

# Task Force on Graduation Rates

June 21, 2005

## Task Force Membership

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<b>John Brockelman (Chairman)</b>	Member <i>Board of Higher Education</i>
<b>Peter Alcock</b>	Member and Representative of the Trustees of the State Colleges <i>Board of Higher Education</i>
<b>Judith I. Gill</b>	Chancellor <i>Board of Higher Education</i>
<b>Thomas Graf</b>	Director <i>Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority</i>
<b>Mary Grant</b>	President <i>Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts</i>
<b>Nancy D. Harrington</b>	President <i>Salem State College</i>
<b>Patricia Markunas</b>	President <i>Massachusetts State College Association, and</i> Professor <i>Salem State College</i>
<b>Patricia O'Brien</b>	Associate Director <i>New England Association of Schools and Colleges</i>
<b>Ann Reale</b>	Commissioner <i>Department of Early Education and Care</i>
<b>John Schneider</b>	Vice President <i>MassINC</i>

## Staff to the Task Force

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<b>Lynette Robinson-Weening</b>	Associate Vice Chancellor <i>Board of Higher Education</i>
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## **Executive Summary**

The Task Force on Graduation Rates, established by the Board of Higher Education in April 2004, was charged with developing an understanding of the issues that influence degree completion and making recommendations to the Board of Higher Education on steps that can be taken to improve graduation rates at the state colleges. The Task Force included representatives from the Board, the state colleges, and various organizations with interests in promoting degree achievement in the Commonwealth. The Task Force studied the literature on degree completion, reviewed policy options used in other states, heard testimony from experts in the field, and surveyed each state college on its approaches to improving student retention and degree completion.

The goals and recommendations found in the report give direction to the Board and the state colleges on actions that can be taken to increase the number and shorten the timeframe for students earning bachelor's degrees. The Task Force believes that the recommendations can be implemented without compromising the mission of the state colleges, changing admissions standards, or compromising academic standards. The report refers to the many positive changes that have been made since the formation of the Task Force, recommends that the state colleges and the Board of Higher Education commit to the five-year goals outlined below, and recommends specific strategies to help achieve each goal.

To the state colleges:

- Graduate over 50% of first-time, full-time students within six years and aspire to rank within the top ten states nationally, without compromising academic standards.
- Improve first-year retention of first-time, full-time students by five percentage points, one point each year for five years, resulting in 80% of state college freshmen returning to their initial institution for their sophomore year.
- Reduce gaps in graduation rates related to gender, race, and income.
- Increase degree completion rates of transfer students by five percentage points, resulting in 58% of transfer students graduating within four years of arrival at the institution to which they transfer.

To the Board of Higher Education:

- Provide leadership through coordination of system-wide degree attainment activities, services, and resources, as well as initiatives that strengthen college-readiness.
- Advocate on behalf of the state colleges for funding to design and implement retention strategies that effectively improve and sustain four-year degree completion rates and reduce completion gaps related to race, gender, and income.
- Advocate for increasing financial aid allocations at least to their level in FY2001, focusing on students with greatest financial need.

## **A Report from the Task Force on Graduation Rates**

### **Background**

The Task Force on Graduation Rates, established by the Board of Higher Education in April 2004, was charged with developing an understanding of the issues that impact degree completion and with making recommendations to the Board of Higher Education on steps that can be taken to improve graduation rates. The ten-member Task Force included representatives from the Board of Higher Education, the state colleges, and various organizations with interests in promoting degree achievement in the Commonwealth.

The Task Force was formed in response to the release of the Board of Higher Education's *Accountability Report: State and Community Colleges* in February 2004, which coincided with the first release of disaggregated national graduation rate data. With access to more disaggregated data, Board staff was then able to compare graduation rates for the state colleges with those of Master's I public institutions, a more comparable group of institutions. The result indicated that the six-year graduation rate of first-time, full-time students at the Massachusetts Master's I state colleges was 44%, 1% above the national average of 43% for institutions of the same Carnegie classification. The rate was even higher with the entering class of 1997, in which 46% of students graduated within six years, compared to 44% nationally. The data revealed, however, that viewing graduation rates only in the aggregate failed to identify differences among groups of students. Beneath the surface, one found that students who do not complete their degrees, both nationally and at the state colleges, are disproportionately low-income, minority, male and first-generation college students.

