

**Semester-to-Semester Persistence
and Academic Success**

Office of Institutional Research
(<http://www.hccs.edu/system/admin/research/oirhome.html>)

Achieving the Dream (AtD) Initiative

"Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count" is a multi-year initiative funded by the Lumina Foundation for Education that addresses the challenge of providing low income students and students of color with opportunities for academic success. There are five AtD student outcome indicators: (1) Successful completion of developmental courses and progression to college-level courses; (2) Enrollment and successful completion of college-level "gatekeeper" courses; (3) Passing grades (C or higher) in all courses; (4) Semester-to-semester persistence; and (5) Completion/graduation attaining certificates and degrees. All colleges of the Houston Community College System (HCCS) participate in this initiative to cultivate and promote a culture of evidence in tracking and documenting student success.

Feedback? Questions? Contact Margaret Drain, margaret.drain@hccs.edu.

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Introduction

The focus of this brief is to assess the term-to-term persistence and academic success by ethnicity and financial aid status of the students in both the 2002 and 2003 Fall cohorts.

Methodology

This initiative will track Fall semester student cohorts to examine students' academic success through college and ascertain their semester-to-semester persistence. Analysis of historical data for the Fall 2002 and Fall 2003 cohorts has begun, and longitudinal data will be collected. Included in each cohort are students enrolling in HCCS in the Fall semester, having entered that term or the prior summer semester. These cohorts include full-time, part-time, and transferred students entering for the first time as a degree or certificate-seeking semester credit student. These students may have previously attended HCCS as dual credit or adult literacy program students, non-credit or non-degree seeking students.

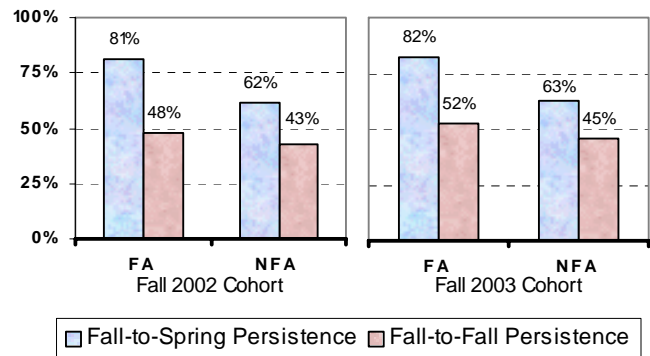
Persistence

The focus now turns to examining various levels of student persistence by ethnicity and financial aid status. For this research brief, the persistence rate is defined as the percentage of students returning to HCCS in subsequent Fall and Spring semesters, or receiving a certificate or degree. The Term-to-Term Retention/ Success Reports available on-line in the Fiscal Management Reports provide more retention detail.

Persistence Results

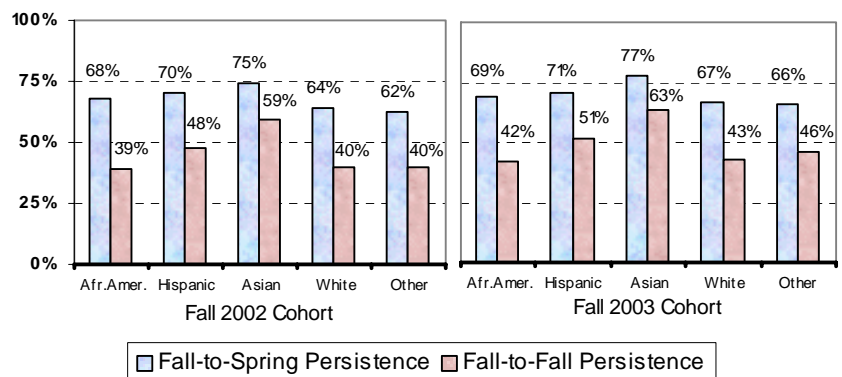
The chart that follows shows that students in both cohorts who received financial aid (FA) have a higher Fall-to-Spring persistence rate (81%–82%) as compared to those students who did not receive financial aid (NFA) (62%–63%). Additionally, the Fall-to-Fall persistence rate for both cohorts is higher (48%–52%) for FA recipients than for NFA (43%–45%) students.

**Semester-to-Semester Persistence by
Financial Aid (FA) Status**



On average, Fall-to-Spring persistence rates for the cohorts were 68% and 70%. The chart below indicates that the Fall-to-Spring persistence rates for each cohort were higher for Hispanic (70%–71%), Asian (75%–77%) and African American (68%–69%) students than for White or Other students (62%–67%). A similar pattern is evident in the Fall-to-Fall persistence rates for both cohorts, although the percentages are much smaller. Of note are the several cases of 3% to 6% higher rates by ethnicity for cohort 2003 compared to cohort 2002.

