



# **Student Enrollment, Retention, and Success in the Florida Community College System**

**Data Trend #28**

**Jim Horne, Commissioner**

**January 2004**

**J. David Armstrong, Jr., Chancellor**

Florida's community colleges provide a broad range of programs and services, designed to meet the changing needs of their students and local communities. Our institutions serve diverse groups of students who enter college with various goals, backgrounds, abilities, and skill levels. While individuals may enroll for different reasons, Florida's community colleges strive to empower students to achieve in the classroom and succeed in their personal and professional lives.

Many students who attend community colleges embrace multiple roles in their families, at work, with friends, and in activities that compete with their academic goals. Unfortunately, due to a complex interaction of these competing factors, some students leave college before achieving their goals. Other students may leave college after attending briefly for personal enrichment, or to accomplish predetermined objectives that did not include completion of a degree or certificate program. As a result, community colleges have been the most likely to experience the highest and most sustained student attrition rates in postsecondary education, sparking scrutiny from critics of these open-door institutions. The general profile of a typical community college student – employed in a full-time or part-time job, living off campus, and enrolled in classes on a part-time basis – makes student recruitment, engagement, and retention difficult for community colleges. Although community colleges contend with competing interests and responsibilities in students' lives, recent data prove that both the community colleges and students are achieving many of their goals.

***SREB data on first-year retention rates for the Fall 1998 cohort shows Florida has the highest retention rate (76%) of all 10 states reporting and a higher retention rate than the overall SREB rate (68%). Georgia, the state with the second highest rate (69%), is 8% below that of Florida. Six states have not yet reported retention rates for this cohort.***

***Florida's Community Colleges Recognized Nationally for Helping Students Succeed.*** In the most recent annual report (released June 23, 2003) of the top 100 associate degree-producing institutions by *Community College Week*, five of Florida's community colleges ranked in the top 10 institutions nationally for associate degrees conferred during the 2001-02 academic year. Among those institutions recognized, Miami-Dade College (4,422) and Valencia Community College (3,626) ranked first and second, respectively, for total associate degrees awarded in 2001-02.

**Table I**  
**Top 10 Associate Degree-Producing Institutions\***

2001-02 Rank	Institution	Number of AA Degrees
1	Miami-Dade College (FL)	4,422
2	Valencia Community College (FL)	3,626
3	Nassau Community College (NY)	2,876
4	Brigham Young University – Idaho (ID)	2,808
5	Salt Lake Community College (UT)	2,556
6	Broward Community College (FL)	2,534
7	Suffolk County Community College (NY)	2,494
8	San Joaquin Delta College (CA)	2,339
9	St. Petersburg College (FL)	2,304
10	<small>munity C</small> Santa Fe Community College (FL)	2,217

\*The Department of Education and Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Education recognize that Florida Community College at Jacksonville (FCCJ) was absent from the *Community College Week* article. FCCJ would have ranked as number 8 in the top 10.

***Florida's Community Colleges Recognized Nationally for Increasing Access to Education.*** According to research conducted in 2002 by the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, minority students are less likely to enroll in four-year institutions and more likely to enroll in community colleges to pursue postsecondary education. In addition, the Pell Institute also reported that factors such as lower entry skills, minority status, lack of social and academic fit on campus, and reduced availability of financial aid from grants contribute to low retention and subsequent attrition among diverse student populations. Therefore, community colleges face unique challenges meeting the needs of minority students. As leaders in expanding access to education and providing opportunities for historically disadvantaged students, Florida's community colleges proved their responsiveness in meeting minority students' needs during the 2001-02 academic year. In a report of the top 100 institutions that awarded associate degrees to minority students, *Community College Week* recognized three of Florida's community colleges in the top five, including Miami-Dade College (3,645), Broward Community College (1,138), and Valencia Community College (1,127).

