within the scope of degree progress, an interim measure of success is the completion of 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 72 percent of the 2001 cohort and almost 73 percent of the 2002 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 Montgomery College 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 2001 and 2002 cohort groups, respectively, Hispanic students persisted at a much lower rate than did other student groups.

In light of the disparity in performance by race/ethnicity, the College needs to identify, articulate and implement programmatic initiatives and take proactive steps to improve the performance of ethnic minority students in future cohort groups.

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 PAR indicators. 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 three years, the College has set benchmarks for improvement in those rates for African American and Hispanic students.

The most recent graduation/transfer data showed that the College's performance was below the established benchmark. Data by race revealed that the performance of African-American and Hispanic students lagged well below the established goals. The rate for Asian students was one percentage point below the goal, while white students slightly exceeded the benchmarks. When the data on graduation/transfer rates according to academic preparedness were examined for all students collectively, college ready students were the only group that achieved the college's performance goals, while developmental completers, developmental non-completers and all students in general were below the established goals.

Table A: Fall 2002 Cohort
Graduation/transfer rate after four years by race/ethnicity and academic preparedness

	College Ready		Developmental Completers		Developmental Non-Completers		All Students	
	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal
All Students	61.5	62.0%	43.4	49.0%	29.0	38.0%	46.9	49.0%
African-American	56.2		39.2		35.3		42.4	49.0%
Asian	71.7		46.2		30.8		52.0	53.0%
Hispanic	51.2		37.2		14.0		35.3	45.0%
White	63.1		50.1		29.9		53.2	53.0%

The results on the persistence rate were fairly consistent with the results of the above analysis.

Table B: Fall 2002 Cohort
Rate of Persistence after four years by race/ethnicity and academic preparedness

	College Ready		Developmental Completers		Developmental Non-Completers		All Students	
	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual	Goal
All Students	82.3	81.0%	77.8	81.0%	48.6	55%	73.0	75.0%
African-American	79.6		74.3		48.4		68.4	73.0%
Asian	90.1		86.4		50.5		80.1	76.0%
Hispanic	72.0		75.3		35.1		64.5	70.0%
White	83.5		78.4		56.5		77.2	74.0%

As stated in the 2006 and 2007 Performance Accountability reports, additional programmatic initiatives need to be identified and implemented in an effort to achieve the goals that have been set for these performance measures. It has been a year since such efforts were to be established.

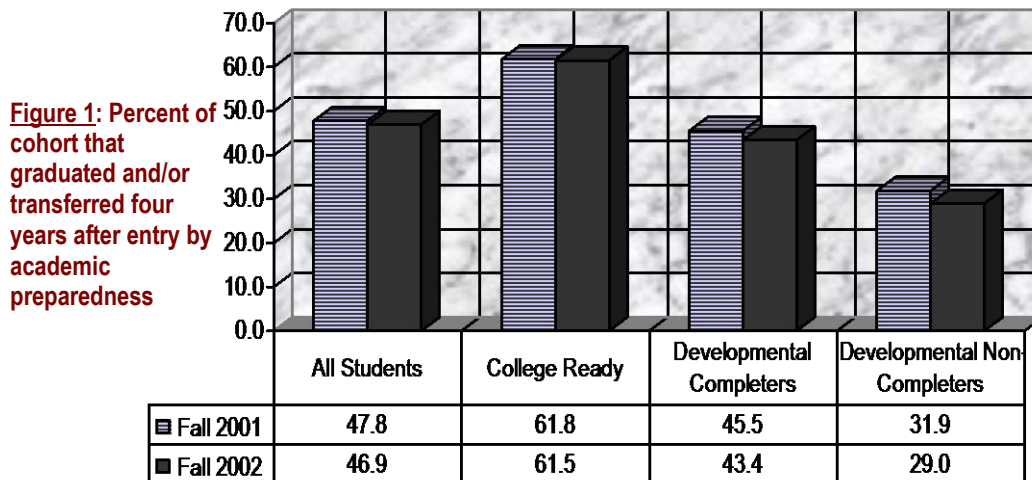
Degree Progress of Fall 2001 and Fall 2002 Entrants After Four Years

