



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
**FULLERTON**

Improving Six-Year Graduation Rates:  
*A Preliminary Plan in Coordination with a CSU-Wide Initiative*

California State University, Fullerton  
December 2009

Task Force:

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## 1. The Overall Challenge

An issue that seems to be increasingly drawing public concern is the graduation rate of American college and university students. Along with 23 other systems of higher education in the nation, the CSU has launched an effort to improve its percentage of students who graduate from their initial enrollment at the institution within six years, what has become a national benchmark time period. For the most recent reporting year, the CSU graduated 49% of the class that enrolled as freshmen six years earlier. Upper division transfer students graduated in the same period of time at 70%. Both place the CSU above national norms but not by much. In October 2009, the CSU announced a goal of raising its graduation rate to a level that would put it in the top quartile of comparable institutions. The effect of that goal is that, as a system, there must be a *six percentage point* increase in the CSU graduation rate. In addition, the system goal is to cut in half the gap between the graduation rates of underrepresented minority (URM) and those of non-minority students.

Campus-by-campus analysis by the Chancellor's Office resulted in separate goals for each of the 23 CSU institutions. The CSU Chancellor's Office used our fall 2000 first-time freshman cohort and AY 2000-2001 upper division transfer cohort to establish six-year graduation rate targets for the fall 2009 first-time freshman cohort and AY 2009-2010 upper division transfer cohort. As it turned out, Cal State Fullerton's goals were almost identical to those of the CSU overall.

Subsequently, the campus launched an effort in early November to develop a preliminary plan to meet the established targets, using a methodology that proved successful in delivering public services in the United Kingdom.

The six-year target increase goals to be achieved by the end of summer 2015 were established as the following:

### Freshmen

Overall:	6 percent increase to 55%
URM	8 percent increase to 53%
Non-URM	5 percent increase to 56%

### Upper-Division Transfers

Overall:	8 percent increase to 81%
URM	9 percent increase to 81%
Non-URM	7 percent increase to 81%

A Steering Committee was quickly established that has voices from many, but not all, appropriate sectors of the campus most closely identified with the challenges facing students in their quest to obtain a college degree. While every attempt was made to keep the Committee at a nimble size, it nevertheless grew to a dozen or so individuals. In spite of its size, the participation level has been high and the contributions strong.

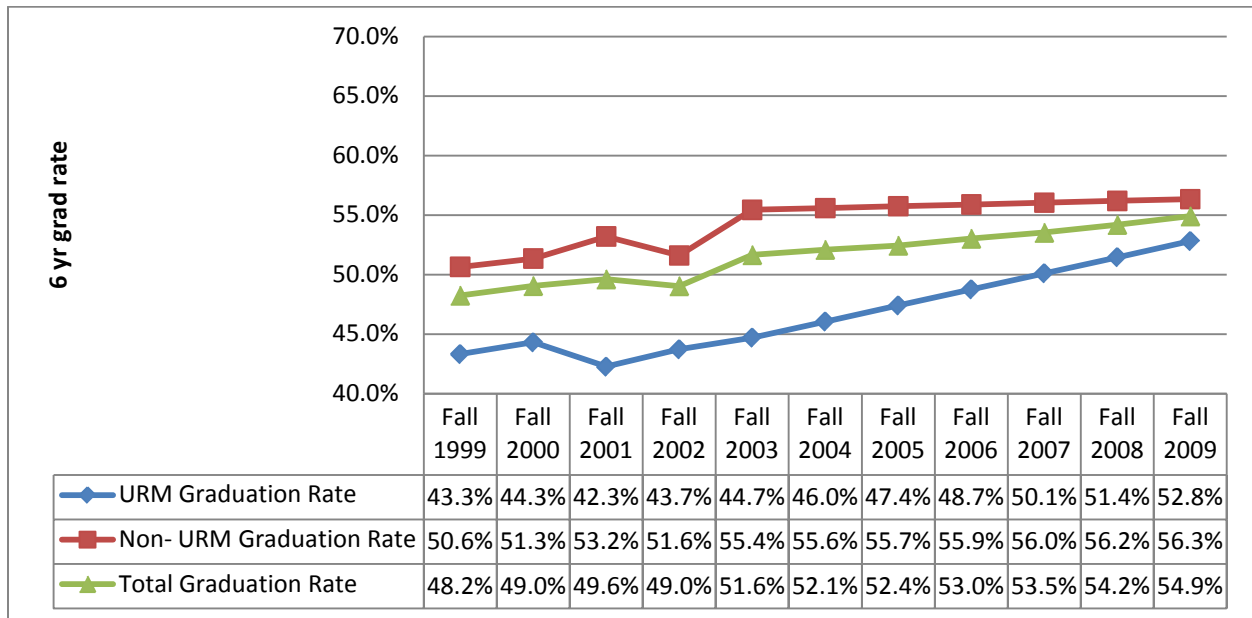
The first step was to determine what the campus was currently doing in terms of graduation rates and establish what our likely trajectories would be if we did nothing. Then, we took the six-year goals as targets and established planned trajectories to achieve those goals.

