

## SECTION FIVE

### Student Success: Student Learning, Retention, and Graduation

Subsections include:

- Student success at UH Hilo
- Dimension 1: Student retention and persistence
- Dimension 2: Student engagement, learning, and development
- Dimension 3: Degree completion
- Dimension 4: Post-graduation outcomes
- Other student success metrics

*‘A‘ohe ‘ulu e loa‘a i ka pōkole o ka lou.*

No breadfruit can be reached when the picking stick is too short.

- *‘Ōlelo no‘eau* meaning there is no success without preparation

UH Hilo’s definition of student success acknowledges its [mission](#) (to challenge students to reach their highest level of academic achievement by inspiring learning, discovery, and creativity inside and outside the classroom), [vision](#) (to prepare students to compete, innovate, and lead in their professional and personal lives and participate in a global society), [values](#) (diversity, service to the local community, the natural environment, and the aloha spirit), [students](#) (full- and part-time students from diverse backgrounds, including a significant number who transfer in-and-out of UH Hilo), and role within the UH System and local community.

Successful UH Hilo students earn their intended degrees from our campus or elsewhere within 150% of normal time and find employment or continue their studies within one year of graduation. To achieve this, UH Hilo provides rigorous, well-designed academic programs and co-curricular activities that rely heavily on our strong campus diversity, local community needs, and unparalleled natural environment. Our goal as a campus is to help develop productive citizens that make our world a better place.

In alignment with this definition, UH Hilo assesses student success along four dimensions:

1. Student retention and persistence;
2. Student engagement, learning, and development;
3. Degree completion; and
4. Post-graduation outcomes.

*Dimension 1: Student Retention and Persistence*

To ensure students earn their intended degrees, UH Hilo must either retain students or help them continue their education at another school. The [UH Hilo Institutional Research Office](#) (IRO) and the [UH System IRO](#) publish disaggregated data for the following metrics online.

- Retention rate: The percent of students enrolled at UH Hilo in Fall who return to enroll at UH Hilo in Fall of subsequent years. Retention is tracked through the 8th year, but special attention is placed on 1st-to-2nd year retention.
- Persistence rate: The percent of students enrolled at UH Hilo Fall who enroll in any four-year college or university at any time in subsequent years.

Trends in retention (in red) and persistence (in grey) for UH Hilo’s full-time, first-time entering student cohorts are displayed in Figures 5.1 and 5.2. The top-left panel of Figure 5.1 shows that of the 100% of students who entered in Fall 2008, UH Hilo retained 69% into the second year, 53% into the third year, and 47% into the fourth year. It also shows that 16% of the Fall 2008 entering cohort left UH Hilo to continue their education at another four-year university in the second year.

**FIG 5.1. Right, FTIC Student Retention and Persistence Rates by Incoming Cohort**

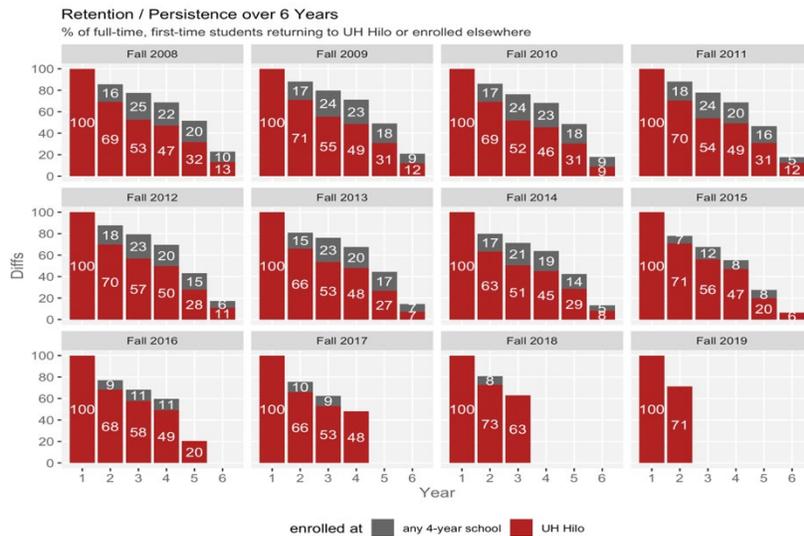


Figure 5.2 highlights trends in retention and persistence from initial enrollment into the second through sixth year. The panel on the left shows the first-to-second year retention increased from 69.2% (for the 2008 cohort) to 72.7% (for the 2018 cohort), while persistence dropped slightly (from 83.6% to 81%). The next two panels show the same trend — retention into the third and fourth years has increased, while persistence has declined. A greater percentage of students are returning to UH Hilo and fewer students are transferring to other schools. The panels on the right of Figure 5.2 also show a steep decline in retention and persistence into the fifth and sixth years. As will be discussed later, this can be attributed to UH Hilo’s greater emphasis on encouraging students to graduate in four years. (CFR 2.10)

**FIG 5.2. Right, FTIC Student Retention and Persistence Rates by Years Since Initial Enrollment**

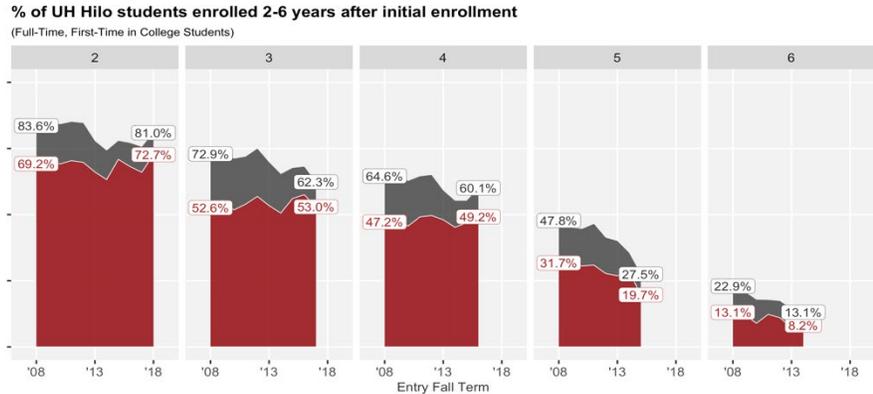
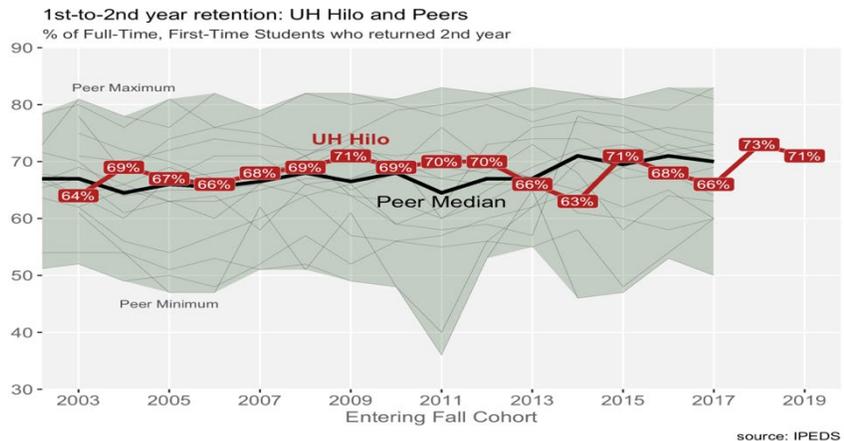


Figure 5.3 displays how UH Hilo’s first-to-second year retention rate (in red) compares to that of 16 [peer institutions](#) (thin lines within the shaded region; median highlighted in black). These peer institutions were chosen by the UH System IRO in 2001 due to their similarity in size, complexity, and mission to UH Hilo. From 2003 through 2017, UH Hilo’s retention rate consistently ranked near the middle of its peer group. While the drops in retention in 2016 and 2017 were troubling, UH Hilo’s retention rate for the 2018 cohort not displayed in the figure increased to 73%. (CFR 2.10)

**FIG 5.3. Right, Retention Rates for UH Hilo and Peer Institutions**



To investigate any potential disparities in retention and persistence rates among student subgroups, the IRO website provides data tables for:

- [Full-time FTIC, Lower-Level Transfer, and Upper-Level Transfer students](#)
- [Lower- and Upper-Level Transfer students by the location of their previous institution](#)
- [FTIC, Transfer students by permanent address \(Hawai‘i Island, Hawai‘i, US, International\)](#)
- [All students by admissions test scores and high school GPA](#)
- [Full-time FTIC and Transfer students by residency](#)
- [Full- and Part-Time students](#)

From these tables, generalizations about UH Hilo’s first-to-second year retention can be made:

- The overall retention rate from 2008-18 was 66%.
- Retention rates have remained stable for FTFT students (near 70%) and upper-level transfer

students (75%). Since 2015, retention rates for lower-level transfer students have increased from 50% to roughly 75%.

