Fundamentals First

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Gordon State College
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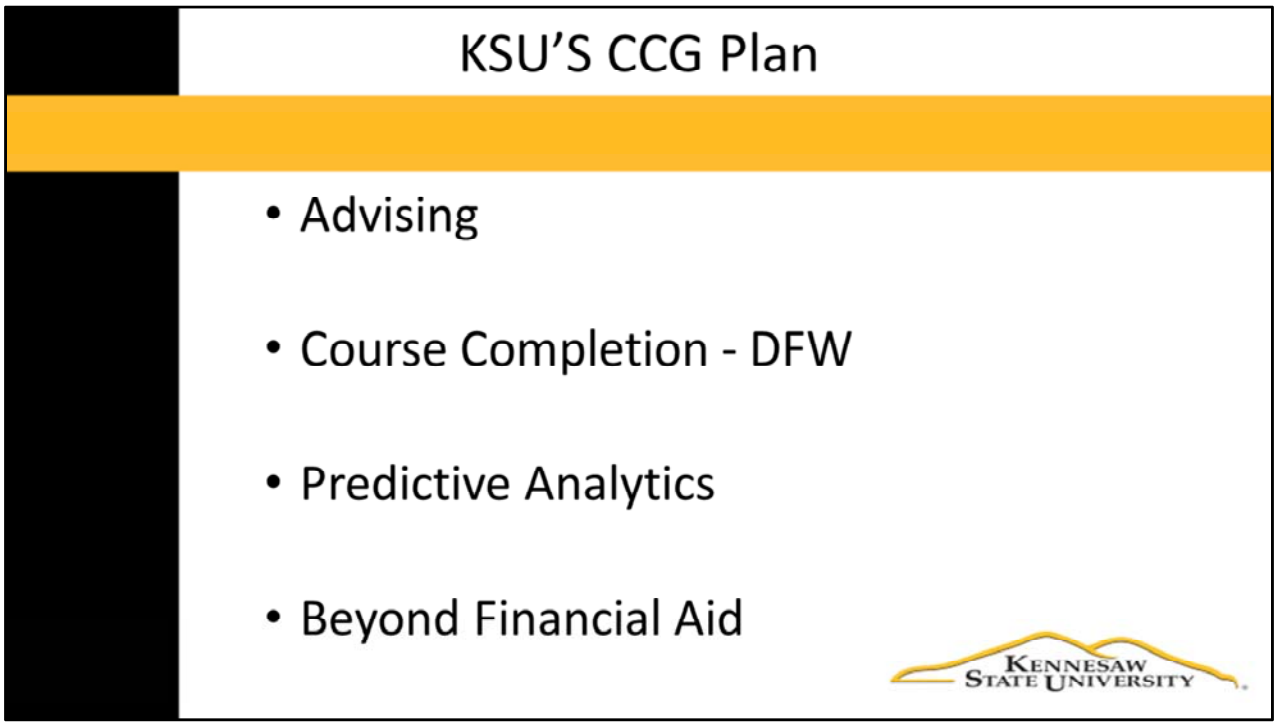
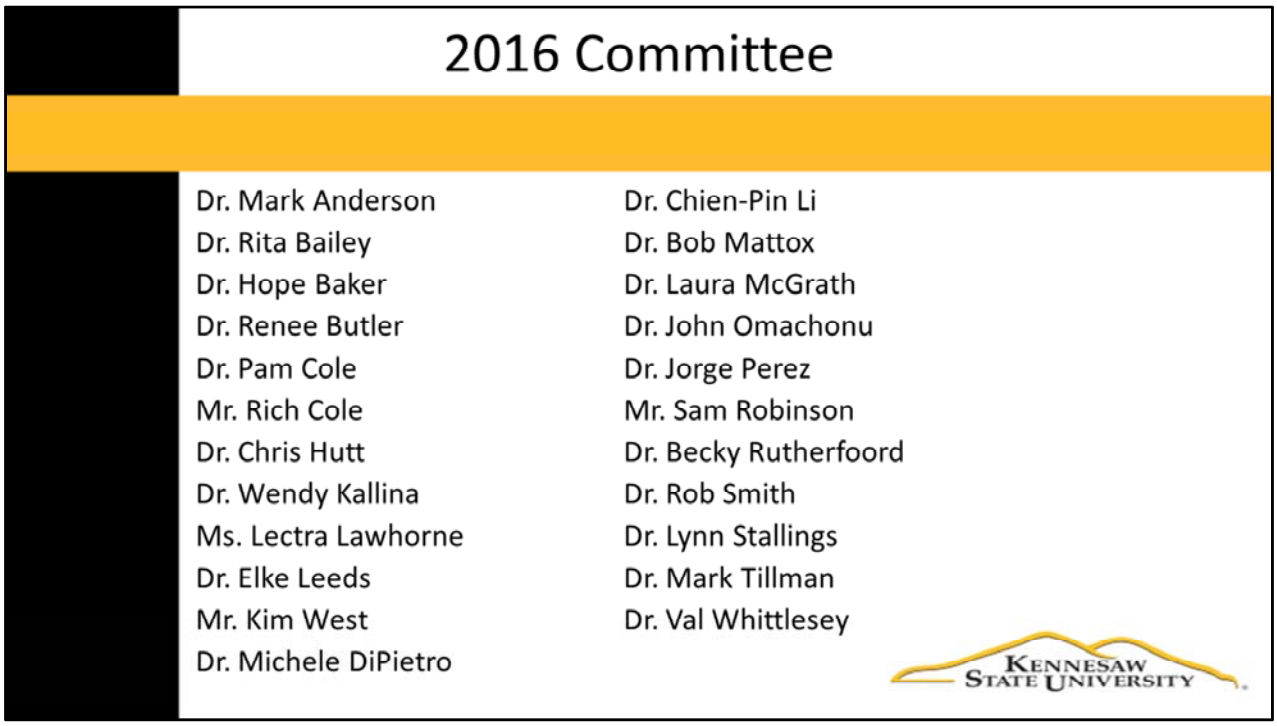
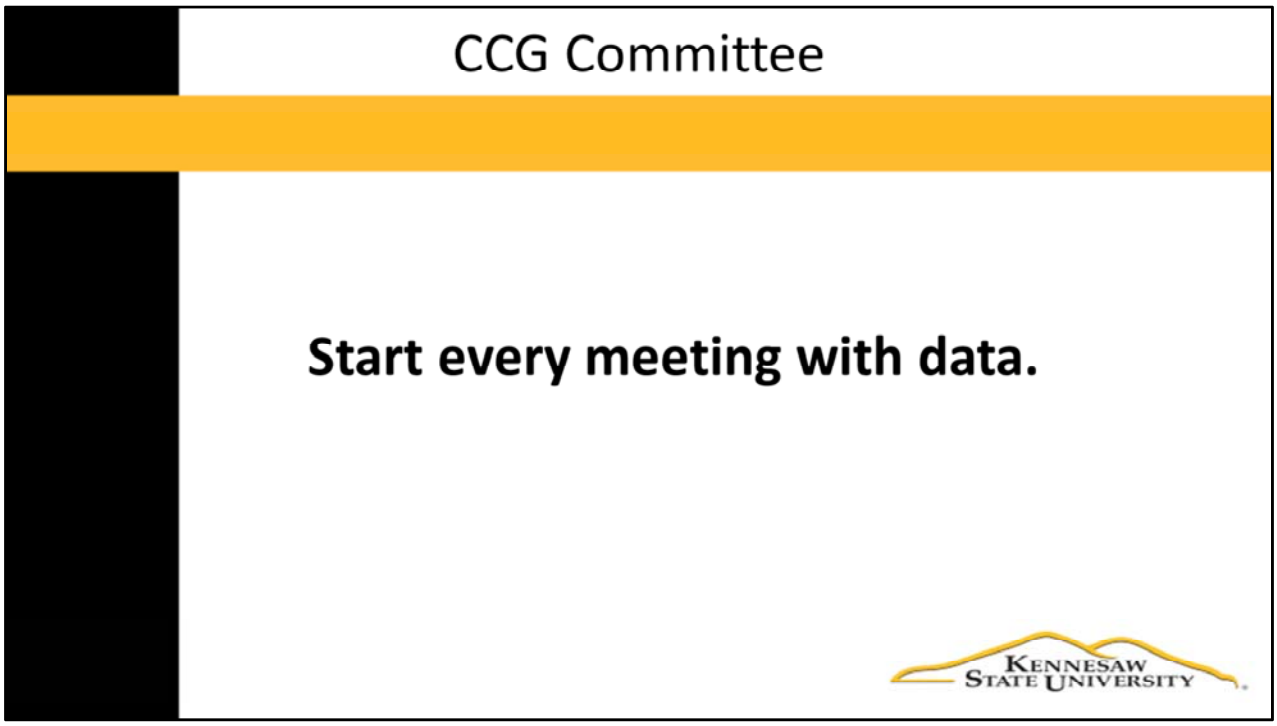


- KSU's 2016 CCG plan was organized into four categories.