Trend lines are developed and shown in table 1 (Freshmen) and table 2 (Transfers) for URM (Native American, Black, or Hispanic students), Non- URM (all other students), and (3) Overall/Total. The overarching goal of the process will be to at least halve the gap between URM and Non-URM graduation rates while increasing the overall university graduation rates.

Chancellor's Office baseline data in the tables are shown in grey. Most recent CSU Fullerton cohort data are shown in yellow. The most recent results lower the slope estimates from the fall 2000 cohort level due to recent improvements in graduation rates. Graduation rates can be turbulent and the estimates for the fall 2004 and later freshmen cohorts and the AY 2003-04 and later transfer cohorts should be viewed as goals based on the slope required to meet fall 2009/AY 2009-10 cohort goals.

**Table 1**  
First-time Full-time Freshman Trajectories

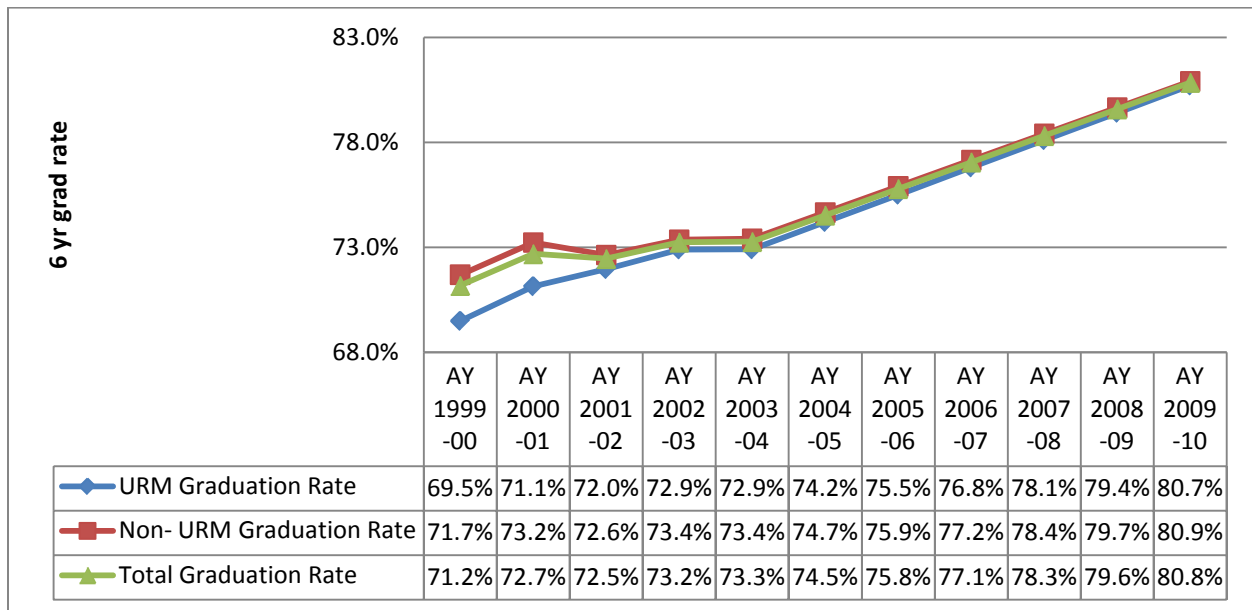
	URM			Non- URM			Total		
	Cohort	Graduated	URM Graduation Rate	Cohort	Graduated	Non- URM Graduation Rate	Cohort	Graduated	Total Graduation Rate
Fall 1999	838	363	43.3%	1,706	864	50.6%	2,544	1,227	48.2%
Fall 2000	869	385	44.3%	1,788	918	51.3%	2,657	1,303	49.0%
Fall 2001	911	385	42.3%	1,861	990	53.2%	2,772	1,375	49.6%
Fall 2002	1,075	470	43.7%	2,217	1,144	51.6%	3,292	1,614	49.0%
Fall 2003	1,094	489	44.7%	2,006	1,112	55.4%	3,100	1,601	51.6%
Fall 2004	1,298	598	46.0%	2,244	1,247	55.6%	3,542	1,845	52.1%
Fall 2005	1,510	716	47.4%	2,310	1,287	55.7%	3,820	2,003	52.4%
Fall 2006	1,498	730	48.7%	2,239	1,251	55.9%	3,737	1,981	53.0%
Fall 2007	1,709	856	50.1%	2,333	1,307	56.0%	4,042	2,163	53.5%
Fall 2008	1,901	978	51.4%	2,618	1,471	56.2%	4,519	2,449	54.2%
Fall 2009	1,550	818	52.8%	2,295	1,293	56.3%	3,845	2,111	54.9%



