

Statewide Articulation Agreement— Effective and Comprehensive

Summary

Articulation between The Florida College System and the State University System (SUS) is both effective and efficient. Florida's Articulation agreement is designed to help students who earn an Associate of Arts (AA) degree transfer seamlessly to the SUS. The data show that Florida's public universities continue to provide access for AA transfer students and that once enrolled, these students are generally successful. The key findings that demonstrate the effectiveness and efficiency of the articulation system include:

- The admission rate for SUS applicants who have an AA degree is about 76% as compared to 57% for students starting college at a state university.
- Once enrolled, AA transfers tend to have comparable grade point averages (GPA) for students who started at a state university, with 53% maintaining a grade point average over 3.0.
- AA transfers also take similar numbers of courses for graduation and have comparable graduation rates.

Introduction

Florida's "2+2" statewide articulation agreement is among the most comprehensive articulation agreements in the nation.¹ The agreement guarantees students who graduate with an AA degree or selected Associate in Science (AS) degrees from a public community college, college, junior college, or state college admission to one of the eleven state universities, though not necessarily the student's first choice. It also guarantees that at least 60 credit hours will transfer so that students will be admitted to the upper division as juniors.² This improves student transfer and progression between the state's colleges and public universities thereby reducing the time it takes students to earn a baccalaureate degree. It also saves the state money since the tuition and fees are lower at the college level.

1. The statewide articulation agreement was established in 1971 and codified in Section 1007.23, Florida Statutes, and Chapter 6A-10.024, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.)/Board of Governors (BOG) Articulation Regulation from "Statewide Postsecondary Articulation Manual" by the Florida Department of Education Office of K-20 Articulation at <http://www.fldoe.org/articulation/pdf/statewide-postsecondary-articulation-manual.pdf>

2. Admission to limited access degree programs is based on meeting competitive entrance requirements.

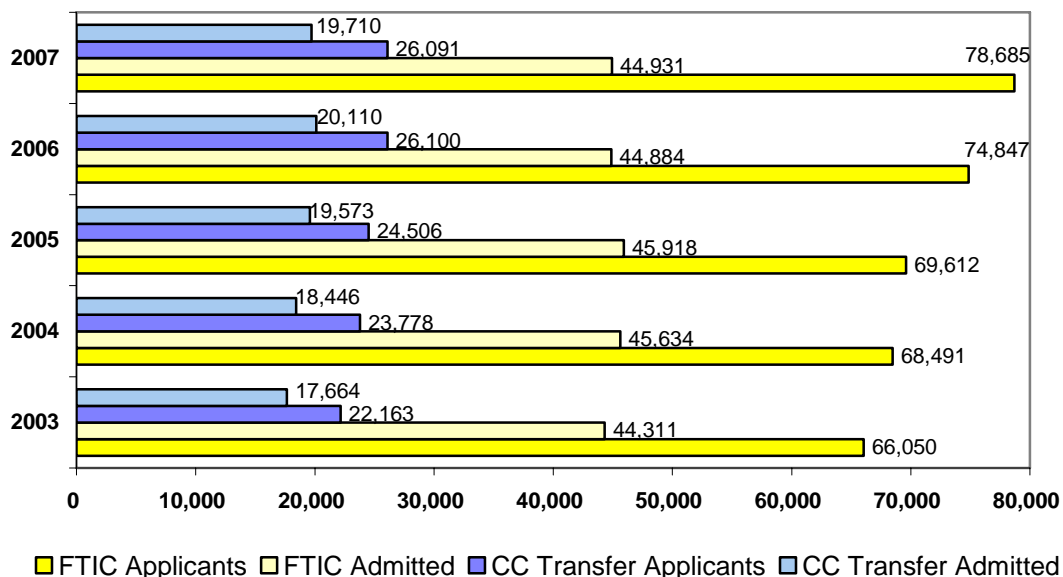
With the establishment of The Florida College System and the increasing number of community colleges offering baccalaureates, it is important to reinforce the state’s commitment to the 2+2 guarantee. With just 1% of the total baccalaureate degrees awarded in 2006-07, The Florida College System does not have the capacity or desire to reduce the need for AA transfer slots within the SUS.³ In addition to limited capacity, by law, The Florida College System baccalaureate program offerings will not provide the range of disciplines and programs that are offered at the state universities.⁴

