

Few Community College Students Ever Make It To A Four-Year University

Researchers say “too many students are failed by the current system.”



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A professor delivers her opening lecture to students in a psychology course on the first night of midnight classes at Bunker Hill Community College in Boston.

A new report [released](#) Tuesday finds only 14 percent of community college students nationwide transfer to four-year schools and earn a bachelors' degree within six years. The report by the Community College Research Center at Columbia University's Teachers College shows while the vast majority of students intend to earn a BA, few succeed.

“Too many students are failed by the current system of transfer between community colleges and universities,” said Davis Jenkins, Senior Research Associate at Columbia's Community College Research Center. “This report enables us, for the first time, to see in which states colleges are supporting students in this journey so we can figure out what works and enable students everywhere to be successful.”

The report exposes a widening gap between lower-income students and their wealthier peers.

Among the students who enrolled at community college in 2007 and successfully transferred, 42 percent earned a bachelor's degree. That's far below the 60 percent of students who started at public four-year colleges.

Massachusetts, a state rich with private colleges and universities, was below the national average of 14 percent, but none of this may be as shocking as it seems.

"Our students move around a lot," says Pam Eddinger, President of Bunker Hill Community College in Boston, where the six-year graduation rate is around 11 percent. Eddinger says what's lost in the statistics is the type of students served. Many work part- or full-time and fit in classes where they can.

"Your average student finishing in six years might have experienced two community colleges and two four-year colleges in their mix," she says.

The report recommends two- and four-year colleges work together to align curricula and to better track academic credits.