- UH Hilo retains transfer students from non-Hawai'i institutions (55%) at a lower rate than students transferring-in from Hawai'i institutions (65%). This discrepancy is greater among lower-level transfers (48% vs. 68%).
- Since Fall 2015, UH Hilo has retained 78% of international students, 64% of Hawai'i Island students, 62% of students from other State of Hawai'i islands, and 57% of mainland students.
- Students with higher admissions indicators — high school GPAs  $\geq 3.50$ ; SAT scores  $\geq 1350$  or ACT scores  $\geq 30$  — are retained at higher levels (75%) than students with lower admissions indicators (52%) — high school GPAs  $< 3.00$ ; SAT  $\leq 930$  or ACT  $\leq 18$ .
- Full-time Hawaiian (61%), non-Hawaiian (62%), male (62%), and female (62%) students are retained at nearly identical rates.
- The retention rate for Pell recipients (66%) is higher than that for students who do not receive Pell Grants during their initial semester (59%).

Beyond these demographic comparisons, UH Hilo analyzes retention and persistence data to evaluate initiatives implemented to improve student retention and persistence. This data will be provided later in this essay. (CFR 2.10)

### *Dimension 2: Student Engagement, Learning, and Development*

To indicate the extent to which UH Hilo provides “rigorous, well-designed academic programs and co-curricular activities that rely heavily on our strong campus diversity, local community needs, and unparalleled natural environment,” the following metrics are tracked and reported.

- High-Impact Practice (HIP) Participation: The percent of undergraduate students completing at least two HIPs prior to graduation. As defined by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), HIPs include Service Learning, Learning Communities, Research with Faculty, Internships, Study Abroad, and Culminating Senior Experiences.
- Student Engagement: NSSE Engagement Indicator scores which measure student perceptions of the rigor of their coursework, the campus environment, and their experiences with faculty, and their interaction with diverse others.
- Perceived Development: The percent of students who indicate UH Hilo contributes positively to their knowledge, skills, and personal development.
- Student Learning Assessment: Direct measures of student learning (academic program- and institutional-level assessment results).

The Institutional Research Office tracks the first three metrics with the [Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs maintaining student learning assessment data](#). (CFR 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 4.1)

NSSE founding director George Kuh recommends institutions “aspire for all students to participate in at least two HIPs over the course of their undergraduate experience.”<sup>1</sup> The shaded column of Table 5.1

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<sup>1</sup> National Survey of Student Engagement (2007). Experiences that matter: Enhancing student learning and success—Annual Report 2007. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research.

shows the percent of UH Hilo seniors completing at least two HIPs has declined from 62% to 57% since 2013. As a comparison, HIP completion among students in the Far West Public university comparison group increased from 57% to 59%. The left side of the table shows, however, that UH Hilo has been successful in increasing the number of students who complete one HIP (from 86% to 91%). Efforts to improve on this metric focus on getting more students to participate in one additional HIP prior to graduation.

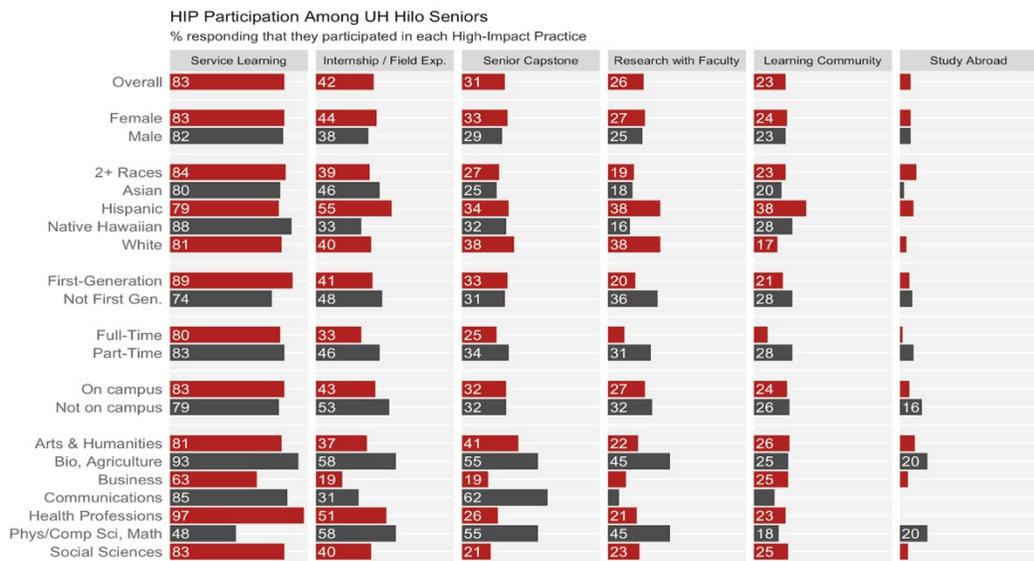
**TABLE 5.1.** *Below*, Percent of UH Hilo Seniors Participating in High-Impact Practices (HIPs)

Year	Completed at least one HIP			Completed 2+ HIPs		
	Far West Public	UH Hilo	Difference	Far West Public	UH Hilo	Difference
2013	91%	86%	-5	57%	62%	+5
2014	91%	86%	-5	57%	60%	+3
2015	85%	87%	+2	58%	60%	+2
2016	85%	92%	+7	59%	60%	+1
2017	86%	88%	+2	58%	58%	0
2018	85%	87%	+2	56%	55%	-1
2019	85%	91%	+6	59%	57%	-2

source: National Survey of Student Engagement

More [detailed NSSE reports](#) indicate UH Hilo (staying true to its mission) is most successful in getting students to participate in service learning. Figure 5.4 shows that while participation in HIP is fairly consistent across demographic groups, students in some majors are less likely to participate in specific HIPs (e.g., Communications majors are less likely to participate in research with faculty and more likely to complete a culminating senior experience). (CFR 2.3, 2.10, 2.11)

