

# POSTSECONDARY PATHWAYS & BARRIERS TO OPPORTUNITY REPORT: 2009-2011 North Carolina Public High School Graduates

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Individual educational attainment and barriers to attainment are not readily captured by a single indicator. Educational attainment is a process with multiple key steps. After completing high school, individuals must enroll in college and persist in their enrollment until degree completion. In a series of four data briefs, we use National Student Clearinghouse data to better understand key transition points and the college-going behaviors of North Carolina public high school graduates from 2009-2016. Specifically, we will examine:

1. **Access:** How many students are going to college?
2. **Persistence:** How many students are still enrolled in postsecondary after their first year?
3. **Success:** How many students persist in their postsecondary enrollments to successfully complete a degree or credential?
4. **Postsecondary Pathways and Barriers to Opportunity:** What are the most common pathways through postsecondary? What are the potential barriers to success suggested by pathways that end in stop-out or dropout?

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In this report, we examine the key transition points in the postsecondary pipeline in combination to understand how losses or leaks from the pipeline can compound over time. We identify postsecondary outcomes and examine how patterns of institutional and enrollment characteristics come together to reveal common postsecondary pathways among the 2009-2011 North Carolina public high school graduates. We then identify the academic and economic characteristics of students on these pathways to highlight opportunities for interventions to promote postsecondary success.

*All data and tables in this report are derived from the authors' evaluation of NC DPI data matched with the National Student Clearinghouse.*

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# POSTSECONDARY PATHWAYS & BARRIERS TO OPPORTUNITY REPORT:

## 2009-2011 North Carolina Public High School Graduates

### DATA BRIEF

## Key Findings

Postsecondary outcomes for the 268,327 students who graduated from North Carolina public high schools between 2009 and 2011 were split nearly evenly across three major categories:

- **Postsecondary Success:** 34 percent enrolled in a postsecondary program by May 15, 2012, and earned a postsecondary degree or credential within six years.
- **Some Postsecondary, No Degree:** 33 percent enrolled in a postsecondary program by May 15, 2012, but did not earn a degree or credential within six years.
- **Not Enrolled:** 33 percent had not enrolled in a postsecondary program by May 15, 2012.

The five most common pathways among North Carolina public high school graduates in the Postsecondary Success group were:

- **On-time traditional four-year:** 36 percent received a bachelor's degree within four years from the institution at which they first enrolled.
- **Extended traditional four-year:** 21 percent received a bachelor's degree in five to six years from the institution at which they first enrolled.
- **Extended transfer four-year:** 9 percent received a bachelor's degree in five to six years from a different institution than the one at which they first enrolled.
- **Very extended traditional two-year:** 8 percent took four years or more to earn an associate degree or postsecondary credential from the institution at which they first enrolled.
- **Very extended transfer two-year:** 6 percent took four years or more to earn an associate degree or postsecondary credential and earned their degree from a different institution than the one at which they first enrolled.

The four most common pathways among North Carolina public high school graduates in the Some Postsecondary, No Degree group were:

- **Same school with continuous enrollment:** 40 percent attended one postsecondary institution and had no stop-outs (temporary break in enrollment).
- **Changed schools with stop-out:** 27 percent changed postsecondary institutions and had at least one stop-out.
- **Same school with stop-out:** 18 percent did not change postsecondary institutions and had at least one stop-out.
- **Changed schools with continuous enrollment:** 15 percent changed postsecondary institutions and did not have any stop-outs.

These broad outcomes were strongly associated with academic readiness and economic status. They also revealed sharp distinctions between the most common pathways to bachelor's degree attainment (full-time, on-time enrollment, with limited stop-outs) and associate degree or postsecondary credential attainment (more part-time, delayed completion, and many stop-outs), highlighting the need to develop a more complex model of college-going behavior and pathways to success.



