

# RESEARCH BRIEF

No. 10-17

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## Achievement Gap Analysis Series – Fall-to-Fall Retention: Fall 2011 through Fall 2013 Cohorts

NOVA’s commitment to student success is demonstrated by the College’s participation in the Achieving the Dream (ATD) National Reform Network. ATD is a comprehensive nationwide reform movement for student success in which NOVA has been a member since 2007 and a Leader College since 2010. NOVA’s participation in ATD encourages continuous monitoring of student outcomes in order to identify areas for improvement. Such attempts are based on research that leads to student success and closing the achievement gaps.

This Research Brief is part of a series examining recent trends in achievement gaps among first-time in college (FTIC) students in the following indicators of student success: course completion, retention, graduation rates, success in gatekeeper courses, success in developmental courses, and developmental student success in college-level courses.

This Research Brief examines achievement gaps in the Fall-to-Fall retention rates of three cohorts of FTIC students (Fall 2011 through Fall 2013).<sup>1</sup> Fall-to-Fall retention indicates the percentage of the Fall cohort of FTIC students who enrolled in the Fall semester of the following academic year. Data is disaggregated and analyzed by student demographics: enrollment status (full-time or part-time), gender, age, race/ethnicity, and program placement.<sup>2</sup>

### Key Findings

- Overall, achievement gaps in Fall-to-Fall retention rates were found when data was disaggregated by student **enrollment status, age, race/ethnicity, and program placement**.
- Demographic groups with the highest Fall-to-Fall retention rates were students age 21 and under, Asian or Hispanic, and students enrolled in an A.A. or A.S. program as compared to their counterparts within those demographic groups.
- Although there was a small achievement gap along gender lines, the difference was less than 1 percentage point.

### Section 1. Achievement Gaps in Fall-to-Fall Retention

Table 1 shows the overall Fall-to-Fall retention rates of FTIC students from Fall 2011 through Fall 2013. In each cohort, around half of FTIC students returned to NOVA in the Fall semester.

**Table 1. Fall-to-Fall Retention of FTIC Students: Fall 2011 through Fall 2013 Cohorts**

Fall 2011 Cohort			Fall 2012 Cohort			Fall 2013 Cohort		
Total Enrolled	Returned in Fall		Total Enrolled	Returned in Fall		Total Enrolled	Returned in Fall	
	#	%		#	%		#	%
12,758	6,513	51.1%	13,436	6,512	48.5%	13,644	6,665	48.8%

<sup>1</sup> OIR originally published the details of this study in Report Number10-16 "Achievement Gap Analysis Report 3 – Fall-to-Fall Retention by Enrollment Status Fall 2011 through Fall 2013 Cohorts," available at: <http://www.nvcc.edu/oir/files/F-FRetention.pdf>

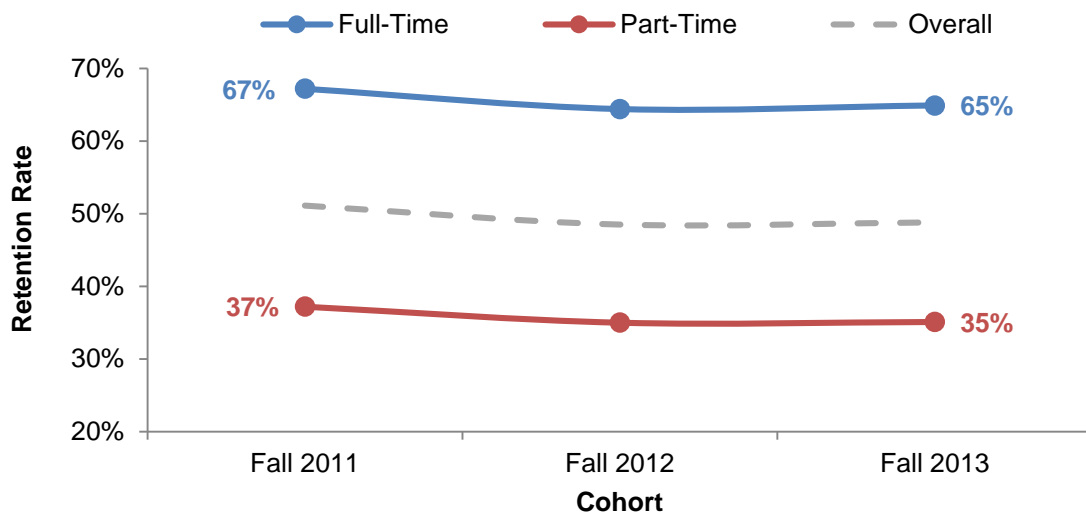
<sup>2</sup> All demographics are as of the student’s first term.