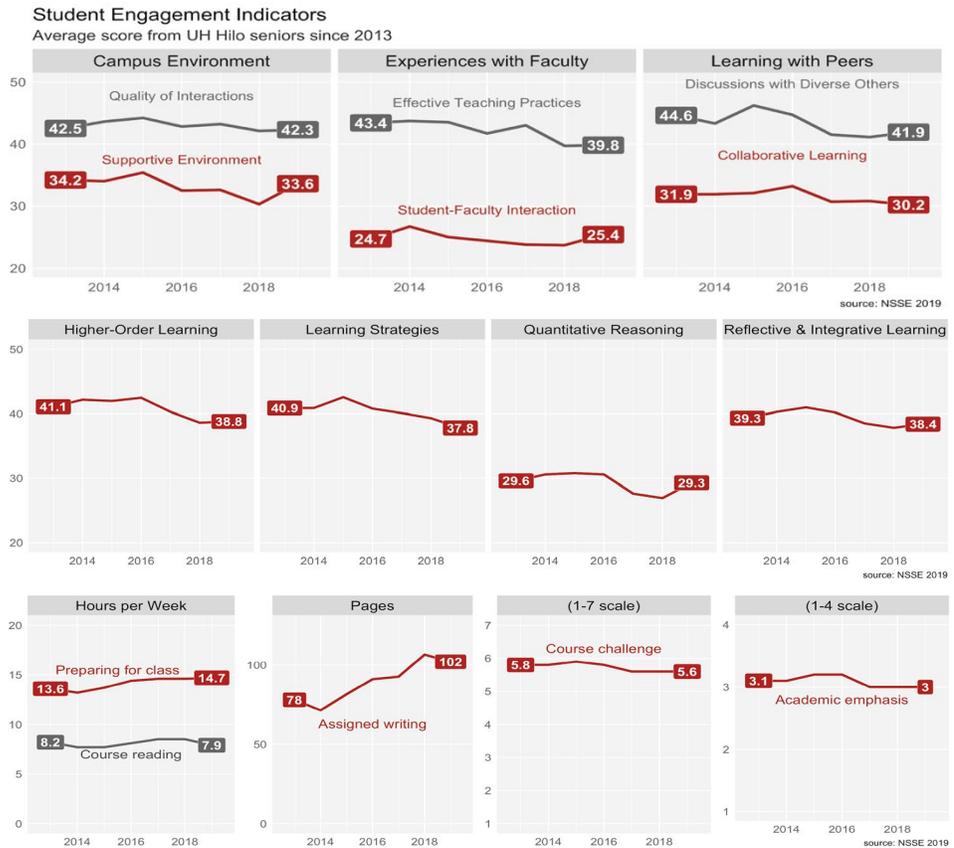
**FIG 5.4.**  
*Right, High-Impact Practices Participation Among UH Hilo Seniors*



source: NSSE 2019

Responses from UH Hilo seniors and seniors from Far West Public universities on NSSE’s Student Engagement Indicators (FIG 5.5) show that UH Hilo has remained relatively stable over the past six years, with students perceiving their courses to be challenging and believing UH Hilo places emphasis on academics. (CFR 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.10, 2.11)

**FIG 5.5.** *Right and Below,* Student Engagement Indicators



**TABLE 5.2.** *Below,* Diverse Perspectives NSSE Items

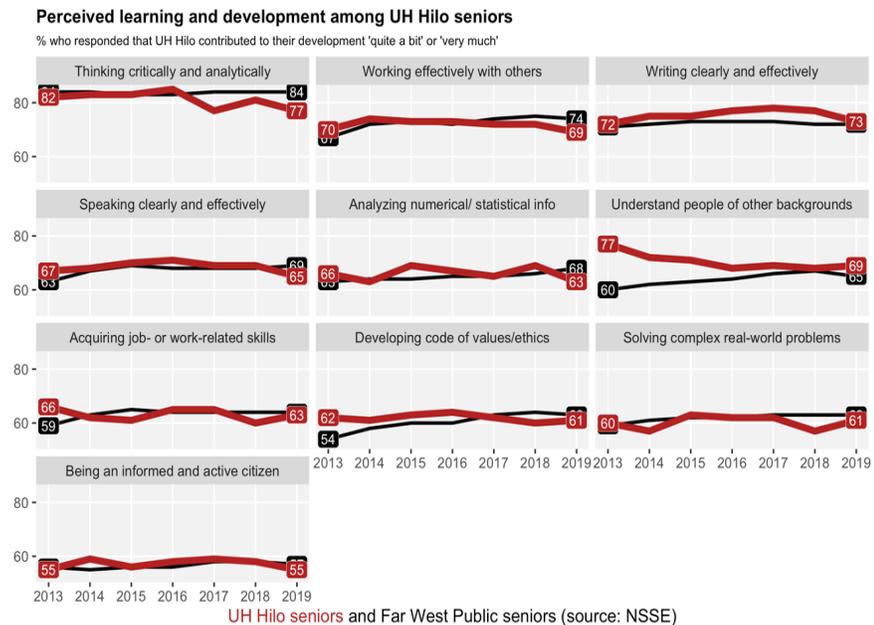
	2017		2018		2019	
	UH Hilo	FWP	UH Hilo	FWP	UH Hilo	FWP
% of seniors who often or very often... included diverse perspectives in course discussions or assignments	56%	54%	56%	53%	57%	53%
had discussions with people of a race or ethnicity other than your own	82%	77%	83%	78%	81%	76%
had discussions with people from a different economic background	74%	75%	75%	75%	77%	76%
had discussions with people with religious beliefs other than your own	70%	71%	68%	71%	71%	70%
had discussions with people with political views other than your own	64%	63%	59%	62%	67%	62%

source: National Survey of Student Engagement  
FWP = Far West Public universities  
Yellow highlight = the higher percentage between UH Hilo and Far West Public universities

Table 5.2 displays more results for individual NSSE items that measure the “discussions with diverse others” engagement indicator. For the past three years, UH Hilo seniors have interacted with diverse others at a rate equal to or greater than seniors from Far West Public universities. (CFR 2.3, 2.10, 2.11)

The purpose of retaining students and engaging them in HIPs is to promote student learning and development. UH Hilo analyzes both direct assessments and indirect perceptions of student learning and development. (CFR 2.3, 2.10, 2.11)

**FIG 5.6.** *Right*, Perceived Learning of seniors at UH Hilo and Far West Public Universities

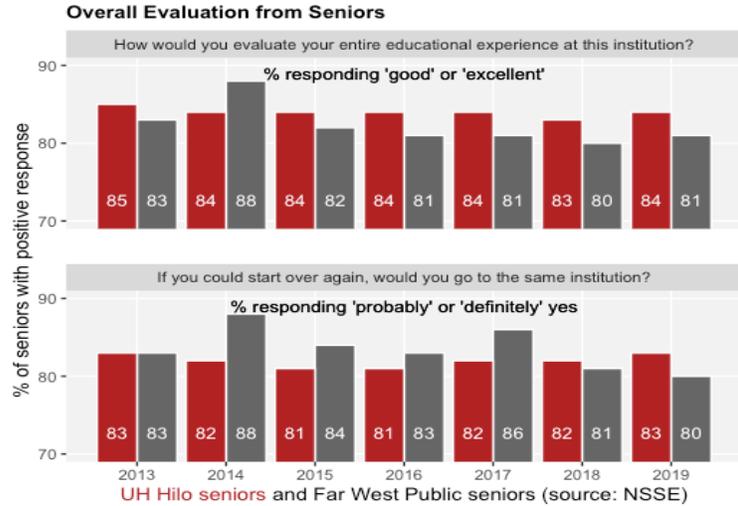


source: NSSE

Figure 5.6 displays trends in the percent of seniors who indicate their university contributed “quite a bit” or “very much” to their development in ten areas. Consistently, more than 80% of seniors have believed UH Hilo contributed to their development is “thinking critically and analytically.” On the other end of the scale, fewer than 60% of seniors indicate UH Hilo contributes significantly to them “being an informed and active citizen.” Comparing the red (UH Hilo) and black (Far West Public university) lines shows that a greater percentage of UH Hilo seniors perceive significant development in “understanding people of other backgrounds” and “writing clearly and effectively.” UH Hilo underperforms its peers in the areas of “working effectively with others” and “thinking critically and analytically.” (CFR 2.3, 2.4, 2.6)

Figure 5.7 displays two final measures of overall student engagement and perceived learning. The top portion displays the percent of UH Hilo seniors who rate their entire educational experience as “good” or “excellent.” The bottom portion displays the percentage of seniors who indicate that if they were to start over again, they would likely choose to attend UH Hilo. In six of the past seven years, UH Hilo seniors (compared to seniors in the peer group) have been more likely to rate their entire educational experience positively. While the percent of seniors who would choose UH Hilo again has not increased in seven years, UH Hilo now outperforms the average Far West Public university. (CFR 2.3, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13, 4.1)

