

Topic in Brief

Graduation Rates for UC Berkeley Undergraduates

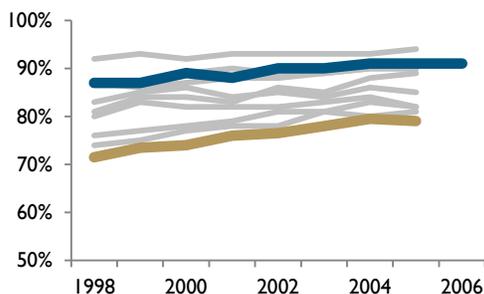
The 2013-14 Governor’s budget cited graduation rates as a key metric for the UC and CSU systems. At UC Berkeley, these rates have increased over time and continue to be among the highest of any public university.

In 2011-12, UC Berkeley awarded degrees to a record 7,315 undergraduates, each one bearing a story of hard work, commitment, and adversity overcome. Individually, these stories are inspiring; collectively, they form one of the great success stories of public higher education.

PEER COMPARISONS

Compared to our public and UC peer universities, UC Berkeley’s 6-year graduation rates for fall-entrant freshmen (the federal reporting standard) have in recent years been very high, exceeded only by the University of Virginia. Berkeley’s rate for the most recent cohort now stands at 91%, as our holistic admissions review process continues to provide a strong foundation for selecting a diverse group of students who have a high likelihood for academic success. In addition, compared to the other 107 institutions in Berkeley’s Carnegie Classification (Research Universities – Very High Research Activity), Berkeley well exceeds the median rate.

Graduation Rate Comparisons for Fall-Entrant Freshmen Cohorts

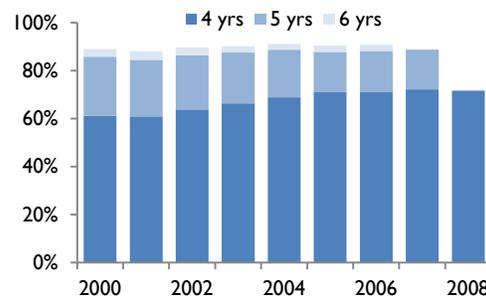


Blue: UC Berkeley; Gray: Public Peer Institutions;
Gold: Carnegie RU-VH Median Value

FALL-ENTRANT FRESHMEN

Each fall semester, UC Berkeley welcomes over 4,000 new freshmen, comprising about 57% of all new students in a typical annual entering cohort. Our five most recent 6-year graduation rates for these students have all been 90% or 91%.

Fall-Entrant Freshman Graduation Rates by Elapsed Time: 4, 5, and 6 Years

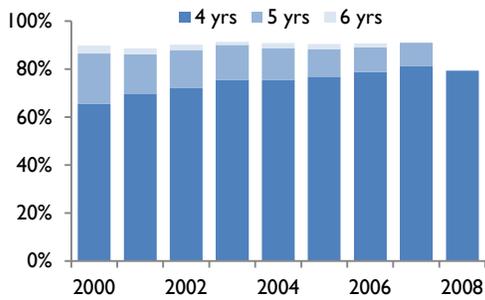


The California 2013-14 Governor’s Budget Summary (p. 36) cites 4-year graduation rates as a metric for both timely completion and cost to students, their families, and the state. It notes that “just 60 percent of students earn a degree in four years at UC.” UC Berkeley’s 4-year graduation rate, however, has exceeded 60% for a decade and now stands at 72% for the Fall 2008 cohort.

SPRING-ENTRANT FRESHMEN

Around 1,000 students (about 12% of each cohort) enter as freshmen in the spring semester. These students tend to graduate at a slightly higher rate than fall-entrant freshmen. For instance, the Spring 2007 cohort already has a graduation rate of over 92% after only five and a half years.

Spring-Entrant Freshman Graduation Rates by Elapsed Time: 4, 5, and 6 Years



In addition, spring-entrant freshmen have considerably higher 4-year graduation rates, now around 80%, than do freshmen who enter in a fall semester.

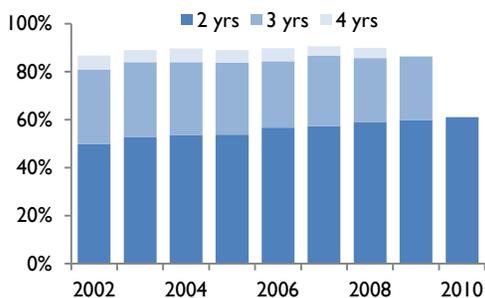
One contributor to that outcome is that about 70% of spring-entrant freshman currently participate in UC Berkeley Extension’s Fall Program for Freshmen (FPF), in which they take first-semester courses for UC Berkeley credit. These FPF students are also much more likely to graduate within six years than are spring entrants who are not in the FPF program.

In Recent Years, New Freshmen Entrants at UC Berkeley Have Graduated at Rates Exceeding 90%.

FALL-ENTRANT TRANSFERS

Over 2,000 transfer students enter in the fall semester, comprising over 25% of each annual cohort. For the Fall 2004 through the Fall 2008 cohorts, these students have 4-year graduation rates of 89% or 90%.

Fall-Entrant Transfer Graduation Rates by Elapsed Time: 2, 3, and 4 Years

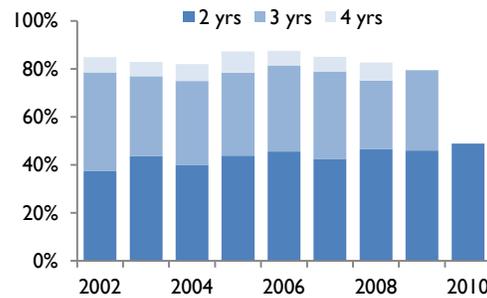


As shown in the chart, both 2-year and 3-year graduation rates for fall-entrant transfers have also grown over time, with the most recent 3-year rate topping 86%. The most recent 2-year rate, for the Fall 2010 transfer cohort, stands at 61%, an all-time high.

SPRING-ENTRANT TRANSFERS

Finally, a declining percentage (currently about 3%) of each entering cohort consists of spring transfer students. With fewer than 300 students, the graduation rates for this group tend to vary more than we see with the other groups, although the 4-year rates average 85% and the 2-year rates are generally rising slowly.

Spring-Entrant Transfer Graduation Rates by Elapsed Time: 2, 3, and 4 Years



Fall Transfer Entrants Graduate at Rates Equivalent to Freshmen Entrants, While Spring Transfers Have Slightly Lower Rates.

ADDITIONAL AREAS OF STUDY

As one of the university’s key metrics for academic excellence, graduation rates lend themselves to a variety of analyses that might prove interesting and useful. For example, using Cal Answers, we might look more closely at graduation rates by gender, ethnicity, residency, and other demographic categories. In addition, we could analyze possible reasons for both lower spring-entrant transfer graduation rates and higher Fall Program for Freshmen rates. Finally, various analyses of graduation rates will be integrated into Berkeley’s currently ongoing WASC accreditation process.