

Retention Rates Definitions

A retention rate is the percentage of students in a given cohort who are enrolled in a USG institution in a specified term (in this case, the same academic term one year later). The number of students in the cohort is the denominator of the rate; the number of students enrolled one year later is the numerator of the rate.

For retention rates, the definition of the cohort may vary according to the subject of interest; however, the most common cohorts studied are first-time/full-time, degree-seeking freshman students and all beginning freshman students. An example of a sub-cohort is first-time/full-time students who attended college in the fall after spring graduation from high school (traditional students).

Definitions are provided for the beginning student cohorts and for retention rate reports. The definitions used here are based on data elements from the University System of Georgia Academic Data Collection (ADC).

Degree-Seeking Freshmen

Degree-seeking freshmen are those who declare the objective of earning a certificate or 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.

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 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.

Freshmen

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

Full-Time Freshmen

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

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 categories. Ethnicity, whether Hispanic or non-Hispanic, is considered like a race for purposes of reporting.

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—A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian Subcontinent.

Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander--A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific islands.

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.

Two or More Races—A person in more than one of the above categories.

Race/Ethnicity is self-reported by the student at the time of application; however, it is not required information on the application. The category of "unknown" is used to report students whose racial/ethnic category is undeclared.