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## Introduction

Our first three briefs examined key transition points in the postsecondary pipeline, specifically:

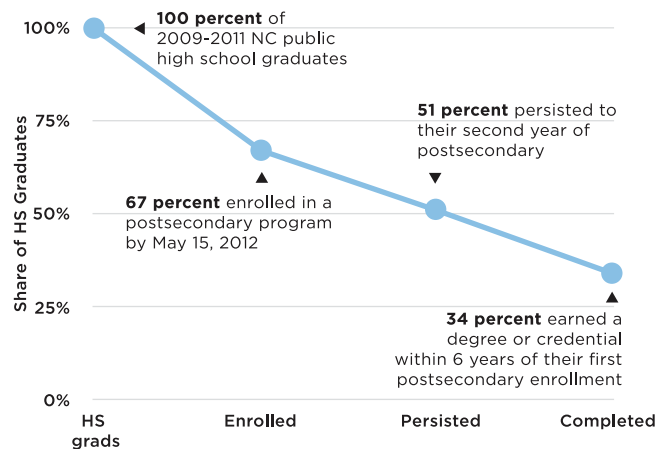
- **Access:** 67 percent of the 2009-2011 North Carolina public high school graduates enrolled in a postsecondary program by May 15, 2012.
- **Persistence:** 76 percent of postsecondary enrollers persisted to their second year.
- **Success:** 51 percent of postsecondary enrollers completed a postsecondary degree or credential within six years of their first enrollment.

In isolation, each of these transition points helps us understand one piece of the postsecondary pipeline. In combination, they help us understand how losses or leaks from the pipeline can compound over time. **Figure 1** displays how attrition at these key transition points impacts the overall postsecondary outcomes of North Carolina's public high school graduates. For every 100 students who graduated from a North Carolina public high school between 2009 and 2011:

- 67 enrolled in a postsecondary program by May 15, 2012.
- 51 persisted to their second year of postsecondary enrollment.
- 34 earned a degree or credential within six years of their first postsecondary enrollment.

Taken together, these loss points in the educational pipeline identify key groups of students who may benefit from different interventions. In the following sections, we examine how patterns of institutional and enrollment characteristics come together to reveal common postsecondary pathways among the 2009-2011 North Carolina high school graduates. We then identify the academic and economic characteristics of the students on these pathways, which can be used to identify intervention strategies that promote postsecondary success.

FIG. 1: **POSTSECONDARY OUTCOMES**  
(2009-2011 NC High School Graduates)



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# Postsecondary Pathways

## KEY FINDINGS:

Postsecondary outcomes for North Carolina's 2009-2011 public high school graduates were split nearly evenly across three major categories:

- **Postsecondary Success** (34 percent): These students had the highest average high school GPA (3.24) and the lowest rate of economic disadvantage (18 percent).
- **Some Postsecondary, No Degree** (33 percent): These students had the second highest average high school GPA (2.57) and 36 percent were economically disadvantaged.
- **Not Enrolled** (33 percent): These students had the lowest average high school GPA (2.39) and the highest rate of economic disadvantage (47 percent).

Postsecondary outcomes for the 268,327 students who graduated from North Carolina public high schools between 2009 and 2011 were split nearly evenly across three major categories (**Figure 2**):<sup>1</sup>

- **Postsecondary Success:** 92,317 or 34 percent enrolled in a postsecondary program by May 15, 2012, and earned a postsecondary degree or credential within six years.<sup>2</sup>
- **Some Postsecondary, No Degree:** 88,355 or 33 percent enrolled in a postsecondary program by May 15, 2012, but did not earn a degree or credential within six years.<sup>3</sup>
- **Not Enrolled:** 87,655 or 33 percent had not enrolled in a postsecondary program by May 15, 2012.<sup>4</sup>

These broad outcomes were strongly associated with academic readiness and economic status (**Figure 3**). The average high school GPA of all graduates was 2.74.<sup>5</sup> Students who enrolled in postsecondary and earned a degree within six years had an average high school GPA half a point higher than the overall average—3.24—and significantly higher than students who enrolled but did not earn a degree (2.57) and higher than students who did not enroll (2.39).

