

The Power of Retaining More First-time College Students in Their First Year

The typical cohort of matriculating fall first-time college students at Peralta CCD persist to their first spring term at a 50% rate and then to the following fall term at a 30% rate. The variation from one fall entering cohort to the next is very small, plus or minus 1 percentage point each term.

Cohort tracking research at other colleges indicates that retaining more students from initial fall to initial spring has a geometrically increasing impact on further persistence and hence the program completion rates for earning a degree or certificate or transferring to a four-year college.

For example, if initial fall to initial spring persistence were increased by 10 percentage points then student persistence to the first spring term has increased by 20%. Increase of 10pts / 50% base = 20% gain over the typical cohort.

But research has shown that this 10 percentage point increase is maintained at virtually 10 points in each of the following semesters. Thus, by the second fall term persistence has increased by 33% (10pts / 30% base = 33% gain in persistence). By the next spring persistence has increased by 50% (10pts / 20% base = 50% gain), and by the following spring, persistence has increased by 100%, that is, it has *doubled*. This doubles the opportunity for students to earn degrees or certificates and to transfer.