1) Advising was restructured with a goal to provide students with superior proactive advising throughout their academic career.
2) For students, earning a "D" or an "F" or withdrawing with a "W" in a course means additional time and tuition costs. For the institution, a high DFW rate in gateway courses can contribute to bottlenecks as students who need to repeat the course compete with students who need to take the course to stay on track. KSU is participating in two national initiatives (G2C and RFY), planning an early alert system, and continuing the Supplemental Instruction program to address high DFW courses.
3) KSU is using Ad Astra Platinum Analytics to facilitate data-informed academic course scheduling by leveraging data in Banner and DegreeWorks. EAB-SSC Campus is designed to support data-driven advising efforts that enable proactive, informed interventions with at-risk and off-path students. EAB-APS is designed to provide information to multiple stakeholders to facilitate discussions surrounding enrollment, capacity, and resource allocation.
4) A subcommittee of the CCG committee is completing the BFA self-assessment guide. The charge for this subcommittee is to compile data across the institution to gain a better understanding of the financial statuses and needs of our students, to discuss the legal and ethical uses of these types of data, and to determine next steps in linking students to needed information and services.



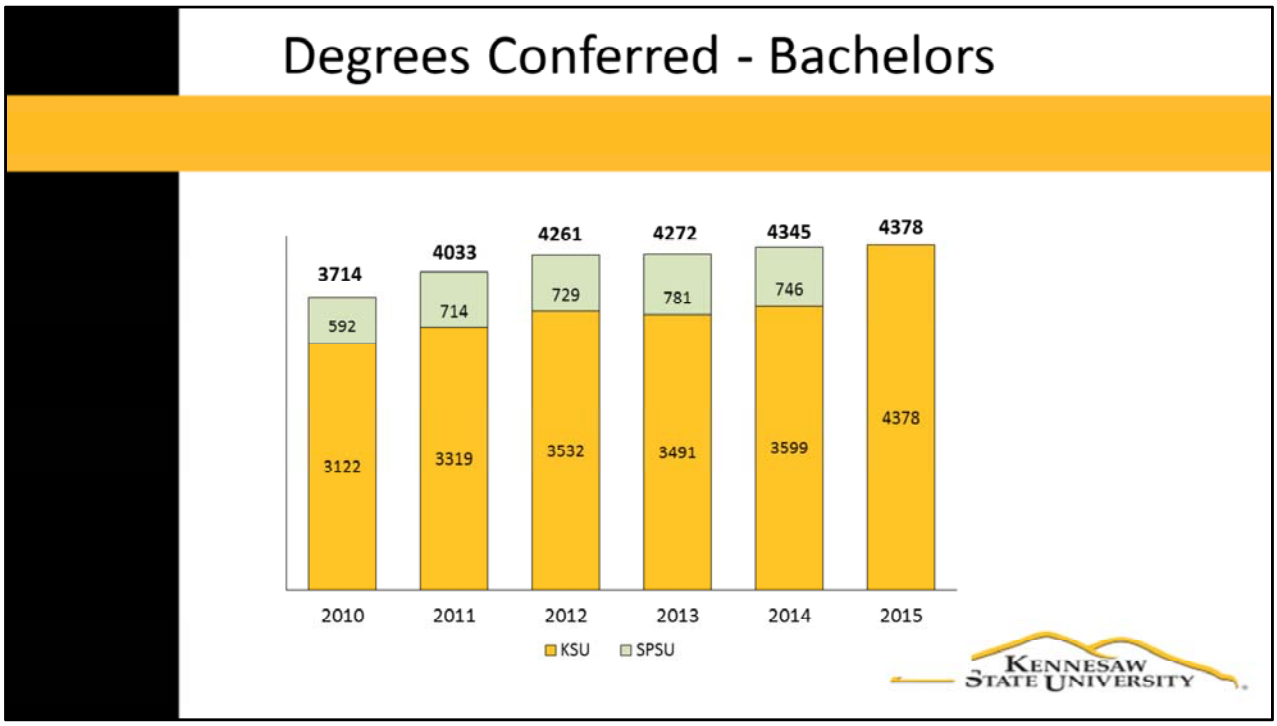
In 2015, our CCG initiatives grew to keep pace with a comprehensive university and it became clear that our CCG reporting had not captured the scope of the retention, progression, and graduation (RPG) work being planned and implemented on both campuses. There are RPG initiatives in every college, in many departments in Student Affairs, and in the operational units providing indirect services and support to our students. An expanded CCG committee was created in summer of 2016 to complete an inventory of programs and initiatives, discuss points of intersection and opportunities for synergy, review associated metrics, and create content for a CCG website currently under construction.



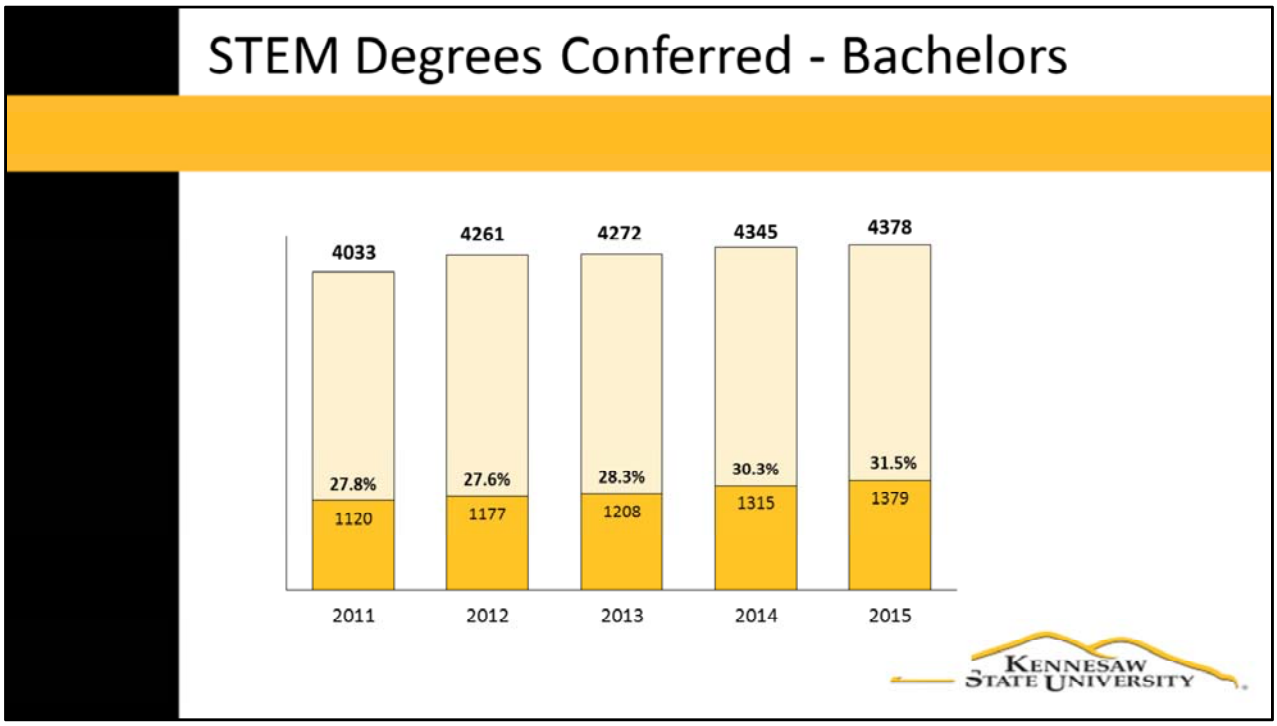
By starting every meeting with data, we have a common understanding of the topics to discuss. Don't assume people understand the definitions of the metrics – take the time to define the metrics and allow for questions.

Kennesaw State University is one of four comprehensive universities and the third-largest university in the state of Georgia. Kennesaw State University (KSU) and Southern Polytechnic State University (SPSU) in Marietta were consolidated in January of 2015.

