

Massachusetts

Alliance of States

Big Goals

For more information on Massachusetts's leadership in improving college completion, see:

<http://www.mass.edu/home.asp>

While the issue of college completion is one that has only recently landed on the national radar, Massachusetts leaders have had the issue under a microscope in their state for at least six years. **Both at its community college level and**

four-year colleges, the state has conducted thorough introspections into the causes of low completion rates and, importantly, what can be done to boost them.

Like with most other state leaders, those in Massachusetts understand the link between a well-educated citizenry and a healthy, vibrant economy. A 2007 task force report on completion and retention at the state's community colleges noted that, by 2012, 56 percent of Massachusetts' jobs will require a college education. The report concluded that "the economic health of the [state] is in jeopardy without a more focused effort to increase the number of residents who at least earn an associate degree."

That task force put forth recommendations to improve completion rates, which in 2006 stood at 17.4 percent using the national IPEDS three-year graduation rate of first-time, full-time degree-seeking students. Among the recommendations for boosting that graduation rate was increasing student contact time with full-time faculty, customized education plans for students, and increased advising/mentoring programs.

In addition, the task force put forth a comprehensive set of indicators and benchmarks that it said is an improvement over the IPEDS system. The state now uses the task force's recommended system to track student progress toward degrees in key areas over a four-year timeframe. The most recent report from the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education states that, in 2007, nearly 74 percent of community college students had achieved at least one of the benchmarks of success.

That same year, Massachusetts joined the highly-regarded Achieving the Dream, a national effort funded by the Lumina Foundation for Education, which aims to improve student success outcomes for underserved students.

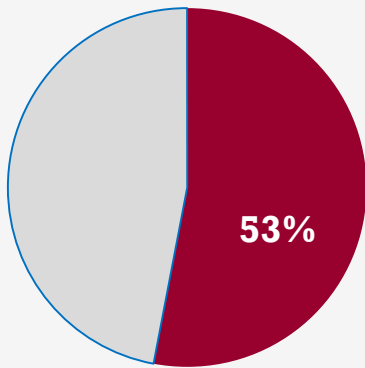
Leadership for Success

In 2005, the Massachusetts higher education leaders set a goal that state colleges would graduate within six years more than 50 percent of first-time full-time enrollees and would increase first-year retention rates to over 80 percent within five years. Through a variety of strategies outlined in that plan, the state on 2008 was on track to meet those goals: the six-year graduation rate was expected to top 50 percent and the first-year retention rate stood at 74.4 percent and was trending upward.

At the four-year level, Massachusetts leaders recently completed an in-depth look at undergraduate education and what students should know and be able to do upon graduation. This effort was undertaken by delegates from higher education, the State House and business. The group put forth strong ideas about the need for common expectations and learning standards across all state college and universities and it underscored the crucial role an educated workforce plays in the health of growth of the state's economy.

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By the end of this decade, more than 60% of jobs will require college education.¹