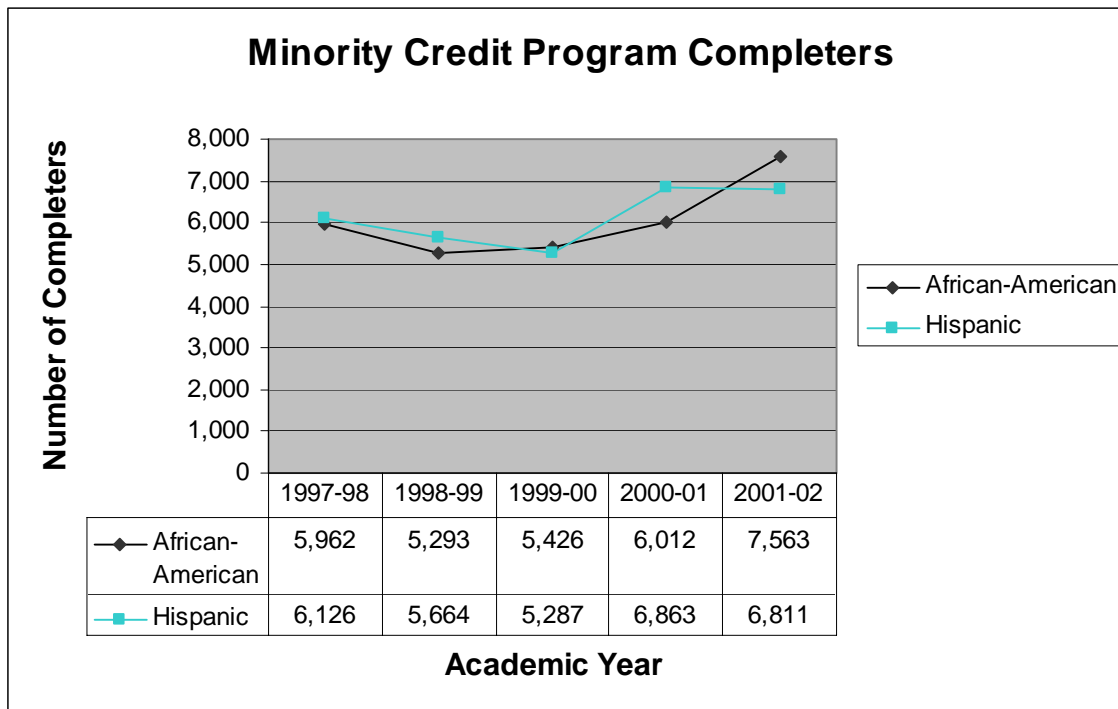
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**Table II**  
**Top Five Institutions that Awarded Associate Degrees to Minority Students**

2001-02 Rank	Institution	Number of AA/AS Degrees
1	Miami-Dade College (FL)	3,645
2	CUNY Borough of Manhattan CC (NY)	1,289
3	San Joaquin Delta College (CA)	1,150
4	Broward Community College (FL)	1,138
5	Valencia Community College (FL)	1,127

\*Source: *Community College Week* (released June 23, 2003)