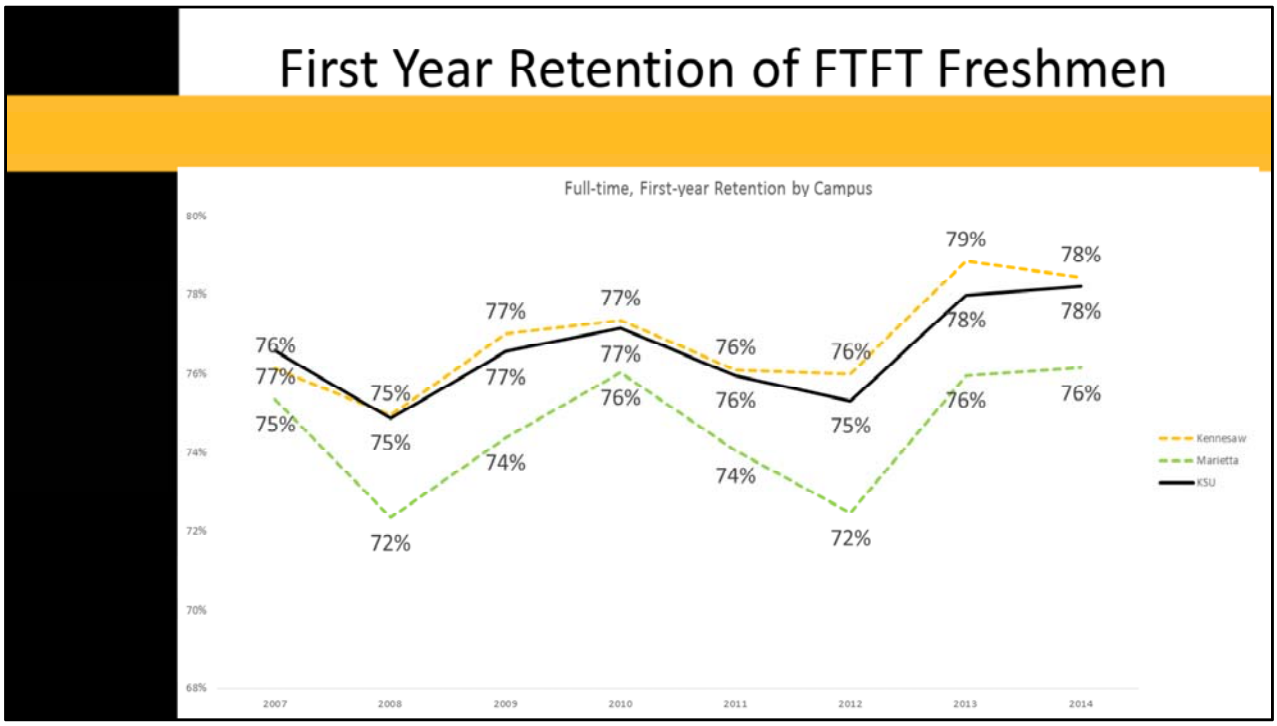
In fall 2015, the new KSU welcomed its first fall class to the Kennesaw and Marietta campuses . In 2015, many of the ideas to enhance student success that were generated over the course of the consolidation - with the expert input of the administration, staff, and faculty - were set into motion. The fall 2016 enrollment represents a 7.7% increase over the combined enrollments for KSU and SPSU in fall 2014. Retention and progression rates are increasing – KSU students are thriving. Retention, progression, and graduation (RPG) has become the item of premier importance across the institution and is becoming the driving force for determining budget priorities.



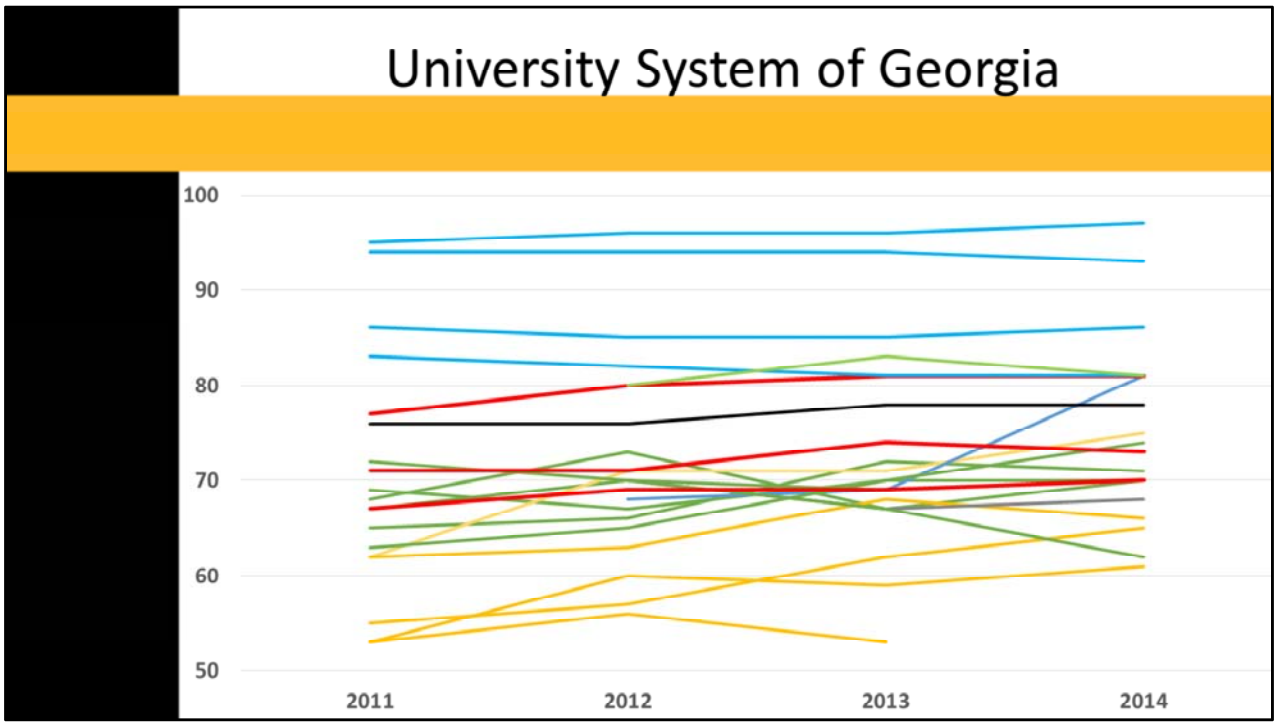
The following charts are from CCG meetings. This chart shows the number of bachelor's degrees conferred for both campuses.



The number of bachelor's degrees conferred increased 9% over five years from 4033 to 4378. The number of STEM degrees conferred has increased 23% in the same time period and now comprise almost one-third of baccalaureate degrees completed.



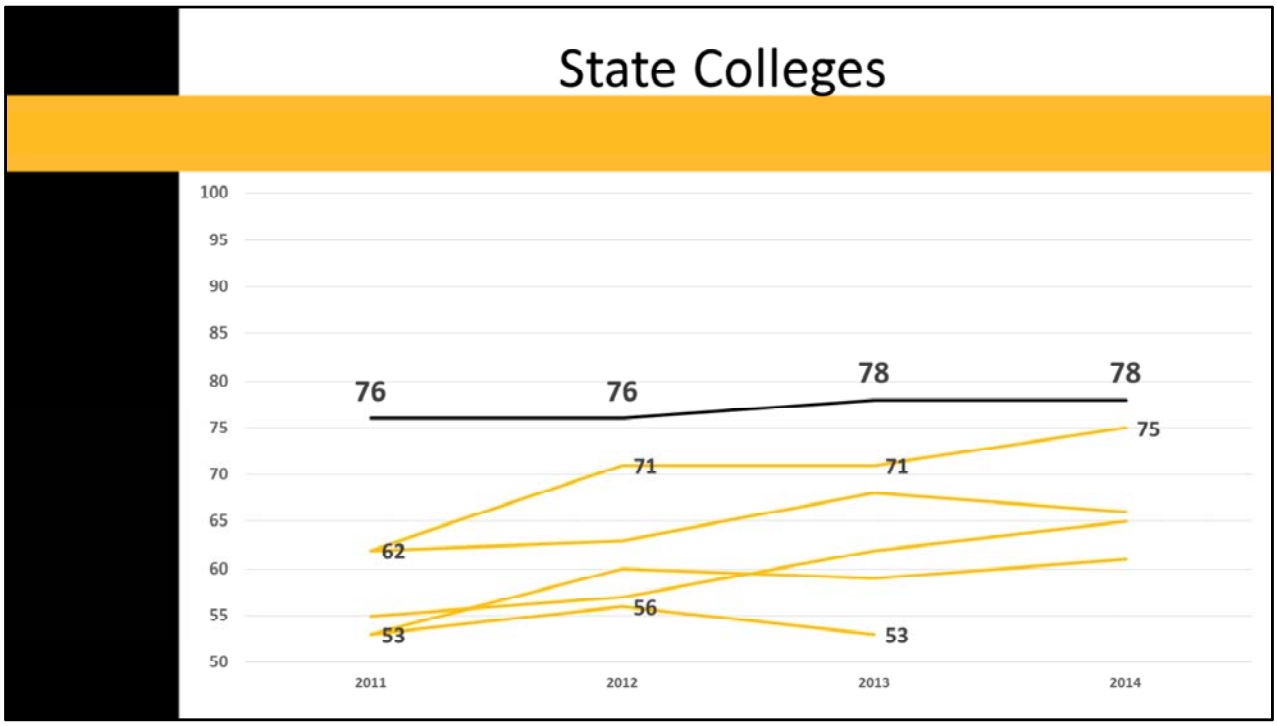
This chart shows the retention rates of both institutions prior to consolidation (KSU in gold, SPSU in green) and then the combined retention rate (black). Although there were differences in the retention rates, they do follow similar patterns. The “new” retention rate more closely resembles the KSU rate due to the difference in size of the institutions. KSU was approximately 4X larger than SPSU.