**FIG 5.7. Right,** Overall ratings of UH Hilo and Far West Public Universities



Student evaluations of courses and instructors provide additional evidence of the perceived learning of UH Hilo students. Data for these student evaluations of courses and instructors are provided in Section 4, which looks at differences between evaluations of face-to-face and online courses. (CFR 2.3, 2.6, 2.10)

The primary measure of student success is the extent to which students actually learn and develop. Section 3 provides an in-depth discussion of student learning outcomes and experiences, with a focus on key graduation requirements, such as service learning activities intended to enhance the academic program integrity and quality. Section 4 outlines how core competencies are built into the foundation of academic programs. Section 6 discussed an assessment of the efficacy of these initiatives at the program-level. (CFR 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.10, 2.12, 2.13, 4.1)

As another measure of student learning, UH Hilo tracks licensure exam pass rates. Figure 5.8 compares UH Hilo’s first-time NAPLEX pass rates to the national pass rate. The figure shows the pass rate for UH Hilo Doctor of Pharmacy students is typically within one standard deviation of the national pass rate, except for temporary dips in 2011, 2015, 2017, and 2019. These data, along with graduation rates and post-graduation outcomes, are made available to the public on the [Doctor of Pharmacy accreditation and program disclosure webpage](#). (CFR 2.10, 4.1)

**FIG 5.8. Below,** NAPLEX (North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination) Pass Rates



### Dimension 3: Degree Completion

To measure the extent to which students “earn their intended degrees from UH Hilo or elsewhere within 150% of normal time,” the following metrics are tracked.

- Average time-to-degree: The average number of academic years and credit hours earned by UH Hilo students awarded Bachelor’s degrees.
- Six-year Graduation Rate: The percent of degree-seeking students earning bachelor’s degrees within 6 years from UH Hilo or another school.

Tables 5.3 and 5.4 display time-to-degree trends for full-time students earning bachelor’s degrees from UH Hilo. Table 5.3 shows FTFT students at UH Hilo graduate, on average, in 9.5 semesters with a total of 130-135 credit hours completed (including 10 hours transferred-in from other schools). Table 5.4 shows transfer students, on average, take 6 semesters to graduate with approximately 140 credit hours (including the 65 hours they transfer-in from other schools). (CFR 2.10)

**TABLE 5.3.** *Below, Average Time-to-Degree Statistics for Full-Time, First-Time Students*

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
avg. # of years	4.5	4.6	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.7	4.7	4.9	4.6	
avg. # of academic years	4.9	5.0	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.1	5.3	5.0	
avg. # of semester (not counting summer)	9.4	9.5	9.6	9.6	9.8	9.5	9.5	9.6	9.3	
avg. # of transfer credits	6.6	6.9	10.3	9.1	7.3	11.7	10.3	9.8	9.3	
avg. # of credits earned at UH Hilo	124.1	124.7	123.8	126.0	127.2	123.0	122.5	123.2	121.8	
avg. total # of credits completed	130.6	131.7	134.1	135.1	134.6	134.7	132.8	133.0	131.1	

**TABLE 5.4.** *Below, Average Time-to-Degree Statistics for Full-Time Transfer Students*

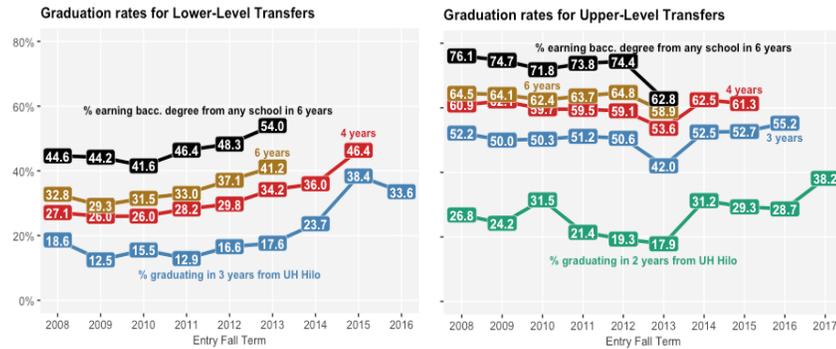
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
avg. # of years	2.9	2.8	3.1	2.9	3.1	2.9	3.0	3.2	3.0	
avg. # of academic years	3.3	3.2	3.5	3.3	3.5	3.3	3.4	3.6	3.4	
avg. # of semester (not counting summer)	6.2	5.8	6.4	6.1	6.2	6.0	6.1	6.4	6.0	
avg. # of transfer credits	57.5	64.2	60.2	63.0	63.8	66.7	61.5	65.6	64.1	
avg. # of credits earned at UH Hilo	82.0	75.4	82.3	77.2	79.5	73.8	76.1	76.5	75.2	
avg. total # of credits completed	139.6	139.6	142.6	140.1	143.3	140.6	137.6	142.1	139.3	

The previous tables indicate how long it takes students to graduate. These graduation rate statistics that display trends in the percent of full-time, first-time UH Hilo students who graduate within 4 to 6 years are published on the [UH Hilo IRO website](#). UH Hilo has greatly increased its 4-year graduation rate from just above 10% (for the 2006-2010 cohorts) to 15-27% for the 2012-2015 entering cohorts. The 5- and 6-year graduation rates have also generally increased since 2005. Using data from the National Student Clearinghouse, the percent of FTFT UH Hilo students who earn a bachelor’s degree from *any*

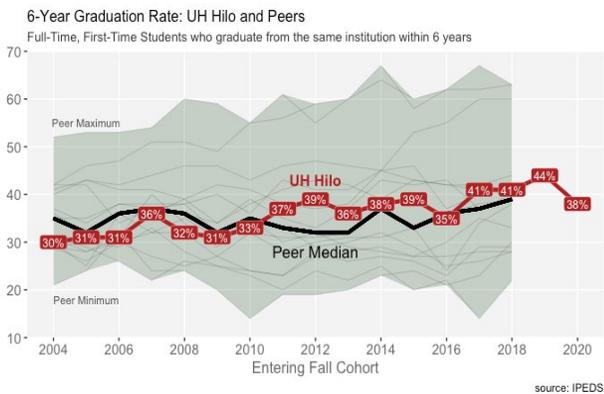
four-year college or university within six years, indicates that roughly 40% of students earn degrees from UH Hilo, 50% earn degrees from the UH System (including UH Hilo), and 55% earn a bachelor’s degree from any school (including UH Hilo). (CFR 2.10, 2.14)

The same general upward trend in graduation rates for students who transfer into UH Hilo with the three-year graduation rate for lower-level transfer students almost tripling from 2009 to 2016 is reflected in Figure 5.10. Figure 5.11 shows that UH Hilo’s six-year graduation rate (for FTFT students) has been higher than the median rate for its 16 peer institutions in seven of the last eight years. (CFR 2.10, 2.14)