## Table 2

### Upper Division Transfer Trajectories

	URM			Non- URM			Total		
	Cohort	Graduated	URM Graduation Rate	Cohort	Graduated	Non- URM Graduation Rate	Cohort	Graduated	Total Graduation Rate
AY 1999-00	1,062	738	69.5%	3,469	2,487	71.7%	4,531	3,225	71.2%
AY 2000-01	1,199	853	71.1%	3,469	2,540	73.2%	4,668	3,393	72.7%
AY 2001-02	1,323	952	72.0%	3,716	2,699	72.6%	5,039	3,651	72.5%
AY 2002-03	1,365	995	72.9%	3,769	2,765	73.4%	5,134	3,760	73.2%
AY 2003-04	1,230	897	72.9%	3,321	2,438	73.4%	4,551	3,334	73.3%
AY 2004-05	1,841	1,366	74.2%	4,718	3,522	74.7%	6,559	4,888	74.5%
AY 2005-06	1,570	1,185	75.5%	3,946	2,995	75.9%	5,516	4,180	75.8%
AY 2006-07	1,666	1,279	76.8%	4,209	3,247	77.2%	5,875	4,527	77.1%
AY 2007-08	1,812	1,415	78.1%	4,185	3,281	78.4%	5,997	4,696	78.3%
AY 2008-09	1,645	1,306	79.4%	4,078	3,248	79.7%	5,723	4,554	79.6%
AY 2009-10	1,124	907	80.7%	2,634	2,131	80.9%	3,758	3,038	80.8%



## 2. Define the “Delivery Chain”

One of the elements of the methodology used in the United Kingdom is to define what is called a delivery chain. This essentially means that the person or office responsible for each of the strategies established to accomplish the overall goal is identified and held accountable. While there may be others reporting information on progress, the responsibility lies with clearly identified individuals/offices.

Almost all of the responsibilities in this effort will fall into one of two divisions: Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. Some will cross over the two, academic advising being an example. Table 3 identifies the Challenges, Strategies, Coordinators, and Responsible Units that will play the essential roles in the campus plan to achieve the targets for graduation rate increases.