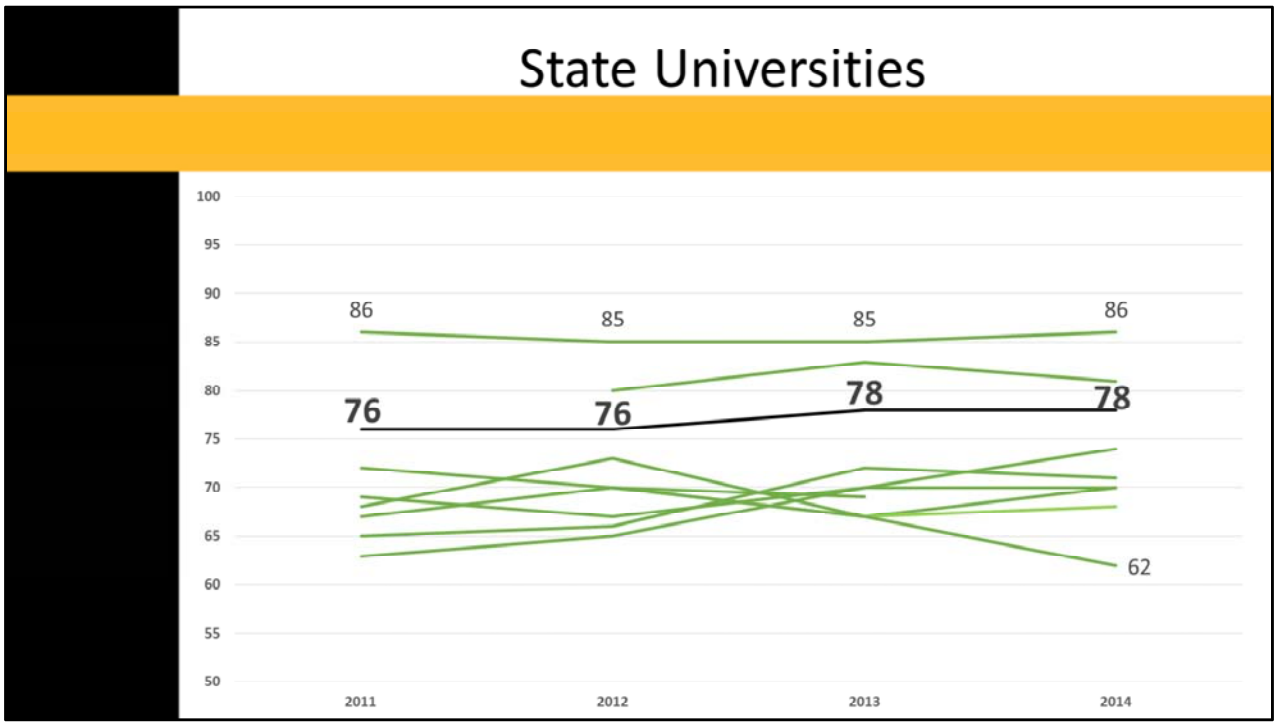
How many of you know what your retention rate is? How many of you know how many students it will take to increase your retention rate 1%? How hard is it to increase your retention rate 1%? What is your retention goal and why?

We often discuss increasing retention without context. What is a “good” retention rate for your institution and why?

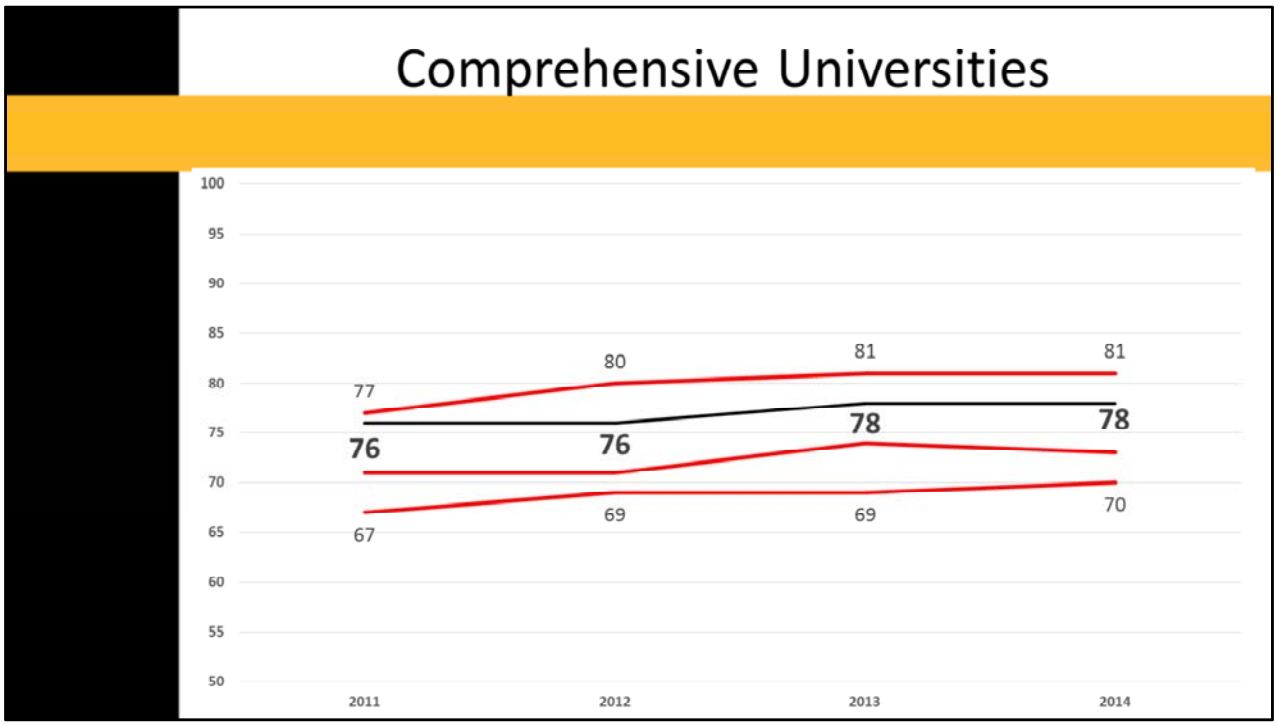
This graph shows the retention rates for University System of Georgia institutions. KSU is the black line. The USG is made up of state colleges, regional universities, comprehensive universities, and research universities.



State Colleges often serve as access institutions with a limited number of baccalaureate programs targeted to serve the economic development needs of their region. The retention rate for these schools ranged from 53-75%.

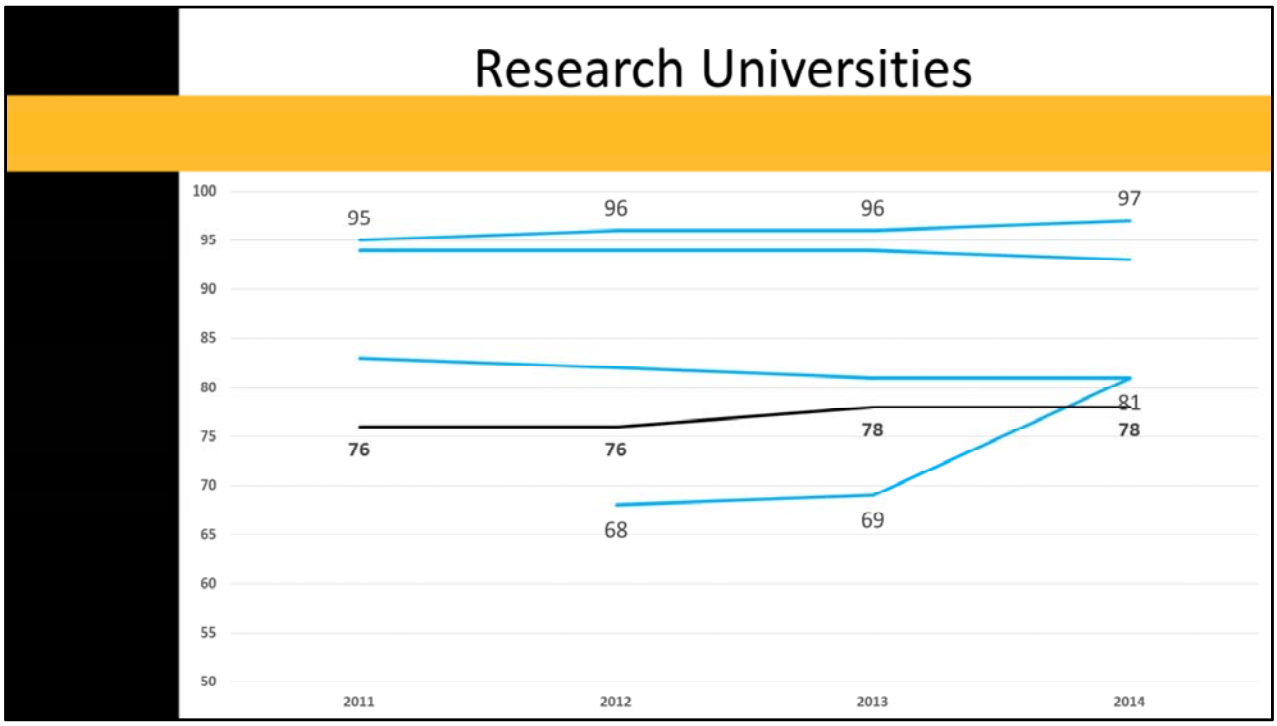


State Universities provide a variety of disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and professional academic programming at the baccalaureate level, with selected master's and educational specialist degrees.