Similarly, just 18 percent of students in the postsecondary success group were economically disadvantaged, nearly half the overall rate of 34 percent.<sup>6</sup> Students with some postsecondary, no degree had above average rates of economic disadvantage (38 percent) while nearly half of students who had not enrolled were economically disadvantaged (47 percent).

FIG. 2: **SIX-YEAR POSTSECONDARY OUTCOMES**  
(2009-2011 NC High School Graduates)

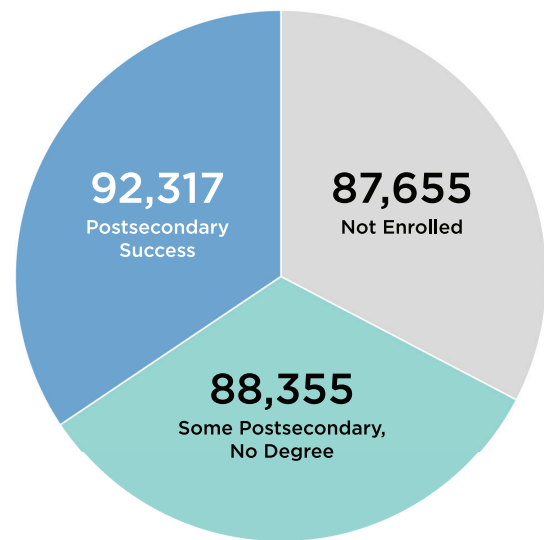
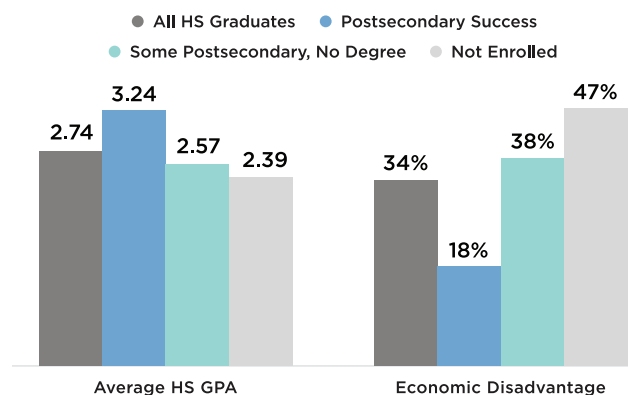


FIG. 3: **ACADEMIC AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS BY POSTSECONDARY OUTCOME**  
(2009-2011 NC High School Graduates)



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# Pathways to Postsecondary Success

## KEY FINDINGS:

The five most common Postsecondary Success pathways were:

- **On-time traditional four-year** (36 percent): These students had the highest average high school GPA (3.47) and were the least likely to be economically disadvantaged (12 percent).
- **Extended traditional four-year** (21 percent): These students had a lower average high school GPA (3.21) and had higher rates of economic disadvantage (21 percent) compared to those at four-year institutions who completed a bachelor's degree on time.
- **Extended transfer four-year** (9 percent): These students had the lowest average high school GPA (3.06) of graduates from four-year institutions and 18 percent were economically disadvantaged.
- **Very extended traditional two-year** (8 percent): These students had a lower average high school GPA (2.95) than students in four-year pathways and 25 percent were economically disadvantaged.
- **Very extended transfer two-year** (6 percent): These students had the lowest average high school GPA (2.81) of the top five postsecondary success pathways and 29 percent were economically disadvantaged.

Postsecondary Success degree completion pathways were classified in three ways:

### 1. Time to degree

- **On time:** earned degree within 100 percent of normal time (two years for credential and associate degree earners, four years for bachelor's degree earners)
- **Extended:** earned degree within 100-150 percent of normal time (three years for credential and associate degree earners, five to six years for bachelor's degree earners)
- **Very extended:** earned degree in 200 percent or more of normal time (four to six years for credential and associate degree earners; not applicable for bachelor's degree earners in this analysis)<sup>7</sup>

### 2. Institution awarding degree

- **Traditional:** earned degree from first institution attended
- **Transfer:** earned degree from institution different from the institution of first enrollment