Admissions for AA Transfer Students Remains Steady

Exhibit 1 compares the number of students who applied to a school within the State University System with the number who were admitted between 2003 and 2007. Over time, the number of First Time in College (FTIC) applicants has increased from 66,000 to almost 79,000. As spaces at the university level become capped due to budget limitations and demand increases, state universities may respond by tightening admission standards. The data in the exhibit show that the admission rate for FTIC applicants dropped from 67.1% to 57.1% over a five year period.

During the same time, the number of all community college transfer students has also increased and the admission rate has decreased. The growth rate for transfer students is not as high as for FTIC students and so the consequences for admission are also not as severe. The number of transfer applicants has grown from 22,000 to 26,000 while the acceptance rate declined more modestly from 79.7% to 75.5%.

**EXHIBIT 1: SUS UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS*
COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFERS VS. SUS NATIVE STUDENTS 2003 – 2007**



SOURCE: DIVISION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES ANALYSIS OF DATA PROVIDED BY THE FLORIDA BOARD OF GOVERNORS.
* "CC TRANSFER" INCLUDES COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFERS FROM ALL CATEGORIES (AA, AS, AND NO ASSOCIATE DEGREE TRANSFERS). "FTIC" INCLUDES SUS NATIVES AND STUDENTS WHO TRANSFER WITHIN THE SUS. THESE ARE UNDUPLICATED NUMBERS.

3. 2008 Fact Book, Report for the Community College System
4. Baccalaureate programs are limited to education, nursing, and applied sciences.

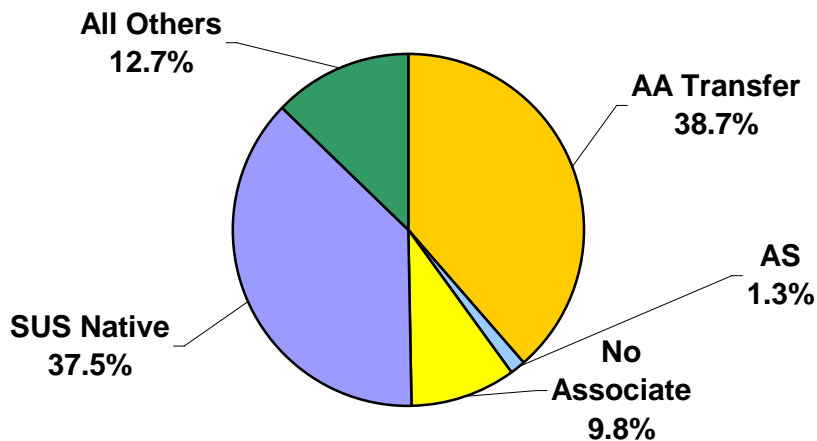
The higher admission rate for AA transfer students underscores the fact that state universities continue to provide preferential admission under the 2+2 system and that AA transfer students consistently meet the admission requirements.

The Board of Governors’ Regulation 6.004⁵ states that AA graduates shall receive priority admission over out-of-state students. The rule, however, also allows for admissions restrictions where curriculum, space, and fiscal limitations exist. As universities grapple with budget reductions and increased demands, this may lead to reductions in the number of college students admitted to upper division ranks of the State University System.

AA Transfer Students are a Major Proportion of the SUS Upper Division Population

The State University System admits more FTIC native students than AA transfers. However, all AA transfers enter into the upper division as juniors and some portion of FTIC students do not reach that point. As a result, when looking at just upper division students, Exhibit 2 shows that AA transfer students are a larger proportion of the SUS upper division than SUS natives. In 2007-08, 65,489 students who earned AA degrees at community colleges were enrolled in the SUS upper division. This accounted for 38.7% of all upper division students. For the same year, SUS natives, students who started college in the SUS, represented 37.5% of the upper division population. The remaining 23.8% were transfer students with AS degrees (1.3%); those who transferred without an associate’s degree (9.8%) or other types of transfers, including students who transferred between SUS institutions (12.7%).