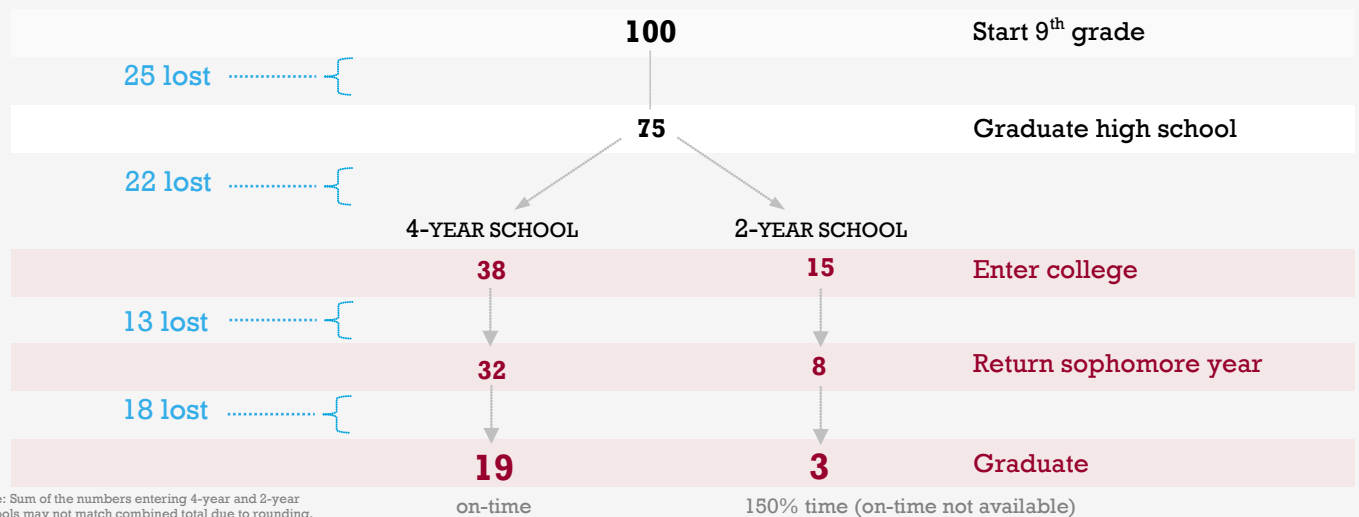
Today, 53% of Massachusetts's adults aged 25-34 have a college degree.²

Job growth across the U.S., 2010-2020:

| High-growth jobs | Required education |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Dental hygienist | Associate degree |
| Computer software engineer | Bachelor's degree |
| HVAC/refrigeration mechanic | Certificate |
| Physical therapist assistant | Associate degree |
| Network systems analyst | Bachelor's degree |
| Licensed practical nurse | Certificate |

Too many students get lost along the way, hindering Massachusetts's economic growth.³

(This chart models how success rates at each stage impact overall educational attainment. It is not based on longitudinal data, but is an attempt—using a collection of available data—to illustrate the challenges states face.)



Note: Sum of the numbers entering 4-year and 2-year schools may not match combined total due to rounding.

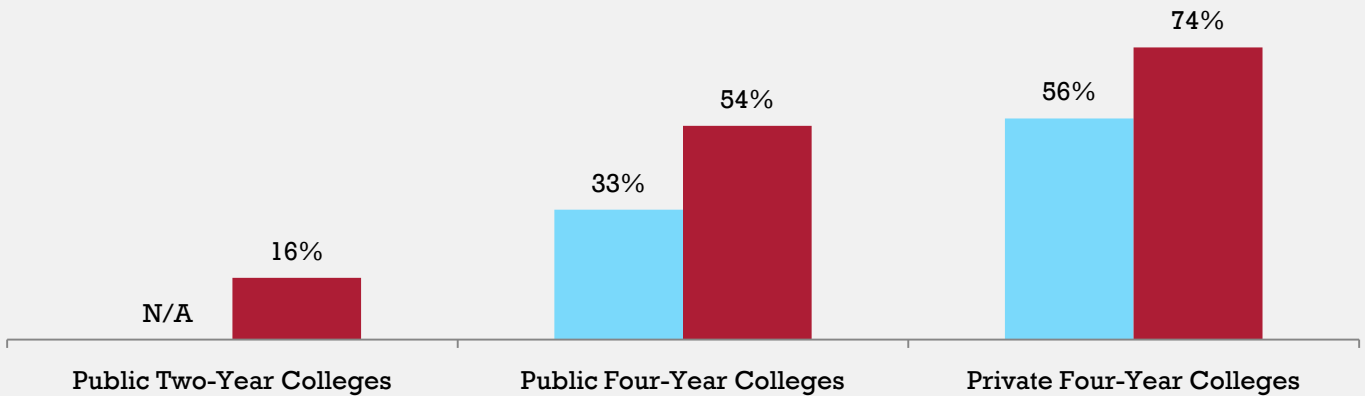
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Graduation Rates

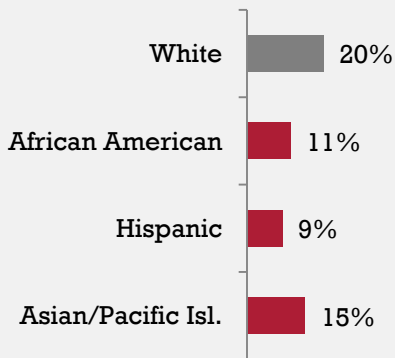
Massachusetts must raise completion rates overall and place extra focus on closing the college attainment gap for underrepresented students.⁴

