The Role of Two-Year Public Institutions in Bachelor’s Attainment

In the 2015-16 academic year, 49 percent of all students who completed a bachelor’s degree at a four-year institution had been enrolled at a two-year public institution at some point in the previous 10 years.

The prior enrollment at a two-year public institution may have been brief, for as little as a single course, and the two-year institution may or may not have been the first institution the student attended. As shown on the third page of this snapshot, 22 percent were enrolled in two-year public institutions for only one term.

In 20 states, more than half of the 2015-16 bachelor’s degree earners at four-year institutions had been enrolled at a two-year public institution in the previous ten years. A state-level data table in Excel format is available for download at https://nscresearchcenter.org/snapshotreport-twoyearcontributionsnufactfouryearcompletions26.
Recency of Two-Year Public Enrollment

Forty-nine percent of all 2015-16 bachelor’s degree earners at four-year institutions had been enrolled at a two-year public institution at some point in the previous 10 years.

About half of these students (49 percent) earned their bachelor’s degree within three years of having been enrolled at a two-year public institution.
Duration of Two-Year Public Enrollment

Forty-nine percent of all 2015-16 bachelor’s degree earners at four-year institutions had been enrolled at a two-year public institution at some point in the previous 10 years.

Almost two-thirds of these students (63 percent) were enrolled in two-year public institutions for three or more terms.

Number of Enrolled Terms at Two-Year Public Institutions Prior to Bachelor’s Degree Completion at Four-Year Institution

Terms in this analysis are institutionally-defined, so term length varies. The average term length was 103 days.