Chapter 4  Undergraduate Student Success

Goals
The University of Michigan prepares its students to become leaders in the 21st century. The U-M’s academic and extra-curricular programs have been developed and implemented so that each student can complete a meaningful degree program in a reasonable time frame, and thereby advance his or her career and personal goals.

Overview
The University takes a number of steps to facilitate students’ timely progress to degree completion. This includes providing sufficient course offerings, excellent advising and mentoring, as well as ensuring that in-state students who demonstrate financial need receive sufficient financial aid. Out-of-state students also benefit from these resources, including access to limited financial assistance.

Each U-M undergraduate school or college has developed initiatives to help students address impediments to successful completion of a degree. The academic units monitor student performance in key courses and require additional academic advising for students who need more support. In addition, all students may take advantage of academic support services and programs, such as departmental tutoring, study skills workshops, mentoring, and programs offered by the Sweetland Writing Center and the Science Learning Center.

This chapter includes data on graduation rates by freshman cohort, retention rates (percentage of first-time, first-year students who return to continue school the following fall), and survey data related to student satisfaction with the U-M academic experience.

More than 96 percent of freshman complete their first year of course work and return the following fall. And better than three-quarters of Michigan undergraduate students complete their first degree within four years of enrolling as freshmen. After six years, about 90 percent of undergraduates earn a degree. University of Michigan students’ six-year completion rates are now 10 percentage points higher than the average of public Association of American Universities (AAU) member institutions, and nearly equal to the average of AAU private universities. These high rates reflect U-M’s ability to recruit excellent, well-prepared students and deliver high-quality education in a supportive environment.

Undergraduates who transfer to the U-M complete their degree programs at high rates as well. Between 85 and 90 percent of transfer students graduate within four to six years after enrollment.

U-M undergraduates are surveyed regularly and report very positive opinions of the University as a whole and of their individual academic programs.

In addition to graduate school or employment, University of Michigan students are increasingly interested in becoming entrepreneurs, with a growing number of students launching business ventures even before graduation.

For more information
Additional data on undergraduate demographics can be found in Chapter 2 on admissions and enrollment and in Chapter 7 on diversity. Information about undergraduate costs and financial aid is in Chapter 3.

Most Popular Undergraduate Degrees, 2019-20
- Computer Science (10.4% of degrees granted)
- Business (7.0%)
- Economics (6.8%)
- Psychology (4.7%)
- Biopsychology, Cognition and Neuroscience (3.8%)

Charts in Chapter 4
U-M graduation rates are far higher than the average rates for AAU public universities and comparable to the average 6-year rates for AAU private universities.

4.1 Graduation Rates for U-M, AAU Public and AAU Private Universities\(^1\) for Freshman Cohorts Starting Fall 2002-2012.

This chart shows the fractions of new freshman cohorts that have graduated with a bachelor’s degree in four, five and six years. The bottom axis represents the year each freshman cohort started college. Comparative data from Association of American Universities (AAU) institutions\(^1\) is displayed for 2002 through 2012 cohorts. (AAU schools used to compute the averages is based on members in the sixth year since the cohort entered college.)

Graduation rates for U-M undergraduate students have generally increased over time. Note: The trends for U-M are not as smooth as the nation-wide averages for AAU Publics and Privates.

\(^1\) A list of public and private Association of American Universities (AAU) member institutions is found in Appendix A.
A high percentage of U-M’s new freshman successfully complete their first year of school and return the following year, at rates similar to its peer institutions.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yale U</td>
<td>98.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Chicago</td>
<td>98.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanford U</td>
<td>98.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIT</td>
<td>98.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Pennsylvania</td>
<td>97.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvard U</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern U</td>
<td>97.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia U</td>
<td>97.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Virginia</td>
<td>96.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCLA</td>
<td>96.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornell U</td>
<td>96.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U MICHIGAN</td>
<td>96.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USC</td>
<td>96.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U North Carolina</td>
<td>96.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC-Berkeley</td>
<td>96.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAU PRIVATE</td>
<td>96.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johns Hopkins U</td>
<td>96.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Wisconsin</td>
<td>94.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Maryland</td>
<td>94.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Texas</td>
<td>93.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Washington</td>
<td>93.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio State U</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Illinois</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYU</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAU PUBLICS</td>
<td>91.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the United States, about one-third of new college freshman do not return to their school the following fall for sophomore year. There are many reasons why, from academic challenges or financial difficulties to dissatisfaction with the school or loneliness. Research into freshman retention also shows that students who are the most successful in high school are most likely to return for sophomore year, which suggests that finding the right fit for a student is an important consideration.

As this chart shows, the U-M and its peers do a very good job of supporting new freshman, whether that is through financial aid, student services, or academic support. Average retention rates for public and private member schools of the Association of American Universities (AAU) is also shown. All of U-M peer schools are AAU members.

SOURCE: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

2 A list of public and private Association of American Universities (AAU) member institutions is found in Appendix A.
Seniors have expressed a high level of satisfaction with their U-M academic experience over several measures.

### 4.3 Responses of U-M Graduating Seniors to Survey Questions about Satisfaction with Academics, Course Availability, and Advising, 2009-2019.

- **How satisfied are you with your overall academic experience?**
  - 2019: 85%, 90%
  - 2018: 90%, 90%
  - 2017: 89%, 90%
  - 2015: 90%, 90%
  - 2013: 90%, 90%
  - 2011: 93%, 93%
  - 2009: 91%, 91%

- **How satisfied are you with your ability to get into a major that you want?**
  - 2019: 91%, 93%
  - 2018: 94%, 94%
  - 2017: 96%, 96%
  - 2015: 96%, 96%
  - 2013: 97%, 97%
  - 2011: 96%, 96%
  - 2009: 96%, 96%

- **How satisfied are you with availability of courses needed for graduation?**
  - 2019: 84%, 84%
  - 2018: 84%, 84%
  - 2017: 84%, 84%
  - 2015: 88%, 88%
  - 2013: 87%, 87%
  - 2011: 88%, 88%
  - 2009: 84%, 84%

- **How satisfied are you with availability of courses for general education requirements?**
  - 2019: 86%, 84%
  - 2018: 84%, 84%
  - 2017: 85%, 85%
  - 2015: 87%, 87%
  - 2013: 84%, 84%
  - 2011: 86%, 86%
  - 2009: 82%, 82%

- **How satisfied are you with advising by faculty on academic matters?**
  - 2019: 84%, 82%
  - 2018: 82%, 82%
  - 2017: 82%, 82%
  - 2015: 84%, 84%
  - 2013: 84%, 84%
  - 2011: 84%, 84%
  - 2009: 79%, 79%

- **How satisfied are you with advising by departmental staff on academic matters?**
  - 2019: 84%, 81%
  - 2018: 81%, 81%
  - 2017: 82%, 82%
  - 2015: 81%, 81%
  - 2013: 84%, 84%
  - 2011: 83%, 83%
  - 2009: 79%, 79%

The percentage to the right of each bar is the fraction of students who replied "Very Satisfied," Satisfied," and "Somewhat Satisfied" (the segments shaded in blue) for the particular question and year.