

# Retention Rates Definitions

## Retention

Student retention is the re-enrollment of students from college matriculation through the completion of a college degree. Student retention cohorts may be defined in various ways, e.g., first-time full-time, first-time part-time, etc., and retention rate may be calculated in different ways, but the most common method is to monitor enrollment from the fall term of matriculation to successive fall terms.

## Freshmen

Freshmen include all regularly enrolled students who have earned fewer than 30 semester hours of academic credit.

## First-Time Freshmen

Students who enroll in college for the first time in the fall term of a given year (called the cohort year) constitute the first-time freshmen cohort. First-time freshmen include the following:

- A student who has earned no previous college credit hours;
- A student who has earned college credits while in high school through joint enrollment in college courses;
- A student who graduates from high school in the cohort year, then enrolls in a college for the first time that summer and also enrolls in the fall term of the cohort year. The summer and fall enrollments may be in different institutions.

These definitions follow those created by NCES for IPEDS reporting.

## Degree-Seeking Freshmen

Degree-seeking freshmen are those who declare the objective of obtaining a degree when they enroll for their first term in college. That includes students seeking less-than-one-year and one-year certificates, associate's degrees, and bachelor's degrees.

## Full-Time Freshmen

Full-time freshmen are those who are enrolled for 12 or more credit hours in their first fall term in college.

## Retention Rate Base Cohort

The base cohort for calculating undergraduate student retention rates includes all undergraduate, degree-seeking, first-time, full-time freshmen.

## First-Year Retention Rates

First-year retention rates are defined as the percentage of the student retention base cohort that is enrolled at the original or another USG institution in the next fall semester following the cohort fall term. Students who have completed a degree program in their first year of enrollment also are counted as retained. There are two types of rates:

- *System-Wide Rates.* Students who are enrolled at any USG institution in the fall semester one year after their matriculation are counted in the retention rate calculation.
- *Institution-Specific Rates.* Only students who are enrolled at the institution in which they matriculated in the fall semester one year after their matriculation are counted in the retention rate calculation.

## Gender

Gender is either male or female. Gender information is self-reported by the student at the time of application; however, it is not required information on the application. Institutions collect the information at registration if there is no information on the application. The category "unknown" is not allowed in USG reporting. If a student refuses to indicate gender, the institution makes a judgment.

## Race/Ethnicity

Race/ethnicity is categorized into one of the following six groups. Ethnicity, whether Hispanic or non-Hispanic, is considered one of the six categories. Thus, additional information on the race of Hispanic students is not provided.

*Black, Non-Hispanic*—A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa, except those of Hispanic origin.

*American Indian/Alaskan Native*—A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.

*Asian/Pacific Islander*—A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, or Pacific Islands. This includes people from China, Japan, Korea, the Philippine Islands, American Samoa, India, and Vietnam.

*Hispanic*—A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

*White, Non-Hispanic*—A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa or the Middle East, except those of Hispanic origin.

*Multi-racial*—A person in more than one of the above categories.

These definitions, except for Multi-racial, are consistent with NCES definitions. The addition of "multi-racial" as a racial/ethnic category is required by Georgia law.

Race/Ethnicity is self-reported by the student at the time of application; however, it is not required information on the application. Institutions collect the information at registration if there is no information on the application. The category "unknown" is not allowed in USG reporting. If a student refuses to indicate race, the institution makes a judgment and assigns the student to one of the six groups. If no information is available, the student is assigned to the majority race/ethnic group at the institution.

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