The Task Force is confident that Massachusetts state colleges are moving in the right direction. The entering freshman in fall 2004 had an average grade point average of 2.93 and average SAT scores of 1010. The Board of Higher Education's *2004 Performance Measurement Report* reflects segmental five-year highs in both retention and graduation rates. Massachusetts state colleges can become national leaders among Master's I public institutions by implementing programs that enable increasing numbers of students to successfully complete their bachelor's degrees, especially those students who are at greatest risk of dropping out. It is in this context that the following report and recommendations are submitted to the Board of Higher Education.

## Understanding Graduation Rates

*“Just as more education leads to greater economic welfare for persons, families and households, so too does more education lead to greater economic welfare for cities, states and the country. Increasingly, economic welfare is determined for each and all of us by the amount of formal education we have earned.”*

### **-Educational Attainment and State Economic Welfare- Postsecondary Opportunity, No.100 – October 2000**

The following statements and principles, supported by all Task Force members, synthesize the extensive literature and data in the area of retention and graduation rates and serve as the foundation for the recommendations to the Board of Higher Education.

- 1. The bachelor’s degree has become the passport to economic success.** This is particularly true in Massachusetts, which in “2002 scored 90 on the New Economy Index, compared to a nationwide score of 60. The New Economy Index, developed by the Progressive Policy Institute, measures the extent to which states are participating in knowledge-based industries,”<sup>1</sup> industries that rely on employees with bachelor’s degrees or higher. In 2003, the average personal income for Massachusetts residents with a bachelor’s degree was \$55,038 compared to \$27,872 for those with only a high school diploma. Even attending college without earning a degree yields significantly fewer benefits. A 2002 U.S. Census Bureau study reported that nationally students who began college but did not complete a degree earned \$26,958, only 10% more than those with only a high school diploma (\$24,572) and 69% less than those who completed only a bachelor’s degree (\$45,678).<sup>2</sup>
- 2. Differences in graduation rates among groups of students are unacceptable, especially at a time when the population of students that will be most in need of public higher education includes increasing numbers of students of color and students from lower-income, first-generation college, and immigrant families.** Nationally, less than one-half (45%) of students who enroll as first-time, full-time students at public, Master’s I institutions<sup>3</sup> graduate within six years from their original institution. Students who do not complete their degrees are disproportionately minority, male, and first-generation college students.<sup>4</sup> Six of the nine state colleges are classified as Master’s I

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<sup>1</sup> *Measuring Up 2004: The State Report Card for Massachusetts*, The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, p.11.

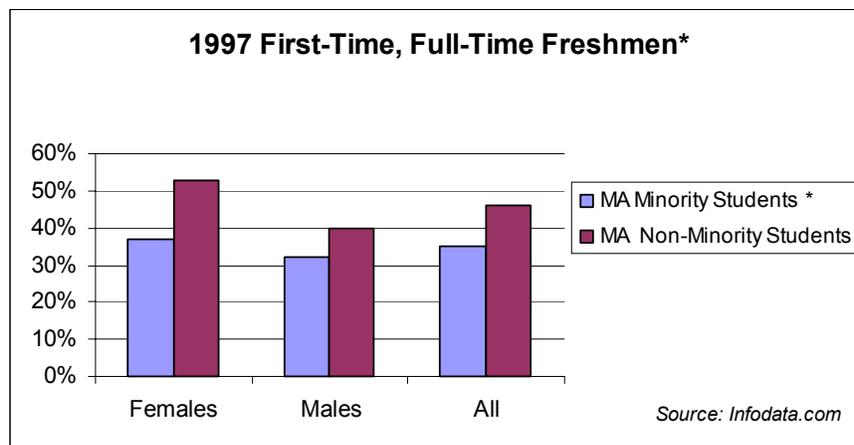
<sup>2</sup> Tinto, Vincent, *Student Retention and Graduation: Facing the Truth, Living with the Consequences*, The Pell Institute, Occasional Paper (1), July 2004, p.7.

<sup>3</sup> The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education is taxonomy of U.S. higher education institutions by institutional functions, using objective data such as number, types and levels of degrees awarded. Master’s Colleges and Universities I typically offer a wide range of baccalaureate programs, and they are committed to graduate education through the master’s degree and award 40 or more master’s degrees per year across three or more disciplines.

