

Methodology for Calculating the Associate Degree- and Certificate-Seeking Cohort Metric

The SAM project provides a common measure for student achievement many types of institutions: public and private, nonprofit universities, colleges, and community colleges. There are two models included in SAM, one for bachelor’s degree programs and one for associate degree and certificate programs. This document describes the methodology for calculating the associate degree- and certificate-seeking model.

The **associate degree- and certificate-seeking model** will report outcomes for associate degree- and certificate-seeking students attending the reporting institution for the first time (including both new students and students who transfer in from another institution) with additional break-outs for (1) full-time associate degree- and certificate-seeking students attending the reporting institution for the first time (including both new students and students who transfer in from another institution) and (2) part-time associate degree- and certificate-seeking students attending the reporting institution for the first time (including both new students and students who transfer in from another institution).

The **associate degree- and certificate-seeking model** will report on the percentage of students who:

- Graduated from the reporting institution
- Are still enrolled at the reporting institution
- Transferred to one or more subsequent institutions (includes students who transferred and are still enrolled, students who transferred and have graduated, and students who transferred but whose enrollment or graduation status unknown)
- Have unknown transfer, current enrollment or graduation status.

The **associate degree- and certificate-seeking model** will report outcomes for one time period for each cohort: at the end of 6 years

SAM Institution Example: Students Seeking an Associate Degree or Certificate



-  Graduated: Original Institution
-  Enrolled: Original Institution
-  Transferred: Other Institution
-  Current Status Unknown

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The SAM associate degree and certificate model outcomes are calculated using data from a variety of sources—the National Student Clearinghouse, state longitudinal data systems, system data, and/or institutional data. Currently, no single source provides all of the data necessary to track the completion of certificates and degrees and subsequent enrollment. Therefore, data to create the associate/certificate model will be collected and entered by participating institutions into the web interface and the graphic display will be automatically created. *Note that for institutions that participate in the Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA), the data for SAM will be easily aggregated from the data required to report the VFA’s Student Progress and Outcomes measures.*

This document outlines the methodology that is used to calculate the SAM associate degree- and certificate-seeking model. **It is important to note that, although similar, the SAM associate degree and certificate model will not match graduation and retention rates calculated using the federal methodology (e.g. Student Right to Know/IPEDS) nor are they intended to match.**

The key characteristics of the SAM associate degree and certificate model are listed below.

Students

- Both associate degree- and certificate-seeking students are included in the cohort, not just those seeking an associate degree.
- Students who are enrolled for the first time at the reporting institution are included in the cohort, not just those who are first-time-in-college.
- Credential-seeking students are behaviorally defined as students who have earned 12 credit hours (or the equivalent) of course work by the end of their second year (including the summer term).

Outcomes

- The SAM associate degree and certificate model counts a student as graduating if they complete either an associate degree or a certificate at the reporting institution. Graduation does not mean that the student studied at only the reporting institution but that the reporting institution granted their associate degree or certificate within the 6-year period.
- Students who are still enrolled at the reporting institution at the end of the 6-year period are reported. Enrollment at the end of the 6-year period does not necessarily imply continuous enrollment throughout the reporting period.
- Any student with a documented “transfer-out” from the reporting institution to another institution is counted within the “transferred” outcome category. After transfer, the student may continue to be enrolled at another institution or earn a degree or certificate; however, those outcomes are not captured by the SAM associate degree and certificate model.

Reporting Period

- The SAM associate degree and certificate model uses a 6-year reporting period for all cohorts.