**FIG 5.10. Right, Transfer Student Graduation Rates**

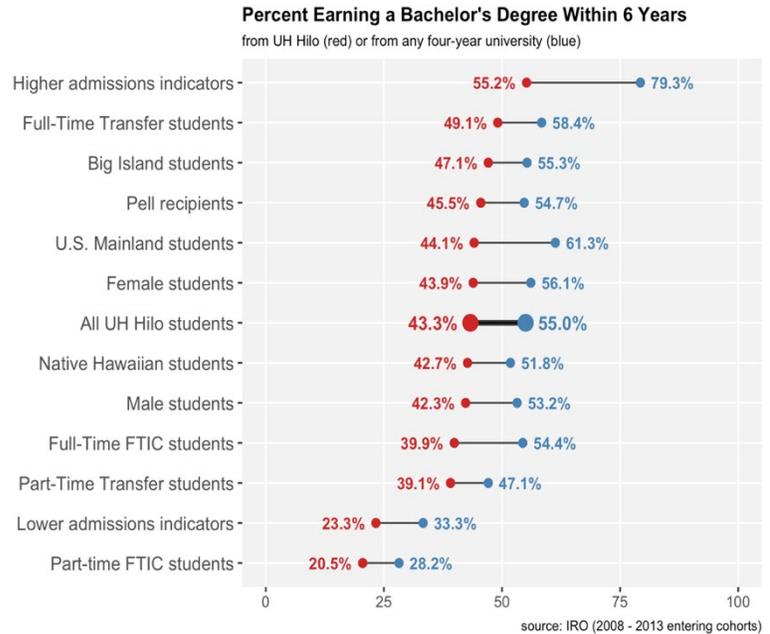


**FIG 5.11. Right, 6-Year Graduation Rates: UH Hilo and Peers**



Turning attention away from full-time, first-time students, Figure 5.12 displays the percent of students who earn a degree within six years from UH Hilo (red) or any other university (blue) disaggregated by demographic subgroups. Subgroups with higher graduation rates are displayed at the top of the chart; subgroups with lower graduation rates appear toward the bottom. For comparison, the overall six-year graduation rate for all students entering UH Hilo between 2008 and 2013 is highlighted in the middle of the chart. Perhaps unsurprisingly, students entering with higher admissions indicators (high school GPAs  $\geq 3.50$ ; SAT scores  $\geq 1350$  or ACT scores  $\geq 30$ ) have relatively high graduation rates. Full-time transfers and students from Hawai’i Island are also more likely than other UH Hilo students to graduate in six years. (CFR 2.10, 2.14)

**FIG 5.12. Right, UH Hilo Six-Year Graduation Rates (across Fall 2008-13 entering cohorts)**



On the other end, part-time first-time-in-college students and students with lower admissions indicators have markedly lower graduation rates than the overall institutional rate. Fewer than a quarter of these students earn a bachelor’s degree from UH Hilo within six years (and fewer than one-third go on to earn a bachelor’s degree from any school within six years). Of the students with lower admissions profiles (high school GPAs < 3.00; SAT ≤ 930 or ACT ≤ 18), 52% are retained into the second year, and only 35% are retained into the third year. After the sixth year, only 3% continue to enroll at UH Hilo. This indicates that these students aren’t taking too long to complete their degrees; they’re simply not persisting until graduation. (CFR 2.10)

Table 5.5 provides a closer look at the success of these students to show that not all students with lower admissions profiles are struggling to graduate on-time. In fact, transfer students with lower admissions profiles have higher graduation rates (49%) than the UH Hilo average (43%), and 61% earn a bachelor’s degree from UH Hilo or another school within six years. It’s the first-time students with lower admissions indicators who struggle — fewer than 18% earn a degree from UH Hilo (and 27.5% earn a degree from any school) in six years. (CFR 2.10)

**TABLE 5.5. Below, UH Hilo Six-Year Graduation Rates for Students with Lower Admissions Profiles**

	% with lower admissions indicators earning a bachelor’s degree in 6 years from...			
	First-Time-in-College (n = 287)		Transfer Students (n = 61)	
	UH Hilo	Any School	UH Hilo	Any School
<b>Cohorts entering between 2008 and 2013</b>	<b>17.8%</b>	<b>27.5%</b>	<b>49.2%</b>	<b>60.7%</b>
Lower admissions indicators are students with: high school GPAs below 3.00, ACT scores below 18, or SAT scores below 930				

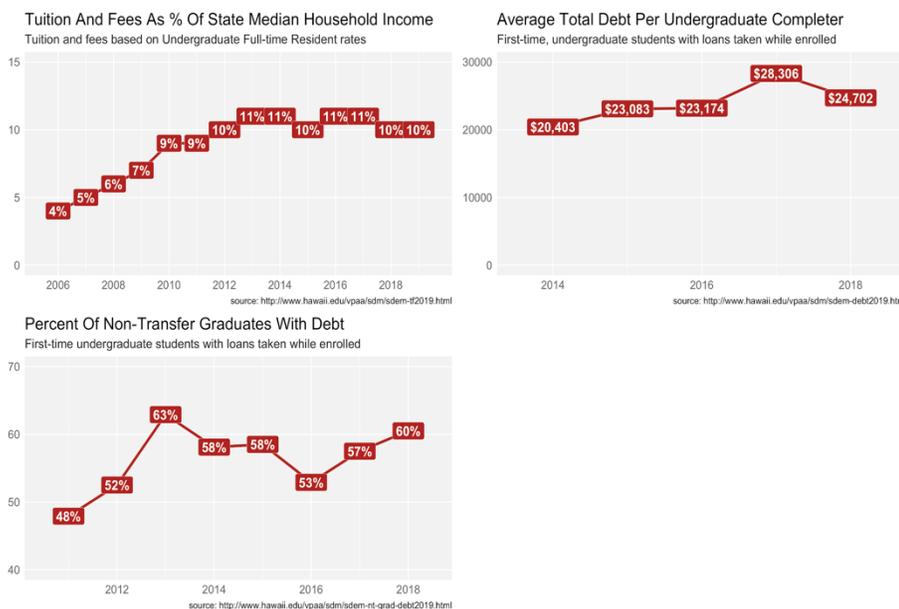
The lowest-performing student subgroup consists of part-time, first-time students. Of the 139 part-time, first-time students enrolled from 2008 until 2013, only 16 (11.5%) earned a degree from UH Hilo within six years. Another 7 (5%) earned degrees from other schools within six years. Retention, once again, is the precursor to these low graduation rates. UH Hilo only retains 44% of these students into the second year (and 32% into the third year). (CFR 2.10)

*Dimension 4: Post-graduation Outcomes*

UH Hilo’s definition of student success calls for graduates to “find employment or continue their studies within one year of graduation.” UH Hilo operationalizes these post-graduation outcomes with the following metrics.

- **Affordability:** Controlling costs and minimizing the debt burden of graduates can improve the post-graduation outcomes of students. Cohort default rates, debt upon graduation, and tuition costs are metrics to measure affordability.
- **Employment rate:** The percent of graduates who are employed full-time within one year of earning their degree from UH Hilo.
- **Median salary:** The median salary of graduates who, one year after earning their degree from UH Hilo, are employed full-time.

**FIG 5.13. Below, UH System Cost and Debt Metrics for UH Hilo**



As part of *UH Strategic Directions, 2015-2021*, the UH System tracks and reports [tuition and fees as a percentage of median household income](#), [average total debt per undergraduate completer](#), the [percent of non-transfer completers without debt](#). Tuition and fees (as a percent of median household income) have remained flat since 2012, debt per undergraduate completer has increased \$4000 since 2014, and

the percent of graduates with debt has bounced between 50-60% since 2012. (FIG 5.13)

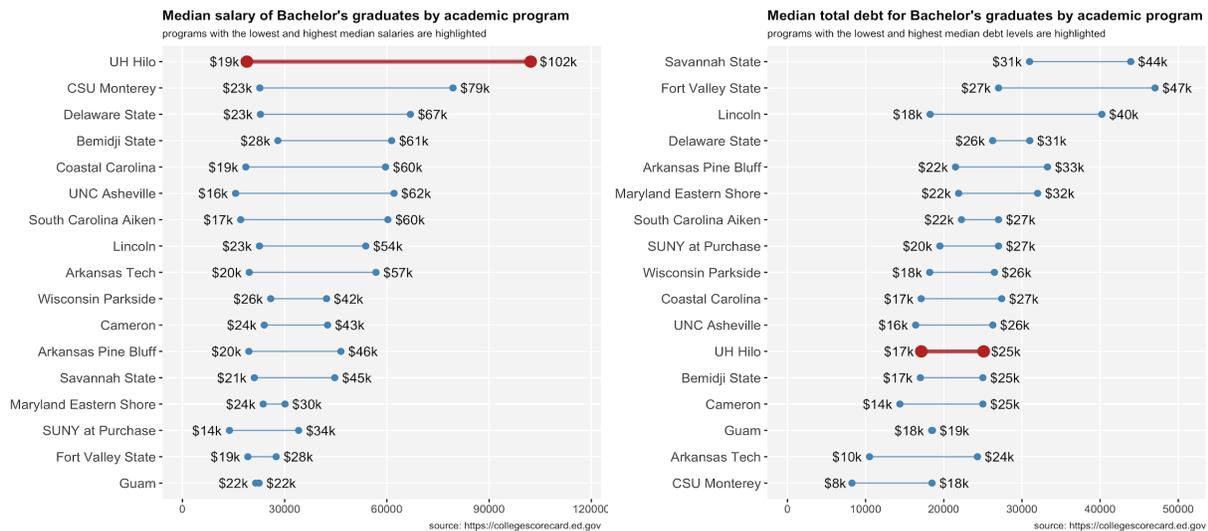
UH Hilo’s cohort default rate dropped from 9.4% in 2014 to 6.1% in 2016, outpacing the drop in the national cohort default rate for public, four-year institutions (TABLE 5.6). UH Hilo’s 6.1% default rate is also noticeably lower than the 9.3% default rate for all Hawai’i institutions. (CFR 4.2)