### 3. Type of degree earned

- **Four-year:** bachelor's degree
- **Two-year:** postsecondary credential or associate degree



**TABLE 1: TIME TO DEGREE, AWARDING INSTITUTION, AND TYPE OF DEGREE FOR STUDENTS IN THE POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS OUTCOME GROUP (2009-2011 NC High School Graduates)**

	Total	Two-Year			Four-Year
		Two-Year Total	Credential	Associate	Bachelor's
<b>On-Time (All)</b>	<b>45,320</b>	<b>4,852</b>	<b>2,032</b>	<b>2,820</b>	<b>40,468</b>
Traditional	41,192	4,346	1,813	2,533	36,846
Transfer	4,128	506	219	287	3,622
<b>Extended (All)</b>	<b>33,465</b>	<b>6,465</b>	<b>1,407</b>	<b>5,058</b>	<b>27,000</b>
Traditional	24,078	5,194	997	4,197	18,884
Transfer	9,387	1,271	410	861	8,116
<b>Very Extended (All)</b>	<b>13,159</b>	<b>13,159</b>	<b>2,924</b>	<b>10,235</b>	<b>n.a.</b>
Traditional	7,581	7,581	1,537	6,044	n.a.
Transfer	5,578	5,578	1,387	4,191	n.a.
<b>Missing Information</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>91,949</b>	<b>24,477</b>	<b>6,363</b>	<b>18,114</b>	<b>67,472</b>

*Note: Not shown are 245 students whose first degree earned was a master's or higher. These were generally students who participated in accelerated professional programs, such as six-year pharmacy programs in which students complete undergraduate studies and a Doctorate of Pharmacy in six years.*

**Table 1** displays the numbers of students who earned a degree within six years by the time to degree and awarding institution (rows) and the type of degree first earned for students who received a postsecondary credential, associate degree, or bachelor's degree as their first postsecondary award (columns).

## Five Most Common Pathways for Postsecondary Success Outcome Group:

- **On-time traditional four-year:** 36,846 students—40 percent of all graduates—received a bachelor's degree within four years from the institution at which they first enrolled.
- **Extended traditional four-year:** 18,114 students—21 percent of all graduates—received a bachelor's degree in five to six years from the institution at which they first enrolled.
- **Extended transfer four-year:** 8,116 students—9 percent of all graduates—received a bachelor's degree in five to six years from a different institution than the one at which they first enrolled. Among these students, the three most common transitions were:
  - starting at an NC community college and graduating from a UNC system school (2,835 students);
  - changing schools within the UNC system (2,112 students); and
  - starting at a private four-year institution in North Carolina and graduating from a UNC system school (847 students).<sup>8</sup>
- **Very extended traditional two-year:** 7,581 students—8 percent of all graduates—took four years or more to earn an associate degree (6,044) or certificate (1,537) from the institution at which they first enrolled.
- **Very extended transfer two-year:** 5,578 students—6 percent of all graduates—took four years or more to earn an associate degree (4,191) or certificate (1,387) and earned their degree from a different institution than the one they first attended. Among these students, the three most common transitions were:

- changing schools within the NC community college system (1,908 students);
- starting at a UNC system school and graduating from an NC community college (1,815 students); and
- starting at an in-state, four-year private institution and graduating from an NC community college (437 students).

Another 21,292 students (23 percent of the Postsecondary Success outcome group) took a different path to degree completion, as detailed in **Table 1**.

## Characteristics of Students in Postsecondary Success Pathways

**Table 2** highlights selected academic, economic, and enrollment characteristics for students in the most common pathways of the Postsecondary Success outcome group. Compared to students who earned an associate degree or credential as their first degree (two-year pathway), students who earned a bachelor’s degree as their first degree (four-year pathway) had a higher average high school GPA, were less likely to be economically disadvantaged, were less likely to enter postsecondary as a part-time student, and were less likely to have a break in their postsecondary enrollments prior to degree completion (any stop-out).