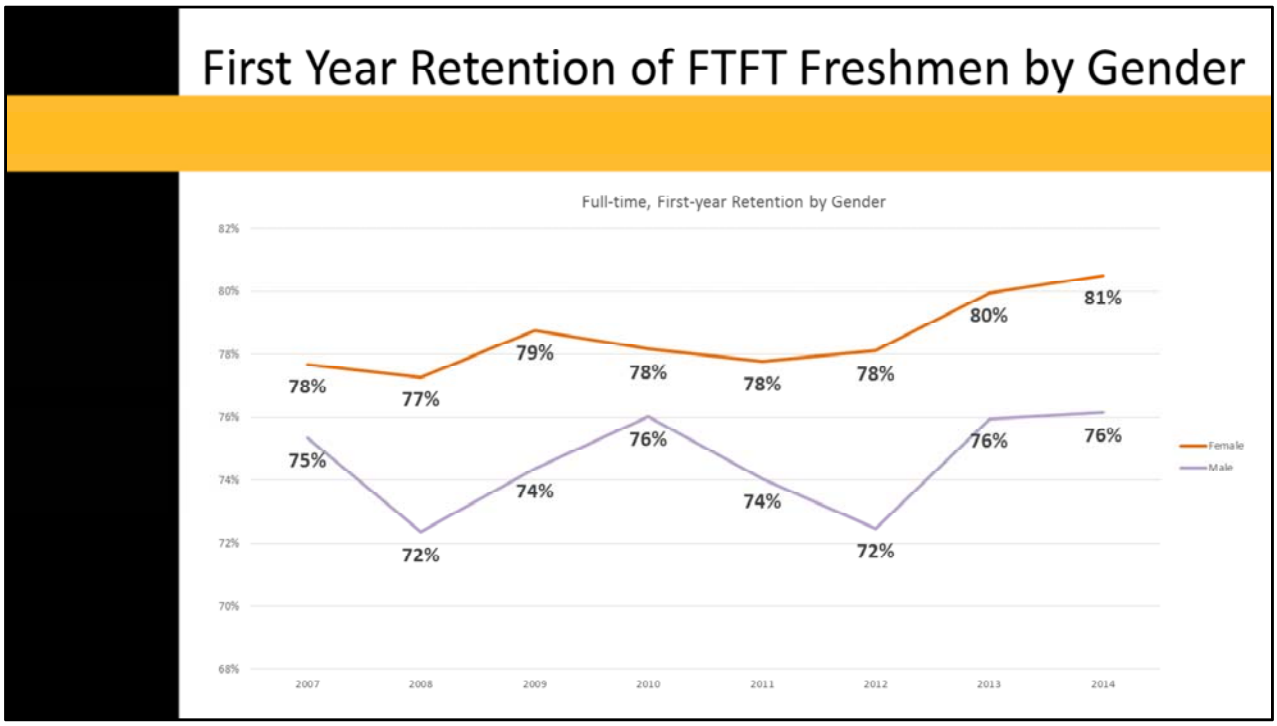
KSU, as one of four comprehensive universities, offers academic programming at the baccalaureate and masters levels, professional programs at the baccalaureate and post baccalaureate levels, including a limited number of professionally-oriented doctoral level programs;

KSU's retention rate is the second highest in its USG institutional category.

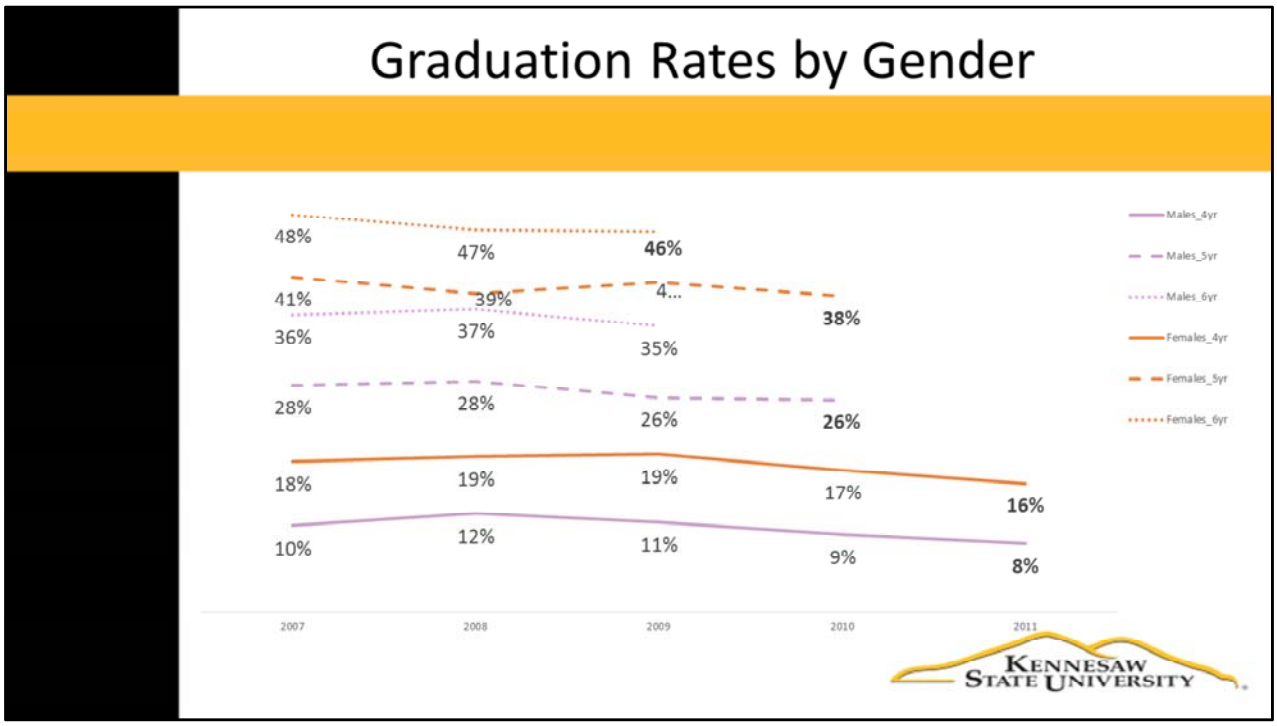


Georgia's research universities, with the highest admission standards in the system, also have the highest retention rates. KSU's retention rates are not as high as University of Georgia or Georgia Tech, and are slightly lower than Georgia State University. Augusta University is a newly consolidated research university and this is reflected in their rapid increase in retention after consolidation.

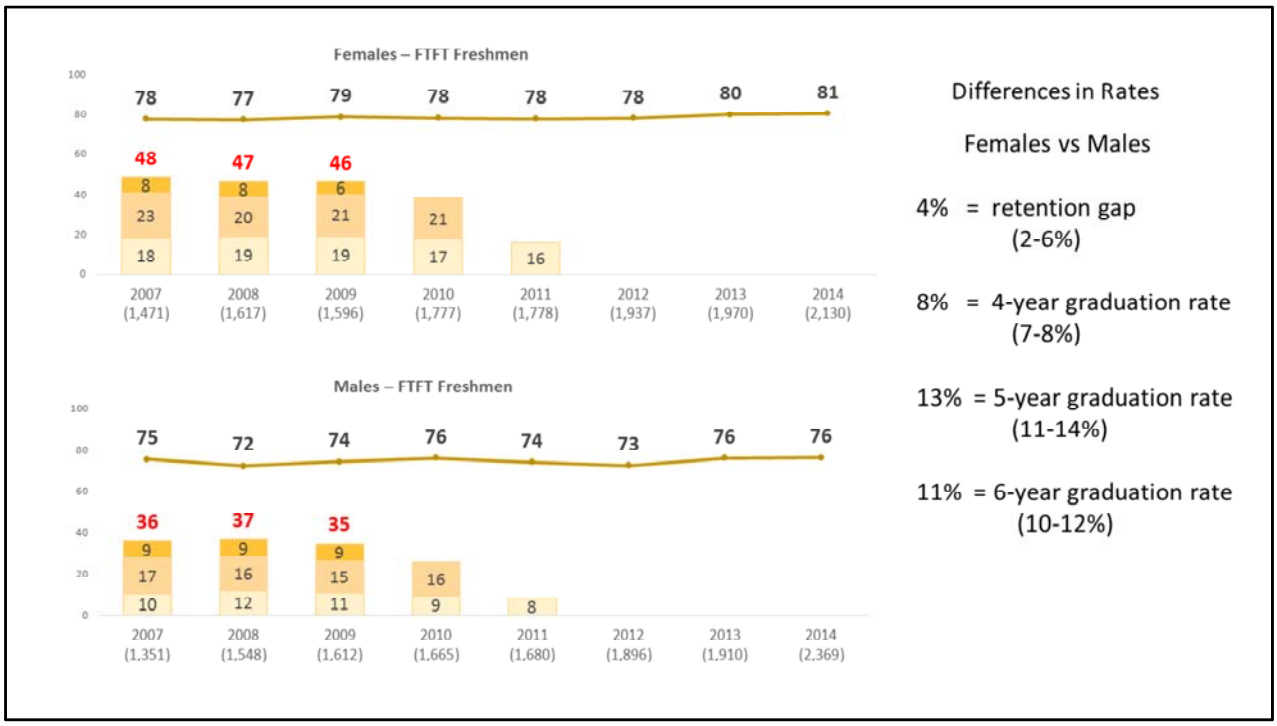
Setting a retention goal in the high 80's or low 90's for KSU might be a long-term stretch goal. The newest rate for KSU (not reflected on these charts from 2016 CCG meetings) is 80%. With approximately 5,000 incoming FTFT freshmen – 50-60 additional students would increase the retention rate by 1%.



