



# Measuring the Success of Community College Transfer Students

While the higher education institutions' student success are periodically evaluated for the first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students, an evaluation for the transfer students, especially the community college transfer students, is rare at the national or state level. Not including these students when measuring institutional performance drew severe criticisms over the years because of the incomplete picture it portrays. For UMass Boston, measuring the success of transfer students is crucial as more than half of our students were transfer students up until Fall 2016 (36 percent in Fall 2018), the majority of them coming from a community college. In 2018, UMass Boston participated in the Community College Transfer Survey by the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE) for two key reasons- 1) to measure, for the first time, the success of the students transferring in from community colleges and 2) to benchmark our performance against other peer institutions. This research brief presents the principal findings.

Degree-seeking students, both full-time and part-time, transferring in with at least 30 credits in fall semesters who attended only community colleges or two-year institutions prior to transferring in to UMass Boston are included in this study. Students who went to an institution other than a community college, for example, a 4-year institution prior to transferring in to UMass Boston were excluded, even if a community college were among the last five institutions he/she attended. Cohorts<sup>1</sup> of 2008 to 2016 were included in this study.

A total of 133 institutions participated in this survey voluntarily. Institutions were grouped for comparisons based on several institutional characteristics: selectivity, size, percent of part-time undergraduates, and Carnegie classifications. Please note that this report is intended for internal use only. The results are to be used to benchmark institutional retention and graduation efforts. This information may not be shared externally.

## Retention Rates

UMass Boston's 2-year retention rate is higher than the peer institutions.

Figure 1 presents the average 1-year and 2-year retention rates of UMass Boston community college transfer students compared to those of peers. UMass Boston's 1-year retention rate was 77 percent, same as the peer institutions with more than 20% part-time undergraduates but slightly less than the peers with 5,000 to 17,999 students (79%). However, UMass Boston's 2-year retention rate is higher (52%) than both peer groups.

Figure 1: 1-Year and 2-Year Retention Rates Comparison

	1-year	2-year
UMass Boston	77%	52%
<hr/>		
Peer Institutions		
5,000-17,999 Students	79%	48%
Above 20% Part-time	77%	50%

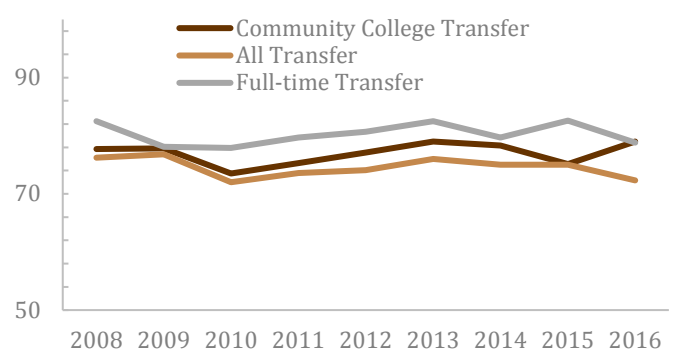
One-year and 2-year retention rates for both male and female UMass Boston students are nearly identical. The 2-year retention rate for female students (52%) is higher than our peers (48%). Black Students have a higher 1-year retention rate and Black, Hispanic, and Asian students have a higher 2-year retention rate than peers. Table 1 compares the retention rates of UMass Boston and peers by gender and ethnicity.

Table 1: Retention Rates Comparison by Gender and Ethnicity (in %)

	1-year		2-year	
	UMass Boston	All Peers	UMass Boston	All Peers
Gender				
Female	77	82	52	48
Male	78	83	52	54
Ethnicity				
Black	77	76	55	50
Hispanic	79	84	57	52
Asian	82	86	60	53
White	75	82	49	50
Nonresident Alien	84	85	39	47

At UMass Boston, in general, community college transfer students have higher average 1-year retention rates than all degree-seeking transfer students. However, they have a lower retention rate compared to the full-time transfer students (figure 2).

Figure 2: One-Year Retention Rate Comparison within UMass Boston Transfer Students

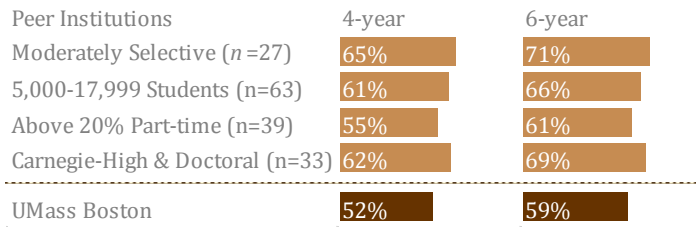


## Graduation Rates

UMass Boston's graduation rates are lower than the peer institutions.

