

**Pell Institute Fact Sheet**  
**Updated: 12/14/2011**

**6-YEAR DEGREE ATTAINMENT RATES**  
**FOR STUDENTS INITIALLY ENROLLED IN 4-YEAR INSTITUTIONS**

Background/History

There are many positive outcomes associated with graduating from college, including higher income and rates of employment. This fact sheet examines the 6-year degree attainment rates **for students that initially enrolled in a 4-year postsecondary institution** in Fall 2003. The graduation rates are disaggregated by the following four categories:

- Pell Grant receipt,
- First-generation and low-income status,
- Family income, and
- Family income as a percent of the Federal poverty threshold.

Overall, 57.8% of students enrolled in postsecondary education earned a bachelor's degree within 6 years. 6.2% of these students earned an associate's degree or other credentials, 12.2% were still enrolled and did not yet earn a degree, and 23.7% left school without a degree and did not return.

Disaggregation of the data, however, reveals an even more disturbing picture. Each of the four charts below shows significant gaps in graduation rates by income. According to the data below, students from low-income families are less likely to earn a bachelor's degree within 6 years, compared to their more financially affluent peers.

Data Source: 2003/04 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, (BPS:04/09)

<b>6-year degree completion rates for students initially enrolled in a 4-year institution by Pell Grant status</b>				
	Attained bachelor's degree	Attained associate's degree or other credentials	Still enrolled	Dropped out
<b>Received Pell Grant</b>	44.4	8.1	15.5	32.0
<b>Did not receive Pell Grant</b>	63.7	5.4	10.8	20.2

- The Federal Pell Grant Program provides need-based grants to low-income undergraduate to promote access to postsecondary education.

<b>6-year degree completion rates for students initially enrolled in a 4-year institution by first-generation and low-income status</b>				
	Attained bachelor's degree	Attained associate's degree or other credentials	Still enrolled	Dropped out
<b>Low-income, first-generation</b>	31.6	10.0	18.0	40.4
<b>Low-income, not first-generation</b>	47.8	6.6	12.8	32.7
<b>First-generation, not low-income</b>	51.0	9.0	13.3	26.7
<b>Not low income and not first-generation</b>	71.2	3.3	9.7	15.8

- Low-income is defined as the student's family income falling at or below \$25,000. First-generation is defined as students who come from families where neither parent has earned a bachelor's degree or higher.

**6-year degree completion rates for dependent students  
initially enrolled in a 4-year institution by parental income**

	Attained bachelor's degree	Attained associate's degree or other credentials	Still enrolled	Dropped out
<b>\$0-\$29,999</b>	41.2	7.7	15.7	35.4
<b>\$30,000-\$59,999</b>	54.0	8.5	13.3	24.3
<b>\$60,000-\$99,999</b>	66.0	5.4	10.0	18.7
<b>\$100,000 and above</b>	75.4	2.6	8.9	13.2

**6-year degree completion rates for students initially enrolled in a  
4-year institution by family income as a percent of the poverty threshold**

	Attained bachelor's degree	Attained associate's degree or other credentials	Still enrolled	Dropped out
<b>Less than 150%</b>	38.2	8.2	17.8	35.7
<b>151 to 200%</b>	46.0	8.0	12.9	33.1
<b>201% to 300%</b>	58.0	5.4	11.3	23.3
<b>301% and above</b>	61.0	4.8	10.3	17.9

- According to the U.S Census Bureau, the poverty threshold for 2003 was \$ 18,660 for a two-adult, two-child family. A family is considered at the poverty threshold when its total income (before taxes and not including public housing, Medicaid, or food stamps) is less than the family's threshold. The official poverty threshold does not vary geographically and is updated annually for inflation.
- 150% of poverty is the eligibility cutoff for TRIO participation