www.studentachievementmeasure.org

What is the Student Achievement Measure (SAM) Project?

The **Student Achievement Measure (SAM) Project** is a collaborative effort by six leading higher education associations to enhance transparency and provide the public with a more comprehensive measure of college student progress and completion. SAM tracks student movement across postsecondary institutions to provide a more complete picture of undergraduate student progress and completion within the higher education system. SAM is a voluntary alternative to the federal graduation rate, which is limited to tracking the completion of first-time, full-time students at one institution.

Through a shared website, colleges and universities can deliver a more complete picture of student progress along the path to earning a college degree or certificate. 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.

Partner Associations

The SAM Project is a joint initiative of the six national higher education presidential associations: the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), the American Council on Education (ACE), the Association of American Universities (AAU), the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU).

What are the components of the Student Achievement Measure?

Two models are included in SAM, one for bachelor's degree programs and one for associate degree and certificate programs. Institutions are encouraged to report data for both models, if appropriate.

Cohorts

Each model reports outcomes for groups, or cohorts, of students who matriculate into an institution during the same term. SAM tracks the progress of students within a cohort over a six year (full-time bachelor's-seeking cohorts and associate/certificate-seeking cohorts) or ten year (part-time bachelor's-seeking cohorts) time period ending in a Summer term.

The **bachelor's degree model** reports 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; REQUIRED)*;

    (2) full-time, bachelor's degree-seeking students who transferred in to the reporting institution (transfer-in students; REQUIRED);

    (3) part-time bachelor's degree-seeking students attending college for the first time (OPTIONAL); and

    (4) part-time, bachelor's degree-seeking students who transferred in to the reporting institution (OPTIONAL)

The **associate and certificate program model** reports outcomes for:

    (1) all associate degree or certificate-seeking students attending the reporting institution for the first time (including both new students and students who transfer in from another institution);

    (2) full-time associate degree or certificate-seeking students attending the reporting institution for the first time (including both new students and students who transfer in from another institution); and

    (3) part-time associate degree or certificate-seeking students attending the reporting institution for the first time (including both new students and students who transfer in from another institution)

Outcomes Reported

The **bachelor's degree model** reports 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 **associate and certificate program model** reports on the percentage of students who:

- Graduated from the reporting institution
- Are still enrolled at the reporting institution
- Transferred to one or more subsequent institution (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.

Time Periods

The **bachelor's degree model** reports outcomes in SAM charts for three time periods for each cohort.

- Full-time, first-time cohort:
    - At the end of 4 years
    - At the end of 5 years
    - At the end of 6 years
- Full-time, transfer cohorts
    - At the end of 2 years
    - At the end of 4 years
    - At the end of 6 years
- Part-time cohorts (both first-time and transfer-in):
    - At the end of 6 years
    - At the end of 8 years
    - At the end of 10 years

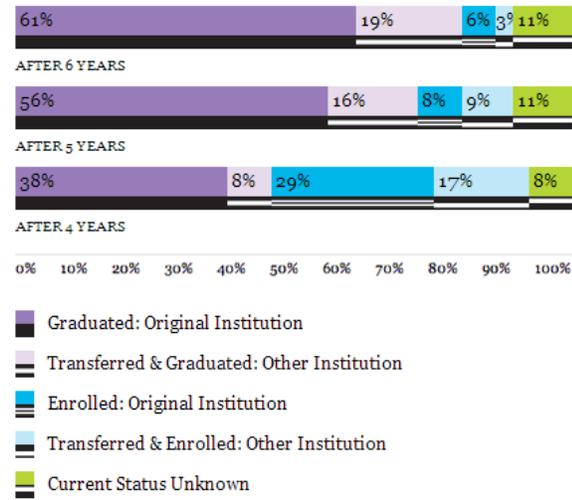Outcomes for additional years are reported in the SAM Detail Table for each cohort.

The **associate and certificate program model** reports outcomes for one time period for each cohort.
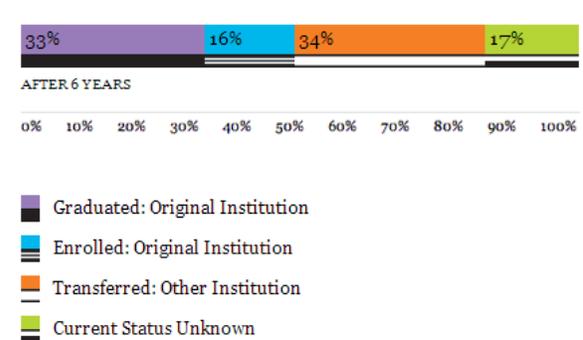
- At the end of 6 years

SAM Chart Examples

Both SAM models will report multiple student outcomes using a horizontal, stacked bar chart.

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

61%	19%	6% 3% 11%

AFTER 6 YEARS

56%	16%	8% 9% 11%

AFTER 5 YEARS

38%	8% 29%	17% 8%

AFTER 4 YEARS

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

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

SAM Institution Example: Students Seeking an Associate Degree or Certificate

33%	16%	34%	17%

AFTER 6 YEARS

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

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

How is the metric calculated?

Bachelor's degree-seeking model

The data to build the Student Achievement Measure can easily be obtained from the National Student Clearinghouse using the Cohort Query available through StudentTracker. The use of a standard query helps ensure that the underlying calculation methodology is applied in a consistent manner and greatly increases the reliability of the metric.

- Institutions submit data for each of the student cohorts through StudentTracker that will be matched to the Clearinghouse enrollment and completion data. The institutions receive back a set of files from the Clearinghouse that will be directly uploaded by the institution into a web interface that will automatically create the graphic display for the appropriate time period.

