

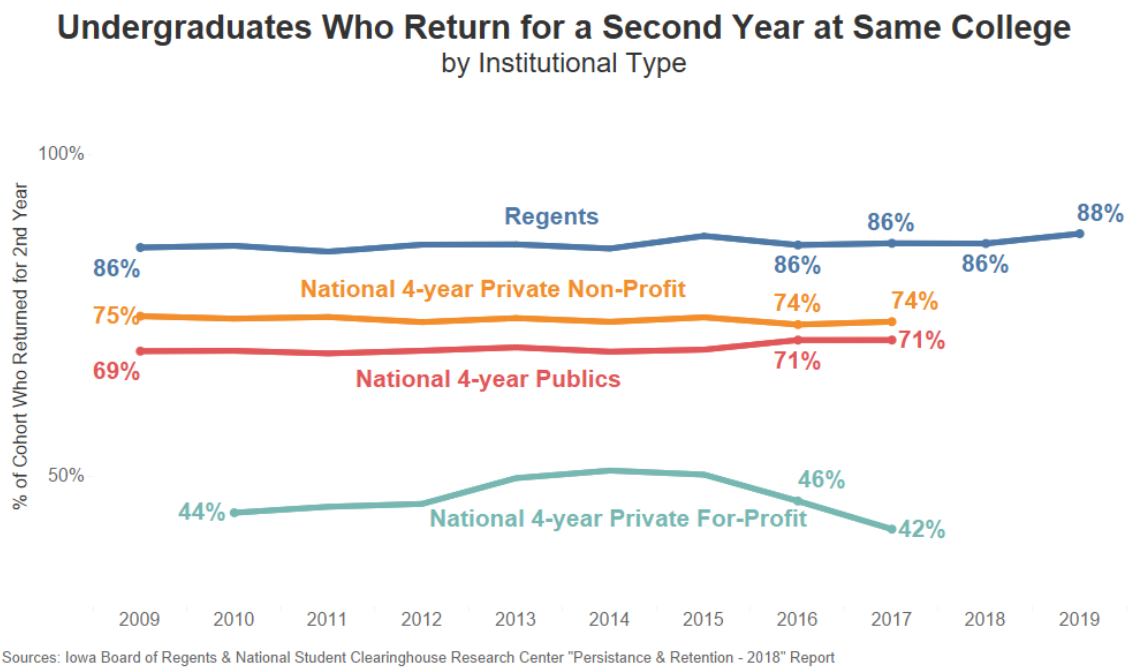
Contact: Jason Pontius

### **FALL 2020 GRADUATION AND RETENTION REPORT**

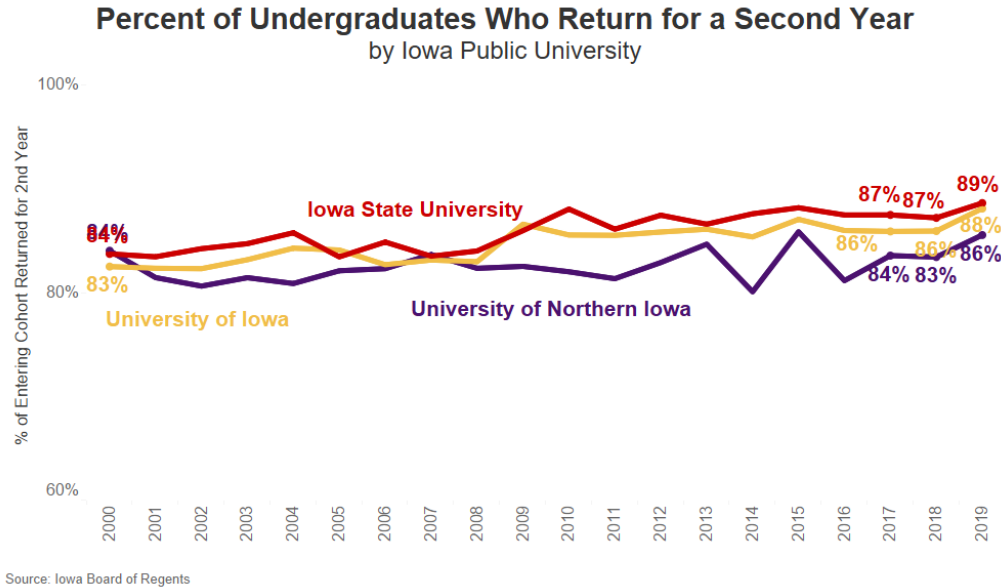
**Action Requested:** Receive the Fall 2020 Graduation & Retention Report.

**Executive Summary:** The Regent university overall retention rates and six-year graduation rates are largely unchanged for last year while the universities continue to show steady improvement in time to degree. Six-year graduation rates for students who identify as a racial/ethnic minority have rebounded after a two year decline.

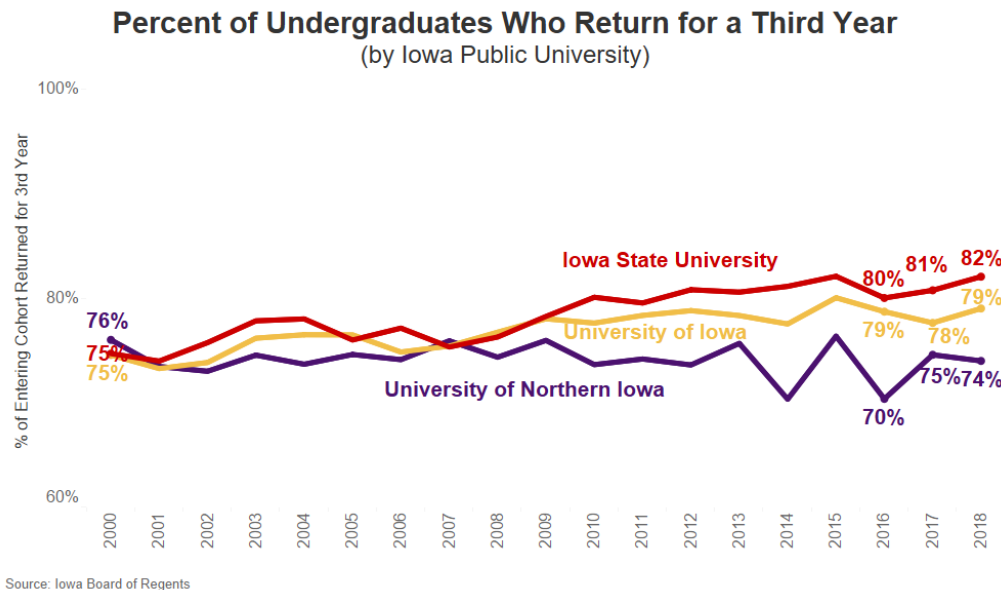
**Retention rates.** One year undergraduate retention rates at the Regent universities have remained consistent over the past 10 years. Eighty-eight percent of the entering class of 2019 returned for their second year. This rate compares favorably to national one year retention rates at both 4-year public and 4-year private colleges and universities (see graph below).