On average, 4-year and 6-year graduation rates of community college transfer students at UMass Boston were 52 and 59 percent, consecutively, both lower than all peer groups. The average of moderately selective peer institutions' 4-year graduation rate was 65 percent and the 6-year rate was 71 percent. Figure 2 presents how UMass Boston's graduation rates for community college transfer students compare with those of all peer groups.

Figure 3: 4-Year and 6-Year Graduation Rates Comparison

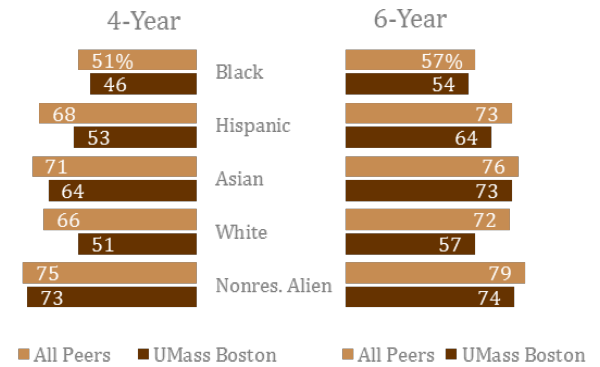


At the institutional level, females have higher 4-year and 6-year graduation rates than male students. Both female and male graduation rates are lower than the peer institutions (Table 2). Similarly, across all ethnic groups, UMass Boston's graduation rates are lower than the peer institutions (Figure 4).

Table 2: Graduation Rates Comparison by Gender (in %)

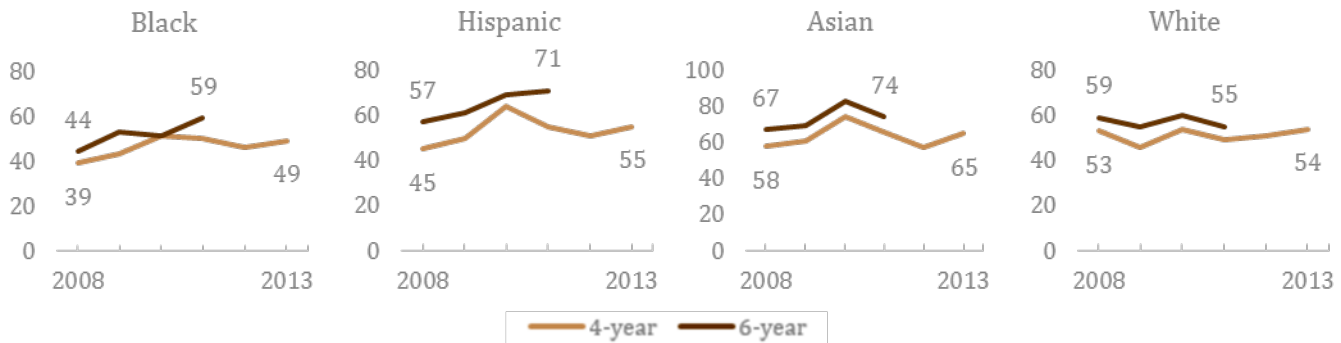
	4-year		6-year	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
UMass Boston	54	49	61	57
All Peers	67	64	72	70

Figure 4: Graduation Rates Comparison by Ethnicity



While the graduation rates were lower than peers, there has been an upward trend at the institutional level, for example, the 4-year graduation rate of 2013 cohort was 54 percent, up from 49 percent of 2008 cohort. Similarly, the 6-year graduation rate went up from 56 percent (2008 cohort) to 61 percent (2011 cohort). Figure 5 illustrates how the graduation rates increased over time among the ethnic groups.

Figure 5: Graduation Rate Trends at UMass Boston



Institutions with larger portions of transfer students and part-time students tend to have lower retention and graduation rates.<sup>2</sup> CSRDE community college transfer student survey results echo this traditional knowledge. While the retention and graduation rates of the community college transfer students are higher than the first-time freshmen, these student groups should not be compared as they are different in many aspects. This brief recommends the leadership team to consider these findings when making policies to increase student success rates of community college transfer students at UMass Boston.

This research brief is written by the OIRAP Research Analyst Fatema Binte Ahad.

<sup>1</sup> Cohort Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Headcount	431	474	535	535	585	587	613	578	542
Female	257	277	331	313	336	337	334	327	315
Black	103	104	74	108	126	123	139	127	125
Hispanic	42	56	39	51	86	88	95	75	86
Asian	55	49	57	53	54	75	49	60	46
White	193	244	292	211	231	190	202	193	187
Non-resident Aliens	10	9	12	13	9	8	24	21	23

<sup>2</sup> McLaughlin, G. W., McLaughlin, J. E., McLaughlin, J. S., Howard, R. D., & Whalen, S. (2016, June). Measuring the success of transfer students: A new metric evaluated. In *meeting of the Association for Institutional Research*. Retrieved April (Vol. 4, p. 2018).