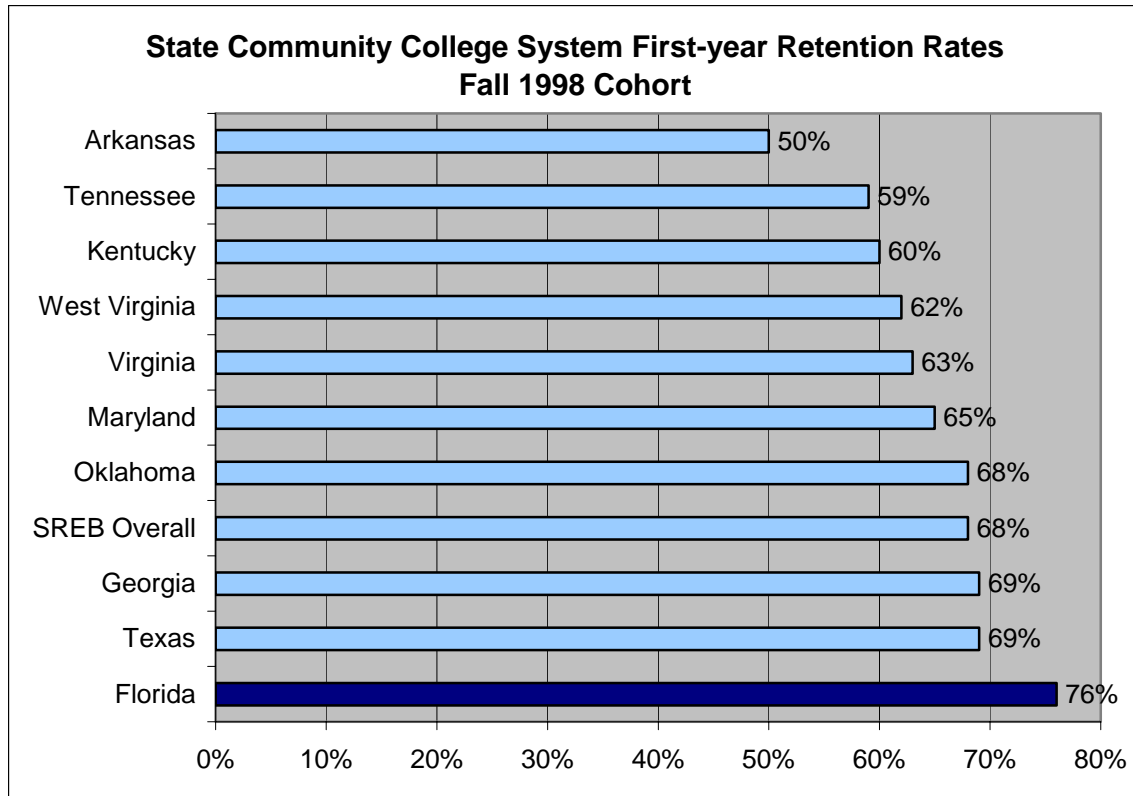
Despite barriers to enrollment, retention, and success for minority students, since 1998 the number of completers in programs that lead to an associate degree or certificate has increased by 27 percent for African-American students – from 5,962 in 1998 to 7,563 in 2002, and 11 percent for Hispanic students – from 6,126 in 1998 to 6,811 in 2002.



\*Source: Florida Community College System *Fact Book* (Released March, 2003)

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***Florida's Community Colleges Lead the Southeast in Student Retention.*** Results from a recent survey conducted by the Southern Regional Education Board, a nonprofit research organization that monitors education institutions in 16 states, found that Florida's community colleges retain students at a better rate than 9 other southern states and the SREB overall. According to the report, 76 percent of students who first entered a community college in 1998 were retained after their first year of enrollment. In addition, 30 percent of those students still enrolled completed a degree or certificate program within three years, ranking Florida first in the southeast region for credit program completion. Moreover, the graduation rate does not reflect those students who may have completed their academic program of study after transferring to another institution.

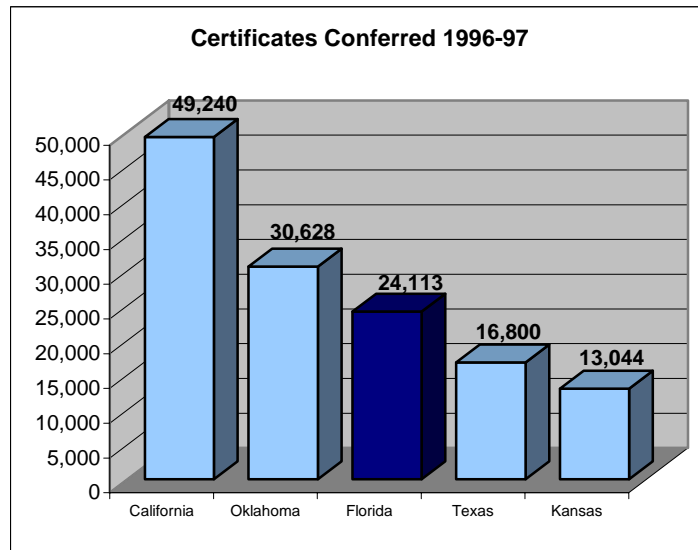
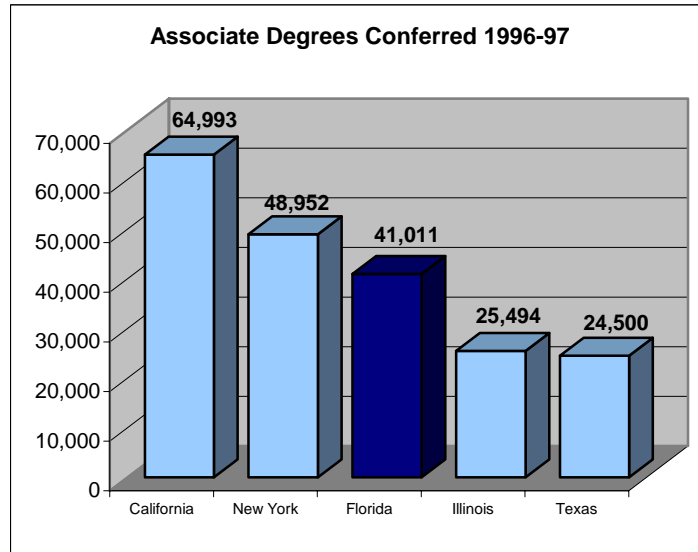