<sup>4</sup> *A Matter of Degrees: Improving Graduation Rates in Four-Year Colleges and Universities*, The Education Trust, May 2004, p 4.

institutions.<sup>5</sup> For the cohort of first-time, full-time students entering state colleges in 1997, 46% of non-minority students graduated within six years compared to 35% of minority students. Gender differences were also significant. The six-year graduation rate for white females was 51%, compared to 40% for white males, 37% for minority females, and 32% for minority males.<sup>6</sup> “The undergraduate years represent a major “leak” in the educational pipeline for students from underrepresented ethnic/minority groups”<sup>7</sup> nationally and in Massachusetts. These students are precisely those whose employment will fuel the Massachusetts economy in the future.

**Massachusetts State Colleges Six-Year Graduation Rates  
by Minority Status and Gender**



*1997 cohort—Mass Public Master’s 1:90 Asian; 256 Black; 151 Hispanic.*

(\*Weighted: Does not include students with race unknown or Non-USA residents)

- Financial support in the form of grants rather than loans is critical to improving graduation rates for students with high financial need.** Nationally, only 7% of students from families in the bottom income quartile have earned a baccalaureate degree by their mid-20s. Among students from families in the top quartile, the rate is 60%.<sup>8</sup> Over 500,000 students annually leave higher education, increasingly burdened with loans but without the degree and the consequent earning power needed to repay them.<sup>9</sup> A recent report from the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education found that “half of entering freshmen borrow, and one-fifth of borrowers drop out. In 2001, this meant that there were more than 350,000 ex-students who had begun college six years earlier but had no certificate or

<sup>5</sup> MCLA is a Liberal Arts I institution; Massachusetts Maritime and Massachusetts College of Art are classified as specialized institutions.

<sup>6</sup> Does not include students with race unknown or Non-USA residents.

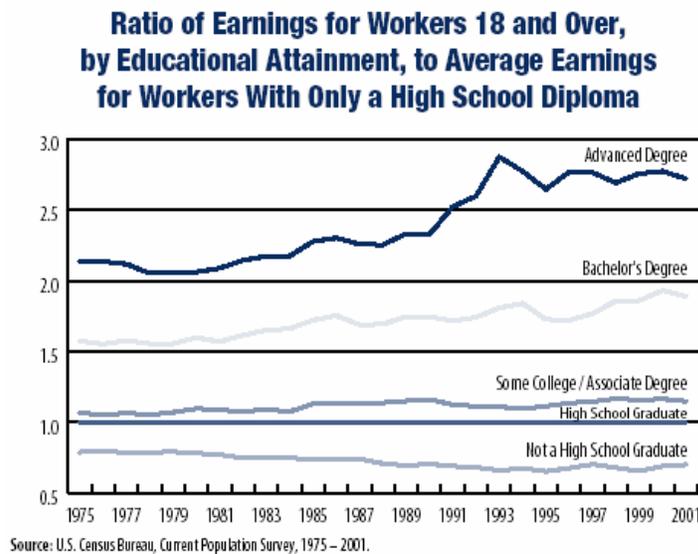
<sup>7</sup> Astin, Alexander & Oseguera, Leticia, *Degree Attainment Rates at American Colleges and Universities* (Revised Edition), Higher Education Research Institution, University of California Los Angeles, 2005, p.8.

<sup>8</sup> Op. cit., *A Matter of Degree*, p.5.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.3.

degree and a debt to repay. For students who began at four-year institutions and expected to attain a bachelor's degree, borrowers who dropped out were twice as likely to be unemployed as borrowers who received a degree, and more than ten times as likely to default on their loan."<sup>10</sup> According to *Measuring Up 2004: the State Report Card on Higher Education: Massachusetts*, families in the lowest 40% of Massachusetts incomes would need to spend 46% of their annual income to pay the cost of a Massachusetts public, four-year education, after factoring in financial aid. In Massachusetts, appropriations for financial aid have decreased 20% since FY2000.

4. **Although four years is the goal and expectation for completing a bachelor's degree, six years<sup>11</sup> is an appropriate amount of time to measure institutional performance on graduation rates.** The average number of years to complete a bachelor's degree for first-time, full-time students entering state colleges is 4.4 years; nationally, the average has been approximately 4.5 years for over three decades. Although the average numbers of years to complete a degree has remained relatively unchanged over the past three decades, the stakes in not having a degree today are much higher than they were decades ago. As jobs have required an increasingly educated workforce, the ratio of earnings gap depicted below has widened between those with bachelor's degrees and higher and those with only high school diplomas.<sup>12</sup>



Four years to complete a bachelor's degree should continue to be the goal of our institutions, and policies and programs should be developed to support that goal. At this time, however, national measures of degree completion include only first-time, full-time students who graduate within six years from their original institution. A six-year measure factors in time for students to change majors, attend part-time, if necessary, or even take a semester or two off.

