

SPOTLIGHT ON OU

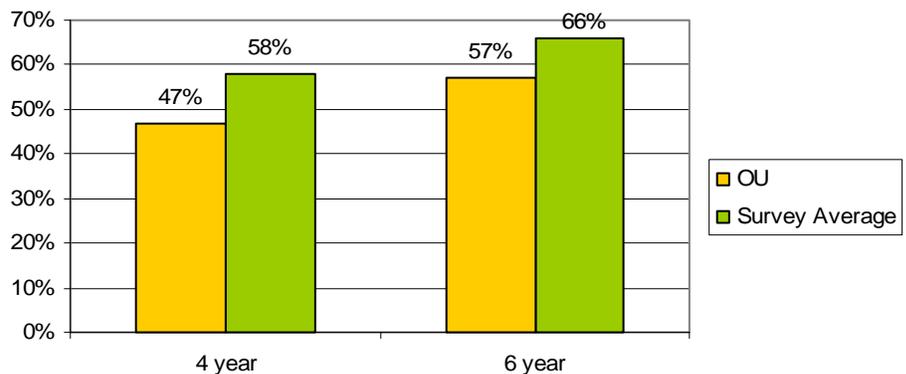
Community College Transfer Students' Retention and Graduation Rates 2005-06

Students who entered Oakland University (OU) as transfer students made up 41% of all undergraduates enrolled in fall 2006. This is lower than it was twelve years ago – about 50% - but it is still a substantial portion of Oakland’s undergraduate population. About 65% of the transfer students who entered this fall came from community colleges, 45% from Oakland Community College (OCC) and Macomb Community College (MCC) combined. Even though transferring from community colleges to 4-year schools is a major educational activity in this country, relatively little is known about how well these students do once they get to our campuses. Oakland University is a member of the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE), a voluntary data sharing consortium which has begun to address this lack of information. The fall 2004 CSRDE survey gathered data on 79,066 transfer students from 110 colleges and universities, including 478 at OU (See note on page 6 for more information about the survey).

The 2005-06 CSRDE Community College Transfer Report presented the aggregated retention and graduation rates of the 1998 to 2004 community college transfer cohorts. This paper presents some of the key findings of that study and compares the outcomes of OU’s community college transfer students to the national averages reported by CSRDE.

1. According to the CSRDE survey report, **“58% of community college transfers transferring in with a minimum of 30 credit hours**

Figure 1: Graduation Rate of Sophomore* Transfer Students



* Students transferring in >=30 credit hours

graduated within four years after first enrollment in the 4-year institution.” At OU, the average was 47%, 11% less than the survey average. At six years, the OU graduation rate had only reached 57%. To put this in some context, community college transfer students with at least 30 credit hours are at least sophomores, so the four year graduation rate might be compared to the five or six year rates for students who enter as full-time FTIACs, which average 34% and 45% respectively. At 47%, the OU 4-year graduation rate for all community college transfers (full and part-time) may be considered comparable to the 6-year FTIAC rates. Given that transfer students have had a minimum of one year of successful post-secondary experience, they might be expected to perform well at the transfer institution.

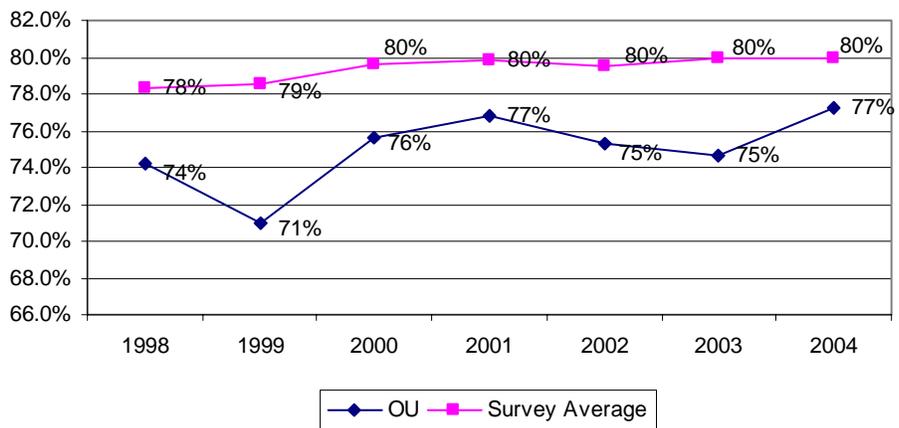
Looking specifically at transfers from OU’s primary feeder schools, students who transferred from MCC had higher rates of both retention and graduation than those from OCC. The first-year retention rate averaged 80% for MCC students, vs. 74% for OCC students. The average four-year graduation rate of the MCC students was 54% vs. 45% for the OCC students, while the six-year graduation rate was 65% vs. 60%, indicating that the gap may be reduced over time. There will be more on this in section 3 on the next page.