## Enrollment Status

Fall-to-Fall retention was consistently higher (by 30 percentage points) for full-time students than part-time students.

- Full-time students' retention rates decreased from 67 to 65 percent across cohorts, and part-time students' Fall-to-Fall retention rates decreased from 37 to 35 percent from the Fall 2011 cohort to the Fall 2013 cohort.
- Full-time students comprised 46 percent of students in each cohort.

**Figure 1. Fall-to-Fall Retention Rates by Enrollment Status: Fall 2011 through Fall 2013 Cohorts**

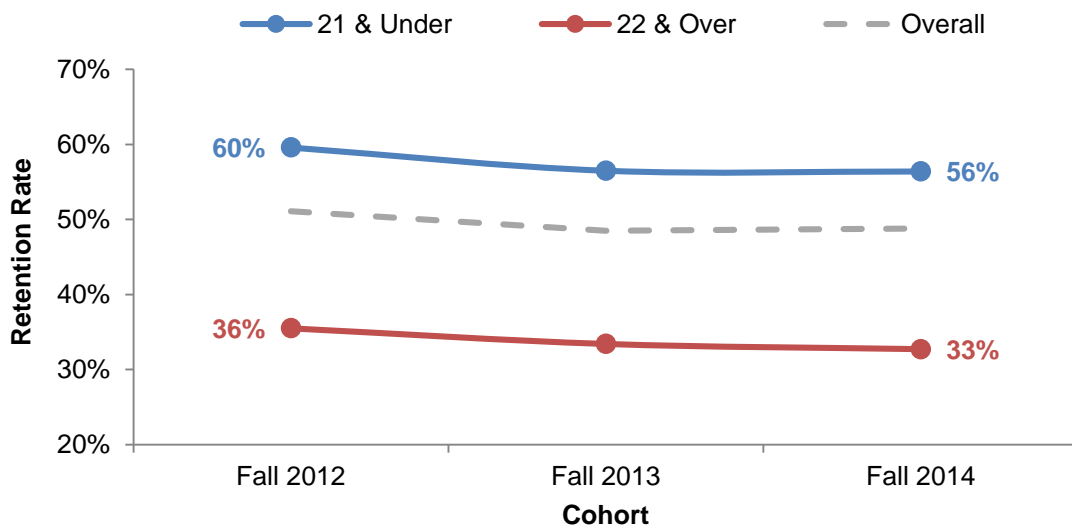


## Age

Fall-to-Fall retention rates show an achievement gap by age. Younger students (ages 21 and under) had better Fall-to-Fall retention rates than older students. On average, over 58 percent of students in each cohort were ages 21 and under.

- While an average of 57 percent of students ages 21 and under returned to NOVA in the Fall, only about 34 percent of older students did so.