<sup>10</sup> *Borrowers Who Drop Out*, The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, May 2005.

<sup>11</sup> The Campus Security and Student Right-to-Know Act, as amended, requires that institutions participating in any student financial assistance program under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 disclose the percentage of first-time, full-time undergraduate students that graduates or completes within 150% of the normal program completion time from their original institution. This is the only national measure of degree completion.

<sup>12</sup> Op. cit., *A Matter of Degree*, p.3.

Research has found that if students do not graduate within six years of beginning their bachelor's degree, the chances of their ever completing their degree are greatly reduced.<sup>13</sup> This was consistent with data presented to the Task Force: of students entering the state colleges in 1996 who did not graduate within six years, only 4% graduated within six-years from another public or private institution, and only an additional 5% were still enrolled in a four-year college. Six-year graduation rates provide an appropriate base for comparing Massachusetts institutions with the national data and for assessing institutional performance.

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<sup>13</sup> Clifford Adelman, *Principal Indicators of Student Academic Histories in Post-Secondary Education, 1972-2000*, U.S. Department of Education, 2004.

## Improving Graduation Rates

*In FY2004, the state colleges successfully increased the percentage of first-time, full-time students returning for their second year from 73 to 75%.*

*– 2004 Performance Measurement Report –*

- 1. Improving graduation rates first requires understanding the factors that impact student retention. These factors are attributable both to differences in entering class characteristics and to the effectiveness of campus retention programs.** Nationally, students who are most apt to withdraw in their first year are students with financial need, students who work more than 20 hours a week, first-generation college students, academically under-prepared students, students who fall behind in credits in their first year, Hispanic and African-American students, and males. In fact, research has shown that two-thirds of the variation in degree completion rates among institutions is attributable to these differences in entering class characteristics.<sup>14</sup> However, the wide variance of graduation rates among institutions, even among campuses of similar size that serve similar types of students and have similar missions, illustrates that an institution's student body, mission and geography need not preclude it from improving the success of its students in completing degrees in a timely manner.

A recent report by the Education Trust, *One Step from the Finish Line* (January 2005), found that some institutions consistently outperform their peers in helping students stay in college and earn degrees. A comparison of graduation rates among 26 public, Master's I, state universities with similar missions, students, and geographical locations, showed a 35 percentage point spread between the institution with the highest six-year graduation rate (65.9%) and the lowest (31%). What made the difference? "These institutions were found to have invested considerable time, energy, and resources into analyzing their internal data to better understand patterns of student progression, uncovering chokepoints and hurdles to completion....they were never content and always working to get even better."<sup>15</sup> Higher percentages of students living on campus, higher percentages of full-time students, higher percentages of full-time faculty, high-quality instruction, effective systems for advising, and effective personal and academic support services have been found to positively affect graduation rates. The state colleges are improving their rates by developing an in-depth understanding of which students are not staying to graduation and why, while concurrently adapting best practices of institutions of similar size, student populations and missions that are graduating higher percentages of students than their peer institutions.

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<sup>14</sup> Op.cit., Astin & Oseguera, p.8.

<sup>15</sup> Carey, Kevin, *One Step from the Finish Line: Higher College Graduation Rates are Within Our Reach*, The Education Trust, January 2005, p.20.

