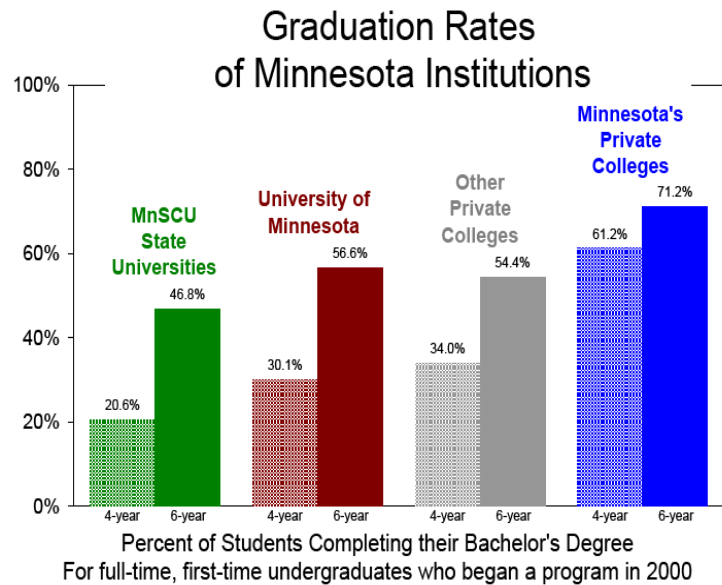




MINNESOTA'S PRIVATE COLLEGES

Minnesota's private colleges lead in graduation rates

Minnesota Private College Council (MPCC) institutions have the highest graduation rates in Minnesota. According to the latest data from the U.S. Department of Education, 61 percent of full-time, first-time students at MPCC institutions graduate in four years. This is more than twice the rate of University of Minnesota (U of M) students (30 percent) and more than three times the rate of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) students (21 percent). By the sixth year after enrollment, 71 percent of MPCC first-time, full-time students have completed their degrees compared to 47 percent and 57 percent respectively of their MnSCU and U of M peers.



Source: U.S. Department of Education (2007), IPEDS

So why are graduation rates significant? Obviously it costs students, families and taxpayers more when full-time students take longer than four years to earn a degree. Graduation rates can also indicate availability of needed programs and courses, access to and quality of student services and how well an institution recruits students who fit with its mission and are likely to succeed there.

The U.S. Department of Education estimates that 71 percent of freshmen are included in its graduation rate calculations — those who enrolled full-time in a specified term, had never attended college before and intended to earn a bachelor's degree. At MPCC institutions, this included 97 percent of new entering freshmen in fall 2000 (data is collected over a six-year period).

MPCC institutions have the highest graduation rates for students of color in Minnesota as well. Half (49 percent) of MPCC first-time, full-time students of color completed their degrees in four years compared to 13 percent and 21 percent respectively of their MnSCU and U of M peers. At the six-year mark, 61 percent of students of color at MPCC institutions have completed their degree compared to 35 percent and 46 percent

respectively of their MnSCU and U of M peers. The lower graduation rates for students of color are an ongoing area of concern for educators and policymakers.

For Minnesota's economy, institutional graduation rates are an important indicator for monitoring workforce development. As the Baby Boom generation reaches retirement age, the pool of available workers to satisfy the state's labor demands will diminish, especially among workers with a bachelor's degree (Demographics and Destiny, DEED, 2006). Improving the success of students enrolled in higher education will assist in the production of skilled workers. Increasing the graduation rate of the state's 26,000 new entering students at four-year colleges would significantly augment the state's supply of educated workers.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Education at a Glance 2007 provides data indicating that college attainment rates in the U.S., while leading all participating nations for 55-64 year olds, have dropped significantly as younger cohorts are examined. Of the 30 countries surveyed, nine exceed the U.S. in college education attainment for 25-34 year olds. For the four age cohorts included in the analysis, U.S. college attainment rates have remained the same, ranging from 37 to 40 percent. This is compared to countries that show drastic increases when comparing their oldest and youngest cohort. For example, Korea's college attainment for 55-64 year olds is 10 percent (compared to 37 percent in the U.S.) while 51 percent of their 25-34 year olds have college credentials (compared to the U.S.'s 39 percent).

All 30 major economic countries have made strides in increasing attainment of their younger adults while the U.S. has showed no growth or a decrease in college attainment. As a state and as a country, we need to do better.

Hardwick~Day thanks the Minnesota Private College Council for permission to distribute this article. The original, with links to data sources, may be found at:

http://www.mnprivatecolleges.org/publications/stories/2007_10/grad_rates.php