The number of students returning for a second year can fluctuate annually by cohort and differs by university. Iowa State University retention improved to 89%, the University of Iowa increased to 88%, and the University of Northern Iowa was up three percentage points to 86% (see graph below).

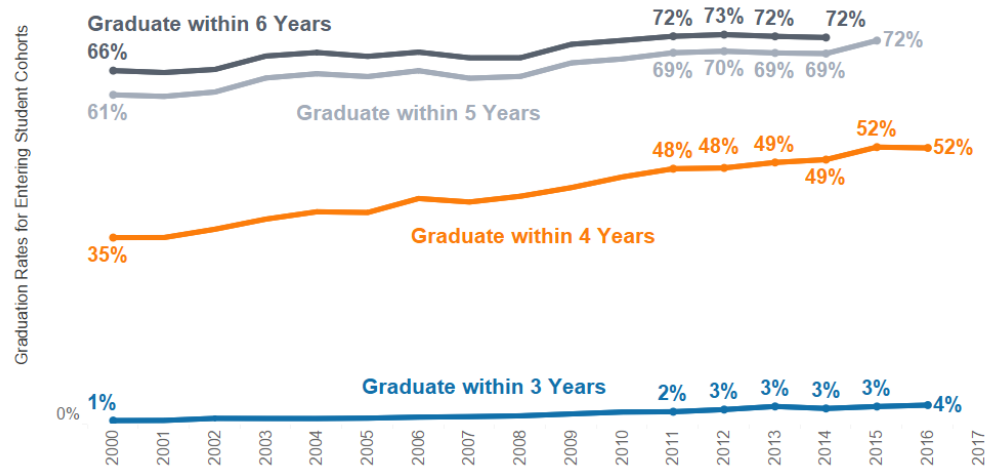


The number of students who choose to return to their university for a third year was up one percentage point at Iowa State University (82%), up one percentage point at the University of Iowa (79%), and down one percentage point at the University of Northern Iowa (74%). See graph below.



Graduation rates. The overall Regent university four-year (52%) and six-year graduation rates (72%) remained unchanged. There was growth in both the three-year (4%) and five-year graduation rates (72%). The 2014 entry cohort had an average six-year graduation rate of 72% for all Regent universities. (see graph below).

### Iowa Public University Graduation Rates

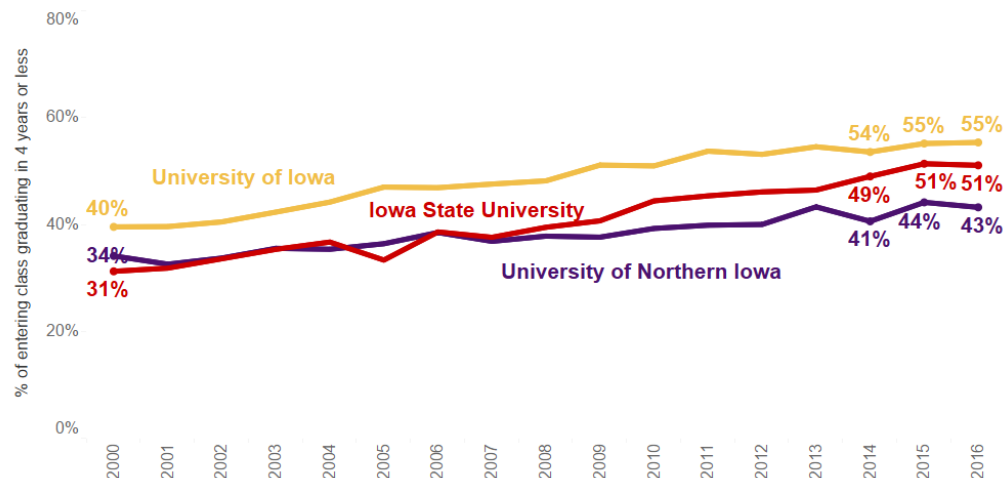


Sources: Iowa Board of Regents

The University of Iowa, with the highest four-year rate among Regent universities (55%), remained unchanged from last year. Iowa State University also maintained a 51% graduation rate, and the University of Northern Iowa dropped one percentage point to 43%. See graph below.

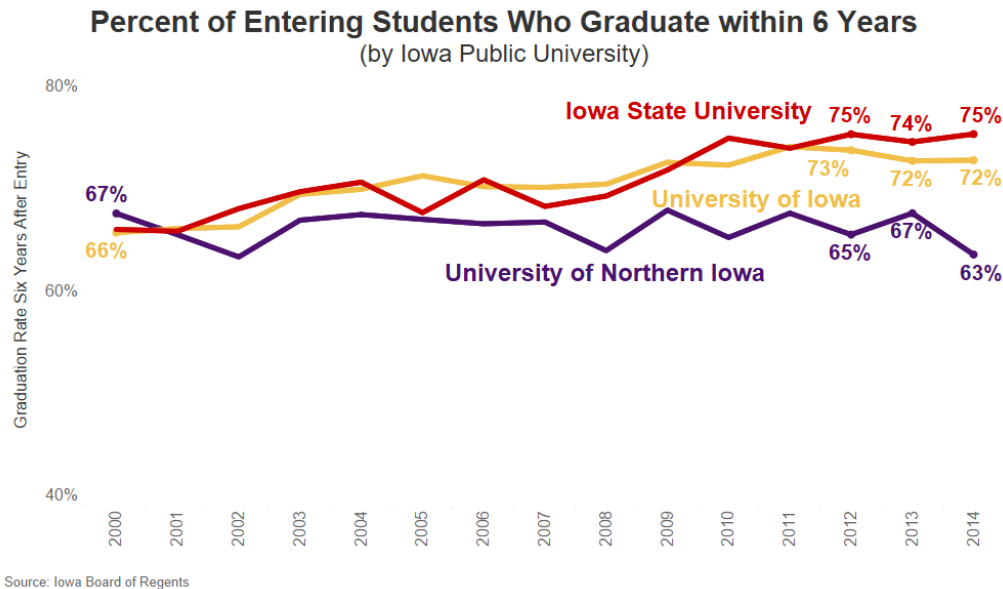
### Percent of Entering Students Who Graduate within 4 Years

