

Student Strategy Blog

Issues For Planning And Transitions To College

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58% Of American Students Take 6 Or More Years To Complete College

by [Jeff Ludovici](#) on [DECEMBER 5, 2009](#) in [ARCHIVE](#), [PARENTS](#), [STUDENTS](#), [TRENDS](#)

In it's annual report, the [Condition of Education 2009](#), the U.S. Department of Education described graduation rates for American students. The report focused on "traditional" students ages 18-24, and examined some basic factors: Public universities versus private colleges, males versus females, and the timeframes of 4, 5, and 6 years for those who did earn a bachelor's degree (not counting those who took longer or who left college all together).

For all U.S. students pursuing a bachelor's degree at both public and private colleges, the Department found that only the minority of them actually graduated on a traditional 4-year track. For both young men and women, only 36% of students who did graduate completed a bachelor's degree in 4 years. 53% of those who completed a degree took 5 years to finish, while 58% of American students took six years to complete a traditional 4-year bachelor's degree.

A closer look at college type and student gender found more specific data. The lowest graduation rates were at public universities, with only 24% of young men and 34% of young women completing a bachelor's degree within 4 years. 45% of young men at public universities took 5 years to graduate, as did 53% of young women. The largest portion of students at public colleges completed graduation within 6 years, with 51% of men and 58% of women completing a bachelor's degree in that timeframe.

The highest graduation rates in the U.S. were for private, not-for-profit colleges. 46% of young men and 54% of young women earned a bachelor's degree within the traditional 4-year timeframe. 59% of young men completed a degree within 5 years, and 62% finished in 6 years. For young women, 63% finished within 5 years and 67% completed a bachelor's degree within 6 years.

In all, the lowest rates of traditional graduation (completing a bachelor's degree within 4 years) were for young men at public universities. The highest 4-year graduation rates were for young women at non-profit colleges. When looking at the largest segment to complete a college degree, young women at not-for-profit colleges who attended for 6 years earned a bachelor's degree at a rate of 67%.

For graduation rates on specific colleges, visit the U.S. Department of Education's [College Navigator](#) website.



SEARCH

 

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This is a place for parents, students, and professionals to find help regarding planning and transitioning to college.

LOOKING FOR HELP?

Jeff consults with students and families across the U.S., including California, New York, Ohio, Illinois, D.C., Maryland, Florida, and other areas. If you are a parent who is seeking services to help a student currently in college, or to plan for college, please see the contact page where you can write or call Jeff. There is never a charge for an initial consultation, and he answers all emails and phone calls within 24 hours.

Visit also my [collegestrategyblog.com](#), especially if you're looking for help for failing college students.

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I'm Failing Out Of College, Now What Do I Do?

by [Jeff Ludovici](#) on [DECEMBER 5, 2009](#) in [ARCHIVE](#), [PARENTS](#), [STUDENTS](#)

Probably the most “taboo” subject about college is what happens when a student begins to fail. We Americans are so obsessed with getting in to college that we lose sight of the ultimate goal of attending college: Graduation. For a sobering view on this, please see how the [U.S. compares against the world](#), and the [2009 graduation rates](#) from the U.S. Department of Education.

I work directly with students who start to do poorly in college. Most often my clients have been good students, even earning honors, and want to succeed. Invariably, something happens that starts to cause failure. In some cases, parents saw the downturn in grades simply as “willful bad behavior,” when it turned out the student had a medical, emotional, or other problem causing the failure.

Because of the pace of the semester, students who find themselves failing have some difficult and fast decisions to make. What to do in specific scenarios is a big topic, and can vary broadly, but here are some basic steps to consider:

1. Define The Problem:

You have to look at the specific details of what’s happening. Did you lose motivation? Fall behind in class? Are you feeling overwhelmed? How are you sleeping? Problems with friends? Defining the problem is the first step to effective problem solving. Write down all the issues in as much detail as possible, then look for themes. You might realize that you’re having health-related issues, like poor appetite, loss of sleep, etc. Anxiety and depression are common in college students, and are easily treatable. If left alone, they can reach the point where they affect your grades or ruin a semester. Again, spend time defining the exact details of the problem in your view.

2. Draw On Your Resources:

Once you've defined the details of the problem, start working on possible solutions. Yes, this may include getting your parents involved. For most students, they are the key source of support, both financially and emotionally. The more supportive services you can get in to place, the better. If you do have health issues, including emotional, it's critical to get them taken care of. If this is the case, seeing a professional and having a medical condition documented will help you. Having a verified "disability" will allow you to request some special considerations. Also, consider getting tutoring if that's appropriate. Even if you feel it may not help, it shows a "good faith" effort on your part to remedy the situation. This may be important if the semester doesn't end well for you.

3. Develop A Plan:

To solve the problems, you need to have a comprehensive game plan. You may have some tough decisions to make regarding your course load or enrollment. This should be done in conjunction with your family and professionals that you hopefully can get involved. Ideally, being able to focus your efforts on fewer classes will help you improve your grades. This is easy to say in "theory," since cutting back on classes often has results for financial aid, graduation timeframes, and even health insurance coverage. Your plan should include permanent solutions to the problem. For example, if you've identified not being prepared academically for college as a factor, then the implication might be to work closely with your school's tutoring center. There may even be some state-funded college readiness supports on campus for students who qualify. If you're noticing a lot of health issues, including feelings of depression or being anxious in social situations, then you may be unknowingly struggling with a temporary disability that's affecting your studies. The benefits of completing college are huge in comparison to the small actions needed to help improve emotional conditions that are so common in students.

Consider This:

-The [National Survey For Student Engagement](#) pointed out that of all students considered "under prepared" for college, 65% were first-generation students, and 46% were from families where their parents were college educated. You're not alone if preparedness is an issue, no matter what type of family you come from.

-A 2008 poll by MTV and the [Jed Foundation](#) found that 85% of college students felt stressed every day, with 42% reporting feeling down, depressed, hopeless, having trouble sleeping, feeling lonely, and feeling like failures. Depression is very common in young adults (ages 18-24), and can certainly be brought on by the stress of college. This is a very treatable condition, and seeing a physician quickly may reduce it's impact on your grades.

-As I mentioned earlier, we tend to focus too much on college entry, and not enough on college completion. When you looked for a college, were you taken in by the "image" of the college, and not it's realities? You need to ask yourself if you're at the right college for you. Finding the right college, especially if you have some special needs, will be a key to success.

For every student that I've worked with, I've seen college struggles or even failures occur for different reasons. The common theme I see among students who do poorly is ineffective planning prior to college. Many times students and families are only

thinking in terms of getting in, attending a “big name” school, doing well on the SAT, and other factors related to entry. Being accepted to a college is only the first step, and is the easy part when compared with performing academically in college. College completion and success are based on a complicated interplay of academic, interpersonal, social, emotional, and other factors, which aren’t considered enough during the planning phases.

When developing your plan to improve your academics, you need to consider the effect that these non-academic areas are having on you. By acting quickly to define the problem, use resources available to you, and then develop a plan to regroup, you’ll have the best chance at being able to keep moving forward.

For more information, please feel free to contact me:
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