**Figure 2. Fall-to-Fall Retention Rates by Age: Fall 2011 through Fall 2013 Cohorts**

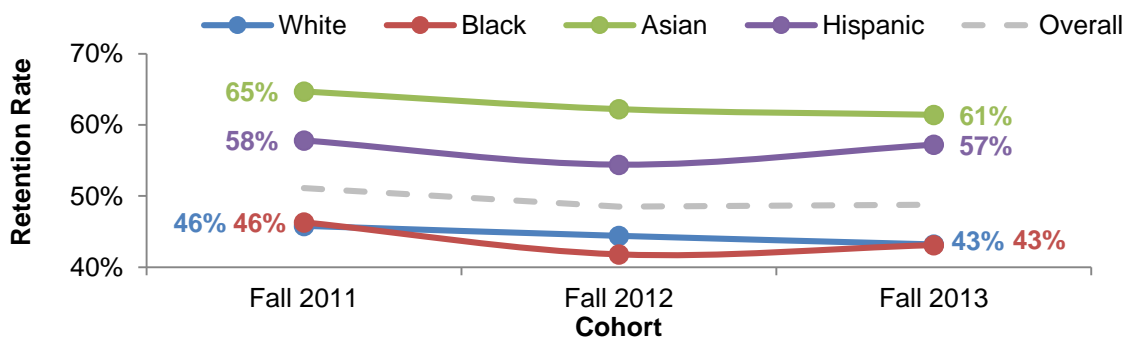


## Race/Ethnicity

The data shows an achievement gap in the Fall-to-Fall retention rates of FTIC students by race/ethnicity.

- Asian students and Hispanic students had consistently higher Fall-to-Fall retention rates than White students and Black students.
- Asian students had the highest retention rates (about 63 percent on average), followed by Hispanic students (around 57 percent).
- White students' and Black students' Fall-to-Fall retention rates were lower than the overall rate (about 49 percent), both with an average retention rate of 44 percent.
- These gaps appear correlated to the enrollment status of each racial/ethnic group. For example, 57 percent of Asian students – the group with the highest retention rates – attended NOVA full-time. In contrast, only 40 percent of White students – who had the lowest retention rate – attended full-time.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 3. Fall-to-Fall Retention Rates by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2011 through Fall 2013 Cohorts**

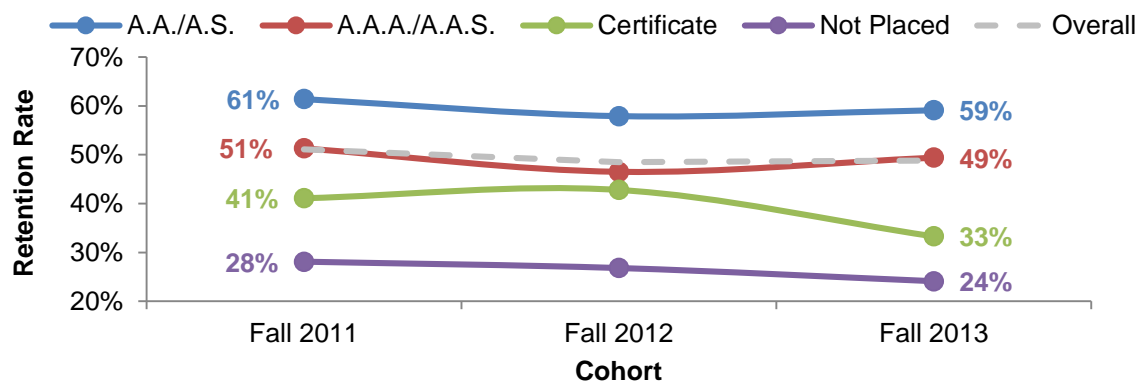


## Program Placement

The data shows an achievement gap in Fall-to-Fall retention based on students' choice of degree or certificate program.