- If the institution wishes to report the Student Achievement Measure for the bachelor's model and has not been submitting enrollment and graduation data to the Clearinghouse, it is strongly recommended that the institution submit back-files from at least the previous six years (for full-time cohort reporting) or the previous ten years (for part-time cohort reporting) up to the present to allow reporting within one year of joining SAM.

More information on the Cohort Query can be found on the National Student Clearinghouse's website - http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/colleges/files/ST_CohortQueryGuide.pdf. *Note that for institutions that participate in the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA), this is the same query and process used to create the VSA Success & Progress Rate.*

Associate degree- and certificate-seeking model.

The data, of necessity, comes from a variety of sources in the short term–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 is 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 will be easily aggregated from the data required to report the Student Progress and Outcomes measures.*

My institution only enrolls transfer students; can I participate in SAM?

Yes. Institutions may, with approval from the SAM Executive Director, participate by posting data for only one of the required cohorts for either model. Please contact the SAM Executive Director (executivedirector@studentachievementmeasure.org) to request a waiver.

Is an institution required to report both full-time and part-time cohorts?

For institutions reporting the Associate/Certificate model, both full-time and part-time cohorts are required. For institutions reporting the Bachelor's model, only full-time cohorts are required. We strongly encourage institutions with large part-time cohorts to also report SAM metrics for their part-time cohorts as well.

Are International Students included in the results of NSC's StudentTracker Cohort Query?

Yes. 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.

How are data for the metrics be collected and reported?

Data necessary to display the metric will be collected through a web-based data collection site. Each participating institution will have its own online account that can be used to log into the site to either upload a data file with the required information or enter the data manually. The institution will then publish the data uploaded/entered as a horizontal, stack bar chart on the SAM website. Institutions will have the ability to preview the data entered before publishing the chart for public view on the website.

Does the SAM Project collect student unit level records?

No. There is no student unit level record data collection by the SAM project.

Which institutions can participate in SAM?

Postsecondary institutions that meet either of the following criteria are eligible to participate in the SAM project:

    (1) an accredited, nonprofit university or college offering baccalaureate or associate degrees
    (2) a member of one of the six partnership organizations (AACC, AASCU, AAU, ACE, APLU, NAICU)

How can an eligible institution participate in the SAM project?

Eligible institutions can sign up to participate in the SAM project through an online form on the SAM website (www.studentachievementmeasure.org/sign_up). **Participation by institutions is voluntary.**

What is required to participate?

SAM participants will create a profile, including basic information about the institution (name, address, institutional contacts) at the time the institution signs up to participate. In the fall, each institution will create its SAM metric(s) using the tools and specifications provided, and publish the SAM metric(s) to the common website without altering the underlying form or content.

The SAM project is grant-funded and does not require a fee or dues to participate. Institutions using the National Student Clearinghouse StudentTracker Cohort Query will pay the appropriate participation fees to the Clearinghouse. The fees range from no cost up to $0.10 per student enrolled, based on the type and amount of data submitted to the Clearinghouse. Additional information on the subscription options and fees for StudentTracker is available from the Clearinghouse website: http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/colleges/fees.php#studenttracker

Will VSA participants be required to enter data for both the College Portrait and SAM?

For public institutions currently participating in the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA), the VSA will allow for the syncing of data to display both the SAM and the VSA *Success & Progress Rate* so that institutions that participate in both projects will enter or upload the required data only once. Institutions will be required to indicate that they want to sync their data from the SAM to the VSA site and will be required to review and publish their data on both sites independently. Please contact support@studentachievementmeasure.org for more information or with questions.

Will VFA participants be required to enter data for both the VFA and SAM?

The data used within the SAM model for associate degrees and certificate programs is the same as used within the Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA). Planning is underway to determine how data can be shared across SAM and the VFA.   Many community colleges and two-year colleges will begin to post their data for SAM and the VFA in 2014.

When can institutions sign up to participate?

Institutions may sign up to participate through the SAM website at any time.

When can institutions begin to upload or enter their data?

Institutions are encouraged to provide the data necessary to publish their SAM page within 6-8 weeks of signing up. Data can be posted at any time, though we encourage institutions to update their data to the most recently available cohort in the Fall when the data entry site opens for the new year.

When can institutions submit their Cohort Queries to the National Student Clearinghouse?

Institutions reporting data for the bachelor's model should submit their Cohort Queries to the National Student Clearinghouse after September 15 to allow for sufficient time for summer degrees and enrollment to be reported. All Cohort Queries should be submitted using a search data of 9/15 of the year the cohort began.

Can an institution provide data for both the bachelor's degree-seeking and the associate/certificate seeking models?

Yes. Some institutions offer degree and certificate programs that fall into both models and they will be welcome and encouraged to report data for both models.

Can a system sign up for SAM on behalf of its member institutions?

If a formal system of institutions wishes to participate as a group, each institution identified at the time of sign-up will be held separately and individually to the expectations and conditions of participation. A senior official of the system must be authorized through a procedure agreed upon by the system institutions to enroll all of its institutions in the SAM Project. The senior official will provide, at the time of sign-up, a list of all required information for each institution within the system that will be participating in the SAM Project. Any system institution that wishes to withdraw from the SAM Project may do so at any time.

Systems will also be able to, if desired, upload data for all participating institutions within their system. However, as SAM is an institutional measure, each institution's data will need to be reviewed and published individually.

How is the SAM Project funded?

Funding for SAM Project is provided in large part by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation with additional funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.