**EXHIBIT 2⁶: 2007-08 SUS UPPER DIVISION STUDENT BODY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE PREPARATION AND NATIVE STATUS**



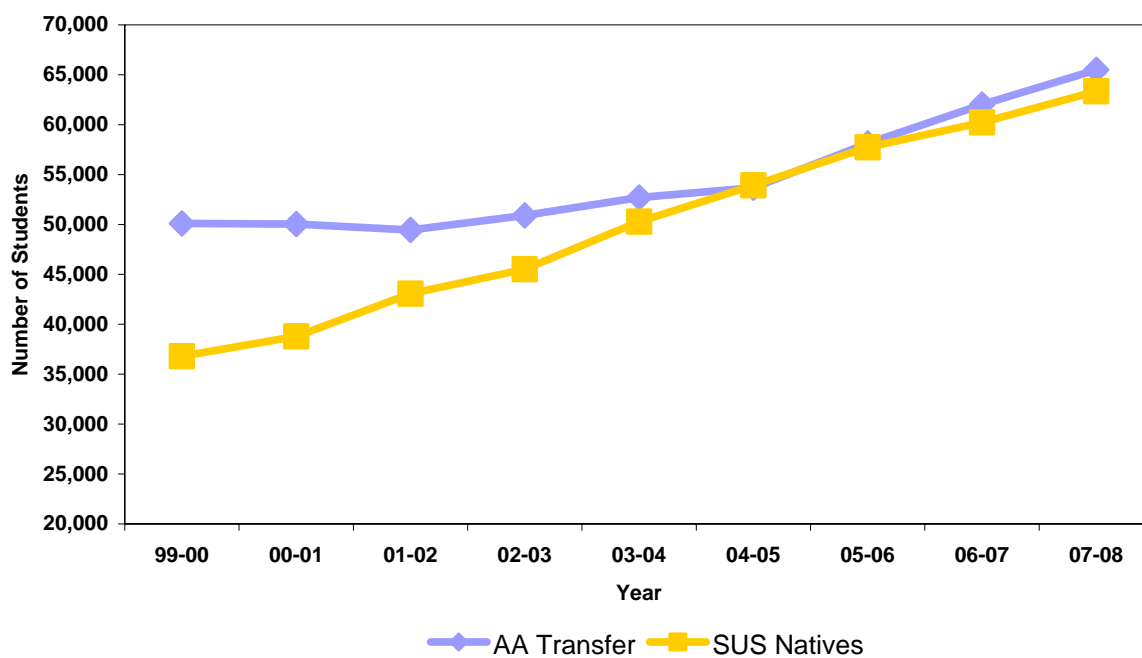
SOURCE: DIVISION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES ANALYSIS OF DATA PROVIDED BY THE FLORIDA BOARD OF GOVERNORS.

5. Board of Governors Regulation 6.004 can be viewed in full at http://www.fblog.org/documents_regulations/regulations/6.004.pdf

6. “AA Transfer” is an upper division student in an SUS institution who graduated with an Associate in Arts degree from a Florida community college, entered the SUS institution and remained in the same SUS institution. “AS” is an upper division student in an SUS institution who graduated with an Associate in Science degree from a Florida community college, entered the SUS institution and remained in the same SUS institution. “No Associate” is an upper division student in an SUS institution who transferred from a Florida community college without an Associate degree and remained in the same SUS institution. “SUS Native” is an upper division student in an SUS institution who began the baccalaureate program in the SUS institution and remained in the same SUS institution. “All Others” is an upper division student in an SUS institution who does not fit in the other four categories. This category includes students who transfer within the SUS and transfer from out of state.