2. **The major factor in increasing the percentage of first-time, full-time students who graduate in six years is increasing the number of students continuing past their freshman year.** Research indicates that one-half of all first-time, full-time students who fail to complete college leave before beginning their second year. This is true for the six comprehensive state colleges. Freshmen retention rates in the state colleges are currently at a five-year high, with 75% of the cohort that entered in fall 2002 returning for its sophomore year. Graduation rates will not be substantially improved, however, unless even more students return for their sophomore year.
3. **Although graduation rates of first-time, full-time students are one important measure of institutional performance and student success, in order to better understand and improve the experience of all students, graduation patterns of full- and part-time students who transfer into and among the state colleges should be studied and appropriate goals set for their degree attainment.** Approximately 35% to 40% of new students entering Massachusetts state colleges each year are transfer students, over half of whom transfer from other public colleges and university campuses. Approximately 80% of transfer students attend full time. An analysis of all transfer students entering the state colleges in fall 1997 indicated that 60% graduated within six-years (53% within four years). After six years, 3.7% were still enrolled. At Westfield State College, 71% had graduated within four years. To understand fully the success of students in the public sector, first-time and transfer students' degree attainment should be assessed, and programs to improve transfer completion rates should be implemented and systematically evaluated.
4. **Resources need to be made available to implement programs that will help institutions improve retention and increase the percentage of students who earn degrees at the state colleges.** Although the state colleges have begun to implement programs to increase the retention of students, they have been limited by decreases in appropriations from undertaking initiatives that would require significant new monies. Appropriations that would be exclusively focused on improving retention and graduation rates could jump-start the capability of the state colleges to increase programming and services. Financial aid programs are another way that state support might be leveraged to reward students who persist to graduation and who complete their degrees within a reasonable period of time. Performance funding to reward those campuses that have improved graduation rates should also be considered. Resources devoted to college readiness and other programs that focus on ensuring that high school students are academically, financially, and personally prepared for college should also be a high priority for the Commonwealth.

## Recommendations

***“As policymakers, we owe it to our students to do everything we can to not only provide access to quality higher education but also to ensure that students who choose to attend public institutions are able to graduate in a timely fashion.”***

***– Judith I. Gill, Chancellor –***

Recognizing that earning a bachelor’s degree can have significant impact on the personal and economic future of state college students and on the civic and economic future of the Commonwealth, the states colleges have renewed their commitment to improving retention and graduation rates. This commitment was included as a segmental goal in the *2004 Performance Measurement Report* (p.16), which states that “the colleges will complete a comprehensive analysis of effective and affordable best practices in the areas of retention and advising, and will, in consultation with the Board of Higher Education, execute an implementation plan of identified best practices designed to increase the rate of state college students achieving a bachelor’s degree within a six-year period.” In addition, the Board of Higher Education and the campus boards of trustees are committed to using achievement of segmental goals as one factor in the future evaluations of state college presidents. Shortening the time to degree and increasing the percentage of all students earning degrees continue to be a high priority for the Governor and the Legislature. These are also topics being considered by the Board of Higher Education’s Task Force on Student Financial Aid as it develops recommendations for changes in financial aid policy.

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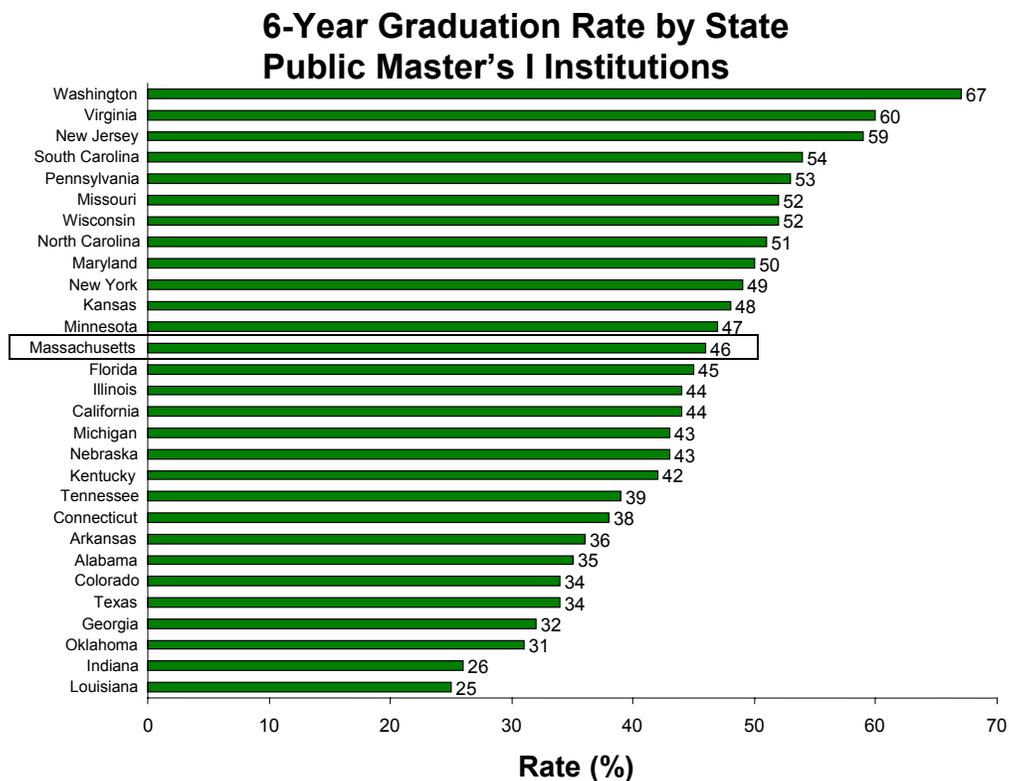
***Acknowledging the many positive activities that have been undertaken since its formation and to ensure that such activities remain at the top of the higher education agenda for the foreseeable future, the Task Force on Graduation Rates recommends that the Board of Higher Education and the state colleges:***