The Steering Committee identified 22 challenges that students face in moving expeditiously toward a degree. The list is not exhaustive, by any means, but represents a reasonable analysis of challenges that might be addressed in a timely manner. As the process continues, there will undoubtedly be additions, revisions, and, perhaps, deletions. At least one strategy was associated with each challenge. Again, as the plan is implemented these strategies will be readdressed for their efficacy in moving the campus toward its goals. The responsible unit has been preliminarily identified and at least one member has been assigned to keep the Steering Committee informed of progress.

**Table 3**

### Challenges and Strategies to Achieve Graduation Rate Increase Goals

Challenge	Strategy	Committee Coordinator(s)	Responsible Unit
1. Lack of integrated orientation and advisement process.	Reexamine and implement a more integrated orientation process with 100% college participation	Lea Jarnagin and Bridget Driscoll	Student Affairs and Academic Affairs
2. Second semester advising not mandated	Mandate second semester advising with special emphasis on at-risk students with GPA below 2.25.	Bridget Driscoll	Academic Advising Center
3. General advisement problems	Establish a program of peer leaders; group sessions; consider second-semester freshman program	Bridget Driscoll, Larry Johnson, Robert Miyake, Lea Jarnagin	AVP Undergraduate Programs and Student Affairs
4. Financial obligations	Assure that the FAFSA preliminary application is complete. Develop a Spring awareness campaign.	Jessica Shutte (Dawn Valencia assistance)	Student Financial Aid

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Committee Coordinator(s)</b>	<b>Responsible Unit</b>
5. Access to remediation in time to have an impact on educational career.	Review support services for students in remedial courses.  Start remedial process to begin prior to first fall term. Add workshop component and faculty support for tutoring assistance information.	Jessica Wagoner and Susamma Barua	AVP Undergraduate Programs
6. Gatekeeper courses that impede student progress	Identify bottleneck courses and develop alternative solutions.	Ed Trotter and Ed Sullivan	Academic Deans
7. Students lack a clear academic focus	Determine optimal time for students to declare a major and identify what prerequisite courses they require.	Bridget Driscoll and Nancy Page Fernandez	AVP Undergraduate Programs
8. Immediate intervention for first-time students not enrolled in subsequent semester	Make individual phone contact with each first-term student who hasn't enrolled in subsequent term	Lea Jarnagin and Jessica Wagoner	Student Affairs and Academic Affairs
9. Incoming freshman doesn't see the big picture about how the entry-level classes and steps play a role in their career.	Explore entry-level class on careers in the field; opportunities perhaps as a freshman orientation course; review entry-level course student learning objectives.	Nancy Page Fernandez, Scott Hewitt and Susamma Barua	AVP Undergraduate Programs
10. Knowing learning styles	Explore use of automated tools such as READI to help students identify their learning styles	Scott Hewitt and Dawn Person	AVP Undergraduate Programs
11. Insufficient individual faculty involvement in time-to-degree effort	Explore literature to determine best methods to increase FT faculty participation in lower-division student academic life	Dawn Person and Claire Cavallaro	AVP Academic Affairs
12. Insufficient understanding of course critical paths toward degree completion	Establish a review process aimed at clarifying the four-year path to a degree.	Ed Trotter and Robert Miyake	AVP Academic Affairs (Department Chairs) and Student Affairs (Assistant Deans)

