

Methodology for Calculating the Bachelor's Degree-Seeking Cohort Metric

The SAM project provides a common measure for student achievement for nearly all 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 bachelor's degree-seeking model.

The **bachelor's degree-seeking model** will report outcomes for (1) full-time bachelor's degree-seeking students attending college for the first time (*the same definition as the Student Right to Know graduation rate report in IPEDS*); and (2) full-time bachelor's degree-seeking students who transferred in to the reporting institution (transfer-in students). Additionally, institutions have the option to report outcomes for (1) part-time bachelor's degree-seeking students attending college for the first time; and (2) part-time bachelor's degree-seeking students who transferred in to the reporting institution (transfer-in students).

The **bachelor's degree-seeking model** will report on the percentage of students who:

- Graduated from the reporting institution
- Are still enrolled at the reporting institution
- Transferred/graduated from one or more subsequent institution
- Transferred/are still enrolled at a subsequent institution

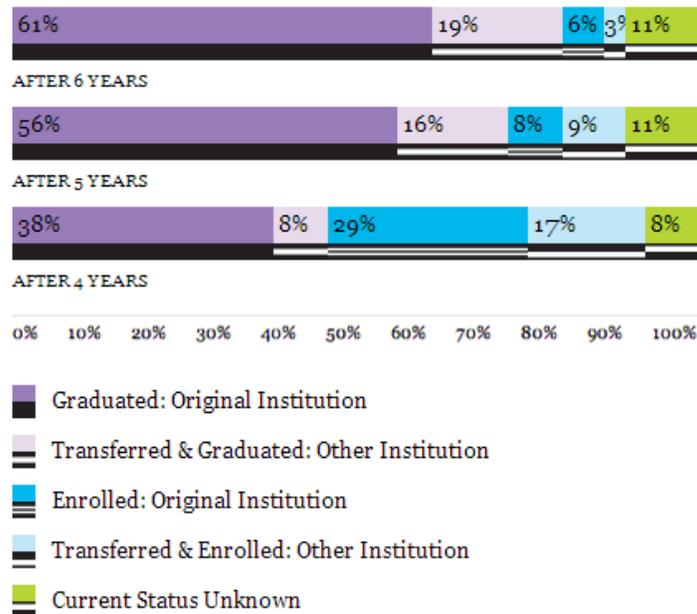
Have unknown current enrollment or graduation status (includes students who transferred but whose enrollment or graduation status is unknown)

The **bachelor's degree-seeking model** will report outcomes for three time periods for each cohort.

- For full-time cohorts:
 - At the end of 4 years
 - At the end of 5 years
 - At the end of 6 years
- For part-time cohorts:
 - At the end of 6 years
 - At the end of 8 years
 - At the end of 10 years

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SAM Institution Example: Full-time Students Seeking a Bachelor's Degree



The SAM bachelor's degree model outcomes are calculated using data from the National Student Clearinghouse to StudentTracker Cohort Query, which was created in 2008. More details about the Cohort Query can be found on the NSC website at <http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/colleges/studenttracker/vsa.php>.

This document outlines the methodology that is used to calculate the SAM bachelor's degree-seeking model. **It is important to note that, although very similar, the SAM bachelor's degree model 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 SAM bachelor's degree-seeking model outcomes are listed below.

Students

NSC collects enrollment data on both domestic and international students. When institutions report the enrollment records of international students to NSC, it is true that these records are generally reported without a social security number. However, this does not matter for the StudentTracker Cohort Query, because it does not use SSN for matching purposes for any student, international or domestic. Rather, it uses the complete name and date of birth provided in the Cohort Query request file. If a definitive match cannot be made by the system, nor by a human analyst, then the student in the request file would not be matched. However, this should be a relatively rare scenario. If a school believes its results are missing large numbers of international students, we encourage it to contact StudentTracker Support at studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org for further investigation. Retention/Enrollment Rates

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- The SAM bachelor's degree-seeking model retention/enrollment rates are calculated for an academic year versus a fall or spring term. The SAM bachelor's degree-seeking model methodology counts a student if the student is enrolled in one or more terms during the academic year. Enrollment at the end of the 6-year period does not necessarily imply continuous enrollment throughout the reporting period.
- The SAM bachelor's degree-seeking model calculations are 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 SAM bachelor's degree-seeking model 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 SAM bachelor's degree-seeking model 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 SAM bachelor's degree-seeking model graduation rate will include only the students from the cohort who have a matching record at the Clearinghouse. 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 SAM bachelor's degree-seeking model counts both 2-year and 4-year degrees 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.)