

SEASON FOR SHARING A LEGACY OF CARING FOR 20 YEARS



SUBSCRIBE NOW and get 3 months for the price of 1 SUBSCRIBE



search: All azcentral.com

Hi, Sally Manage my account e-Newspaper

- News Sports Money Things to do Politics Opinion Watchdog Travel Food & Home Health Traffic Weather
Ahwatukee | Chandler | Gilbert | Glendale | Mesa | Peoria | Phoenix | Pinal | Queen Creek | Scottsdale | Southwest Valley | Surprise | Tempe

News » Arizona » Article

0 Comments

Community colleges see rise in 6-year graduation rate

SHARE URL EMAIL FONT: A A A Recommend 7 Tweet 0 +1

By Mary Beth Faller The Republic | azcentral.com Sat Nov 16, 2013 9:49 PM

The Maricopa Community Colleges saw an 8 percentage-point gain in its graduation rate, the biggest increase in several years and one that puts the district on track to fulfill its commitment to produce more graduates.

About 28 percent of students who began in 2007 earned a degree or occupational certificate within six years. That compares with 20 percent of incoming students in 2006 and 19 percent for 2004, according to a report released last week by the college district.

The alarmingly low graduation rates for the nation's community colleges became a hot topic in 2010, and President Barack Obama challenged them to improve.

The Maricopa County district, which includes 10 colleges, committed to increasing the number of students who earn degrees and certificates by 50 percent by 2020.

Nationwide comparisons are difficult because few entities measure the graduation rate the same way as the Maricopa County district. But the Chronicle of Higher Education's College Completion database reports that about 20 percent of students at public two-year institutions graduate within three years.

The district's 28 percent graduation rate includes students who started at any of the 10 colleges and then earned a degree or certificate at any Maricopa County college within six years.

Overall, 30 percent of the 2007 group transferred to a university within six years. Some of those students earned credits without obtaining a two-year degree and transferred anyway. The transfer rate has remained fairly steady over the past few years.

The report did not break down the numbers by individual college.

The total number of graduates from the Maricopa County district in 2012-13 was 15,726, with 56 percent earning an associate degree and the rest earning a certificate. The colleges have committed to having 18,000 students earn awards

by 2020.

As part of the commitment, the district set metrics for determining completion. Now, students are asked their intentions when they begin, such as whether they want to earn a degree, transfer to a university or are taking classes for personal interest.

Those answers can paint a more accurate picture of the students' expectations, and, ultimately, the colleges' success rates.

The district started asking those questions in 2012, so they are not reflected in the numbers from the latest report.

Exclusive selections for our subscribers
6 dead as tornadoes, storms hit Midwest
County voters generous toward schools
Floyd has breakout day in big Cards win
Man with mental illness communicates through art
Illegal immigrant vote-fraud cases rare in Arizona
Most Popular Top Videos

- 14 things you might not know about Arizona
6 dead as tornadoes, storms sweep through Midwest
Inmates executed in the United States in 2013
Illegal immigrant vote-fraud cases rare in Arizona
Maricopa County voters generous toward schools
Zimmerman accused of pointing shotgun at girlfriend
Mug shots in the news: Nov. 3-9
Teen to be sentenced for killing Colo. school girl
Mug shots in the news: Nov. 10-16
Today is National Day: November

"At first glance, almost 75 percent of those who come don't finish, but you have to look deeper," said Dana Saar, a governing-board member. "Some were just coming to take one pottery class. You have to measure that intent."

Not all the news was good. The report also showed a decline in the retention rate.

Of students who started in fall 2011, 49 percent did not return for fall 2012, excluding those who transferred or completed degrees. That compares with 46 percent who started in fall 2010 and didn't return for fall 2011.

The colleges have started several programs to boost completion, including hiring more full-time faculty instead of part-time employees and requiring some students to take a success class.