by Iowa Public University

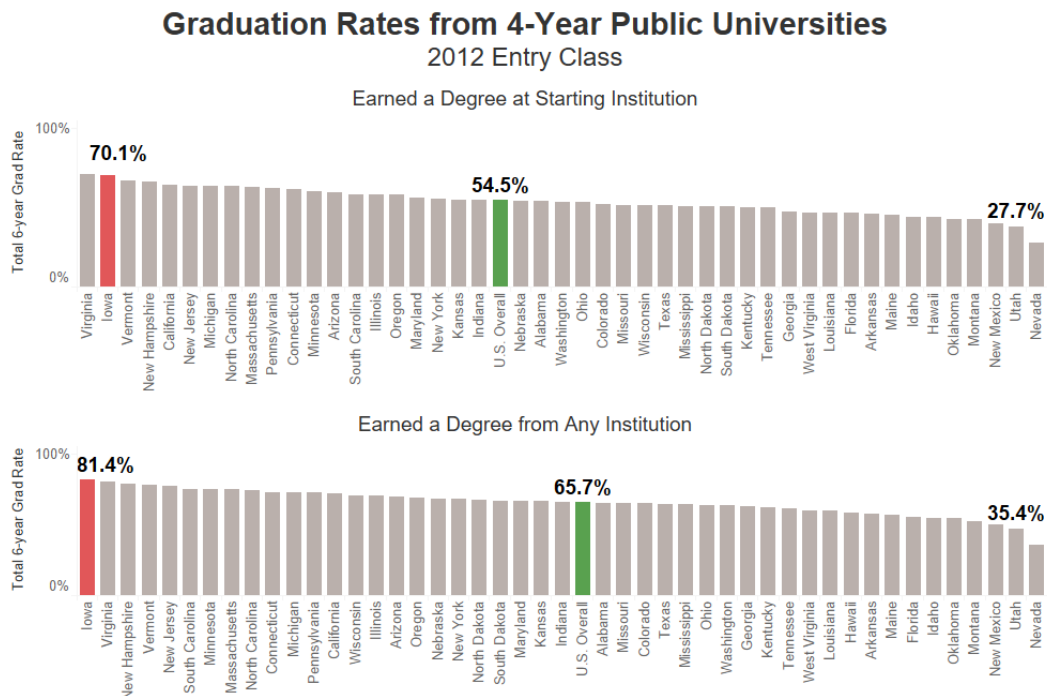


Source: Iowa Board of Regents

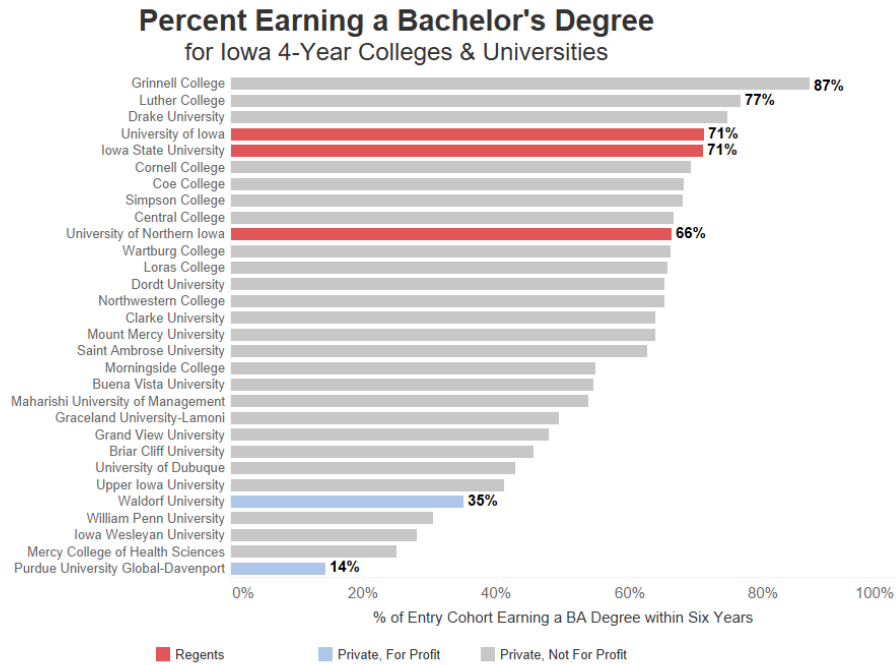
Six-year graduation rates decreased one percentage point from the previous year at both Iowa State University (75%) and the University of Iowa (72%). The six-year graduation rate at the University of Northern Iowa was down four percentage points to 63%.



Students attending a four-year public university in Iowa continue to perform well compared to their peers in other states. The percent of students starting at four-year public university in Iowa who graduated within six years from that same university was 70.1% for the 2012 cohort. Students who start college at an Iowa 4-year public university have the highest total degree attainment rate (81.4%) of similar students nationally.