**TABLE 2: ACADEMIC, ECONOMIC, AND ENROLLMENT CHARACTERISTICS OF TOP PATHWAYS IN POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS OUTCOME GROUP (2009-2011 NC High School Graduates)**

	Average HS GPA	Economic Disadvantage	Began Part Time	Any Stop-Out
<b>All Students</b>	<b>3.24</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>12%</b>
<i>Top 5 Pathways</i>				
On-time traditional four-year	3.47	12%	1%	1%
Extended traditional four-year	3.21	21%	2%	13%
Extended transfer four-year	3.06	18%	5%	15%
Very extended traditional two-year	2.81	29%	17%	43%
Very extended transfer two-year	2.95	25%	12%	44%
<b>All Other Pathways</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>7%</b>



## Four-Year Pathways

Among students who first earned a bachelor's degree:

- Students in the **on-time traditional four-year pathway** had the highest average high school GPA (3.47) and were the least likely to be economically disadvantaged (12 percent). These students were also the least likely to begin postsecondary part time (1 percent) or to stop out (1 percent) after enrollment.
- Compared to on-time graduates, students in the **extended traditional four-year pathway** had a lower average high school GPA (3.21) and higher rates of economic disadvantage (21 percent), though their part-time enrollment rates were similar to their on-time peers (2 percent). These students also had much higher rates of stop-out (13 percent); the most common stop-out was a one semester break.
- Students in the **extended transfer four-year pathway** had the lowest average high school GPA of these three groups (3.06) and were more likely to begin postsecondary part time (5 percent).<sup>9</sup> This group had the highest stop-out rate (15 percent) with breaks commonly occurring before the student changed schools. Compared to students in the extended traditional four-year pathway, these students were more likely to take breaks of two semesters or more.

These patterns suggest that academic readiness may be a larger factor in the time to degree completion among these students, though financial constraints likely have an impact as well. Other barriers, such as medical leaves of absence or mental health conditions, may be significant factors in time to degree completion but are not readily captured in the data.<sup>10</sup>

## Two-Year Pathways

Compared to students in the **very extended transfer two-year pathway**, students in the **very extended traditional two-year pathway**:

- had a lower average high school GPA (2.81 versus 2.95);
- were more likely to be economically disadvantaged (29 percent versus 25 percent); and
- were more likely to begin as a part-time student (17 percent versus 12 percent).

These differences were largely driven by differences in the first institution of enrollment: half of the students in the very extended transfer two-year pathway began at a four-year institution.<sup>11</sup>

Both groups stopped out at similar rates (43 percent versus 44 percent). Compared to students in four-year pathways, students in both two-year pathways who stopped out were more likely to take breaks of two semesters or more, though students who transferred schools were the most likely to take extended breaks.

For these reasons, both academic readiness and economic disadvantage appear to be challenges to timely degree completion among students in the most common two-year degree pathways.





# Pathways to Some Postsecondary, No Degree

## KEY FINDINGS:

The four most common pathways in the Some Postsecondary, No Degree outcome group were:

- **Same school with continuous enrollment (40 percent):** These students had the lowest average high school GPA (2.51) and highest rates of economic disadvantage (40 percent) of these four pathways.
- **Changed schools with stop-out (27 percent):** These students had an average high school GPA of 2.59 and 39 percent were economically disadvantaged.
- **Same school with stop-out (18 percent):** These students had the second lowest average high school GPA (2.52) of these four pathways and 36 percent were economically disadvantaged.
- **Changed schools with continuous enrollment (15 percent):** These students had the highest average high school GPA (2.73) and lowest economic disadvantage rate (31 percent) of these four pathways.

Some postsecondary, no degree pathways were classified in two ways:

### 1. Institution attended

- **Same school:** a student's only enrollments were at the first institution of enrollment.
- **Changed schools:** a student attended two or more postsecondary institutions.

### 2. Continuity of enrollment

- **Continuous enrollment:** student was continuously enrolled with no interruptions between terms of enrollment.<sup>12</sup>
- **Stopped out:** student had at least one gap between enrollment terms, e.g., enrolled Fall 2010 and Fall 2011 but not enrolled Spring 2011.