Although AA transfers represent a significant portion of the students in the SUS upper division, their relative size has declined over time. Exhibit 3 illustrates that the gap between the number of AA degree transfers and SUS native students in the upper division disappeared between 1999-00 and 2004-05 and has widened slightly since then. In 1999-00, 36,798 (29.2%) of upper division students were SUS natives while AA degree transfers made up 39.7% (50,101). The number of SUS native students has increased dramatically while AA transfers have grown at smaller pace. In 2004-05, SUS native students slightly exceeded AA transfers and currently the number of AA transfers in the upper division just slightly exceeds that of SUS natives.

EXHIBIT 3⁷ : TREND IN SUS UPPER DIVISION ENROLLMENT



SOURCE: DIVISION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES ANALYSIS OF DATA PROVIDED BY THE FLORIDA BOARD OF GOVERNORS.

AA Transfer Students are Academically Successful

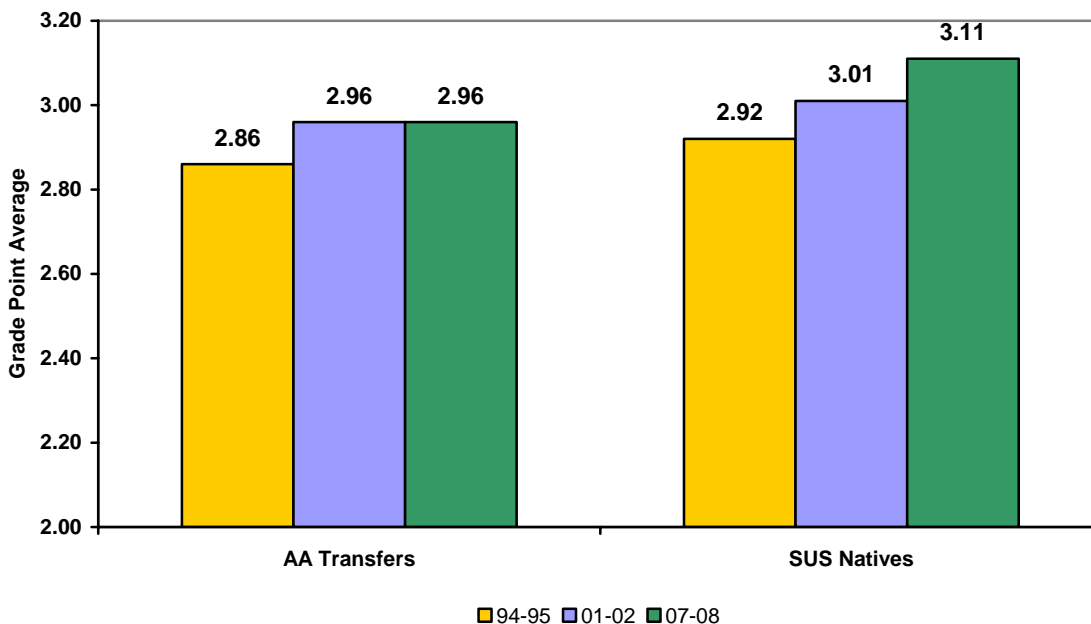
Once enrolled, AA transfer students perform well in their coursework, with half (53%) maintaining a 3.0 or better grade point average. Exhibit 4 shows that the average cumulative GPA for community college AA transfers was comparable to that of SUS natives. In general, AA transfer students have a “B” average in the upper division coursework while SUS natives typically have a “B+” average. In 2007-08 the GPA difference was only 0.15 on a four-point scale.

Several possible factors could contribute to the slight differences in average GPAs. These include differences in student population characteristics such as age, family and work obligations, high school preparation, and the length of time an individual has been out of school. The Bright Futures scholarship’s

7. Total number of upper division students in 2007-08 was 169,121.

academic requirements and the requirement for maintaining a minimum GPA may also play a role in the increasing average for native students.⁸ However, the most likely explanation is the increasing competitiveness of admissions for SUS native students. Exhibit 1 shows that admission rates for SUS native students have declined in the last few years far more than for AA transfers. This means that, on average, the State University System has become more selective for native students and this in turn has likely led to higher admissions requirements and ultimately higher GPAs.