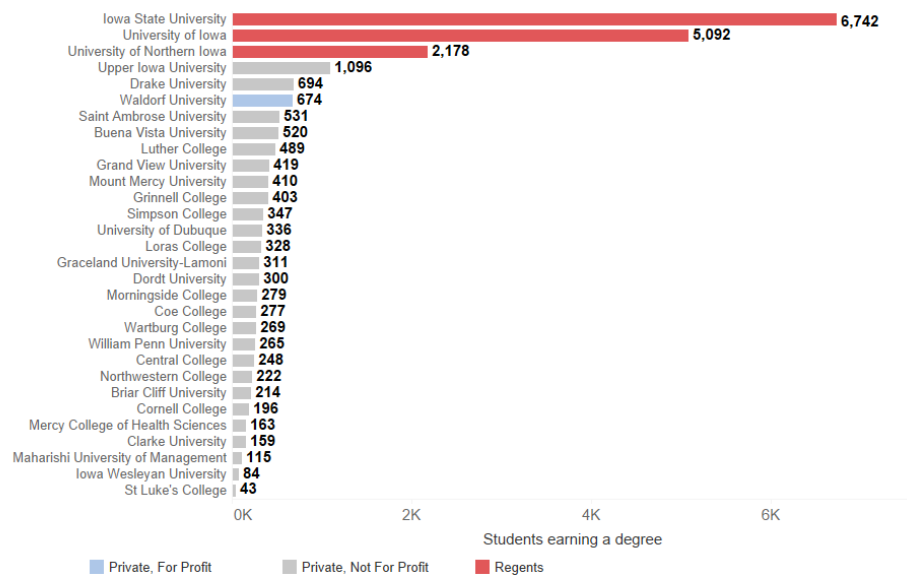


Regent university graduation rates perform well compared to other Iowa colleges and universities (see graph below).

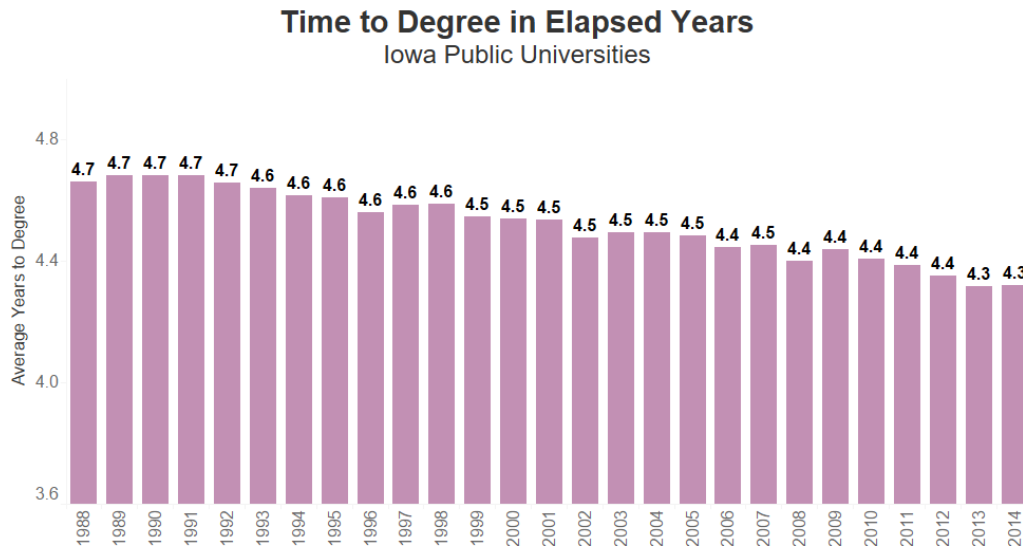


Sixty percent of bachelor's degrees awarded by Iowa colleges and universities were awarded by a Regent university in 2018-19 (see graph below).

**Students Earning a Bachelor's Degree in Iowa 2018-19**

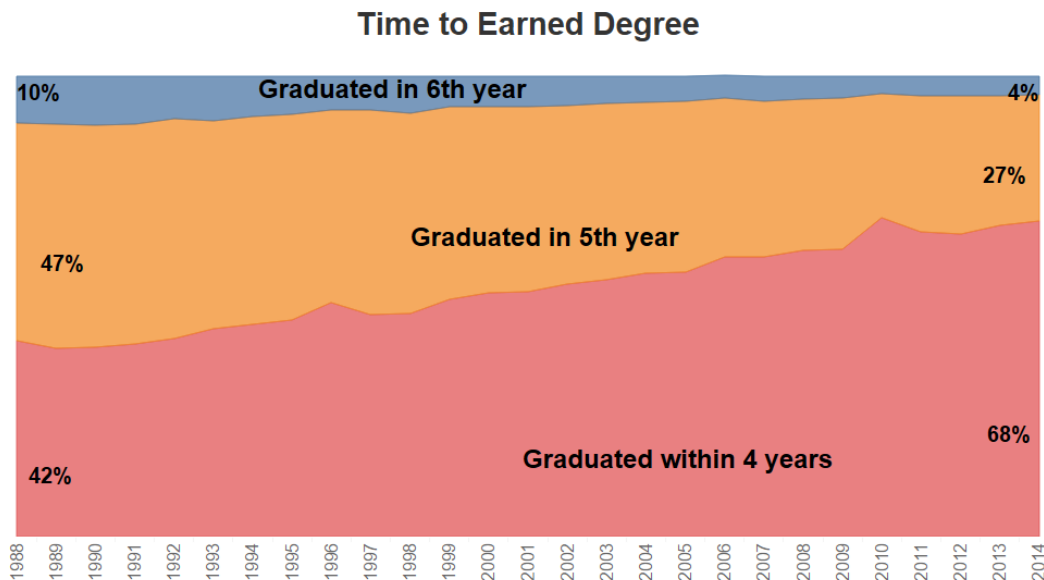


Time to degree. The federal six-year graduation rate standard does not mean that most students need six years to complete a degree. The graph below shows the amount of time in elapsed years that the average student at a Regent university needed to earn a bachelor's degree. This metric measures elapsed time from start to finish, and includes time away from the classroom. Regent university time to degree has steadily declined over time.