Graduation Rates by Institution Type

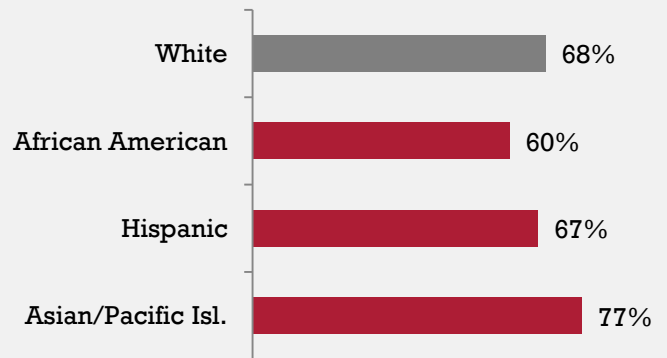
■ On-Time ■ Within 150% of time



Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity: Public 2-Year Colleges (150% time)



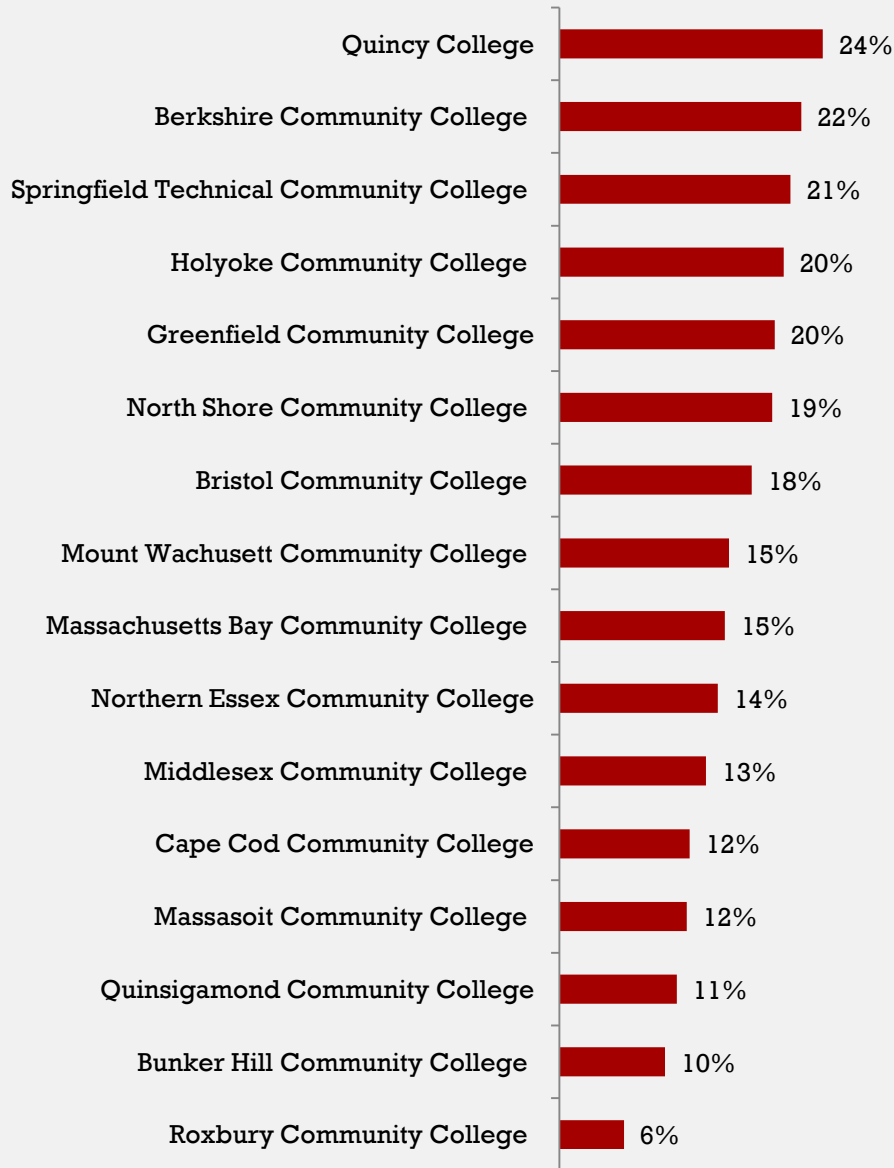
Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity: Public & Private 4-Year Colleges (150% time)



