Data Focus of the Month - December 2019

As you know, the Data Focus page this year has been examining various aspects of the student academic journey through a disaggregated lens in order to gauge how College efforts are making a difference. The series looks at the journey of new-to-college students who began in the fall of 2015 and considers their academic journey and key indicators as depicted in *Figure 1*. This month focuses on retention.
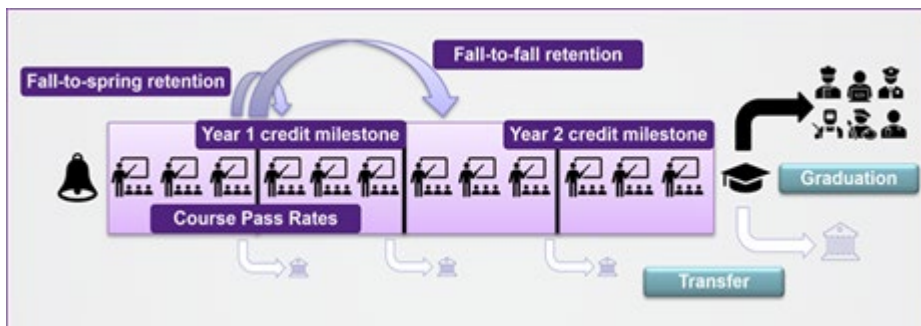

Figure 1. *The student academic journey, noting leading indicators in purple and final outcomes in green.*

Retention is a leading indicator of academic progress. For those students who leave school, explanations are varied: some students transfer, while others leave due to academic or financial barriers, or decide to pursue other endeavors. As the College works to increase completion, we will continue to focus on the very critical component of retention.

This summary provides a snapshot of first-year retention: fall to fall, and fall to spring. The focus is on the fall 2015 IPEDS cohort data, comprised of 1,998 new, first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students. The largest percentage of this cohort group was Hispanic, then Black, White and Asian (see *Figure 2*), with more male students (56 percent) than female students (42 percent).
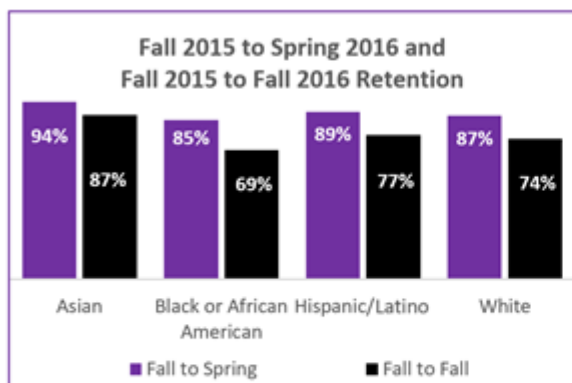

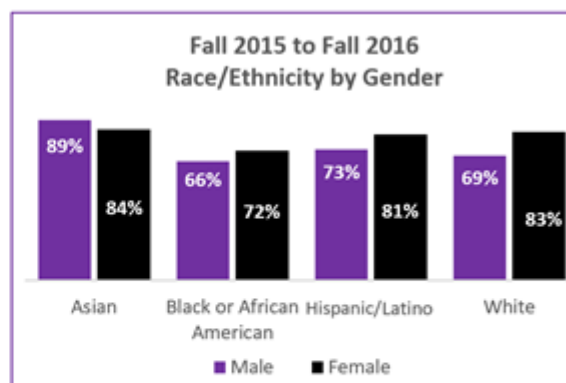**Figure 2.** *Fall 2015 cohort retention (a) fall to spring, and (b) fall to fall.*

Figure 3. *Fall 2015 cohort fall-to-fall retention by race and gender.*

Race/Ethnicity and Retention. Retention rates represent the percentage of the student cohort that entered the College in a particular fall semester and returned in the subsequent spring and/or fall semester. *Figure 2* shows that the vast majority of new students who entered the College in fall 2015, returned in spring 2016 with a two- to ten-point disparity among groups. Fall-to-fall rates are typically lower than fall-to-spring (see *Figure 2*).

Observations on Retention. Returning in the next fall semester is an important indicator of potential student completion. *Figure 3* shows that Asian students, in general, had a higher fall-to-fall retention rate than their counterparts. Black students returned at a lower rate than did other male and female students in other race/ethnic groups. Comparatively, Black male students had the lowest fall-to-fall retention rate.