Disaggregating retention rates is crucial to retention efforts. This chart shows the differences in retention rates between males and females. On average, females have higher retention rates than males.



Graduation rates are also higher for females. If we are going to increase retention and graduation, we need to consider the metrics together.

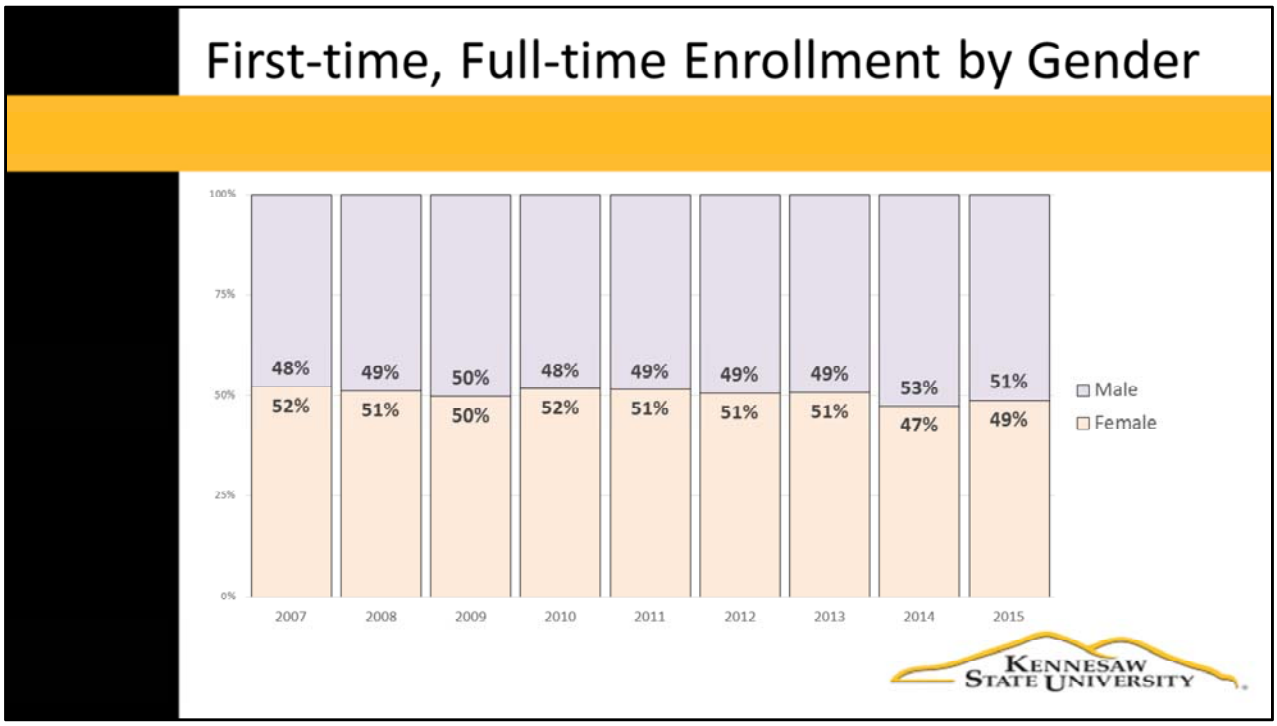


By combining the retention and graduation information in one chart – we can see gender differences more easily. The X-axis is year with the number of students in parentheses.

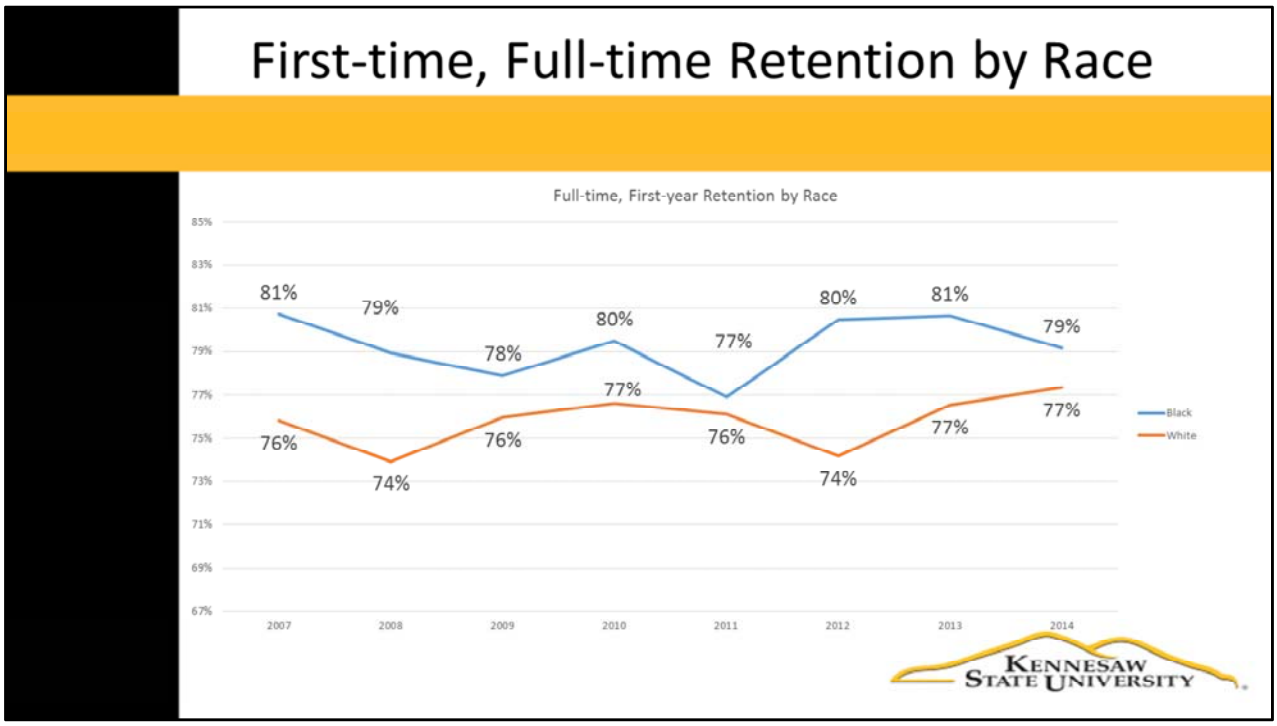
The line represents the one year retention rate. In 2007, the retention rate for women was 78%.

The columns represent graduation rates. The lightest, bottom number in the column is the 4-year graduation rate. For 2007, the 4-year graduation rate for females was 18%. The middle section of the bar is the number of students who graduated in five years. In 2007, an additional 23% of women graduated. This would make the 5-year graduation rate "18% + 23%" or 41%. The darkest part of the column is the additional % of women who graduated in 6-years – for 2007, this is 8%. Combined the total 6-year graduation rate (with rounding) is 48% and shown in red.

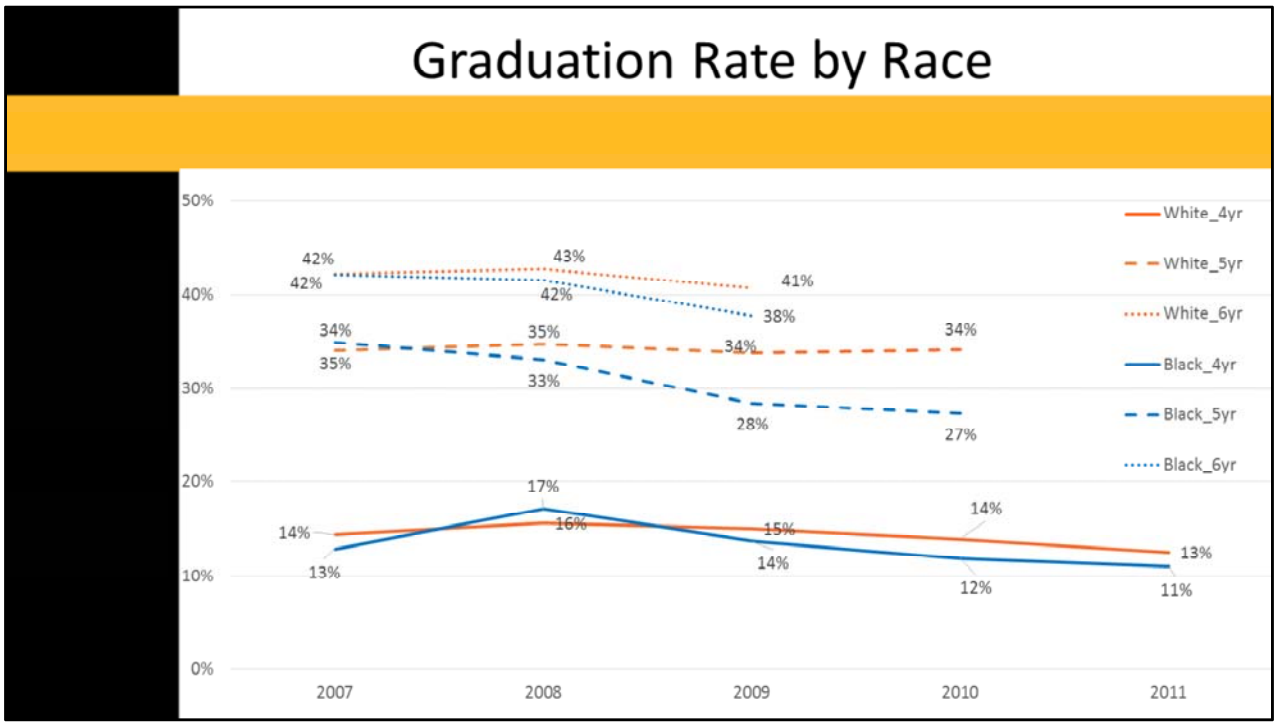
From these charts, we can see the differences in retention and graduation by gender.



