

RESEARCH MEMO

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AT FULLERTON COLLEGE



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Associate-Degree FAQs – Fall 2024 Update

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The Office of Institutional Effectiveness has been asked to clarify the data on associate degree earners that is currently published in our Key Performance Indicators (KPI) dashboard and our [Institutional Effectiveness Reports](#). The following document is intended to help clarify and provide additional insight into this data. *This memo contains descriptive data; it is not intended to be evaluative of any program or pathway and should not be used to make causal statements.*

Question #1 How many students intend to get an associate degree at the College?

When students apply to the College, they provide us with their “educational goal”. Students are given 12 options and are asked to select one. Over the last five years, about 45% of students indicated a goal of “associate degree AND transfer”. The second most common response from students is “transfer to a university only”, which in 2023-2024 was selected by about 10% of students. It should be noted that students generally do not change their educational goal unless they leave the College long enough to be required to re-apply. As such, this presents a snapshot of students’ intention prior to enrolling in courses and generally, before meeting with a Counselor.

Table 1. Students’ Academic Goal by Year

	2019-20 (N = 31,533)	2020-21 (N = 30,500)	2021-22 (N = 26,167)	2022-23 (N = 26,459)	2023-24 (N = 26,908)
<i>Degree, Certificate, and/or Transfer</i>					
Associate degree and Transfer	48.6%	47.5%	49.6%	45.3%	44.8%
Associate degree Only	5.2%	5.9%	6.2%	6.2%	7.1%
Transfer to University Only	14.2%	13.5%	12.5%	10.5%	9.9%
Vocational Certificate/ Degree	3.2%	3.2%	3.4%	3.5%	4.1%
<i>Educational Development</i>					
Educational Development	4.1%	4.4%	4.5%	5.1%	5.5%
High School Completion	1.0%	1.4%	1.5%	1.7%	2.1%
Non-Credit to Credit	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
<i>Career Development</i>					
Career Advancement/ Change	5.4%	5.5%	5.4%	5.7%	6.5%
Career Exploration	2.1%	2.4%	2.5%	2.8%	3.0%
<i>Different Goals / Unknown</i>					
Student at Four-Year Institution	6.2%	6.3%	5.2%	6.0%	5.2%
Missing	1.4%	1.3%	<0.1%	3.6%	2.1%
Undecided	8.6%	8.5%	9.1%	9.6%	9.6%

Question #2: How many students intend to get a local associate degree compared to an associate degree for transfer?

While the educational goal option does not distinguish between a local associate degree (local AA) and an associate degree for transfer (ADT), a student’s program of study/major is based on the specific degree or certificate they intend to complete. The table below breaks down students’ majors by type of award. For students who may have changed majors, the last major of record is counted.

Unlike the educational goal, students can change their major more regularly. That said, since students are generally not required to change their majors, many students end up enrolling and/or completing a program of study that is different from their major of record.

Over the last five years, the most common award type was local AA degrees. In 2023-2024, about 45% of students’ majors on record led to a local AA while 31% led to an ADT.

Table 2. Student Majors by Award Type

Award Type	2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Local AA	16,573	52.5%	14,702	48.2%	12,403	47.4%	12,455	47.1%	12,061	44.8%
AD-T	9,257	29.3%	10,039	32.9%	8,716	33.3%	8,737	33.0%	8,365	31.1%
Certificate	6,503	20.6%	4,426	14.5%	3,762	14.4%	3,881	14.7%	4,092	15.2%
Undeclared/ Unreported	2,672	8.5%	2,377	7.8%	2,083	8.0%	2,232	8.4%	2,390	8.9%
Total	31,553	100%	30,500	100%	26,167	100%	26,459	100%	26,908	100%

Question #3: How many students graduate with an associate degree and/or transfer?

