The Role of Two-Year Institutions in Four-Year Success

For many students, the path to successfully completing a degree at a four-year institution includes enrollment at one or more two-year institutions.

In the 2010-11 academic year, 45 percent of all students who completed a degree at a four-year institution had previously enrolled at a two-year institution.

The contribution of two-year institutions varies by state. In 13 states, more than half of the degree recipients at a four-year institution had previously enrolled at a two-year institution.

The 2010-11 Two-Year Contributions Table with individual state and territory information is available at www.studentclearinghouse.org/snapshot.

Note: The institutional level is based on 2009 IPEDS institutional characteristics, with the Florida College System being the only exception. The 28 schools in that system offer four-year degrees, but all are categorized as two-year institutions for this analysis. This is in keeping with their traditional role as a primary point of access to higher education.
Recency of Two-Year Enrollment

In the 2010-11 academic year, 45 percent of all students who completed a degree at a four-year institution had previously enrolled at a two-year institution.

Over half of these students completed a degree from a four-year institution within three years of leaving their most recent two-year institution. Three quarters of them completed a degree within five years.
Duration of Two-Year Enrollment

In the 2010-11 academic year, 45 percent of all students who completed a degree at a four-year institution had previously enrolled at a two-year institution.

Nearly a quarter of these students were enrolled in a two-year institution for a single term. About three quarters of them were enrolled for six or fewer terms.

*Terms in this analysis are institutionally defined, so term length varies. The average term length was 106 days.*