**TABLE 5.6.** *Below*, Cohort Default Rates (2014-16)

	2014	2015	2016
UH Hilo	9.4%	7.5%	6.1%
Public, 4-year	7.5%	7.1%	6.8%

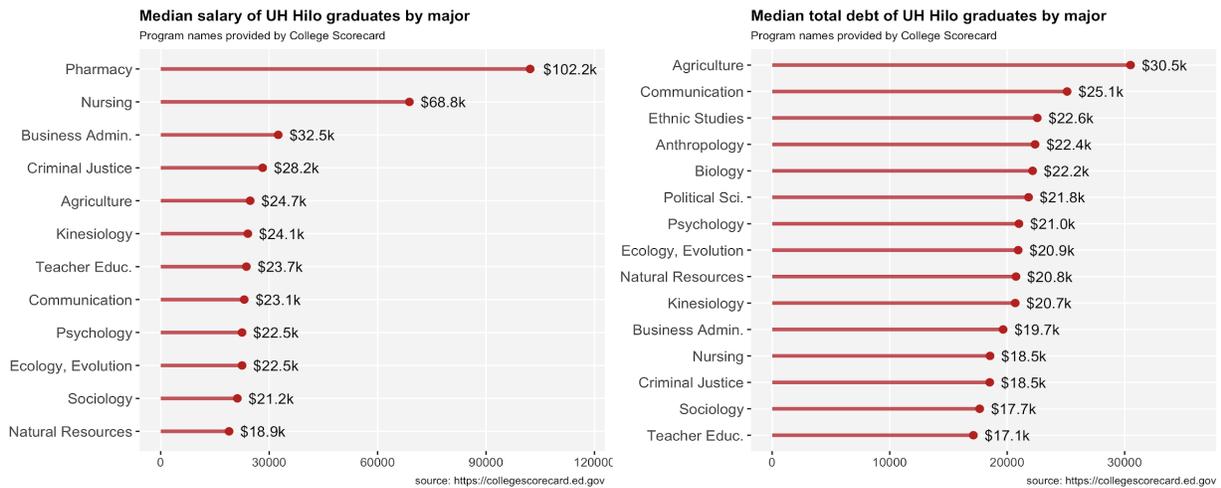
source: <https://www2.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/defaultmanagement/schooltyperates.pdf>

**FIG 5.14.** *Below*, Range in median salary and debt for graduates from each school’s programs



The [USDOE’s College Scorecard](#) allows for comparisons of data and salary data with UH Hilo’s peer institutions. The left side of Figure 5.14 compares the range in median salaries earned by graduates from each academic program, while the right side compares the range in median total debt. Based on this figure, UH Hilo compares favorably with its peer institutions on both metrics (rating high on median salary and on the lower end of total debt for its graduates). The median salary for students who graduate from UH Hilo’s lowest-earning major is \$19k, and the median salary of graduates from UH Hilo’s highest-earning major is \$102k. It doesn’t provide any indication of the distribution of salaries across all UH Hilo majors. Figure 5.15 provides this comparison among academic programs. (CFR 4.2)

**FIG 5.15. Below, Range in median salary and debt for graduates from UH Hilo’s academic programs**



The College Scorecard does not provide data for all UH Hilo academic programs, but it does allow for a comparison in earning power from students graduating from a dozen majors. The range in median salaries for undergraduate programs ranges from \$19k (for Natural Resources) to nearly \$69k (for Nursing graduates). The \$102k median for the Bachelor of Art in Pharmacy Studies degree is earned by students who completed the Doctor of Pharmacy degree program (since only PharmD students are allowed entry into the bachelor’s degree program). UH Hilo’s [Pharmacy](#) program publishes additional outcomes data for their graduates online. For example, it notes that 77% of its 2019 graduates were employed in the profession of pharmacy within one year of graduation, with another 14% entering residencies or other professional degree programs.

*Other Student Success Metrics*

Through the UH System [performance funding model](#), described in Section 7, UH Hilo is held accountable annually for the following additional student success metrics: (1) total degrees and certificates awarded, (2) degrees and certificates awarded to Native Hawaiian students, (3) degrees and certificates awarded in STEM fields, (4) degrees and certificates awarded to Pell recipients, and (5) the number of transfers into UH Hilo. UH Hilo’s performance on these metrics (along with 27 other measures) are published by the UH System in [campus scorecards](#). (CFR 2.10, 2.14, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4)

UH Hilo’s recent efforts to improve student success have focused on (1) improving advising, (2) increasing communication and outreach, and (3) enhancing collaboration between academic and student affairs.

(1a) Career and Academic Advising Center (CAAC)

To increase student retention, UH Hilo began in 2013 to assign professional advisors to all first-year students through the [CAAC](#). Each student is advised by the professional advisor until they declare a

major and get matched with a faculty advisor in their field of study. Table 5.7 provides a broad indicator of the effectiveness of the CAAC by displaying retention rates for first-year students enrolling before and after the CAAC was established. The table shows that the introduction of the CAAC coincided with a small (2%) increase in retention. While that’s not a tremendous increase in retention — and any change in retention cannot be completely attributed to a single initiative — the CAAC has reduced faculty advising loads (which may have led to recent improvements in four-year graduation rates). (CFR 2.3, 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13)

**TABLE 5.7.** *Below*, Retention Rates Before (‘08-’12) and After (‘14-’18) CAAC implementation

First-Year Student Population	First-to-Second Year Retention Rates		
	2008-2012 cohorts	2014-2018 cohorts	Difference
All first-year students	65.5%	67.4%	+1.9%
Lower-level transfer students (full-time)	50.8%	67.8%	+17.0%
Female	65.2%	67.6%	+2.4%
Male	65.9%	67.3%	+1.4%
Mainland students	62.9%	63.4%	+0.5%
Lower admissions indicators	56.6%	55.8%	-0.8%
Native Hawaiian students	69.3%	68.3%	-1.0%
Full-time FTIC students	69.9%	68.1%	-1.8%
Pell recipients	70.8%	68.7%	-2.1%

(1b) Mentor Collective

UH Hilo partnered with Mentor Collective in October 2017 to provide mentoring for first-year and new transfer students. Mentor Collective matches new students with trained peer mentors based upon common interests and professional aspirations. In Spring 2018 [Mentor Collective](#) connected 22 peer mentors to 83 new students (who spent, on average 5.1 hours each engaging with their mentors that semester). Early results from this initiative are promising, as Table 5.8 shows that first-time students participating in the Mentor Collective have much higher retention rates and first-semester GPAs. (CFR 2.3, 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13)