The California Community College Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) developed the [Student Success Metrics](#) dashboards to help colleges share information about student outcomes. These data are compiled by the CCCCCO around the end of each spring term. Since the CCCCCO can combine data from other colleges, state agencies, and four-year universities, it provides additional insights into our students.

In terms of completion, the CCCCCO has a few ways of presenting data; the total number of completers in any given year and the percentage of first-time students who eventually complete.

For the former, about 4-5% of students earn a local AA degree in any given year (Table 3). In comparison, about 9-10% of students who previously completed at least 12 units at the College transferred to a four-year university during the same period.

Table 3. Total Number of Completers by Award Type (CCCCO Data)

Award Type	2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022	
	Count	Percent (N = 28,921)	Count	Percent (N= 28,163)	Count	Percent (N= 24,110)
Certificate	1,652	5.7%	1,866	6.6%	1,645	6.8%
Local AA	1,256	4.3%	1,103	3.9%	1,175	4.9%
ADT	1,089	3.8%	1,225	4.3%	1,100	4.6%
Any AA/ADT	1,929	6.7%	1,991	7.1%	1,961	8.1%
Transferred*	2,667	9.2%	2,839	10.1%	**	**

*Must have earned 12 or more units

** Available in May 2024-Fall 2024

The dashboard allows users to filter the data by educational goal. Table 4 contains the rates of students who indicated a goal of associate degree and/or transfer. About 6-7% of these students earn a local AA degree each year, which is similar to the proportion of students who earn an ADT degree. During the same period about 10-11% of students with an associate degree and/or transfer goal transferred to a four-year university.

Table 4. Total Number of Completers by Award Type (Degree/Transfer Students Only)

Award Type	2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022	
	Count	Percent (N = 19,298)	Count	Percent (N= 18,252)	Count	Percent (N= 15,198)
Certificate	1,429	7.4%	1,564	8.6%	1,374	9.0%
Local AA	1,141	5.9%	982	5.4%	1,014	6.7%
ADT	1,021	5.3%	1,149	6.3%	1,014	6.7%
Any AA/ADT	1,766	9.2%	1,815	9.9%	1,745	11.5%
Transferred*	1,968	10.2%	1,957	10.7%	**	**

*Earned 12 or more units

** Available in May 2024-Fall 2024

Data in Table 5 below is based on the [CCCCO's cohort view](#) in which first-time students¹ are tracked over a two, three, four, and six-year period to identify cohort completion rates. After three-years, about 7% of students who started at the College in 2017-2018 completed a local AA, while 6% completed an ADT. About 14% of students who started in 2017-2018 transferred to a university; this was the largest proportion of completers.

A benefit of the cohort view is that it provides a combined look at the College's completion rates. Specifically, it provides the total number and percent of students who received any award or transferred. For the 2017-2018 cohort, 1,048 students completed any of the awards listed below within three academic years. If 780 students from this cohort transferred, this indicates that 268 students (about 25%) earned an award (degree or certificate) without transferring.

Table 5. Three Year Completion Rates by Award Type (CCCCO Data)

Award Type	2015-2016		2016-2017		2017-2018	
	Count	Percent (N = 6,205)	Count	Percent (N=5,853)	Count	Percent (N=5,721)
Certificate	85	1.4%	66	1.1%	479	8.4%
Local AA	248	4.0%	254	4.3%	372	6.5%
ADT	236	3.8%	238	4.1%	337	5.9%
Any AA/ADT	437	7.0%	427	7.3%	577	10.1%
Transferred*	697	11.2%	696	11.9%	780	13.6%
Any of the above	900	14.5%	868	14.8%	1,048	18.3%

*Must have earned 12 or more units

¹ Technical Definition: All students who enrolled as first-time in higher education non-special admit credit students in at least one primary term of the selected year with a minimal credit enrollment at the selected college who are tracked for two, three, four and six years from first term of enrollment

Question #4: Of our students who do graduate, how many receive a local AA vs an ADT?