Maria Harper-Marinick, executive vice chancellor and provost, said she's glad the new numbers keep the district moving toward its target, and she expects the graduation rate to improve even more in the coming years.

One reason is the new Arizona's College and Career Ready Standards, formerly known as the Common Core Standards, which are fully in place for K-12 this year.

"I think we will see a change in the proficiency of high-school students, and what I'm predicting is that we'll see fewer students who need developmental education," she said.

Students who take remedial, or developmental-education, classes graduate at a lower rate than students who don't.

For the group that started in 2007, 20 percent of students who had to take a remedial class ended up graduating within six years. That's an improvement over the 16 percent graduation rate for developmental-education students over the previous several years.

About one-third of new high-school graduates test into remedial math, reading or English, for which they must pay but do not earn credit.

Chancellor Rufus Gasper said the community colleges are revamping the remedial classes, possibly accelerating some of them so students are not as delayed in their progress toward a degree.

Another factor in the graduation rate is that many students do complete all or most of the credits needed for a degree but choose to transfer to a university before officially graduating.

"They finish, but what they don't have is the piece of paper that says they finished," Harper-Marinick said.

She said many engineering majors in the Maricopa County district transfer to Arizona State University's program before earning a two-year degree.

"About 50 percent of the students are gone by the second year," she said.

"They didn't complete with us, and there's nothing ASU can give them. Now they have nothing."



TOP JOBS



- [QUALITY CONTROL](#)
- [ANOTHER GREAT COMPANY](#)
- [SERVICE PLUMBER](#)
- [PRUITT'S PLUMBING](#)
- [Warehouse positions - JOB FAIR!](#)
- [AmericasourceBergen](#)
- [FITTERS, PAINTERS, WELDERS](#)
- [ANOTHER GREAT COMPANY](#)

[All Top Jobs](#)

[Employers - Post your job now](#)

GET AZCENTRAL ANYWHERE

azcentral.com mobile editions

Get azcentral.com on your phones and tablets for the latest news, sports, video, photos and much more from azcentral, The Arizona Republic and 12 News.

- » [Get azcentral.com mobile!](#)
- » [Android](#) | [iPad](#) | [iPhone](#)
- | [iPhone Sports](#) | [AZ](#)

From our sponsor

Banner Children's Total Kid for iPad



Download your free copy of Total Kid, an interactive digital parenting magazine filled with trending health topics, videos, tips and activities. Sponsored by Banner Health.

YOU MAY LIKE

by Taboola



Friends, family of 6th-grader who died react to T-shirt ban



President Obama's Gettysburg Snub



Obama: 'Website is working a lot better now'



T-shirts for 6th grader who died of cancer banned

FROM AROUND THE WEB

by Taboola



Pastor Mocked for His 'Biblical Money Code,' Gets Last Laugh Moneynews



What Will Santa Bring? Perfect Toddler Toys Fisher-Price

YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN

- [Wis. woman missing since 2004 is found in Mexico](#)
- [Ariz. woman likely died from overdose, police say](#)
- [Family leaves waitress 'lifestyle' tip instead of cash](#)
- [Pressure on Arizona Medical Board queried](#)
- [High cost of valley fever: Price of drug skyrockets](#)
- [Yarnell evacuation flawed and chaotic, experts say](#)
- [Penn State student killed in fall from ninth floor](#)
- [Big dreams for a brighter future](#)
- [Ohio boy who came home for early Christmas dies](#)
- [52 years after last visit, JFK's Arizona ties echo](#)

[?]

SPONSORED LINKS

- [Applying lessons and undertaking change at Goldman Sachs](#) (Quartz)
- [21 smokin' hot men over 50](#) (AARP)
- [Which Schools Offer the Easiest Online Degrees?](#) (Education Portal)
- [25 Growing Career Fields You Should Consider](#) (Education Portal)
- [5 Dog Breeds That Are Sadly Losing Popularity](#) (Vetstreet)
- [What to Say When Someone is Having an Anxiety Attack](#)