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Graduation Rates by Campus

Public Two-Year Colleges (150% time)

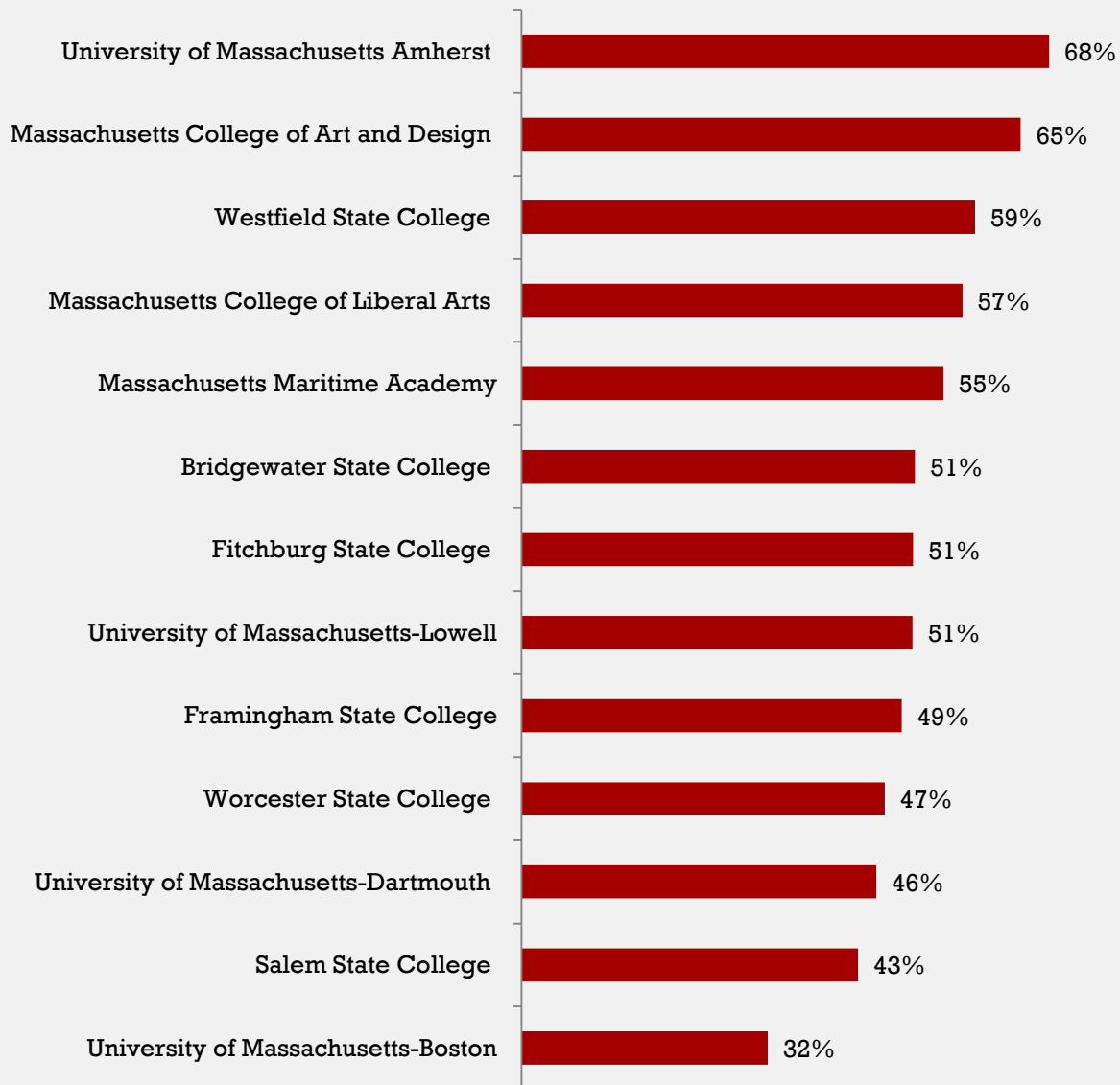


Reported by institutions to NCES Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Graduation rates for two-year colleges are for first-time, full-time students completing certificate or degree within 150% of normal program time. Source: U.S. Department of Education, IPEDS 2007-08 Graduation Rate File; gr2008 Early Release Data File Downloaded 11-05-09; aggregated by NCHEMS.

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Graduation Rates by Campus

Public Four-Year Colleges (150% time)