**Table 3** displays the numbers of students who enrolled in a postsecondary program but did not earn a degree within six years by institution attended (rows) and continuity of enrollment (columns).

**TABLE 3: INSTITUTION OF ENROLLMENT AND CONTINUITY OF ENROLLMENT FOR STUDENTS IN SOME POSTSECONDARY, NO DEGREE OUTCOME GROUP**

	Continuity of Enrollment		
	Total	Continuous Enrollment	Stopped Out
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>88,350</b>	<b>48,904</b>	<b>39,446</b>
<b>Institution of Enrollment</b>			
Same School	51,277	35,341	15,936
Changed Schools	37,073	13,563	23,510



## Four Most Common Pathways for Some Postsecondary, No Degree Outcome Group:

- **Same school with continuous enrollment:** 35,341 students—40 percent of those in the some postsecondary, no degree outcome group—attended one postsecondary institution and had no stop-outs.
- **Changed schools with stop-out:** 23,510 students—27 percent of this outcome group—changed postsecondary institutions and had at least one stop-out. More than half of this group—60 percent—stopped out within the first year and stop-outs of two terms or more were most common.<sup>13</sup> Changing schools generally happened after a stop-out. The three most common school changes were:<sup>14</sup>
  - changing from one two-year institution to another two-year institution (7,866 students);
  - changing from a four-year institution to a two-year institution (7,508 students); and
  - changing from a two-year institution to a four-year institution (5,807 students).
- **Same school with stop-out:** 15,936 students—18 percent of this outcome group—did not change postsecondary institutions and had at least one stop-out. Stop-out patterns were similar to patterns among students who changed schools and stopped out: 54 percent occurred within the first year of enrollment and more than half (62 percent) were breaks of two terms or more.
- **Changed schools with continuous enrollment:** 13,563 students—15 percent of this outcome group—changed postsecondary institutions but did not have any stop-outs. The three most common school changes were:
  - changing from a four-year institution to a two-year institution (5,745 students);
  - changing from a two-year institution to a four-year institution (3,240 students); and
  - changing from one two-year institution to another two-year institution (2,699 students).

**Table 4** shows selected academic, economic, and enrollment characteristics of students in these four most common postsecondary, no degree pathways.

**TABLE 4: ACADEMIC, ECONOMIC, AND ENROLLMENT CHARACTERISTICS FOR STUDENTS IN SOME POSTSECONDARY, NO DEGREE OUTCOME GROUP (2009-2011 NC High School Graduates)**

	Average HS GPA	Economic Disadvantage	Began Part Time	Average Terms Enrolled	Degree in >6 Years
<b>All Students</b>	<b>2.57</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>6.3%</b>
<b>Top 4 Pathways</b>					
Same school with continuous enrollment	2.51	40%	47%	3.4	0.8%
Changed schools with stop-out	2.59	39%	40%	7.0	10.2%
Same school with stop-out	2.52	36%	53%	5.8	7.4%
Changed schools with continuous enrollment	2.73	31%	27%	8.4	12.5%



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## Characteristics of Students in Some Postsecondary, No Degree Pathways