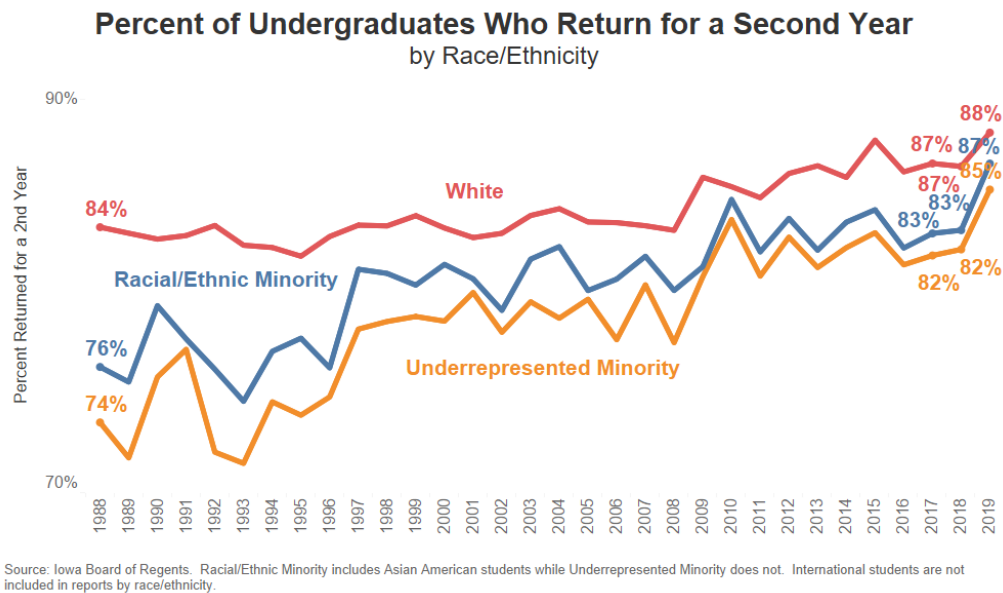
Source: Iowa Board of Regents  
 $\text{Time to degree} = (\# \text{ graduating within 3 years} \times 3) + (\# \text{ 3-4 years grads} \times 4) + (\# \text{ 4-5 year grads} \times 5) + (\# \text{ 5-6 year grads} \times 6) / \# \text{ grads within 6 years of entry}$

When looking at all graduates, the percent who earn a degree in four years has increased significantly over the past 25 years. Of the 2014 entry cohort, 68% of degree earners graduated in four years compared to 42% of the 1988 cohort. Only four percent of degree recipients in the 2013 cohort needed a sixth year to finish.

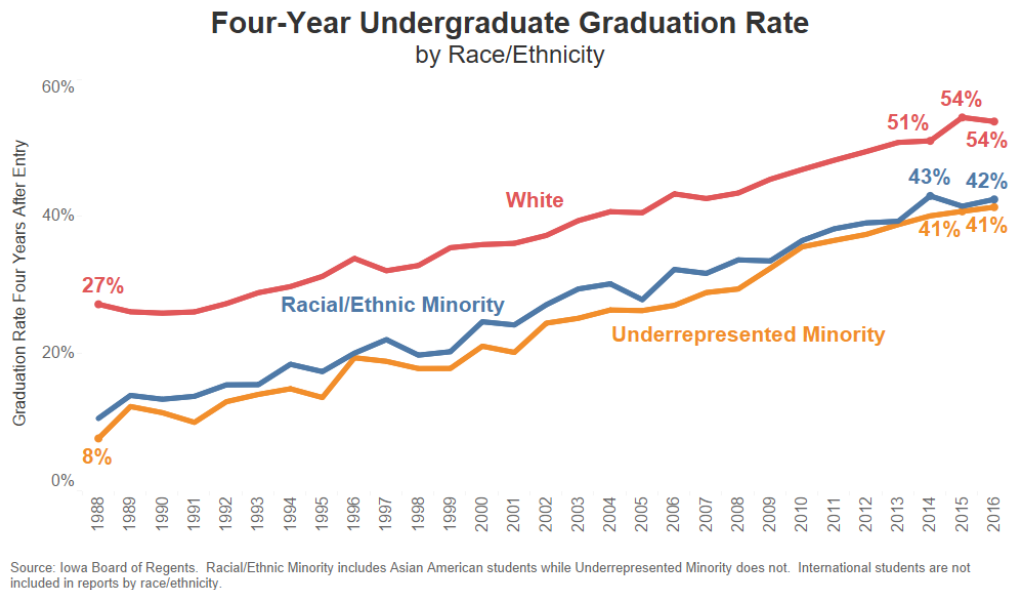


Source: Iowa Board of Regents for first-time full-time bachelor's degree graduates

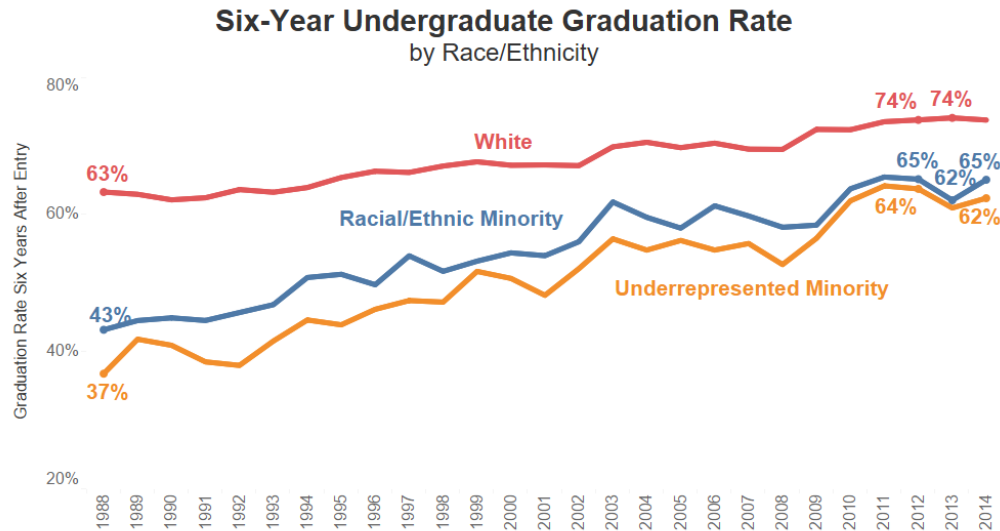
Race and ethnicity. The next three graphs illustrate the “achievement gap” between White students and students who identify as either a racial/ethnic minority or underrepresented minority. “Racial/Ethnic Minority” includes Asian Americans but “Underrepresented Minority” does not. Neither category includes international students. The graph below shows the percent of undergraduates who return for a second year by race/ethnicity. The gap has generally narrowed over time.



One exception to the narrowing “achievement gap” is four-year graduation rates. That gap has only narrowed from 16 percentage points for the 1988 entry cohort to 13 percentage points for the 2016 entry cohort (see graph below).