**TABLE 5.8.** *Below*, Retention and First Semester GPAs based on Mentor Collective Participation

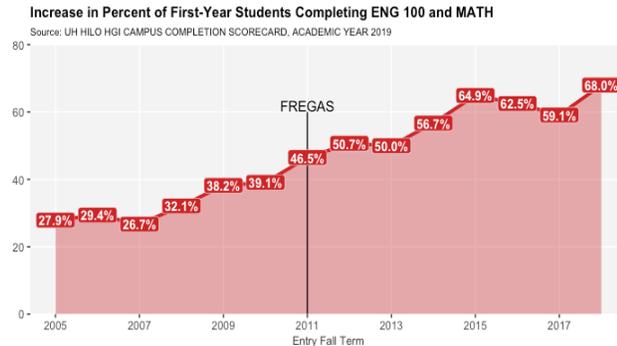
		2017-18		2018-19	
		Participated in Mentor Collective	Did Not Participate	Participated in Mentor Collective	Did Not Participate
First-Time-in-College	# of students	276	137	277	136
	retention rate	72.8%	50.4%	75.5%	66.2%
	1st sem. GPA	2.90	2.68	2.95	2.83
Transfer	# of students	68	303	230	82
	retention rate	70.6%	65.7%	70.4%	72.0%
	1st sem. GPA	3.03	2.92	3.02	3.01

(highlighted cells represent the higher result among those who did and did not participate in the Mentor Collective)

(1c) Freshman Guaranteed Academic Schedules (FREGAS), STAR, and GPS

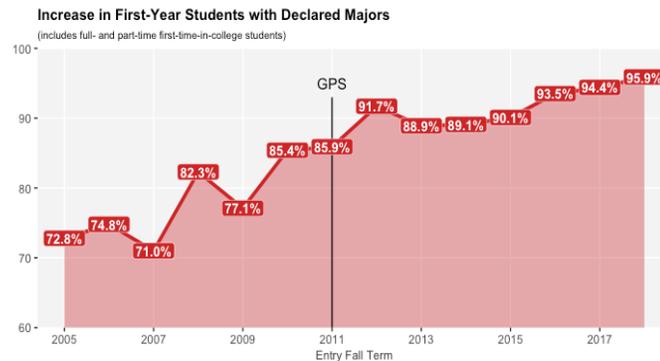
Based on evidence that students who complete 24+ credit hours, ENG 100, and one math course during their first year have significantly higher graduation rates, the FREGAS initiative was started in Fall 2011. FREGAS guarantees enrollment in ENG 100 and introductory MATH courses for all full-time, first-time students. Figure 5.16 shows that since FREGAS was implemented in 2011, the percent of first-year students completing ENG 100 and one MATH course during their first academic year jumped from 39.1% to 68%.

**FIG 5.16.** *Below*, First-Time Students Completing College-Level Math and English in the 1st Year



A Guided Pathway System (GPS) was launched alongside FREGAS in 2011 to further improve student advising. GPS is a system that prescribes courses to students to help them fulfill their degree requirements in a timely manner. Though GPS, students can easily track their progress toward degree completion. GPS works best when students declare an intended major. Figure 5.17 shows that prior to the implementation of GPS, 70-85% of first-year students had declared majors. Since the implementation of GPS, that percentage has increased to 95%.

**FIG 5.17.** *Below*, First-Year Students with Declared Majors (pre- and post-GPS implementation)



Based on this success, FREGAS has transitioned into Freshman 'Eleu, an early outreach and mandatory advising initiative for all first-year students. Through this initiative, first-year students are contacted by their professional advisors prior to the first day of instruction. Students are also required to meet with their advisors at least once in the Fall and Spring to discuss transition and acculturation to the university; major and graduation requirements; curricular and co-curricular resources; and major and career exploration. (CFR 2.3, 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13)

## (2a) 'Opihi UH Hilo Student Success

With performance funds, ['Opihi UH Hilo Student Success](#) launched in December 2017 with the hiring of two student assistant brand ambassadors tasked with generating social media content and educating students about on-campus resources through aggressive tabling and guerilla marketing strategies. The following year, two retention specialists developed and implemented proactive in reach strategies (to current students focused on registration and student support) and outreach strategies (to potential returning students who left UH Hilo with less than 15 credit hours remaining in their programs of study). 'Opihi expanded communication to students about important deadlines, processes, and events that promote student retention. UH Hilo increased email and face-to-face communication to students and faculty about registration deadlines, student success tips, and information that helps demystify the "hidden curriculum" of UH Hilo's terminology, deadlines, and processes. UH Hilo has built upon these initial 'Opihi efforts to further enhance outreach to students. (CFR 2.3, 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13)

- Outreach to Continuing Students: In Spring 2018, UH Hilo targeted all sophomores, juniors, and seniors with personalized emails and phone messages to inform students about their advisors, registration dates, and important deadlines. Of the 2,135 students contacted, 369 (17.3%) graduated by Summer 2018 and 1,480 (69.3%) registered for Fall 2018 (for a combined student success rate of 86.6% retained or graduated).
- Outreach Campaign to Students Who Did Not Graduate: Retention specialists reviewed academic progress and tailored personalized outreach to all 54 students who petitioned to graduate from Spring through Fall 2017 but were not conferred degrees. The specialists followed-up by serving as liaisons between the student and key campus offices to ensure graduation.
- Outreach to Students with GPS Pending Registration Errors: Emails were targeted to students who received errors that prevented them from registering into Summer and Fall 2018 classes. Outreach consisted of emails to students explaining how they might resolve the registration error or to explain what registration errors mean. As a result, all errors were resolved.
- Outreach to Prospective Returning Students: Retention specialists emailed and called 203 seniors who were registered in Spring through Fall 2017 but did not return to UH Hilo by Spring 2018. Of the 177 students in the Spring 2017 cohort, 13 (7.3%) re-enrolled in Fall 2018. Of the 26 students in the Fall 2017 cohort, 5 students (19.2%) re-enrolled in Fall 2018.

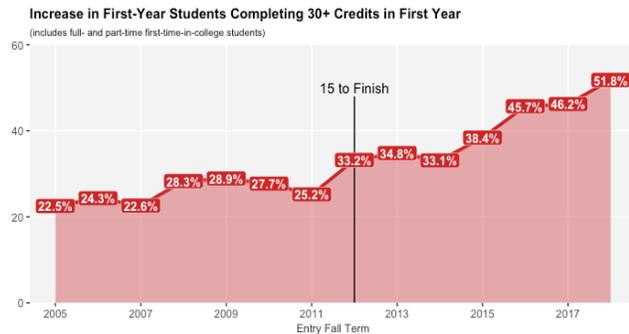
## (2b) MySuccess Phase I

In Spring 2018, UH Hilo launched [MySuccess](#), a UH System early alert communication platform to identify and intervene with students at-risk of leaving UH Hilo. With a focus on first-year students in introductory English and STEM courses, instructors and advisors flag students of concern for referral and coordinate outreach efforts through the [Career and Academic Advising Center](#), [Student Support Services Program](#) (SSSP), [International Student Services](#), [Minority Access and Achievement Program](#) (MAAP) and the [Kīpuka Native Hawaiian Student Center](#). MySuccess deployed two surveys over the course of that initial Spring 2018 semester that identified 594 issues of concern. 79% of those concerns were resolved by the end of the semester. As UH Hilo continues to implement the MySuccess early alert system, student retention and persistence data will be used to evaluate its effectiveness. (CFR 2.3, 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13)

(2c) 15 to Finish

Based on research that suggested “students who take at least 15 credits a semester are more likely to do better in school and not only graduate, but graduate on time,” UH Hilo introduced the UH System’s *15 to Finish* marketing campaign in 2012. Figure 5.18 shows the percent of first-year students completing 30 or more credit hours in their first year increased significantly following the introduction of the *15 to Finish* campaign. In fact, this percentage doubled from 25% in 2011-12 to 52% in 2018-19. (CFR 2.10, 2.14, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4)