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Committee Coordinator(s)</b>	<b>Responsible Unit</b>
13. Need for more socialization into college life at early stage and making students feel more connected to the university.	Embed GE advising, selection of major, and college socialization processes in English 101 and HCOM 100/102 or equivalents (What is the critical time for a student to make significant decisions by college/dept?)	Ed Trotter, Bridget Driscoll, Nancy Page Fernandez, and Dawn Person	AVP Undergraduate Programs
14. Lack of knowledge of where to get solutions for academic and student-related problems.	Create a one-stop go-to problem solver.	Jessica Schutte, Jessica Wagoner, Bridget Driscoll, and Lea Jarnagin	Academic Affairs and Student Affairs
15. Inability of faculty and staff to assist in solving student problems because of a lack of information about what is available on campus.	Develop a communications program to provide a simple set of messages about where to find information to solve student-related problems.	Jessica Schutte, Jessica Wagoner, Bridget Driscoll, Lea Jarnagin and Scott Hewitt	Strategic Communications
16. Difficulty of communicating with student body	Develop a process to monitor how students get and consume information from the campus (e-mail, texting, Web)	Ed Trotter	Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Information Technology
17. Student lack of a “Give-back” feeling	Develop a plan to facilitate a student to feel this is <u>their</u> university; capstone experience (internship, research, etc.)	Ed Sullivan, Ed Trotter, Lea Jarnagin, and Scott Hewitt	AVP Undergraduate Programs, Student Affairs, University Advancement
18. Institutional culture	Shift campus focus toward freshmen and how they stay, feel connected to the university, and succeed.	Robert Miyake, Larry Johnson, Susamma Barua, Scott Hewitt	VP Academic Affairs
19. Institutional size	Launch a set of strategies aimed at overcoming the homogeneous nature of the undergraduate experience. Establish faculty-in-residence positions in student housing.	Ed Trotter and Lea Jarnagin	AVP Undergraduate Programs and Student Affairs
20. Graduation check process is confusing/cumbersome	Streamline the process of degree audit to improve the use of the TDA and graduation check	Bridget Driscoll, Robert Miyake, Jessica Wagoner, Larry Johnson and Ed Sullivan	AVP Academic Affairs



<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Committee Coordinator(s)</b>	<b>Responsible Unit</b>
21. Student housing availability, particularly for freshmen	Determine how the completion of the third stage of student housing can be combined with an outreach program to nearby housing facilities provided by the private sector.	Lea Jarnagin and Nancy Page Fernandez	Student Affairs
22. Limited formal and informal mentoring and networking of new students by faculty	Increase awareness of who our students are through new faculty orientation and setting a tone for expectations of faculty involvement in mentoring and increased informal interactions with new students	Dawn Person and Ed Trotter	AVP Academic Affairs (Faculty Development Center.)

### 3. Interim Reporting Plans

Integral to the methodology are the monthly reports. As requested, proposed are initial outlines of the first three months' reports.

#### *January 2010*

- Report on access to remediation in the summer (Item 5)
- Report on results of immediate intervention efforts for first-time students not enrolled in subsequent semester (Item 8)
- Streamline Titan Degree Audit and graduation check process (Item 20)
- Incorporate feedback from CSU on initial plan

#### *February 2010*

- Report on feasibility of mandatory second-semester advisement (Item 2)
- Identify any bottleneck courses and propose how to alleviate the problem (Item 6)
- Establish a process for curriculum review to make requirements simpler and more flexible (Item 12)
- Report on embedding GE and other advising in introductory courses (Item 13)
- Report on development of peer leaders/advisers (Item 3)
- Explore how to shift campus more toward emphasis on freshman success (Item 18)
- Develop a process to monitor student communications habits (Item 16)
- Determine how we might shift the campus focus toward freshmen and how they stay, become connected to the university, and succeed (Item 19)
- Determine how the completion of the third stage of student housing can be combined with an outreach program to nearby housing facilities provided by the private sector. (Item 21)

#### *March 2010*

- Reexamine and implement a more integrated orientation process (Item 1)
- Assure financial aid information is distributed in a more effective manner (Item 4)
- Determine optimal time to declare major and understand prerequisite requirements (Item 7)
- Explore entry-level class on careers in a field (Item 9)
- Explore use of automated tools to determine best student learning style (Item 10)
- Research methods to increase full-time faculty involvement in lower division student academic life (Item 11)
- Create a one-stop, go-to problem solver (Item 14)
- Develop campus-wide communications program to help faculty and staff know where solutions to student-related problems can be found (Item 15)
- Develop a plan to facilitate a student to feel this is their university (Item 17)

## Appendix A, “Deliverology” Steering Committee Contact Information

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>e-mail</i>	<i>Phone</i>
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