- ***commit to the five-year goals outlined below to improve student retention and six-year degree completion rates and reduce gaps in retention and completion rates related to gender, income and race;***
- ***identify and secure sufficient resources to support these goals, and***
- ***report progress annually to the Governor and the Legislature.***

## Recommendations and Goals for State Colleges

Make retention and degree completion among the highest priorities. Identify institutional factors that may contribute to student attrition, reallocate resources, both human and fiscal, to provide effective interventions, especially for students most at risk of dropping out, and provide professional development for faculty and staff to implement programs and services that promote student success. By 2010, the state colleges will have achieved the following goals:

**A. Graduate over 50% of first-time, full-time students within six years and aspire to rank within the top ten states nationally, without compromising academic standards.** Of the 29 states that have at least three public Master's I institutions, Massachusetts state colleges currently rank 13<sup>th</sup> in six-year graduation rates. The chart below displays graduation rates for all Master's I public institutions for the cohort enrolling in 1997.



By increasing six-year graduation rates by five percentage points, Massachusetts Master's I institutions would graduate over 50% of first-time, full-time students within six years and could rank within the top ten states nationally, depending on changes in other states.

**Recommended Strategies:**

1. Communicate an expectation with students and families that they can graduate in four years.
2. Create four-year “graduation contracts,” in which the institution guarantees courses will be available to enable students to graduate within four years if they follow a defined program of study.
3. Conduct a “critical path analysis” of all degree programs to identify any institutional obstacles that prevent students from graduating within four years and remove those obstacles.
4. Alert advisors to respond to behaviors which lead to attrition—e.g., falling behind in credits, dropping courses, dropping out prior to completing freshman year.
5. Create online progress-to-degree audits that are easily accessible to both student and advisor.
6. Provide special advisors or workshops to students who are undecided about a major.
7. Prior to the end of a student’s sophomore year, provide faculty contact to ensure that path to graduation is clear. Repeat at end of junior year with emphasis on career planning.
8. Consider incentives for students who complete their degrees in four years—e.g., increase financial aid for senior year, change loan into grant for last year.

**B. Improve first-year retention of first-time, full-time students by five percentage points, one point each year for five years, resulting in 80% of state college freshmen returning to their initial institution for their sophomore year.**

**Recommended Strategies:**

1. Establish intensive first-year experiences, such as freshmen interest groups, freshmen seminars, living/learning halls in residences, curriculum clusters, and learning communities that structure activities throughout the first year for all first-year students, integrating curricular and co-curricular activities.
2. Establish an effective early alert system to identify students not attending

classes, withdrawing from classes, falling behind in credits, or performing poorly in courses early in the first year.

3. Hire more full-time faculty. Use full-time faculty whenever possible for freshman courses.
4. Undertake a systematic series of communications with students and their parents before and during the freshman year to reinforce the connection between the institution and the families of students, with particular attention to concerns of first-generation college families.
5. Identify freshman courses, especially “gate-keeper” courses, that have high withdrawal/failure rates and that correlate with student attrition. Improve academic support to students and instructional support/development to faculty—e.g., supplemental instruction or smaller introductory courses with study groups for these courses.
6. Review effectiveness of advising for first-year students, both freshmen and transfers, and make improvements. Some areas of focus may include:
  - Evaluate and improve processes for advising undeclared students.
  - Provide advisors with 12-month “master course schedules.”
  - Identify and disseminate best advising practices, such as intrusive advising, advising teams of faculty and upper-class students, and regular “check-ups”.
  - Provide training to all advisors at least annually.
  - Involve advisors in campus retention efforts.
  - Explore and disseminate innovative models of advising.
  - Develop and implement mechanisms to evaluate advising annually.
  - Recognize and reward excellence in advising.