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 such limited measures. Students attend Montgomery College for a multitude of reasons; and clearly, all students attending Montgomery College are not seeking a degree. Therefore, student success must be measured beyond the degree and transfer seeking perspective. A reasonable question, whereby the answer might well corresponds to a reasonable or more accurate measure of student success is: *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?*

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 and/or preparing for transfer to a senior college or university. Then, four years after entry, what is the collective success of students that meet the 18 credit hour criterion? The answer to this question, for the purpose of this report, is determined to be a measure of degree progress. Examining student success from this perspective has been adopted by the Maryland Higher Education Commission and currently represents four indicators (10, 11, 17 and 18) in the 2007 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 on two cohort groups is presented below.

Graduation/Transfer Success: Figure 1 (Indicator 11 on PAR) shows that after four-years of entry, 47 to 48 percent of all students in the cohort groups had graduated from Montgomery College and/or transferred to senior colleges and universities. (See Table 1 for raw numbers.) When data were examined by degree of



academic preparation upon entry to Montgomery College, the data clearly revealed that college ready students, those who entered the College academically prepared for college level work, 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 that addressed their academic deficiencies compared to students

who did not complete developmental course work. The disparity in success between college ready students and students assessed with developmental needs was particularly apparent among developmental non-completers, where the disproportion in success of students that graduated and/or transferred within four years was as much as 32.5 percentage points for the fall 2002 cohort.

Table 1: Number of Graduates/transfers after four of entry

	All Students	College Ready	Developmental Completers	Developmental Non Completers
Fall 2001	1,285	591	474	220
Fall 2002	1,292	627	488	177

When data for all students in the fall 2001 and 2002 cohorts were examined by race (**Indicator 18 on PAR**), which included students with and without developmental needs, differences in success become apparent. Table 2 shows that white and Asian students, in general, 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 (35.3 to 36.4 percent) than other student groups (42.4 to 53.3) within four years of entry. With the exception of white students, it was further noted that the 2002 cohort group was slightly less successful than its 2001 counterparts, especially among African American students. The success of white students was slightly higher.

Table 2: Graduation/transfer rate after four by race/ethnicity

	African-American		Asian		Hispanic		White		All Students	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Fall 2001	46.1	367	53.3	235	36.4	151	51.6	532	47.8	1,285
Fall 2002	42.4	336	52.0	222	35.3	163	53.2	569	46.9	1,292

A selected analysis of data for the fall 2002 cohort by race and academic preparedness (Table 3) provides another perspective or view on student success. The data revealed that regardless of race, students who enrolled at Montgomery College academically prepared for the rigors of college level course work had a much higher graduate and/or transfer rate within four years of entry than students assessed with developmental needs. Asian and white students who were college ready when they enrolled or had addressed their academic deficiencies by completing developmental course work had greater success than African-American and Hispanic students in the same categories. It was noted also that white developmental completers had as good a chance of graduating and/or transferring four years after entry as did college ready Hispanic students. More than a third of the African-American students who did not complete developmental coursework successfully graduated and/or transferred within four years of entry, which is more than six percentage points higher than all developmental non-completers, in general, and almost two percentage points below Hispanic developmental completers.

**Table 3: Fall 2002 Cohort
Graduation/transfer rate after four years by race/ethnicity and academic preparedness**

	College Ready		Developmental Completers		Developmental Non-Completers		All Students	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
All Students	627	61.5	488	43.4	177	29.0	1,292	46.9
African-American	113	56.2	145	39.2	78	35.3	336	42.4
Asian	109	71.7	85	46.2	28	30.8	222	52.0
Hispanic	64	51.2	83	37.2	16	14.0	163	35.3
White	340	63.1	174	50.1	55	29.9	569	53.2

Persistence: Not all students graduate or transfer within four years, especially those who attend on a part-time basis. When students continue to enroll and take courses well beyond that magical four-year mark, it denotes continuation on the path of success. Therefore, and within the scope of degree progress, 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 in good academic standing and are continuing to persist toward their goals 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 and Table 4), it revealed that almost 72 percent of the 2001 cohort and 70 percent of the 2002 cohort continued to persist toward their goal after four years of entry (**Indicator 10 on PAR**). Figure 2 also shows that students who completed their developmental course work had as good a chance at being successful as students who attended Montgomery College ready for college level coursework, albeit the persistence rate for the 2002 cohort is slightly below the rate for their 2001 counterparts. Consistent with the graduate/transfer findings, those who did not complete their developmental coursework were much less likely to be persistent toward their educational goal.