It is clear that gender is a variable that should be considered in RPG metrics. The chart above shows the % of males and females making up the FTFT freshmen. In 2014, we see a change in the incoming freshman group with 53% of FTFT freshman being male. This resulted from consolidation with SPSU, an institution that was 80% male, as well as an increase in males at Kennesaw – likely due to the addition of a football team. It could be that the 4-year graduation rate shows a decline in 2018 (2014 cohort) because of the enrollment difference. Or, adopting a more positive outlook, it may be better with a smaller gap due to the abundance of retention efforts being implemented.

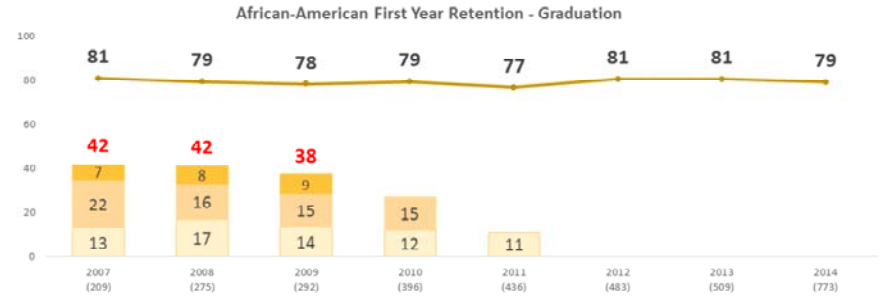


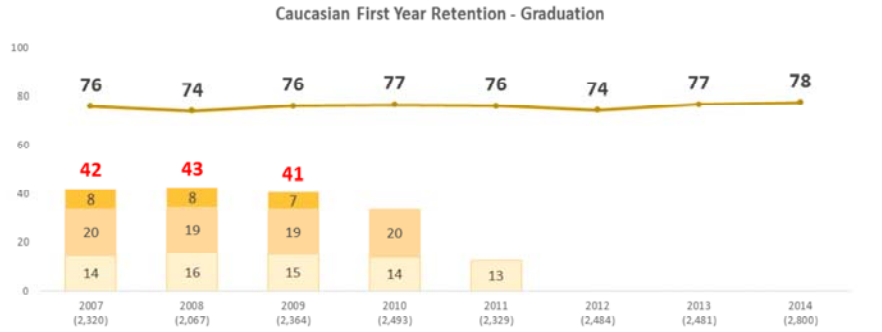
Unlike some institutions, KSU has a higher retention rate for African-American students than for Caucasian students.



Although retention rates are higher for African-American students, graduation rates show the opposite trend.

Differences in Rates

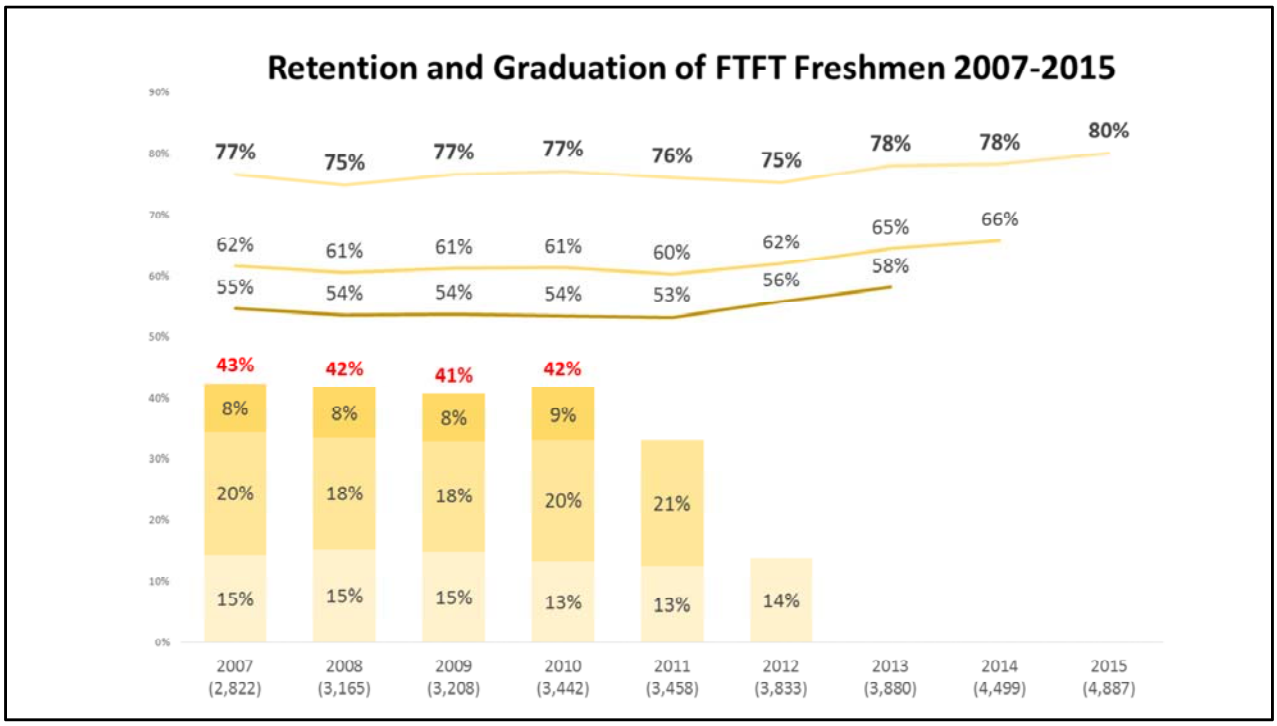




While the retention rates for African-American student has traditionally been higher than for Caucasian students – we might be seeing some convergence. It should also be noted that the group sizes have changed over the 8-year period. In 2007, the ratio of African-American students to Caucasian students was 1:11. In 2014, that ratio was 1:4.

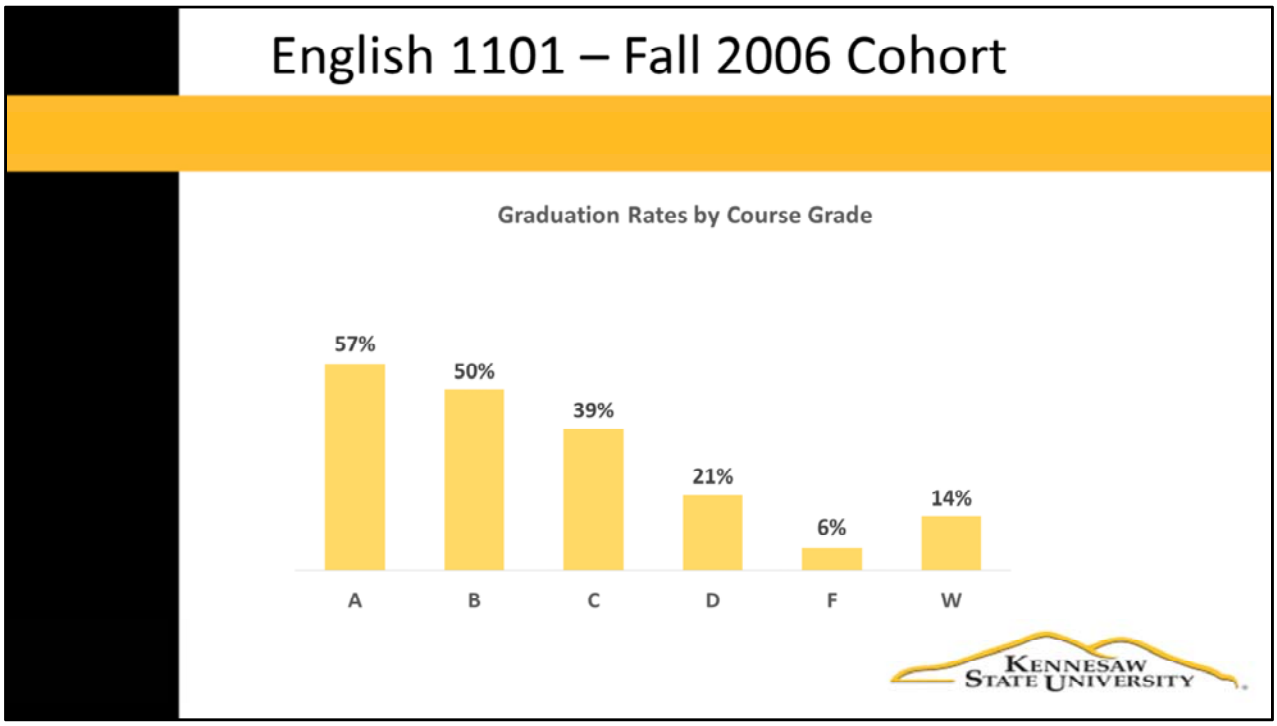
The graduation rates for African-Americans are declining – potentially a troubling trend that will be further examined.