Semester-to-Semester Persistence by Race/Ethnicity

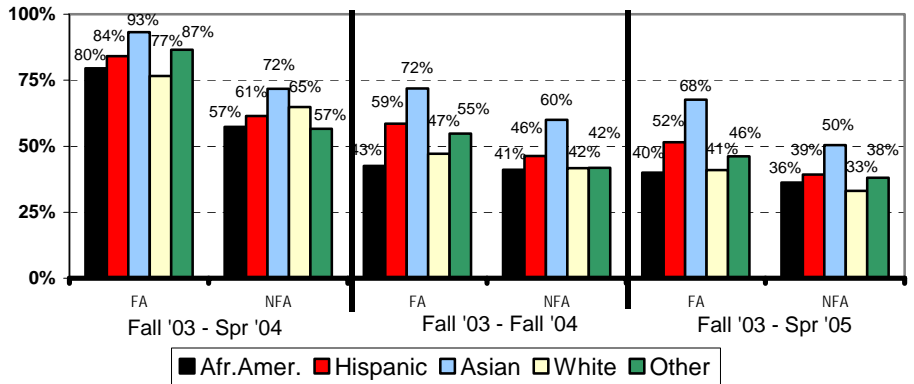


Persistence Results, continued

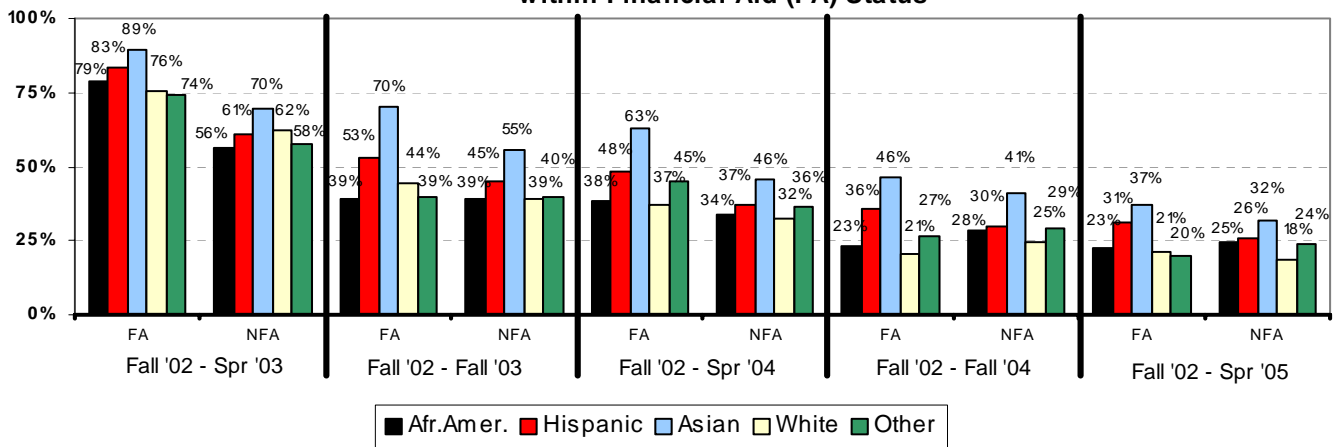
The next two charts examine the rate of persistence for each race/ethnic group according to financial aid status. The chart to the left depicts the persistence pattern for the Fall 2003 Cohort, and the chart below depicts the persistence pattern for the Fall 2002 Cohort.

As expected, the percentage remaining of the original cohort students declines after several semesters. The patterns also show the strong correlation that persistence through the first 1.5 years has with receipt of financial aid for all ethnic groups, and through the second year for Hispanics and Asians. Also, for any given semester, Hispanics and Asians have higher rates of persistence than any other ethnic group, regardless of financial aid status.

Fall 2003 Cohort Persistence Across Time by Race/Ethnicity within Financial Aid (FA) Status



Fall 2002 Cohort Semester-to-Semester Persistence Across Time by Race/Ethnicity within Financial Aid (FA) Status



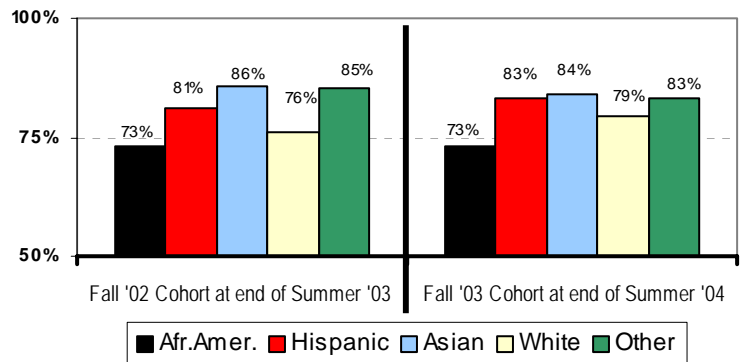
Academic Success

The focus now turns to student success, one proxy for which is the cumulative GPA. In this report, student success rates are calculated as the percent of the cohort students having cumulative GPA greater or equal to 2.00 after their first academic year at HCCS. The chart to the right summarizes student success rates for both cohorts. Over 75% of each ethnic group, except African Americans, had cumulative GPAs equal or greater than 2.00. Both cohorts depicted similar success rates by ethnicity, with only the 2003 Asian and Other students exhibiting slightly lower success rates than their 2002 cohort counterparts.

Summary

In terms of academic persistence, a disparity exists at HCCS between students who received financial aid and those students who did not. Across all ethnicities, financial aid recipients persist at higher rates than other students. There is also evidence that Hispanics and Asians from both cohorts had higher persistence rates and academic success rates than the other ethnicities.

Academic Success with GPA >= 2.00 At End of First Academic Year by Race/Ethnicity



Next Steps

In the coming months, we will provide you with more information on persistence and student success with respect to the Achieving the Dream student cohorts. In the future, more analysis will be provided by financial aid status.