- More than half of the students who attended the **same school with continuous enrollment** left after one or two terms of enrollment. The average student in this subgroup had been enrolled for 3.4 terms, the lowest number among these four pathways. This subgroup was the least likely to earn a degree in seven to nine years (0.8 percent), largely because they tended to leave postsecondary permanently after no more than a few terms. Students in this pathway had the lowest average high school GPA (2.51) and highest rates of economic disadvantage (40 percent), indicating that these students likely faced dual barriers of inadequate academic preparation and limited financial capacity.
- The average student who **changed schools with stop-out** had been enrolled for 7.0 terms since they first began postsecondary. Students in this pathway had the second highest rates of economic disadvantage (39 percent) but had an average high school GPA above the overall group average (2.59 versus 2.57). This slightly higher average GPA may be related to this pathway's delayed completion rate: 10.2 percent earned a degree within seven to nine years, the second highest rate of these four pathways.
- The average student who attended the **same school with stop-out** had been enrolled for 5.8 terms. These students had the second lowest average high school GPA (2.52) of these four pathways. While they were slightly less likely to be economically disadvantaged than the group average (36 percent versus 38 percent overall), they were the most likely to begin school part time (53 percent). Lastly, 7.4 percent of students in this pathway earned a degree or certificate within seven to nine years.
- Students who **changed schools with continuous enrollment** were enrolled for the greatest average number of terms—8.4—and were the most likely to earn a degree within seven to nine years (12.5 percent).<sup>15</sup> This subgroup had the highest average high school GPA (2.73 versus the group average of 2.57) and the lowest rates of economic disadvantage (31 percent). They were also the least likely to begin part time (27 percent). While these students were less academically ready and more economically disadvantaged than students in the postsecondary success outcome group, they were, on average, better prepared for postsecondary success than students in the other some postsecondary, no degree pathways.



## Summary

Among students who successfully completed postsecondary within six years, the “traditional” college pathway—enrolling full time in a four-year program and earning a bachelor’s degree within four years from the first institution of enrollment with no stop-out—is the most common path (40 percent). While many students who enroll in postsecondary complete this path, or a similar one, this “traditional” route to postsecondary attainment represents just 20 percent of students who began a postsecondary program and an even smaller share—14 percent—of all North Carolina public high school graduates.<sup>16</sup>

Most students follow significantly more idiosyncratic paths than “traditional” college students. A third of the 2009-2011 North Carolina public high school graduates had not begun postsecondary. Among students who began postsecondary, most did not complete a traditional path: they changed schools, stopped out, or took more than 100 percent of normal time to earn their degree. Nearly half of the students who began a postsecondary program left without earning a degree (33 percent of all 2009-2011 high school graduates).<sup>16</sup>

This data brief highlighted some of the most common postsecondary outcomes and pathways within these outcome groups for the 2009-2011 North Carolina high school graduates. These pathways consistently pointed to barriers of academic readiness and economic capacity. They also revealed a sharp distinction between the most common pathways to bachelor’s degree attainment (full time, on time, limited stop-outs) and associate degree or postsecondary credential attainment (more part time, delayed completion, and many stop-outs), highlighting the need to develop a more complex model of college-going behavior and pathways to success.