2. **“First-year and second-year retention are issues for community college transfers.”**

Nationally 21% of transfer students did not return to

the four year institutions in the fall of the second year and an additional 27% did not return for the third year. 25% of OU transfer students did not return for the second year, but only 13% more did not return the third year, giving OU a better overall

Figure 2: Transfer Student 1st Yr Retention Rates - Total

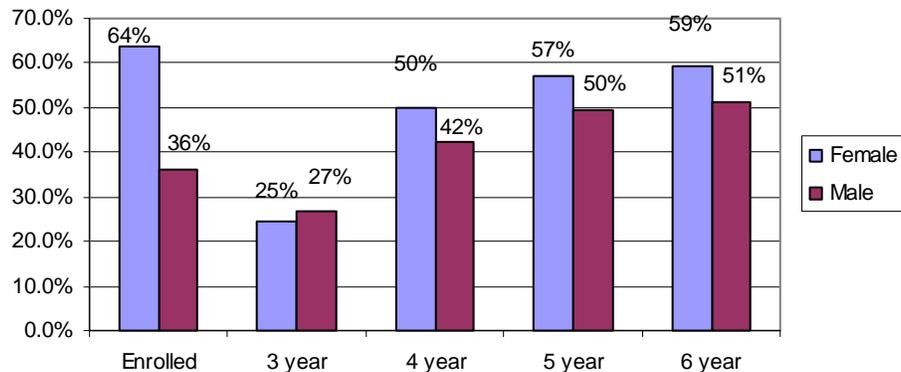


result for retention to the third year; 62% of the OU transfer students were still enrolled in the third year, compared to 52% in the survey. However, by the end of the survey period, 14% of the national cohort who had departed re-enrolled and graduated by the 6th year. At OU, only 1% of transfer students re-enrolled between the 3rd year and 7th year. Figure 2 shows that nationally the first year retention rate has been fairly stable around 80%, while at OU the smaller number of students causes it to vary more from year to year, but averaging around 75%.

3. **“Women: more enroll; more graduate earlier; more graduate within 6 years of transferring from community colleges to 4-yr institutions.”** This finding of the CSRDE survey holds at OU as well (Figure 3).

Nationally, 12% more females were enrolled than males. At OU, close to twice as many transfer students were female and

Figure 3: OU Transfer Students' Enrollment and Graduation Rates by Gender

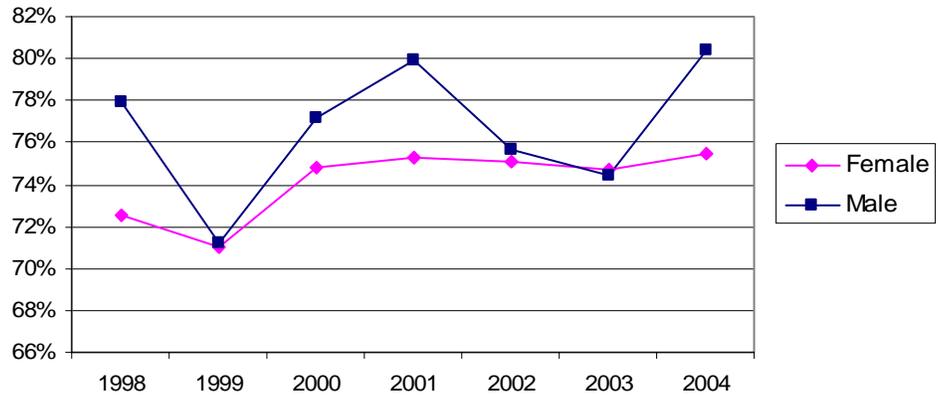


59% of women transfers graduated in six years, compared to 51% of men. Female transfer students from both MCC and OCC graduated at higher rates than their male counterparts in four, five, and six years. The difference in six-year graduation rates between female and male students who transferred from MCC is only 2%, 65% vs. 63%. However, the graduation rate for females from OCC is 63%, just 2% less than MCC, but the rate for males from OCC is only 55%, which is 8% less than both OCC female and MCC male students. Interestingly, while the graduation rates of female students are higher, the first year retention rate is higher for males: 3% higher for MCC and 7% for OCC.

4. Nationally “**from 1998 to 2004 the first year retention rates showed slow continuous improvement for all race and gender subgroups except for Asian and American Indian students.**” At OU, female first year retention rates seem to be trending upward, while the male rate reveals no trend as it fluctuates drastically from year to year (again, probably due to the smaller N). OU’s percent of minority transfer students is quite

small, so these retention rates are also highly variable and do not show the slight upward tendency that is seen for white and African American students.

