



How Do We Compare?

Retention and Graduation Rates for Fresno State

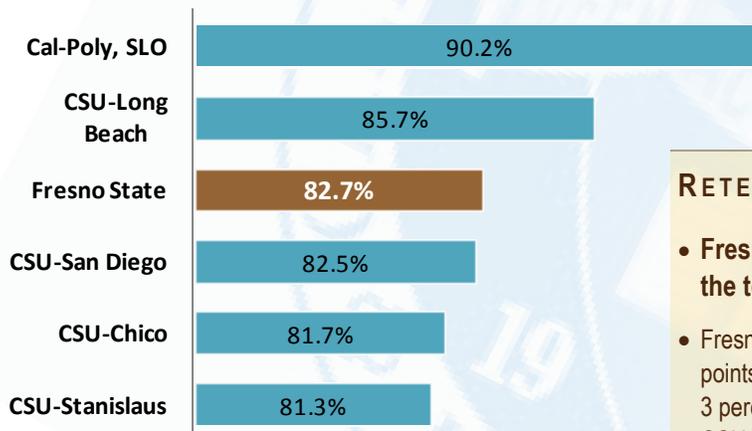
BY BENNY AMARLAPUDI & BRITTANY RUDD

The data demonstrate that Fresno State has high first-year retention rates in comparison to not only other CSUs but also other institutions that are more selective nationally.

This brief presents the retention and graduation rates for first-time, full-time freshmen over a six-year time period compared to institutions within the CSU system and nationally. As outlined in its strategic planning goals, Fresno State is focused on increasing its first-time freshmen retention rates and graduation rates. The Student Success Task Force (SSTF) and Retention Oversight Group (ROG) were formed to discuss and monitor progress of student success strategies.

What is a 'first year retention rate?' It is defined as the percentage of first-time freshmen in a given fall semester who return to the institution the following fall semester. Fresno State's average retention rate for the last 6 years (Fall 2002 - Fall 2007) is 82.7%. But how does that rate compare to other CSU campuses? Figure 1 shows the average rates of the top 5 CSUs that have maintained the highest retention rates within the CSU system. **Fresno State ranks among the top.**

FIGURE 1: AVERAGE RETENTION RATES OF CSU INSTITUTIONS



RETENTION RATES

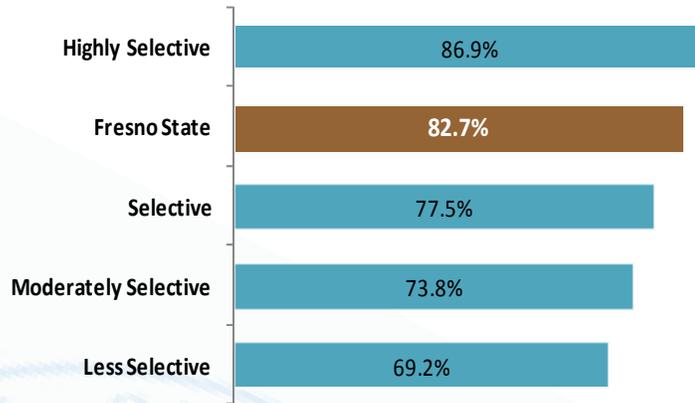
- Fresno State ranks within the top five CSU campuses.
- Fresno State is 7.5 percentage points lower than Cal-Poly and 3 percentage points lower than CSU-Long Beach.

The Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE), a cooperative group of colleges and universities, collects and reports data on retention and graduation rates for institutional benchmarking purposes. Institutions are classified as highly selective, selective, moderately selective, and less selective based on the average composite SAT/ACT score of their entering cohorts; Fresno State is considered 'Less Selective' (SAT Composite < 990). Despite being in this group, Figure 2 shows that Fresno State's retention rates are higher than those in the 'Selective Institution' category.

Based on Fall 1999 and 2000 first-time freshmen cohorts, Fresno State's graduation rates are not as high as might be expected given the high first-year retention rates. **Fresno State ranks 9th among the CSU campuses in 6-year graduation rates. (Figure 3).** Nationally, we are comparable to 'Moderately Selective' and higher than 'Less Selective' institutions (Figure 4).

The data demonstrate that Fresno State has high first-year retention rates in comparison to not only other CSUs but also other institutions that are more selective nationally. However, despite the initial retention success, Fresno State seems to be losing a higher proportion of its students before graduation than what would be expected. Some of this may be due to students transferring to other colleges rather than completely dropping out ([click here to read related brief](#)). Why are students leaving during their sophomore and junior year? Research needs to be done to unravel this mystery.

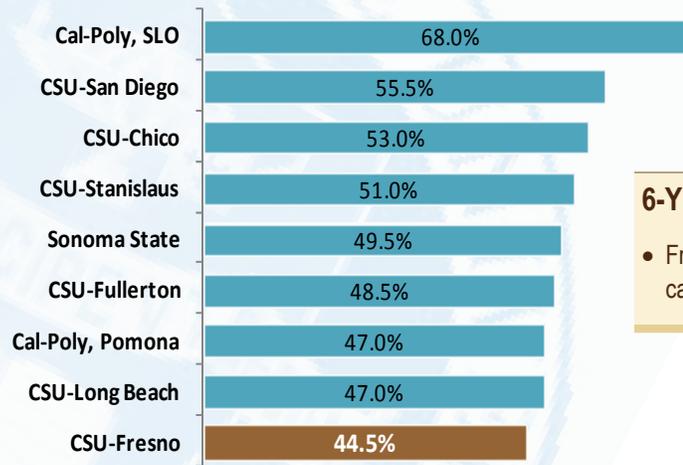
FIGURE 2: FIRST-YEAR RETENTION RATES BY INSTITUTION SELECTIVITY. (CSRDE ANNUAL REPORT)



RETENTION RATES

- Fresno State is 13.5 percentage points higher than the average for 'Less Selective' institutions.
- Fresno State's rate is only 4.2 percentage points lower than the average for 'Highly Selective' institutions.

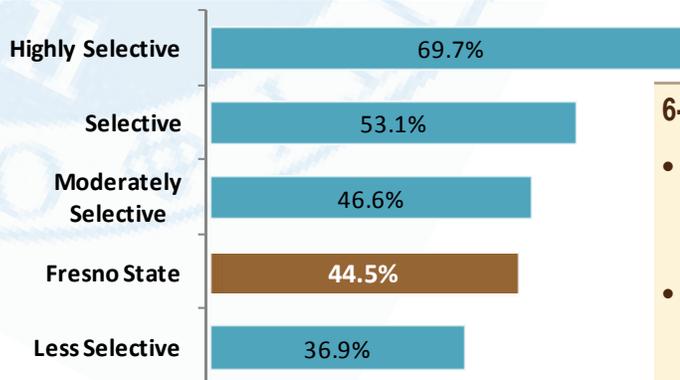
FIGURE 3: AVERAGE 6-YEAR GRADUATION RATES OF CSU INSTITUTIONS



6-YEAR GRADUATION RATES

- Fresno State ranks 9th among the CSU campuses.

FIGURE 4: AVERAGE 6-YEAR GRADUATION RATES BY INSTITUTION SELECTIVITY. (CSRDE ANNUAL REPORT)



6-YEAR GRADUATION RATES

- Fresno State is 7.6 percentage points higher than 'Less Selective' institutions.
- Fresno State is 2.1 percentage points lower than the "Moderately Selective" category.
- Fresno State is 8.6 percentage points lower than the 'Selective' and 25.2 percentage points lower than the 'Highly Selective' rates, respectively.