Since the SSM data is not available at the student level, to answer this question we must use our local data. Over the last four years, local AA degrees were generally the most common award earned by students (Table 6). In 2023-2024 they made up about 41% of all awards given out to students.

Table 6. Awards by Type

Type	2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Local AA	2,498	44.8%	2,125	37.2%	2,260	40.9%	2,006	40.1%	1,989	41.0%
ADT	1,187	21.3%	1,336	23.4%	1,236	22.4%	1,099	22.0%	1,028	21.2%
Cert.	1,889	33.9%	2,258	39.5%	2,032	36.8%	1,900	38.0%	1,840	37.9%
Total	5,574	100%	5,719	100%	5,528	100%	5,005	100%	4,857	100%

Over the last few years, the College has made significant efforts to increase the number of students earning awards. These efforts include the introduction of new certificates and degrees, and intentional outreach to students who apply for graduation. One results of these efforts is that many students earn more than one degree in any given year.

Between summer 2019 and summer 2024, 10,129 students earned a degree at the College. About 35% of those students earned more than one degree during the period (Table 7 below).

Table 7. 2019-2024 Completers by Number of Degrees

Number of Degrees	Count of Students	Percent
1	6,571	64.9%
2	1,647	16.3%
3	1,043	10.3%
4	564	5.6%
5	206	2.0%
6	66	0.7%
7	22	0.2%
8	4	0.0%
9	3	0.0%
10	1	0.0%
11	1	0.0%
12	1	0.0%
Total	10,129	100.0%

Table 8 below takes all students who earned a degree or certificate from tables 6 and 7 and breaks them into groups based on the combination of awards they earned during the period.

Between 2019 and 2024, 2,552 students earned only local AAs (21.3%) and another 1,903 earned local AAs and certificates (15.9%).

While only 26 students earned just an ADT, 3,780 students earned an ADT and a certificate (31.5%). The latter group is the largest group when the data is broken out in this manner.

Table 8. Completers by Type of Awards Earned 2019-2024

Award Category	Count	Percent
ADT Only	26	0.2%
ADT and Certificate	3,780	31.5%
Local AA Only	2,552	21.3%
Local AA and Certificate	1,903	15.9%
Certificate Only	1,856	15.5%
ADT and AA (No Certificate)	17	0.1%
ADT and AA and Certificate	1,851	15.4%
Total	11,985	100.0%

If we exclude certificates, students who only earned local AAs made up about 44% of all degree earners, while 38% earned only ADTs (Table 9).

Table 9. Degree Completers by Type of Degree Earned 2019-2024

Degree Category	Count	Percent
ADT Only	3,806	37.6%
Local AA Only	4,455	44.0%
Both	1,868	18.4%
Total	10,129	100%

Taking the same group and disaggregating by race/ethnicity indicates that a slightly higher number of Latina/o/x students are in the AA Only category compared to the ADT only category (2,407 vs 2,316, respectively) (Table 10). Proportionally, Latina/o/x students are slightly underrepresented in AA Only category, as they represent 54% of these students compared to 61% of ADT Only students and 59% of all degree earners.

Table 10. Degree Completers by Type of Degree Earned and Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Earned an ADT (No AAs)		Earned an AA (No ADTs)		Earned any Degree	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
American Indian or Alaska Native	7	0.2%	11	0.2%	21	0.2%
Asian	394	10.4%	503	11.3%	1067	10.5%
Black or African American	56	1.5%	159	3.6%	242	2.4%
Filipino	47	1.2%	74	1.7%	144	1.4%
Latina/o/x	2,316	60.9%	2,407	54.0%	5,956	58.8%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	7	0.2%	14	0.3%	21	0.2%
Race/ethnicity unknown	76	2.0%	90	2.0%	197	1.9%
Two or more races	229	6.0%	307	6.9%	627	6.2%
White	674	17.7%	890	20.0%	1,854	18.3%
Total	3,806	100.0%	4,455	100.0%	10,129	100.0%