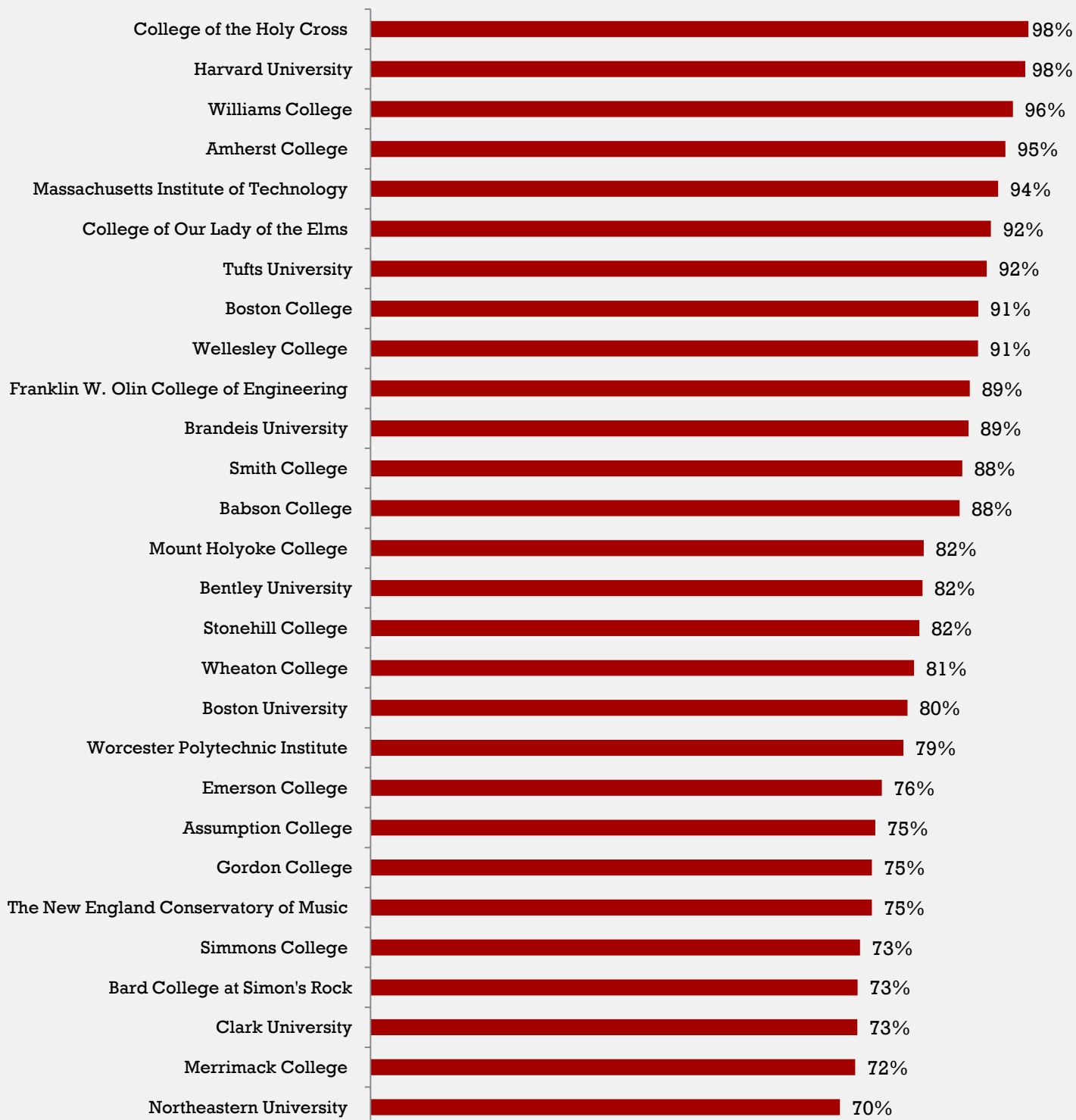


Reported by institutions to NCES Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Graduation rates are for first-time, full-time students completing a bachelor's or equivalent degree within six years. Source: U.S. Department of