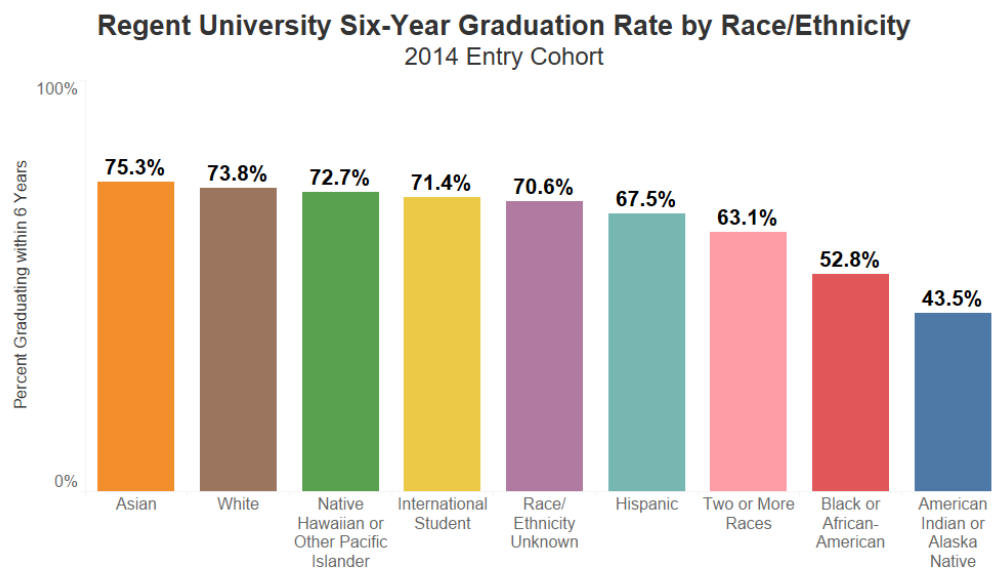


The six-year graduation rate gap by race/ethnicity has narrowed more dramatically over time. The 1988 entry cohort had a 20-26 percentage point gap which narrowed to a 9-12 percentage point gap for the 2014 entry cohort (see graph below).



Source: Iowa Board of Regents. Racial/Ethnic Minority includes Asian American students while Underrepresented Minority does not. International students are not included in reports by race/ethnicity.

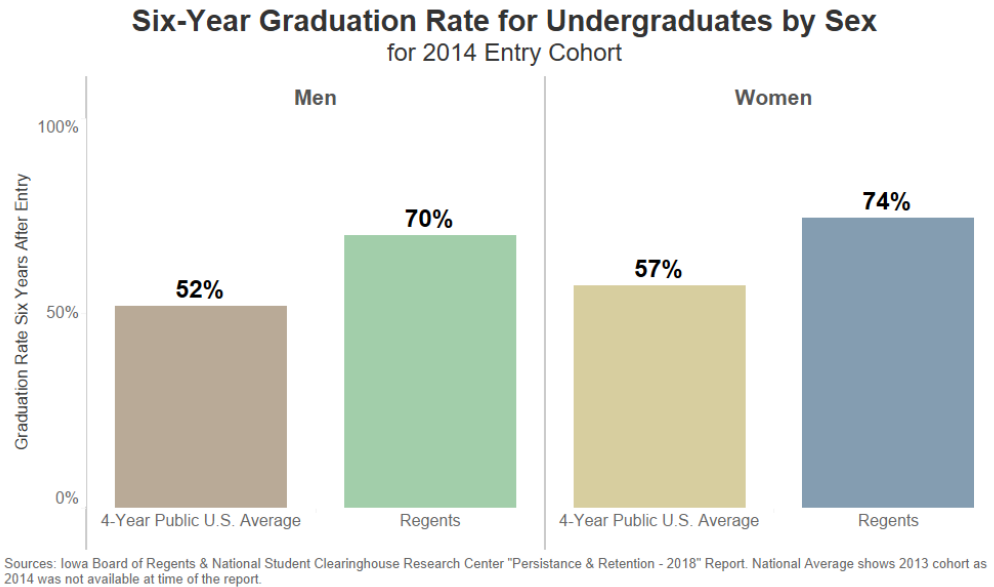
As shown in the graph below, there are significant gaps in graduation rates between racial/ethnic categories within the Regent 2013 entry cohort.



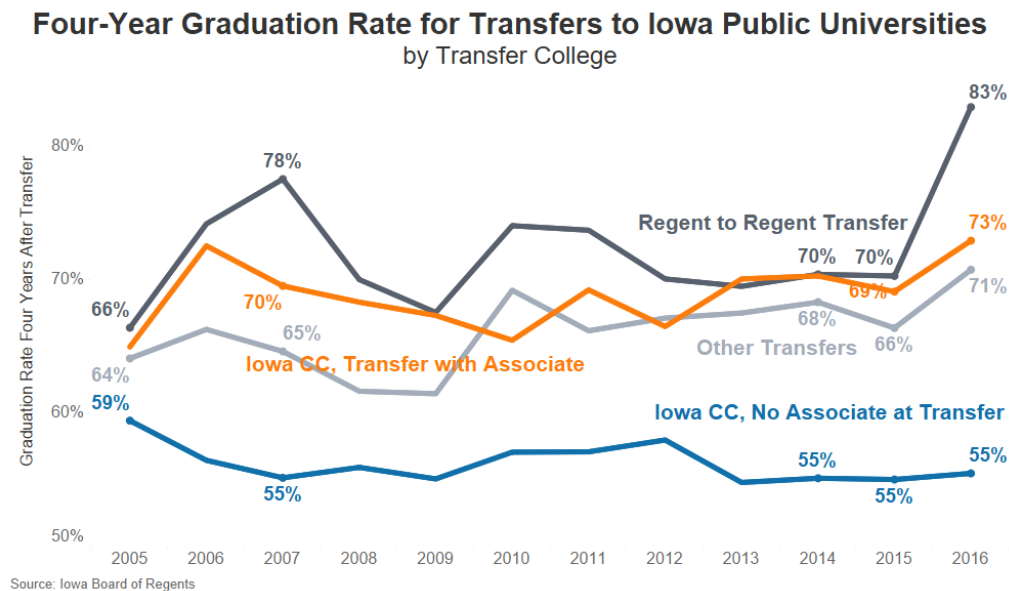
Source: Iowa Board of Regents



Sex. An achievement gap also exists by sex. Both at the Regent universities and nationally, women graduate from college at a rate higher than that of men.