Taken together, in 2009, 78% of African-American students were retained and 38% graduated in 6-years. For Caucasian students, 76% were retained, and 41% graduated. The gap between first-year retention and 6-year graduation was 40% and 35%. Also, African-American students and Caucasian students were more similar in their 4-year graduation rates than 5-year.

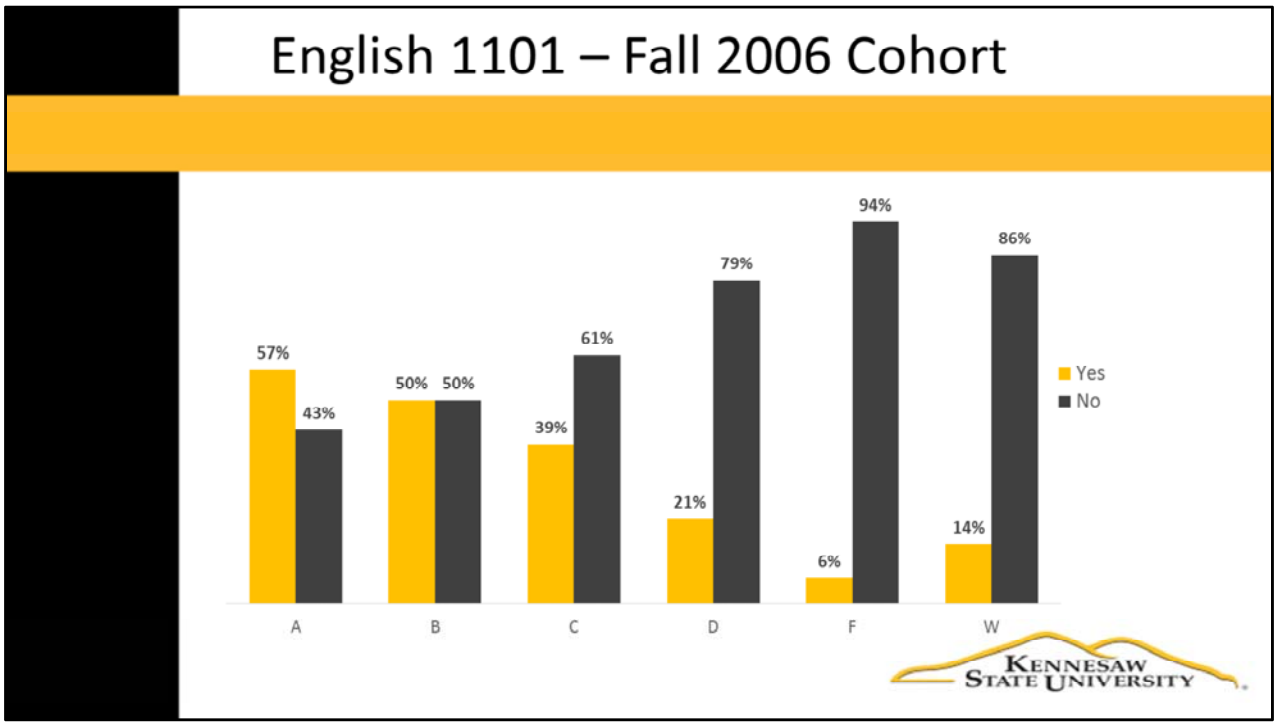


Where do we lose students after retaining them to the fall of their second year? By adding second year and third year retention numbers to our chart – a pattern emerges. In 2007, 23% of students did not return for their second year. Another 25% of students do not return for their third year. By the beginning of the fourth year, only 55% students returned – a loss of 1,270 students in the original cohort.

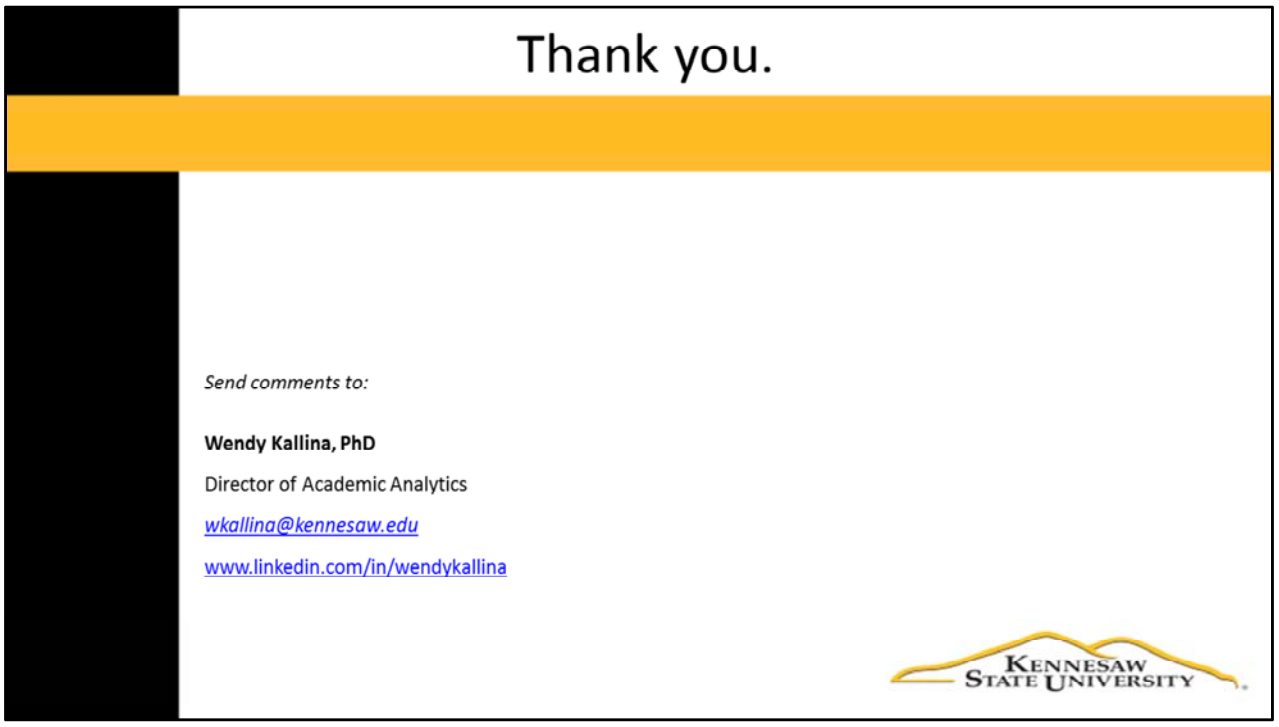
Also note that 55% make it to their fourth year – but only 43% graduate within 6 years. It may be that students have transferred to another institution. Another direction to explore is earned credit hours. Current numbers show that less than 25% of FTFT students earn 30 hours during their first year – so counting fall attendance does not mean that a student is a sophomore in year 2, a junior in year 3, or a senior in year 4. While some discipline specific accreditors require progression metrics - in general, we report 1-year retention and 6-year graduation. Initiatives like CCA's "15 to Finish" highlight the need to move past counting fall attendance and graduation and to move towards measurements and milestones based on actual student progression.



Improving retention and graduation rates requires many partners in the institution. It is crucial to distribute information in ways that can be easily understood. This chart for English 1101 shows the graduation rates for students by the grade earned in English 1101 – all attempts are included. This resembles a grade distribution and a common error is to try to make the percentages add up to 100%. Instead of correctly interpreting the first column as 57% of students who earned an "A" in English 1101 in fall 2006 graduated from the institution, the interpretation is 57% of students who graduated earned an "A" in English 1101.



By adding a second set of columns, there is an ability to see the difference between graduates and non-graduates and where the numbers add up to 100%. This also makes it easier to see the "break points" or grades that may indicate a need for intervention. While a "C" is normally required to meet core requirements or general education requirements – students who earn a "C" have an 11% lower graduation rate than students who earn a "B" and an 18% lower graduation rate than those who earn an "A". The graduation rate of 39% is also lower than the institutional overall graduation rate of 43%. This might be an early sign that a student needs some additional assistance either academically or on the student services side – a conversation that can be initiated by a skilled advisor. While a "DFW" in a course is a clear red flag – it is worth considering that a "C" in the first course of a sequence (in this case , ENG 1101, ENG 1102, ENG 2XXX) could offer the opportunity to have a discussion with a student that, using conventional wisdom, might be okay.



We all hear data-driven, data-informed, decision-support, etc. – but sometimes we forget to create a firm foundational understanding of the metrics. For those of us in institutional research roles, we are charged with presenting data in ways to enhance comprehension, facilitate discussions, and assess progress.