EXHIBIT 4: AVERAGE CUMULATIVE GPA FOR SUS UPPER DIVISION STUDENTS



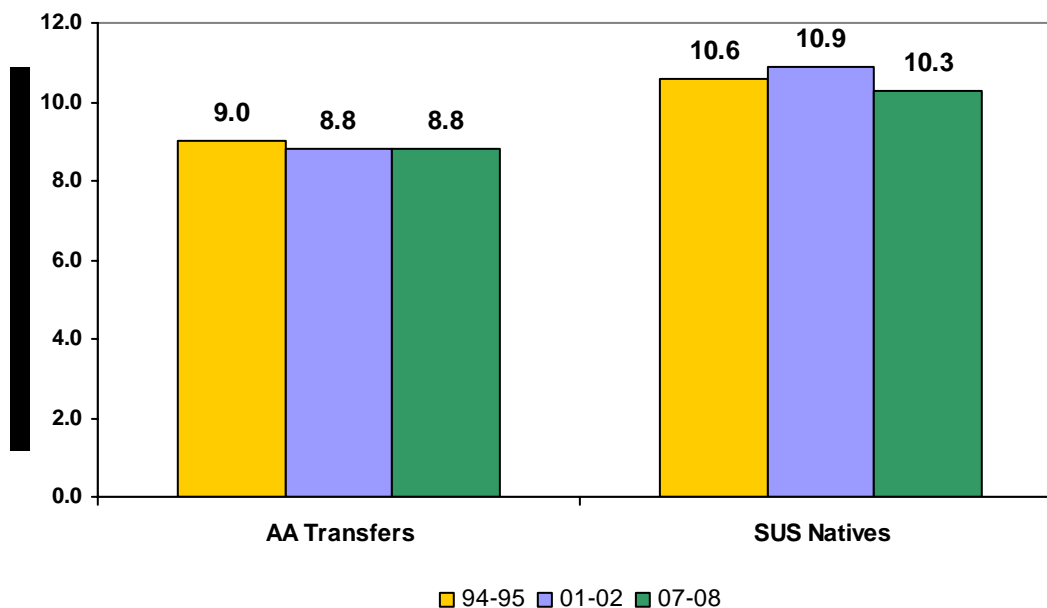
SOURCE: DIVISION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES.

AA Transfer Students Take Slight Fewer Credit Hours per Term

Exhibit 5 shows the average credit hours taken by AA transfer students and SUS natives. AA transfers tend to take an average of 1.5 fewer semester hours per term when compared to SUS natives. This equates to one less course per academic year. Community college students are more likely to be non-traditional students who work part-time. The difference in the average number of Student Semester Hours (SSH) taken per term has remained stable for both AA transfer students and SUS natives.

8. See OPPAGA Report No. 03-17, “Bright Futures Contributes to Improved College Preparation, Affordability, and Enrollment” by the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability at <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/reports/educ/r03-17s.html>

EXHIBIT 5: AVERAGE STUDENT SEMESTER HOURS PER TERM FOR SUS UPPER DIVISION STUDENTS



SOURCE: DIVISION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES.

AA Transfer Students Graduate with Similar Total Credit Hours

Successful articulation of community college transfers relies on the receiving institution honoring common prerequisite requirements for degree programs.⁹ Previous studies¹⁰ examining the issue of excess hours concluded that student characteristics and inadequate advising as the main reasons community college students accumulated surplus hours. In response to these studies, the Department has made improvements to the AA Transfer Evaluation available on FACTS.org. Students can access specific course information and university requirements for baccalaureate degree programs and the system indicates where requirements have been met through courses taken at the community college. In addition to better advising, there is anecdotal evidence that university tracking or mapping advising systems may facilitate native student progression in ways unavailable to the transfer student.