## References

1. This report uses postsecondary enrollment and graduation records from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) to examine the postsecondary outcomes of North Carolina high school graduates. The NSC is a nonprofit organization that provides postsecondary enrollment data and verification for more than 3,750 colleges and universities in the United States. Collectively, these institutions serve 97 percent of all students nationwide and 98% of students in North Carolina. Though overall coverage is high, the NSC data does not capture students enrolled in the for-profit sector as well as it captures students enrolled in public and nonprofit institutions. Degree coverage is also less robust than enrollment coverage. In a 2017 report, researchers estimated that the NSC database captured 93 percent of the enrollment records for the cohort of students who began postsecondary in fall 2011 but just 84 percent of degrees (Shapiro et al.). This suggests that the estimates of completion rates reported here may be slightly lower than the true completion rates, especially for students enrolled in institutional sectors with lower participation in the NSC's DegreeVerify service, namely private nonprofit and private for-profit institutions. Source: Shapiro, Doug, Afet Dundar, Faye Huie, Phoebe Khasiala Wakhungu, Xin Yuan, Angel Nathan, and Ayesha Bhimdiwala. December 2017. *Completing College: A National View of Student Completion Rates—Fall 2011 Cohort* (Signature Report No. 14). Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.
2. Most of these students (88,690) persisted in their postsecondary enrollments between their first and second year. 3,627 stopped out and were not enrolled in a postsecondary program at the beginning of their second year but still completed a degree within six years of their first enrollment.
3. 5,533 of these students earned a postsecondary degree or credential in seven to nine years.
4. 23,128 of these students enrolled in a postsecondary program after May 15, 2012 and 4,727 of these delayed enrollers had earned a postsecondary degree or credential by May 15, 2018.
5. Calculations are based on unweighted GPA provided by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI). 12,126 students—4.5 percent of all graduates—were missing data on their high school GPA and are excluded from this evaluation.
6. Economic disadvantage was determined by the student's free- and reduced-price lunch eligibility (FRPL) during high school.
7. Among 2009 graduates who enrolled on time, postsecondary completion rates rose from 51 percent to 57 percent after eight years since first enrollment, though most of this increase was among individuals earning associate degrees or postsecondary credentials. Time to bachelor's degree receipt is much more concentrated between 100% of normal time (4 years) and 150% of normal time (6 years) than other credentials. Among students who enrolled in a postsecondary program prior to May 15, 2010, less than 2 percent earned a bachelor's degree in three years or less and just 6 percent took seven (3.4 percent), eight (1.9 percent), or nine years (0.5 percent) to complete. In North Carolina, there is now a strong incentive for bachelor's degree completion in four years. Recent legislation (G.S. 116-143.9) established a fixed tuition program, whereby entering students are guaranteed a fixed tuition price for full-time enrollment (12+ credit hours) for up to 8 semesters of continuous enrollment (excluding summer terms and with 10 semesters allowed for students in bachelor's degree programs requiring five years of study). Students who stop out (a break of a semester or more) are no longer guaranteed their initial tuition. Students may take additional semesters to complete their degree but are subject to tuition surcharges.
8. Research by Mattern et al. (2015) on first-year persistence among students who began enrollment at a four-year institution found that students who left their first institution due to financial constraints were most likely to persist in their postsecondary education by transferring to a lower-cost institution. Source: Mattern, Krista D., Jessica P. Marini, and Emily J. Shaw. 2015. "Identification of Multiple Nonreturner Profiles to Inform the Development of Targeted Retention Interventions." *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, & Practice*, 17(1): 18-43.
9. Most students who began part time were initially enrolled in a two-year program at an NC community college (68 percent) or an out-of-state community college (6 percent). Another 17 percent began at a UNC institution and the remainder began at some other four-year institution.
10. A recent international survey from the World Health Organization found that one in three college students showed signs of common mental health disorders. Source: Auerbarch, Randy P., Philippe Mortier, Ronny Bruffaerts, Jordi Alonso, Corina Benjet, Pim Cuijpers, Koen Demyttenaere, David D. Ebert, Jennifer Greif Green, Penelope Hasking, Elaine Murray, Matthew K. Nock, Stephanie Pinder-Amaker, Nancy A. Sampson, Dan J. Stein, Gemma Vilagut, Alan M. Zaslavsky, Ronald C. Kessler, and WHO WMH-ICS Collaborators. 2018. "WHO World Mental Health Surveys International College Student Project: Prevalence and Distribution of Mental Disorders." *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*. Advance online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/abn0000362>.
11. Mattern et al. (2015) found that underprepared students who lacked full academic preparation were the most likely to transfer from a four-year program to a two-year program. These students were also the most likely to be first-generation college students.
12. Students who were only enrolled for one term are included in the "continuous enrollment" category.
13. 31 percent stopped out after one term and 29 percent stopped out after two terms.
14. For students in this pathway, 90 percent of institutional changes occurred after a stop-out.
15. This was the only pathway in the Some Postsecondary, No Degree outcome group where less than half of students had first enrolled at an NC community college (39 percent), followed by a UNC system school (34 percent), a four-year private institution in North Carolina (13 percent), and an out-of-state four-year private institution (5 percent).
16. This creates a large pool of "part-way home" students, many of whom may be successfully recruited to return to complete their degree. For more information on this population in North Carolina and initiatives to serve these students, see: The University of North Carolina General Administration. September 2017. *The University of North Carolina Report on Part-Way Home Initiative*. Accessed at <https://www.ncleg.net/documentsites/committees/JLEOC/Reports%20Received/2017%20Reports%20Received/UNC%20Part%20Way%20Home%20Strategic%20Report.pdf>.



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