



Office of Academic Affairs

Access to Success Initiative



Definitions:

Due to the complex nature and scope of this study, some populations have been defined differently than what is traditionally understood. A few of the more pertinent definitions are below.

- **Minority (Under Represented Minority):** This includes black, Hispanic, and American Indians. It does not include white, Asian or Pacific Islander, unknown race, or multiple races. This is defined the same way for high school and higher education.
- **Low-Income:** The Education Trust defines low-income a variety of ways. For high school students, low-income is defined as any student eligible for free or reduced price lunch. For higher education, low-income is represented by eligibility for the Pell Grant. Finally, low-income among the general population is defined as person who falls below 200% of the poverty line by the US Census.
- **Transfer/Transition Student:** A transfer student is any student who was not at his or her original institution as of the fall 2005 semester. However, when viewing system tables, one must consider the entire system as one unit. Therefore, a student moving from one institution to another would not be considered a transfer for the purposes of the system tables, but would be considered a transfer for the purposes of the institution tables.
- **Persistence:** The Education Trust defines persistence as a term describing retention and graduation jointly.

Cautions and Notes about the Data:

This study attempts to examine a large variety of variables and topics in higher education. Furthermore, the Tennessee Board of Regents institutions are widely varied from one to the other. As a result, there are several notes and concerns which must be mentioned before reviewing the tables.

- There are two types of tables in each section, metrics tables and supporting tables. All of the systems under the Education Trust have agreed that the metrics tables are the only tables for which the system is accountable.
- All-metrics combine both full-time and part-time students. Thus, this data does not match what is typically reported out by systems to IPEDS and others.
- The goal of the education trust is to cut gaps between underserved populations and traditional populations in half by 2015. To represent this goal, The Education Trust uses "ratio goals" which calculate the percentage difference between the focus group and the comparison group, and then finds the midpoint. This format is difficult to understand. Furthermore, by creating goals predicated on the use of a comparison group, the actual goal may not remain the same from year to year.
- The definition of low-income varies by group. As a result, ratios using more than one group, such as high school students and college student, are flawed.
- Some of the ratios use a statewide population of minority or low-income students. However, many of the TBR institutions have a more regional focus and would be better served using a regional population to analyze any gaps that exist.
- Because of the wide variety of populations that exist in Tennessee it would be inappropriate to use this data to compare one school to another. The Education Trust has agreed to not release any institutional data to the public.