Transfer. The graph below shows graduation rates for students who have transferred into a Regent university from another college or university. Most students who transfer to the Regents have graduation outcomes that are similar to students who entered out of high school. The one exception is students transferring to the Regents without having first earned an associate degree.



**THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA  
FALL 2020 GRADUATION AND RETENTION HIGHLIGHTS**

The University of Iowa's six-year graduation rate for the entering class of 2014 is 72.3%, while the four-year graduation rate for the entering class of 2016 is 55.3%. The university's 2019 first-to second-year retention rate is 88.1%.

The University of Iowa has a number of efforts in place to facilitate retention and timely graduation, with a focus on decreasing gaps in retention and graduation rates of first-generation, underrepresented minority, and Pell eligible students. Examples of recent initiatives to increase retention and timely graduation, as well as steps taken to academically support students during the pandemic, are provided below:

- All entering first-year and transfer students are required to complete the **Success@Iowa** online course. Success@Iowa covers topics such as campus resources, alcohol education, suicide prevention training, safety, inclusion, financial literacy, and academic integrity. In fall 2020, Success@Iowa added a module, titled "Virtual Learning Success Strategies," to help students learn about successful academic behaviors for online learning.
- **Excelling@Iowa** is a campus-wide student success platform used by staff and faculty to help students succeed. The purpose of Excelling@Iowa is to provide staff and faculty a way to engage with actionable data narratives about the student experience in ways that yield improvements in both program and individualized student support. The system uses predictive analytics to help identify students who may be struggling, or students considered at risk, and then lets faculty and staff who are connected to these students know so they can provide support and connect them to resources. In the last year, Excelling@Iowa expanded to support all undergraduate students. In 2019-2020 there were 15,459 logged notes/contacts by 620 faculty and staff with 531 referrals sent to students' support teams and campus resources. During the shift during COVID-19, Excelling@Iowa embedded specialized tools to help connect students who may not be engaging in online learning, struggling to connect to others, and retention influencing factors.
- In fall 2020, the university began the **Hawkeye First-Generation Initiative**. The program provided first-generation students a way to engage in activities that enhance the college experience within and beyond the classroom through experiential learning. The program bundles a variety of high impact practices including seminar courses across one of three tracks: mentored campus employment, undergraduate research or civic engagement and leadership, peer mentoring, community events, and personalized academic coaching. While the fall 2020 semester held challenges regarding COVID-19, First-Gen Hawks completed over 400 hours of peer mentoring connections, over 100 hours of academic coaching, and completed 8 seminar courses to promote the transition and retention of first-gen students.
- **Supplemental Instruction (SI)** is a non-remedial academic support program that targets historically difficult courses, in addition to "gateway" courses. SI is a free, course-specific, peer facilitated group study session designed to not only help students learn the material being covered in class, but also how to learn. In 2019-2020 there were 44 SI courses and more than 19,000 student visits to SI. In the spring of 2020, all SI sessions moved online

to continue supporting students in the COVID-19 pandemic. All SI has continued to be offered virtually in the 2020-2021 academic year. Students who attended once per week, on average, had at least a 1/3 letter grade increase. Students who attended SI were also 6% more likely to be retained the following fall compared to their peers, after controlling for ACT, high school GPA and first-generation status.

- **Learning Assistants (LAs)** is an academic support program that embeds students into high enrollment courses to help facilitate learning in lecture like courses. In the fall 2020 pilot, there were 52 students who served as LAs to support the 1000+ students in the Principles of Chemistry I course. LAs work with both chemistry faculty and Academic Support & Retention staff, to help students with problem solving. LAs provide an avenue for students to ask questions and seek support from peers who are trained to assist. The University of Iowa plans to expand the LA program to include additional courses.
- The University of Iowa was awarded a **GEAR UP Iowa College Partner Grant** from Iowa College Aid for the 2020–2021 academic year to provide services and programming that improve outcomes of those traditionally underserved and underrepresented students. Three hundred twenty-nine (329) of the state's GEAR UP Iowa students enrolled at the University of Iowa in fall 2020; 41% identified as first-generation college students. While none of the programming is required, student participation thus far has been commendable. Almost 70% of the cohort participated in the GEAR UP Online Summer Bridge program in July and 80% have participated in a mentoring program to address academic skill building, goal setting, and social integration.
- The **Pomerantz Career Center** offered additional off-cycle, online career preparation courses during the second half of the spring 2020 semester to ensure that students impacted by COVID-19 were provided curricular options to remain fulltime and graduate on-time. Topics included personal finance, job search assistance, and transitioning from college to the workplace.

**IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY  
FALL 2020 GRADUATION AND RETENTION HIGHLIGHTS**

Iowa State University's first- to second-year retention rate was a record-high 88.6% (entering class of 2019) for Fall 2020. This is particularly significant given this occurred amid the global Coronavirus pandemic, which directly impacted the university starting in mid-March 2020 and continues to present day. Iowa State has worked diligently to ensure the students have the necessary resources to achieve success, that they feel a sense of connection to the campus community, and that they have timely and transparent information that can inform their decision-making process. The record-high retention rate is an indication the students, and their families, appreciate how the university has responded to the pandemic as it has evolved over the past year, and that they believe in the strong education and student experience Iowa State University provides.

Iowa State's six-year graduation rate of 74.7% (entering class of 2014) ties the previous record-high six-year graduation rate (set by the entering class of 2012), and its four-year graduation rate of 51.1% (entering class of 2016) is the second highest on record. Among those students graduating in six-years, the Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander population (75%) set a record-high six-year graduation rate, the Hispanic population (70.2%) experienced its second highest six-year graduation rate, and the Black or African American population (53.9%) experienced its third highest six-year graduation rate. Similarly, among those students graduating in four-years, the Hispanic population (39.4%) set a record-high four-year graduation rate, both the Black or African American population (33.8%) and the Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander population (50.0%) experienced their second highest four-year graduation rates, and the Multiracial population (44.0%) experienced its third highest four-year graduation rate. All other populations among those graduating in four- and six-years had very strong graduation rates, which speaks directly to the work the university has been doing to address the attainment gap between our multicultural- and white- student populations.

Iowa State continually strives to foster an environment where the various departments and divisions across the university work collaboratively to enhance the quality of the student experience and to positively influence the retention of students – ensuring they continue their enrollment from matriculation to degree completion. A few of the high-impact practices that occurred this past fall are outlined below.