Figure 2:
Percent of students that were successful persister after four years by academic preparedness

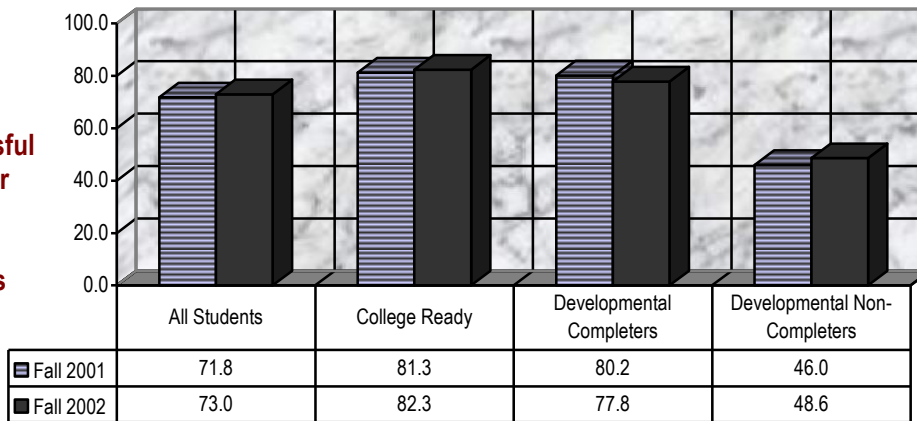


Table 4: Number of successful- persister after four years

	All Students	College Ready	Developmental Completers	Developmental Non Completers
Fall 2001	1,929	777	835	317
Fall 2002	2,011	839	875	297

When data are disaggregated by race/ethnicity (**Indicator 17**), differences in the success of students were quite apparent (Table 5). Compared to all students in the 2001 and 2002 cohort groups, respectively, Hispanic and African-American students persisted at lower rates; and the disparity in success as measured by persistence is more noteworthy when compared to their white and Asian counterparts, where as much as a 15 percentage point disparity was noted.

Table 5: Successful-persister rate after four years by race/ethnicity

	African-American		Asian		Hispanic		White		All Students	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Fall 2001	70.0	557	76.4	337	64.6	268	74.3	767	71.8	1,929
Fall 2002	68.4	542	80.1	342	64.5	298	77.2	826	73.0	2,011

A closer observation of the fall 2002 cohort by race and academic preparedness (Table 6) without a doubt revealed that regardless of race, students who enrolled at Montgomery College academically prepared for the rigors of college level course work were much more likely to stay enrolled and persist toward their academic goal within four-years of entering Montgomery College. It must be noted that students, who were assessed in need of and completed their developmental course work were almost as persistent as those who entered the College academically prepared – and this was apparent across all racial groups. Consistent with aforementioned success data, Asian and White students had a higher rate of persistence than other student groups in all levels of academic preparedness. However, Hispanic students were slightly more persistent than African-American students in the developmental completers category; and Hispanic and white students who completed their developmental course work had a higher persistence rate than Hispanic students who were college ready.

Table 6: 2002 Cohort
Successful persistence after four years by race/ethnicity and academic preparedness

	College Ready		Developmental Completers		Developmental Non-Completers		All Students	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
All Students	839	82.3	875	77.8	297	48.6	2011	73.0
African-American	160	79.6	275	74.3	107	48.4	542	68.4
Asian	137	90.1	159	86.4	46	50.5	342	80.1
Hispanic	90	72.0	168	75.3	40	35.1	298	64.5
White	450	83.5	272	78.4	104	56.5	826	77.2