Education, IPEDS 2007-08 Graduation Rate File; gr2008 Early Release Data File Downloaded 11-05-09; aggregated by NCHEMS.

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Graduation Rates by Campus

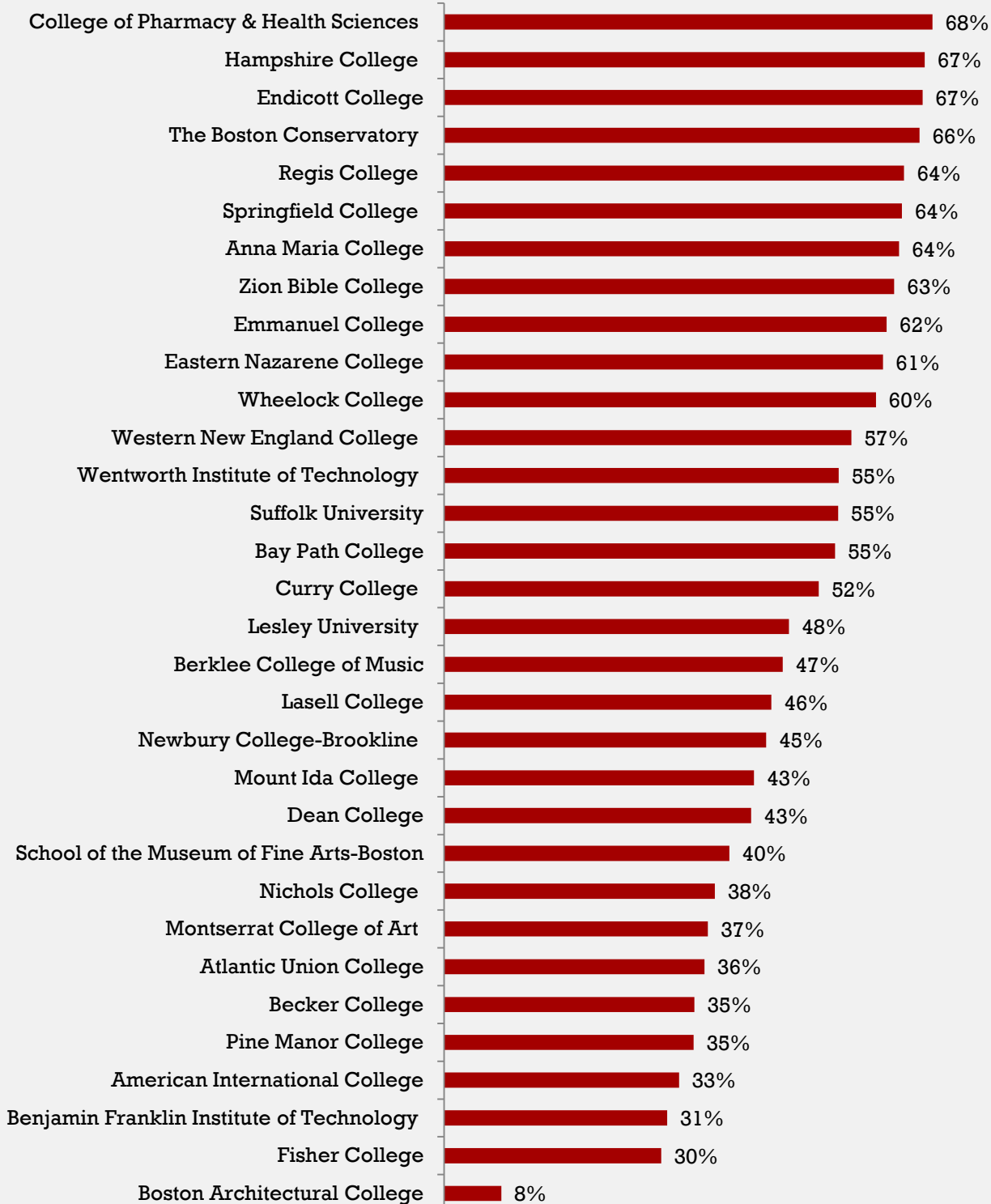
Private Four-Year Colleges (150% time)



