

Important Note

There has been significant media coverage of our “Rules of the Game” report. Some of the articles, editorials and columns attempt to compare the completion rate of 24% presented in that report to the success rate of 52% put forth by the Chancellor’s Office (CO) in their report, *Focus on Results: Accountability Reporting for the Community Colleges*. The two rates are not comparable, as they were developed for entirely different purposes, and are calculated in different ways.

Non-technical Explanation:

- The CO rate was not designed to be a “completion rate” but was intended as a measure of “progress and achievement” that would allow comparisons across individual colleges without disadvantaging colleges that serve more lower-income and academically under-prepared students. The rate was developed for the new system of Accountability Reporting for the Community Colleges (ARCC) imposed by the legislature through AB 1417.
- The CO rate is only applied to students who have successfully completed at least 12 units and attempted a certificate/degree/transfer threshold course (transfer- or degree-level English or math, or certain occupational courses). Thus, the 52% figure represents a finding that half of the students who have already reached a threshold of success actually make it all the way to completion or achieve some level of progress toward transfer.
- The IHELP rate was designed to be a “completion rate” applied to all students who, in our view, should be assumed by the colleges to be “degree-seekers” (which includes certificates, associate degrees, and/or transfer to 4-year institutions to pursue a bachelor’s degree).
- The IHELP rate was not designed as an accountability mechanism. It was intended to measure the share of all degree-seekers in the community college system that earn a certificate/degree and/or transfer to a 4-year institution. Our interest is in the state’s need for college-educated workers in its labor force, and in students’ interest in bettering their prospects through completing a college credential.

Technical Explanation:

Both the numerator and denominator of the two rates are different.

- The denominator of the CO rate includes only students who earned 12 or more units and attempted a degree/certificate/transfer threshold course (transfer- or degree-level English or math, or certain occupational courses) within 6 years of enrolling
- The numerator of the CO rate includes all students within that group who did at least one of the following within 6 years of enrolling:
 - Completed a certificate;
 - Completed an associate’s degree;
 - Transferred to a university;
 - Completed both transfer-level English and math (called “transfer-directed”); or
 - Earned 60 or more units of coursework that are transferable to UC/CSU with a GPA of 2.0 or above in those courses (called “transfer-prepared”).
- The denominator of the IHELP rate includes all students who exhibit behaviors that can be assumed to indicate intent to earn a college credential:
 - Were age 17-19 upon initial enrollment in the community colleges;
 - Indicated a goal of earning a certificate or associate’s degree or transferring to a university at the time of initial enrollment or after meeting with a counselor; or
 - Completed 12 or more units and attempted transfer- or degree-level English or math within 6 years of enrolling.
- The numerator of the IHELP rate includes all students within that group who did at least one of the following within 6 years of enrolling:

- Completed a certificate;
- Completed an associate's degree; or
- Transferred to a university.

In summary

- The CO measure defines more outcomes as “success” than actually qualify as “completion” under IHELP’s definition
- The CO measure excludes from the analysis all students who do not make it to 12 units completed, thus limiting the analysis only to students who have already achieved a degree of success
- By using a larger numerator and a smaller denominator, the CO method produces a much higher percentage – but one that cannot be interpreted as a completion rate among all likely degree-seekers