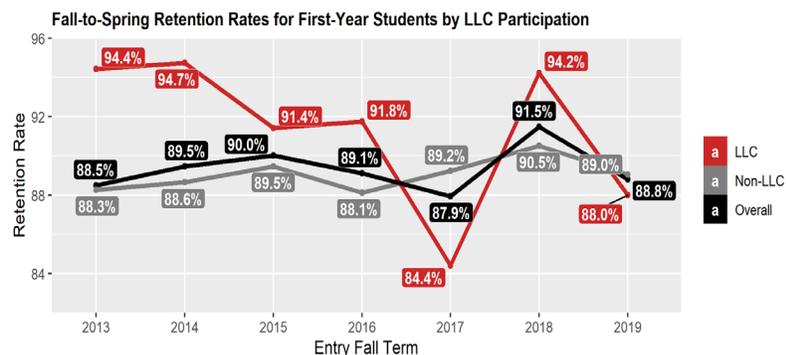
**FIGURE 5.18.** *Below*, First-Year Students Completing 30+ Credits

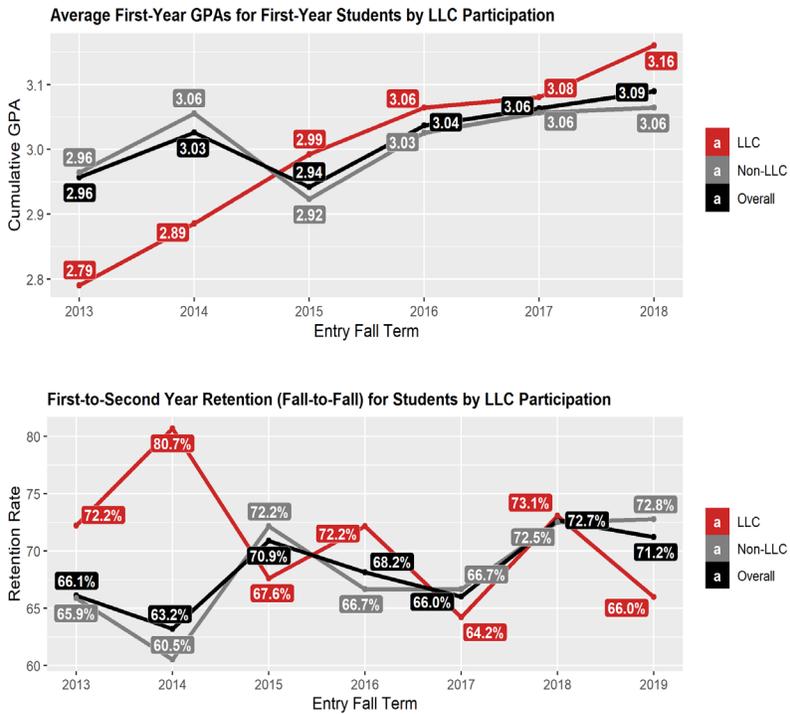


(3a) Living Learning Communities (LLC)

Supported by Title III grant funds, UH Hilo piloted the “Freshman Village” [Living Learning Community](#) in Fall 2014 to blend common interest areas (Health & Recreation, Natural Science, Hawaiian Language & Culture, Sustainability / Environmental Science, Business, and Creative Arts) with academic and social support programs for first-year students. To further build a sense of community, students participating in each LLC enroll in sections of [UNIV 101](#) (*Paths to Academic Success*, a course that provides students with key skills for success) in the Fall and ENG 100 (*Composition I*) in the Spring. LLC programming introduces students to practitioners in their specific interests through applied learning experiences throughout Hawai’i Island. These opportunities allow students to become familiar with Hawai’i Island and promote a supportive community of peers. To evaluate the effectiveness of LLCs in promoting student success, the UH Hilo IRO reports retention, GPA, and graduation rate data regularly to the Division of Student Affairs. Figure 5.19 displays retention and GPA data for students who did and did not participate in LLCs.

**FIG 5.19.** *Right*, Retention and GPA Data by LLC Participation





Although students participating in LLCs are more likely to have higher Fall-to-Spring retention, Fall-to-Fall retention, and first-year GPAs, the differences are neither large nor consistent over time. To further investigate the effect of LLCs on student success, IRO intends to conduct causal analyses using propensity scores. A careful look at the implementation fidelity of LLCs — the degree to which LLCs are delivered as intended — will also provide useful data to evaluate their effectiveness. While LLC impact on retention is still not clear, students identified the activity as enhancing their learning. In a Fall 2019 survey, 67 LLC participants indicated that the overall experience, which included monthly field trips to culturally and historically important sites, was a beneficial learning aspect of their first year at UH Hilo. The data for Fall 2019 can be found in Table 3.8 in Section 3, which looks at the efficacy of service-learning as a broader goal critical to the meaning of degrees from UH Hilo. (CFR 2.3, 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13)

#### *Program review*

UH Hilo also takes full advantage of its internal program review processes to assess and improve student success. UH Hilo has a long history of academic program review, as the UH System requires all programs to be “[subject to review at a minimum of every seventh year.](#)” UH Hilo reviews programs on a five-year cycle. Essay 6 (Quality Assurance and Improvement: Program Review, Assessment, & Use of Data as Evidence) provides an in-depth discussion of how UH Hilo’s academic program review process leads to improvement in student success. (CFR 2.6, 2.7, 2.13, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3)

Building upon the success of the academic program review process, UH Hilo has recently established a co-curricular [Student Affairs Program Review](#) process. Currently annual reports are submitted from a cross-section of the Division of Student Affairs units that address the unit’s core mission, the unit work

that fulfilled the unit's core mission, the top three priorities provided in the previous year's report, any changes to those priorities, resource allocation, assessment, accomplishments, and the upcoming year projections. Using a 5-year cycle, each Student Affairs unit is set to conduct a self-study that evaluates the unit's contribution to student success. An internal program review committee (composed of Student Affairs staff) reviews that self-study to assess the unit's effectiveness and provide recommendations for improvement. This information goes to a committee that includes faculty and staff outside Student Affairs for another evaluation. When available, the self-study is to be reviewed by an external review committee. All this information is supplemented with evidence of cost effectiveness, student engagement, and student success data. The process culminates in an Action Plan, in which the unit sets goals, priorities, and resource requirements for the immediate future. (CFR 2.11, 2.12, 2.13)

### *Summary*

In the area of student retention and persistence (Dimension 1), UH Hilo's goal is to retain at least 75% of full-time students into the second year. This goal applies across all student demographic subgroups, regardless of enrollment status, location, gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and admissions profile. Also, moving forward, UH Hilo is working to develop retention and persistence metrics at the academic program level. The IRO is working with academic affairs to develop these metrics. (CFR 2.10)

In the area of student engagement, learning, and development (Dimension 2), UH Hilo plans to improve the collection and analysis of student engagement, learning, and development data at the program level. In addition to making improvements to the program review process, UH Hilo aims to collect additional data on the student experience within each academic program. Through this focus on program-level experiences, UH Hilo's goal is for 75% of UH Hilo students to complete at least two High-Impact Practices prior to graduation. (CFR 2.3, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13, 4.1)

In the area of degree completion (Dimension 3), UH Hilo's goal is for at least 75% of its undergraduate students to earn a bachelor's degree within six years (with at least 50% earning that degree from UH Hilo). This goal represents a significant increase over current performance while acknowledging that many students enroll at UH Hilo with the intention to transfer to other schools. (CFR 2.10, 4.2, 4.3)

In the area of post-graduation outcomes (Dimension 4), IRO plans to work with academic affairs, student affairs, and the UH Foundation to develop a first destination survey to track student post-graduation activities. This institutional effort will replace multiple alumni surveys administered by programs. UH Hilo's goal is for this data to show at least 75% of UH Hilo graduates are employed full-time or have continued their education within one year of graduation. (CFR 4.4)

This section defined student success at UH Hilo (in alignment with the institutional mission), summarized data on the four dimensions of student success, compared that data to external benchmarks, and evaluated recent improvement efforts. Based on this analysis, goals were established for each dimension. Through ongoing efforts to improve data collection and a focus on enhancing student advising, outreach and communication efforts, and the integration of academic and co-curricular experiences, we are confident these goals will be met as UH Hilo "challenges students to reach their highest level of academic achievement by inspiring learning, discovery and creativity inside and outside the classroom."

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February 2021