**CARES Act Funding**

Iowa State University received \$10,849,429 in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to be used strictly for student support (the student portion). Using a three-pronged approach, 4,793 resident students and 2,413 non-resident students received funding. The average award was \$1,505.61 with awards ranging from \$50 to \$4,900. While a combination of an application form and block grants were used to award the majority of funds, a unique opportunity to partner with the University Library identified students without personal laptop access who met CARES Act criteria; a total of 315 students were awarded dollars to purchase a personal device, which they can now utilize for the remainder of their academic career. Of the 7,206 students who received funding through the CARES Act, 1,074 students graduated and 5,855 re-enrolled for Fall 2020 semester.

### **Learning Communities**

Iowa State University's Learning Communities are celebrating 25-years of success during the 2020-21 academic year, with a total of 92,843 students participating in learning communities since inception. During the Fall 2020 semester, participation was at an all-time high, with 91.6% of first-time, full-time (FTFT) students engaged in one or more learning community experiences. It must be noted that participation in learning communities by FTFT students has increased 30.9% since Fall 2015. Moreover, participation by first-year multicultural students continues to increase year-over-year; during fall 2020, over 91% of first-year multicultural students participating in a learning community experience. Additionally, the Ivy College of Business increased its enrollment in Learning Communities for incoming first-year and transfer students in Fall 2020, with 78% of all new incoming students in one of the Business Learning Communities, which was an increase of 22% over Fall 2019. The retention and graduation rates of students participating in learning communities continues to exceed those of non-learning community participants; data show that, on average, the one-year retention rate for learning community students is 7% higher than for non-learning community students, and the six-year graduation rate for learning community students is 11% higher than for non-learning community students.

### **Academic Progress Reports**

The university distributed academic progress reports (i.e., academically at-risk notices) to students during the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> weeks of the semester, with a particular focus on the high D-F-W courses. This is important shift in at-risk notification timing, as research indicates that intervention efforts earlier in the semester are more effective than mid-term grade reporting, particularly in high D-F-W courses. This effort is in its third semester at the university (i.e., Fall 2019, Spring 2020, and Fall 2020), and planning is underway for expanding the roll-out for Spring 2021. During Fall 2020, 65% of faculty in high D-F-W courses participated in the effort, which is double the rate achieved by peer institutions that also use the EAB student success platform. The university has set an aggressive, but attainable, goal of increasing the participation rate to 80% for Spring 2021.

### **Student Health and Wellness Unit**

Anticipating that the Fall 2020 semester would be challenging for many students, and recognizing the negative impact that COVID-19 has had on the mental health and wellbeing of many college students, the Student Health and Wellness unit – comprised of Student Counseling Services, the Thielen Student Health Center, Student Wellness, and Recreation Services – adapted their services to telehealth and other online methods for delivery, thereby allowing the units to continue their mission of supporting the holistic wellbeing and academic success of Iowa State students. During the Fall 2020 semester, Student Counseling Services provided 4,168 telehealth sessions. While need for all of these services on college campuses has continued to rise over the past decade, the Coronavirus pandemic substantially escalated that need with counseling centers, nationwide, reporting that the students they served were experiencing increased stress and anxiety, feelings of disappointment, sadness, loneliness, and isolation, that they had difficulty focusing, and were finding it challenging to connect with others. Adapting services to an online delivery model allowed the Student Health and Wellness Unit to continue serving the students during this difficult time while ensuring the safety, health, and wellbeing of students and staff.

### **Degrees When Due**

Iowa State University participated in Degrees When Due (DWD), which is an equity and completion initiative overseen by the Institute for Higher Education Policy, that helps colleges increase degree attainment among the “some college, no degree” population. The university identified all students who met the DWD parameters for inclusion in the initiative. Staff in the Office of the Registrar ran and evaluated degree audits for all eligible students and identified their

remaining degree requirements. From there, students were categorized as follows: High (i.e., 0-15 credits away from graduation), Medium (i.e., 16-30 credits away from graduation), and Low (i.e., more than 30 credits away from graduation). During Summer 2020, Iowa State outreached to all students who were in the High category to explain the program, and to invite them back to satisfy their remaining degree requirements. At the conclusion of Fall 2020, six students had satisfied their remaining degree requirements and proudly joined the alumni family. An additional four students are continuing their enrollment into Spring 2021 with a goal of satisfying their remaining degree requirements.

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA  
FALL 2020 GRADUATION AND RETENTION HIGHLIGHTS**

University of Northern Iowa students persist and graduate at rates that exceed our peer institutions and similar Carnegie classified universities. The Retention and Completion Council guides campus-wide work on improving systems and developing interventions to continuously increase student success rates.

**Retention and Graduation Rate Highlights:**

- The four-year graduation rate for the fall 2015 cohort stands at 44.13%, the highest in institutional history and well above the levels of our institutional peers. The most recent comparable rate for our peer institutions is 38.3%, and for our Carnegie peers is 24.9% (IPEDS Data Center).
- Our first-to-second year retention rate for the entering class of 2018 is 83.4%, very similar to the retention rate for the previous cohort (83.6%). The most recent comparable rate for our peer institutions is 78.5%, and for our Carnegie peers is 74.6% (IPEDS Data Center).
- Retention and graduation rates for minority students in the most recent cohort are positive indicators of University of Northern Iowa progress toward diversity and inclusion goals within the current strategic plan.
  - The six-year graduation rate for minority students in the fall 2013 cohort is 59.29%, a rate 4.68 percentage points higher than the previous minority student cohort, and more than five percentage points above the previous five-year rolling average (53.9%).
  - The first-to-second year retention rate for minority students in the fall 2018 cohort was 78.6%, a rate more than two percentage points higher than the previous cohort.
- The four-year graduation rate for low-income students receiving the Pell Grant in the fall 2015 is 40.6%, over six percentage points higher than the previous cohort (34.5%).
- The first-to-second year retention rate for military and veteran students in the fall 2018 cohort is 85.7%, a rate 13.5 percentage points higher than the previous five-year average and above the overall institutional retention rate.
- Retention and Completion Council members worked throughout the 2018-2019 academic year to develop a multicultural retention plan, which has resulted in expanded mentoring support, supplemental academic advising, a new residential community, and enhanced orientation programming for minority students. This plan was implemented in fall 2019 and will work to continue reducing disparities in retention and completion outcomes.