

Voluntary System of Accountability (VSASM)

Methodology for Calculating the Success and Progress Rate

The Success and Progress Rate is a newly created metric that provides a gauge of student progress through the higher education system. Such a measure is increasingly valuable as the majority of students now attend more than one institution before they graduate.

The Success and Progress (S&P) rate is generated using data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) for two student cohorts – first-time, full-time students and full-time transfer students. The S&P rates are calculated using a new cohort query added to StudentTracker on September 2, 2008. More details can be found on the NSC website at <http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/colleges/Tracker/vsa.htm>.

This document outlines the methodology that is used to calculate the S&P rates. **It is important to note that, although very similar, the Success and Progress rates will not match locally calculated graduation and retention rates (e.g. IPEDS) nor are they intended to match.**

The key differences between locally calculated rates and the S&P rates are listed below.

Students

- International students without social security numbers are not included in the S&P calculations.

Retention/Enrollment Rates

- The S&P retention/enrollment rates are calculated for an academic year versus a fall or spring term. The S&P methodology counts a student if the student is enrolled in one or more terms during the academic year.
- The S&P rate calculation is based on “end of term” data rather than “census point” or “20th day” data. (It is not possible to select a mid-term census point that would work for all institutions and all types of terms – semester, trimester, quarters, etc). Therefore, a student who withdraws before the end of the term will not be counted, but a student that enrolls after the typical census point date and successfully completes the term will be counted.
- The S&P enrollment rates include students from the cohort who are enrolled in other 2-year and other 4-year institutions during a particular academic year.

Graduation/Completion Rates

- The S&P graduation rate for the home institution will be similar to the traditional (IPEDS) graduation rate, but will not be the same for most institutions.
- The denominator used in the S&P graduation rate will include only the students from the cohort who have a matching record at the Clearinghouse (e.g., it will exclude international students without SSNs). For the vast majority of institutions the percent of the cohort that can be matched to the Clearinghouse data is very high, typically greater than 95%. However, institutions will not be “penalized” because of nonmatching records.
- The S&P rates count both a 2-year and a 4-year degree as a completion.
- Students who graduate with a 2-year degree and subsequently re-enroll will be included in the enrollment rate until graduation with a 4-year degree. The 4-year degree will replace the 2-year degree. (Students will not be double-counted in the graduation/completion rates)