Figure 4: Transfer Student 1st Yr Retention Rates by Gender



5. **OU transfer students who entered as majors in the School of Education and Human Services had higher rates of retention and graduation.** The CSRDE study did not take programs of study into account, but that data is available for the OU transfer students. About 32% of transfer students who entered in 1998 and 1999 enrolled in majors in the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS). 25% enrolled in the School of Education and Human Services (SEHS), 16% in the School of Business Administration (SBA), 10% in the School of Engineering and Computer Science (SECS), 7% in the School of Nursing (SON), 6% in University Programs (UP), and 5% each in the School of Health Sciences (SHS).

The number and proportion of transfer students in each unit varied by year, so the retention rates varied as well e.g. SEHS enrolled 22% of transfers in 1998 vs. 28% in 1999. 85% of first-year transfers in SEHS were retained in 1998 vs. 75% in 1999. The table below shows the average rates for the combined years. The SEHS transfer students had the highest rate of retention and graduation, with an average 80% first-

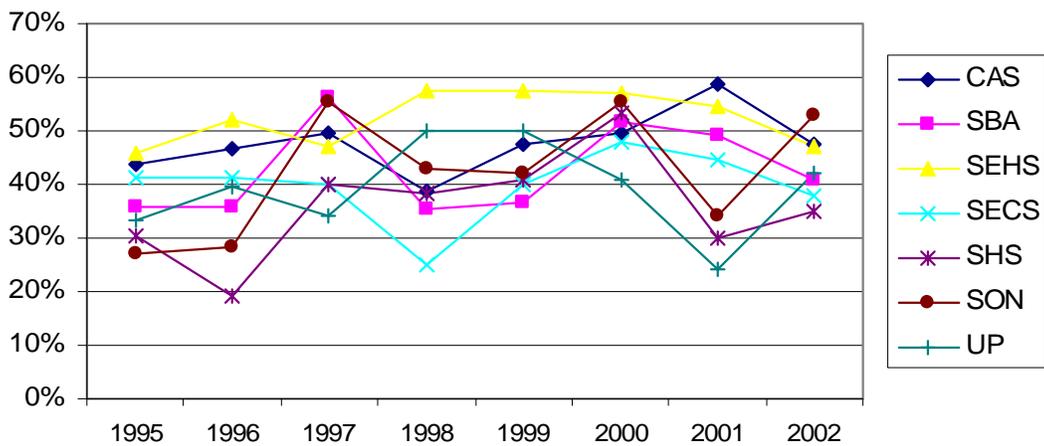
year retention rate and 67% six-year graduation rate (although graduation was not necessarily from SEHS). The graduation rate in SON was more than 20% lower than SEHS.

Retention & Graduation Rates of 1998 & 1999 Transfer Students by School/College

	CAS	SBA	SEHS	SECS	SHS	SON	UP
First-year Retention	76.0%	67.5%	79.9%	75.3%	66.4%	63.1%	61.1%
Six-year Graduation	57.2%	52.8%	66.5%	47.4%	51.9%	45.7%	61.1%
First Term GPA	2.76	2.48	3.06	2.39	2.90	2.86	2.75
% of Total N	31.7%	15.5%	24.8%	10.2%	5.3%	6.5%	6.0%

The findings by school are consistent with earlier analyses done by OIRA. One possible explanation for the lower rates in some areas is that students who transfer in to certain majors may not be adequately informed about requirements to be admitted to and/or graduate from specific programs. If they have unrealistic expectations when they enter, that could result in them leaving OU. Clearly, more study is necessary to better understand what factors contribute to transfer students’ departure from OU.

Figure 5: Four Year Graduation by School/College



And although the focus of this report is community college students who transfer to OU with at least 30 credits, OIRA has data available on other groups of transfer students as well. Email oir@oakland.edu for more information.

Notes on the CSRDE study:

The CSRDE is a voluntary data consortium sponsored by the University of Oklahoma with 575 members*. In 2002, CSRDE began the collection of data about the retention and graduation of community college students who transferred to four-year institutions. The fall 2004 CSRDE survey gathered data on 79,066 students from 110 colleges and universities, including 478 from OU. In this study, “community college transfers were defined as degree-seeking students entering the reporting institution for the first time, known to have only attended community college(s) or 2-year institution(s) and transferring in at least 30 semester hours (i.e. having at least sophomore status).” (2005-06 CSRDE Community College Transfer Report, September, 2006). Both full-time and part-time students were included in the survey.

* the members list may be viewed at <http://tel.occe.ou.edu/csrde/carnegie.html>