

**Explaining the Rise in the Six Year Graduation Rate
from Fall 2000 and Fall 2005**

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July 25, 2011
Revised on August 5, 2011

Between Fall 2000 and Fall 2005, KSU experienced an increase in the First-Time Full-Time Freshmen six year graduation rate from 28% to 41%. It might be perceived that this 13% increase was dramatic, but it was actually the result of incremental increases over roughly half of a decade (see Table 1).

Table 1. Six Year Retention and Graduation Rates from Fall 2000 to Fall 2005

	Fall 2000	Fall 2001	Fall 2002	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005
Retention Rate	43%	46%	47%	49%	52%	50%
Graduation Rate	28%	33%	35%	38%	41%	41%
Annual Change in Graduation Rate	-4%	5%	2%	3%	3%	0%

- The net increase between Fall 2000 and Fall 2001 was one percent.

The incremental changes were fueled by significant increases in the beginning cohort sizes related to the start-up and expansion of on-campus housing in the early 2000's (see Table 2).

Table 2. Significant Increases in First-time Full-time Freshmen since Fall 2002 Have Replaced the Modest Year-to-Year Gains Prior to the Start-up of On-Campus Housing

	Fall 2000	Fall 2001	Fall 2002	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005	5-Year # Change	5-Year % Change
Headcount	13,373	13,951	15,654	17,485	17,961	18,556	5,183	39%
First-time Full-time Freshmen	1,228	1,314	1,822	2,074	1,658	2,083	855	70%
# of Beds in Student Housing	-	-	1,252	-	878	-		
Annual % Change in First-time Full-time Freshmen	0%	7%	39%	14%	-20%	26%		

- KSU first experienced a significant increase in the First-Time Full-Time Freshmen cohort during Fall of 2002, which added 508 students in a single semester progressing toward conferring a degree after adding 1,252 beds in on-campus student housing primarily limited to Freshmen.
- Growth of the First-Time Full-Time Freshmen cohort continued in Fall of 2005 as KSU improved occupancy rates in the existing housing and additional on-campus housing nearly doubled in Fall of 2004.

- As the growth of housing occurred, the First-Time Full-Time Freshmen cohort increased significantly, nearly 59%, growing from 1,314 in Fall 2001 to 2,083 in Fall 2005.

This expansion of the cohorts added an unprecedented 769 students entering into the pipeline toward graduating in six years between Fall 2001 and Fall 2005. The end result of the rise was a proportional increase in the six year graduation rate as students exited.

Examination of the retention rates for the cohorts helps to further understand how the increase in cohort sizes contributed to the proportional rise in the 6-year graduation rate (see Table 3).

Table 3. Students Graduated as a Percentage of Retained Students at the End of the Six Year Has Remained Relatively Constant Since the Start-up of On-Campus Housing in Fall 2002

	Fall 2000	Fall 2001	Fall 2002	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005
Number Of Students Retained	523	600	851	1,010	866	1,032
Number of Students Graduated	344	429	646	793	682	853
% Graduated	66%	72%	76%	79%	79%	83%

Analysis of KSU’s retention rates prior to the sixth year would reveal that nearly 25% of First-Time Full-Time Freshmen between Fall 2000 and Fall 2005 were no longer enrolled after their first year. An additional 25% are no longer enrolled or do not graduate by the end of their sixth year (see the KSU Retention Progression and Tracking System). In examining the remaining students retained at the end of the sixth year, the proportion of students who graduated has remained relatively constant since Fall 2002. This suggests that as on-campus housing opened and expanded, increases in the First-Time Full-Time Freshmen cohort proportionately affected the overall percentage of retained students who graduated in the sixth year and not necessarily intervention measures designed to improve graduating additional students. Additional improvement in the six year graduation rate may actually exist in the seventh year graduation rate. Further study is needed to analyze and identify the contributing factors that cause the students retained in the sixth year to defer graduation until the seventh year.

It is also worth mentioning that when comparing KSU to the top ten largest of Georgia’s public universities by headcount in the Fall of 2010, the 13% growth of the sixth year graduation rate at KSU is impressive (see Table 4).

Table 4. Six Year Graduation Rate of Georgia’s Largest Public Universities.

Institution	Fall 2000	Fall 2004	+/-
August State University	23%	25%	2%
Armstrong Atlanta State University	22%	28%	6%
Columbus State University	32%	33%	1%
University of West Georgia	35%	35%	0%
Valdosta State University	42%	40%	-2%
Kennesaw State University	28%	41%	13%
Georgia Southern University	43%	45%	2%
Georgia State University	41%	48%	7%
Georgia College & State University	41%	59%	18%
Georgia Institute of Technology	77%	79%	2%
University of Georgia	75%	80%	5%

- KSU had the second highest percentage increase in the six year graduation rate between Fall 2000 and Fall 2004.
- The rise of the six year graduation rate in Fall 2004 elevated KSU to the same standing as its sister University System of Georgia institutions.