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Graduation Rates by Campus

Private Four-Year Colleges, Cont.



Reported by institutions to NCES Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Graduation rates are for first-time, full-time students completing a bachelor's or equivalent degree within six years. Source: U.S. Department of Education, IPEDS 2007-08 Graduation Rate File; gr2008 Early Release Data File Downloaded 11-05-09; aggregated by NCHEMS.

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A Note about Graduation Rates

The graduation rates presented here are based on data reported by institutions to the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). These rates reflect the percentage of first-time, full-time students who complete within 150% of normal program time. (Graduation rates for part-time students are typically much lower.) These data do not capture the graduation rates of transfer students—including those who begin at colleges with some credits already accumulated—or part-time students. Many states have or are developing longitudinal data systems that would be able to measure the graduation rates of all students, including part-time and transfer students.

The IPEDS data are presented here because they are the only nationally available and comparable graduation rates. Complete College America believes that states should make the improvement of data systems to more accurately measure completion rates—and the annual public reporting of those rates—a top priority.

ENDNOTES

¹ Carnevale, T., Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2009. High-growth fields based on national projections of total new and replacement jobs. <http://cew.georgetown.edu/research/jobs/79012.html>

² "College degree" means an associate degree, bachelor's degree, or higher. National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), 2008 (from U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample File.) <http://www.higheredinfo.org/>

³ **The pipeline is a model for illustrative purposes and is not based on longitudinal data.** Pipeline data aggregated by NCHEMS: reflects high school graduation rates, college-going rates, college retention rates, and college graduation rates (using the most recent data available for each metric). For the high school graduation rate, NCHEMS uses NCES Common Core Data and divides high school graduates into 9th graders four years earlier. Future revisions will incorporate the cohort-based HS graduation rates that conform to the definitions of the NGA Graduation Compact (for states where those data are available), which are more accurate than the current ratio. The pipeline represents the number of students who graduate from high school within four years, enter college the immediate following fall, return for their sophomore year the following year, and graduate from college. Two-year college graduation rates reflect credentials earned within 150% of expected program time, and include certificates awarded for programs of less than two years; two years but less than four years; and associate degrees. Four-year graduation rates reflect **on-time completers** of bachelor's or equivalent degrees (**within four years**). The data do not account for transfers across institutions. <http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?measure=72>

⁴ Aggregated by NCHEMS from IPEDS 2007-08 Graduation Rate File; gr2008 Early Release Data File, downloaded 11-05-09. Graduation rates are reported by institutions to NCES based on adjusted cohort of first-time, full-time students. Two-year graduation rates include certificates completed within 150% of normal program time in addition to associate degrees completed within three years. IPEDS does not report two-year (or "on-time") completion rates for two-year colleges. Graduation rates by race aggregated by NCHEMS from IPEDS 2006-07 Graduation Rate File. Graduation rates for Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native students are included only if those populations represent greater than 5% of the adjusted cohort. Disaggregated graduation rates are excluded for populations with an adjusted revised cohort size of less than 30, even if that cohort represents greater than 5% of the total entering cohort. Note that 2008 overall graduation rates may be higher than rates reflected in the disaggregated data from 2007 based on differences in graduation rates between years. In each instance, "Private" refers to private not-for-profit institutions only. Graduation rates by campus are presented for Title IV, degree-granting institutions with an adjusted revised cohort greater than 30.