As shown in Exhibit 6, AA transfer students and SUS native students graduate with very similar total credit hours. AA transfer students average 138.0 hours while native students average 135.1. This means

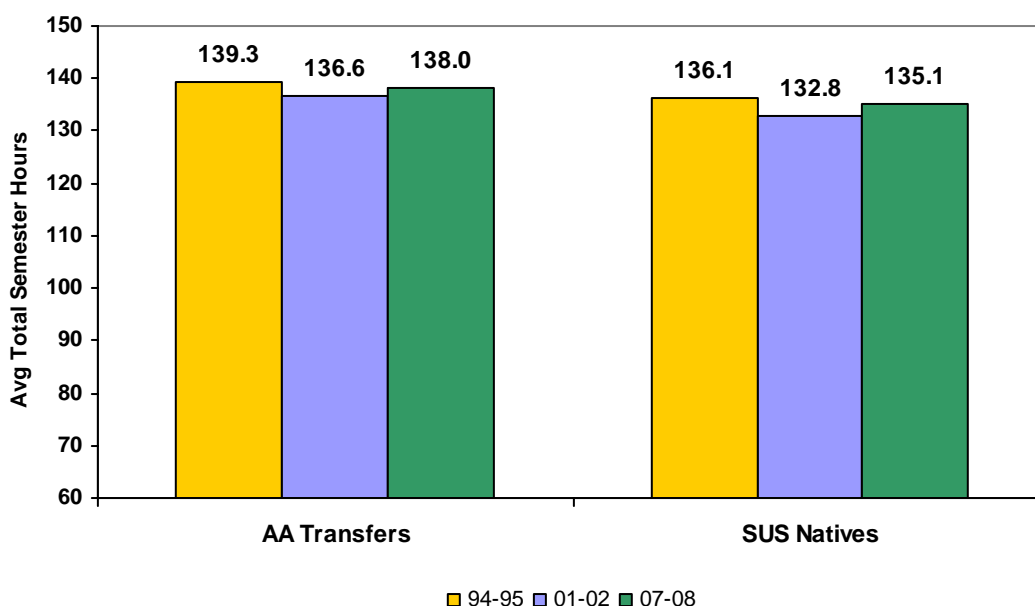
9. See OPPAGA Report No. 02-05, "Articulation Works for Most Community College Transfer Students, but Some Problems Continue" and Report No. 08-11, "Inconsistent Implementation of Common Prerequisites Creates Barriers to Effective 2+2 Articulation" by the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability at <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/reports/topic/eductop.html>.

10. See OPPAGA Report No. 05-30, "Excess Hours at Community Colleges Warrant Attention by the Department of Education and the Legislature" by the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability at <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/reports/pdf/0530rpt.pdf> and Florida Department of Education Program Review, "Policies and Procedures that Reduce the Amount of Excess Hours Accumulated by Community College Students" by the Division of Community Colleges at http://www.fldoe.org/cc/Vision/PDFs/PR2005_06.pdf.

that, on average, the AA transfer students take just one additional class when compared to native SUS students.¹¹ This is a strong indicator of success for Florida’s 2+2 system.

However, differences in academic program requirements can still create impediments to community college transfer students progressing through their upper division programs. For example, SUS graduates must complete two years of one foreign language. The Board of Governors appropriately recommends students complete this requirement in high school or at the community college prior to transfer to the SUS. Since there is no foreign language requirement for the AA degree, it is possible for students to earn their AA and then have to meet the requirement at a university.

EXHIBIT 6: AVERAGE TOTAL SEMESTER HOURS TO DEGREE



SOURCE: DIVISION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES.