- Over half of FTIC students were enrolled in either an A.A. or A.S. degree program. Of these students, about 59 percent returned to NOVA in the Fall.
- The Fall-to-Fall retention rate of students in A.A.A. or A.A.S. degree programs averaged about 49 percent, compared to a rate of 39 percent for students in Certificate programs.
- Students who were not enrolled in a degree or certificate program (Not Placed) had the lowest Fall-to-Fall retention rates, about 26 percent. In each cohort, less than one-quarter were Not Placed.
- Students in A.A. and A.S. degree programs were more likely to attend NOVA full-time, while students who enrolled in A.A.A., A.A.S., or Certificate programs or were Not Placed were more likely to attend part-time.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 4. Fall-to-Fall Retention Rates by Program Placement: Fall 2011 through Fall 2013 Cohorts**



<sup>3</sup> For a breakdown of demographics by enrollment status, see full report: "Achievement Gap Analysis Report 3 – Fall-to-Fall Retention by Enrollment Status Fall 2011 through Fall 2013 Cohorts," available at: <http://www.nvcc.edu/oir/files/F-FRetention.pdf>

## Section 2. Other Findings

### Gender

There was a small achievement gap in Fall-to-Fall retention by gender. Although female students' Fall-to-Fall retention rate was most often higher than that of male students, the difference was less than 1 percentage point in each cohort.

## Section 3. Discussion of Findings

Overall, the data in this Research Brief reveals a number of achievement gaps among FTIC students in terms of Fall-to-Fall retention. In general, Fall-to-Fall retention rates were highest among students who were full-time, ages 21 and under, Asian or Hispanic, and enrolled in an A.A. or A.S. degree program.

These findings mirror national trends. Current research consistently shows that male persistence and achievement lags behind that of female students.<sup>4</sup> The gender gap is most pervasive among Black students, with Black female students earning 68 percent of all associate degrees awarded to Black students.<sup>5</sup> In addition, national data shows that Black and Hispanic students trail Asian and White students on a number of student success metrics. As of 2008, only 30 percent of African Americans and 20 percent of Latinos between the ages of 25 and 34 had attained an associate degree or higher compared to 49 percent of White students and 71 percent of Asian students.<sup>6</sup>

### Closing Achievement Gaps at NOVA

NOVA's Start Strong policy changes, launched in Fall 2014, were based on recommendations from the ATD Core Team. Such policy changes are expected to help in closing achievement gaps. For example, NOVA's orientation, advising, and Student Development course policies provide targeted interventions for FTIC students ages 17 to 24 through the GPS for Success program. The goal of GPS for Success is to help students succeed in college by fostering connections with professional advisors and faculty who help students plan for and attain their academic goals.

One of ATD's six capacity areas for student success is Equity. This capacity area is used as a framework for a faculty-led pilot on teaching and learning that promotes equitable outcomes for all students.

The Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) provides additional insight into how NOVA might approach closing achievement gaps. SENSE provides benchmark data in several areas that can help NOVA understand students' critical early experiences and improve policies and practices that affect student success in the first year. Results of the 2015 SENSE indicated that, relative to other community colleges nationwide, NOVA is underperforming in the "High Expectations and Aspirations", "Engaged Learning," and "Academic and Social Support Network" benchmarks. NOVA must continue to explore the implications of these benchmark scores and identify intervention strategies to help boost student success.

In addition, NOVA faculty on ATD teams are currently examining strategies to improve equity in the classroom through teaching and learning. Future research on achievement gaps at NOVA should take a comprehensive approach to data analysis by triangulating NOVA student data along with surveys, focus groups, and outside research on community college best practices for FTIC students.

<sup>4</sup> Lee, J. M., & Ransom, T. (2011). The educational experience of young men of color: A review of research, pathways, and progress. Retrieved from College Board website: <http://youngmenofcolor.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/downloads/EEYMCResearchReport.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2014). Comprehensive Fact Sheet: Men of Color in Higher Education. Retrieved from: [http://www.ccsse.org/docs/MoC\\_Long\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf?ts=20170113182911](http://www.ccsse.org/docs/MoC_Long_Fact_Sheet.pdf?ts=20170113182911).

<sup>6</sup> Lee & Ransom 2011.