**C. Reduce gaps in graduation rates related to gender, race, and income. Set measurable goals to be achieved within five years.**

**Recommended Strategies:**

1. Each institution should identify categories of students with the lowest retention and graduation rates and examine graduation rate gaps between these groups. Information is now easily available to institutions through the EdTrust Web site, [www.collegeresults.org](http://www.collegeresults.org), and through the Higher Education Information Research System (HEIRS).
2. Determine when the gaps begin to appear among groups of students and why.
3. Intervene selectively to improve the persistence rates of targeted groups of students, through the use of upper class mentors, special academic and personal advisors who regularly check-in with student, and alumni mentors.
4. Provide a physical “home base” for identified groups of students, where academic and personal support services are available.
5. Develop cohorts of students who can support one another, especially through the first two years—e.g., [www.possefoundation.org](http://www.possefoundation.org).
6. Ensure that the financial need of students with the highest financial need is being fully met to eliminate as much as possible the need to work more than ten hours a week or to repay loans.

**D. Increase degree completion rates of transfer students by 5 percentage points, resulting in 58% of transfer students graduating within four years of arrival at the institution to which they transfer.**

**Recommended Strategies:**

1. Establish focus groups of transfer students to determine their specific needs and frustrations.
2. Provide transfer-mentors, former transfer students who become informal advisors for the first year.
3. Develop maps to graduation for all incoming transfer students and their advisors that display how the student can graduate within the shortest period of time. Consider contracts with students: if they follow the map, the institution will ensure

that all courses are available when they need them.

4. Review hours required in all majors. Review majors requiring more than 120 credit hours. Require all bachelor's degrees to be 120 hours, unless granted an exception, and guarantee that the major can be completed in four years.
5. Review course schedule grid and delivery of courses to maximize course offerings when students are most available.
6. Increase articulation agreements, systemwide program compacts, and joint admissions programs with community colleges to expedite the transfer of students and credits and more aggressively advertise Tuition Advantage Program.

## Recommendations and Goals for the Board of Higher Education

**Make retention and degree completion among its highest priorities, including providing systemwide leadership, advocating for funding for state colleges to implement retention strategies and for increased financial aid allocations for low income students.**

**A. Provide leadership through coordination of system-wide degree attainment activities, services, and resources as well as initiatives that strengthen college-readiness.**

### **Recommended Strategies:**

1. Enhance research and assessment support to the campuses that can lead to further improvements and policy changes, e.g., identifying campus retention and graduation rate gaps, setting goals for closing gaps, determining graduation rates of community colleges students who transfer to state colleges, assessing effectiveness of articulation agreements.
2. Sponsor an annual conference for the dissemination of best practices on student persistence and graduation rates.
3. Include a page on the Board of Higher Education Web site devoted to best practices and research related to degree completion.
4. Reinstitute the *College-To-School Report* or similar vehicle for reporting to high schools on the success of their students attending state colleges. Develop a similar report to provide feedback to community colleges.
5. Working with the Department of Education and other stakeholders, build a coordinated student data system to track students throughout their educational experience, coordinate a communication campaign to encourage college attendance, and support the alignment of high school/college admission standards through Achieve.

**B. Advocate on behalf of the state colleges for funding to design and implement retention strategies that effectively improve and sustain four-year degree completion rates and reduce completion gaps related to race, gender, and income.**

**Recommended Strategies:**

1. Request discretionary funding for each of the next five years to support and sustain campus retention activities at the state colleges.
2. Seek external grants to implement statewide retention strategies.

**C. Advocate for increasing financial aid allocations at least to their level in FY2001, focusing on students with greatest financial need.**

**Recommended Strategies:**

1. Advocate for full funding of the Performance Bonus Grant program, which provides a scholarship for students with high financial need who make optimal progress.
2. Link increases in need-based aid to increases in student charges.

Rather than duplicate the work of the Task Force on Student Financial Aid, the Graduation Rate Task Force asks the Board of Higher Education to encourage the Task Force on Student Financial Aid to evaluate the role financial aid plays in degree completion currently and to consider how the Commonwealth might use financial aid as an incentive and reward for students who graduate on time. Florida, Ohio, New York, and Texas have recently implemented programs that might serve as models for the Commonwealth. The Task Force on Student Financial Aid is also encouraged to review the guidelines for the Performance Bonus Grant program—which provides a financial bonus/scholarship in the sophomore/junior and senior years for high-need students who make optimal progress with a defined GPA—and evaluate its effectiveness in promoting degree completion.