AA Transfer Students Have Comparable Graduation Rates

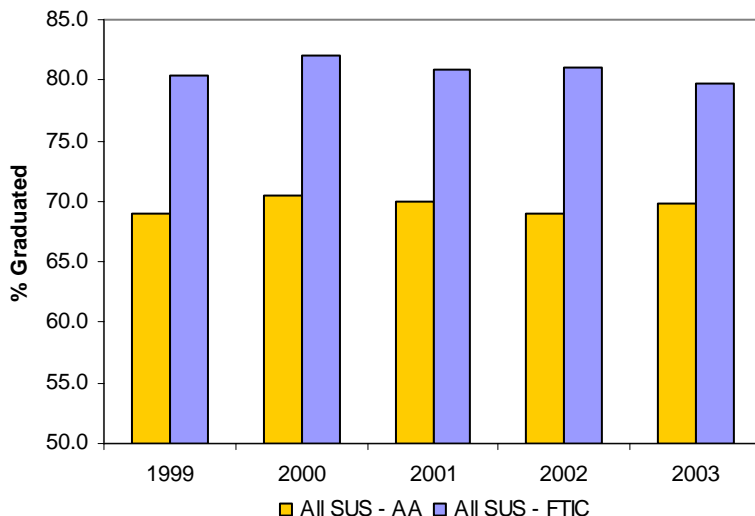
Graduation rates are a significant measure of success both for articulation between the sectors and for the preparation of the community college students. By definition, AA transfer students have already completed at least 60 credit hours and have been admitted to the upper division at a state university. Comparing AA transfers to SUS native students requires limiting the analysis to those who have also reached the upper division. This creates an appropriate comparison group since both have completed at least 60 credit hours.

Exhibit 7 shows the four-year graduation rate for all students reaching the upper division. The rate for SUS natives is typically about 80% while the rate for transfer students tends to be about 70%. However, as noted previously, community college students typically take slightly fewer courses per semester and are

11. Baccalaureate degrees in the SUS are generally 120 credit hours though some programs require more.

more likely to attend college part-time. For 2003, 94% of the SUS natives were enrolled full-time as compared to 64% of the AA transfer students. This will increase their average time to degree.

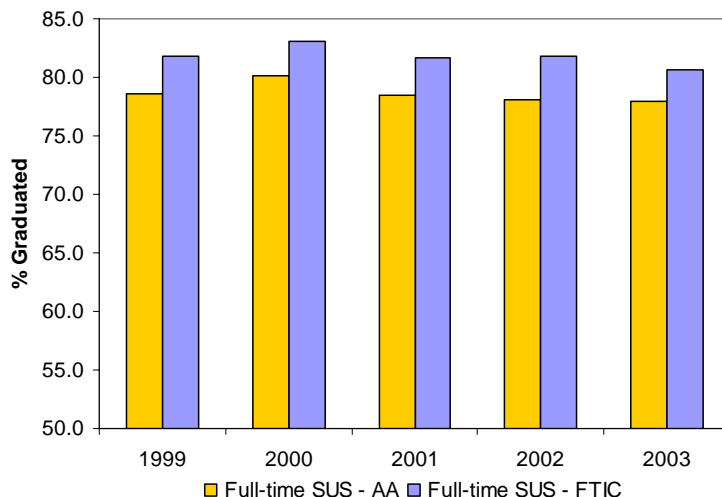
EXHIBIT 7: FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE FOR FULL- AND PART-TIME AA TRANSFER AND SUS NATIVE UPPER DIVISION STUDENTS



SOURCE: DIVISION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES ANALYSIS OF DATA PROVIDED BY THE FLORIDA BOARD OF GOVERNORS.

Exhibit 8 shows the same four-year graduation rate but this time it includes only full-time students (students taking 12 or more credit hours). Averaging about 81%, the graduation rates for SUS native students do not change much when compared to Exhibit 8. But the graduation rates for AA transfer students increase significantly, averaging about 78%, reducing the gap to three percentage points.

EXHIBIT 8: FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE FOR FULL-TIME AA TRANSFER AND SUS NATIVE UPPER DIVISION STUDENTS



SOURCE: DIVISION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES ANALYSIS OF DATA PROVIDED BY THE FLORIDA BOARD OF GOVERNORS.

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