\*Source: SREB *Fact Book Bulletin* (Released January, 2003)

\*Data not available for Alabama, Delaware, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee at time of publication in Bulletin.

***Helping Students Succeed is Nothing New for Florida's Community Colleges.*** In the National Profile of Community Colleges released in 2000, the American Association of Community Colleges reported that nationally, community colleges award nearly 500,000 associate degrees and 200,000 certificates each year. According to the report, Florida (41,011) ranked third nationally in 1996-97 behind California (64,993) and New York (48,952) for associate degrees conferred, and third (24,113) nationally behind California (49,240) and Oklahoma (30,628) for certificates awarded.

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\*Source: AACC National Profile of Community Colleges (Released in 2000)

***The Most Successful Community College Students are Ready for College.*** Recent findings based on information submitted via the Community College Annual Student Database, Division of Colleges and Universities Data Course File, and FETPIP follow-up files indicate that students who enter college prepared for college coursework are more likely to graduate, transfer to the university system, or reenroll than students who require remediation. Information used was based upon a five-year longitudinal study of the fall 1993 first-time-in-college student cohort.

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**Table III**  
**Awards Earned, Transfers and Enrollment of College Preparatory Students By Areas Required**  
**Based upon Fall 1993 FTIC with Complete Placement Scores**

Status	Academic Success		Employed		Successful Outcome	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
College Ready	7,392	57.6%	8,298	64.7%	10,335	80.6%
Need only Mathematics	3,383	38.2%	5,623	63.5%	6,535	73.8%
Reading	726	56.4%	867	67.4%	1,055	82.0%
Writing	703	46.0%	1,003	65.6%	1,186	77.6%
Need Mathematics and Reading	694	37.7%	1,216	66.1%	1,381	75.0%
Mathematics and Writing	771	30.8%	1,571	62.7%	1,786	71.2%
Reading and Writing	822	48.6%	1,067	63.1%	1,308	77.3%
Need all three areas	1,510	29.8%	3,463	68.4%	3,816	75.3%
Needing any remediation	8,609	37.8%	14,810	65.0%	17,067	74.9%
<b>Total Cohort</b>	<b>16,001</b>	<b>44.9%</b>	<b>23,108</b>	<b>64.9%</b>	<b>27,402</b>	<b>77.0%</b>

Results based upon information contained in the Student Data Base for 1993-94 through 1997-98 and various PBPB files created from the SUS SDCF.

Employment based upon a Fall 1997 follow-up of the Original Cohort by FETPIP.

***Florida's Community Colleges Continue to Improve Student Retention and Success.*** Florida's community colleges offer students a multitude of learning opportunities. Whether seeking professional training, personal enrichment, or completion of the first two years of college, our colleges support students of different backgrounds who possess varying skills and abilities to help them achieve their goals. To continue improvement in student retention and success, Florida's community colleges will participate in the first statewide implementation of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) in the spring of 2004. Using findings from innovative strategies and cutting edge techniques like CCSSE to improve student engagement and retention, our community college system will continue to be a leader in fostering student achievement, and the cultivation of a responsible citizenry and productive workforce.

To find more information on the data presented here, please visit the following websites:

Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) — <http://www.sreb.org>

Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) — <http://www.ccsse.org>

American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) — <http://www.aacc.nche.edu>

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