



Students with Disabilities At Maryland Colleges And Universities

March 2022

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This annual report discusses data on the numbers of students who registered with disability services¹ at Maryland colleges and universities and their completion and retention outcomes. To better understand higher education outcomes for students with disabilities in Maryland, the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Disabilities and in partnership with the state's higher education institutions, created a survey administered to colleges and universities² to collect these data in aggregate form. The information may be used to improve policies and practices to support the success of students with disabilities.

As noted on the Maryland Department of Disabilities website, "Federal law (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act³) and Maryland state laws require that all students with disabilities be provided a 'free, appropriate public education' that helps them learn and prepares them for employment and daily living. This means local public school districts will provide individualized or special education and related services to students with disabilities from birth until they leave high school. Students who leave high school prior to their 22nd birthday will no longer be eligible for these services."

Higher Education in Maryland is held to several federal laws which dictate and mandate how colleges and universities interact with and provide services to students with disabilities. These laws include the Americans with Disabilities Act (as Amended in 2008), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and the Fair Housing Act. The ADA National Network website⁴ provides the following summary regarding a college or university's responsibility to students with disabilities:

"Both public and private colleges and universities must provide equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities. Title II of the ADA covers publicly-funded universities, community colleges and vocational schools. Title III of the ADA covers privately-funded schools. All public or private schools that receive federal funding are required under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to make their programs accessible to students with disabilities.

All the programs of postsecondary institutions, including extracurricular activities, must be accessible to students with disabilities. The schools can do this in several ways: by providing architectural access to buildings, including residential facilities; by providing aids and services necessary for effective communication, like sign language interpreters, Braille or electronic formats and assistive listening devices; and by modifying policies, practices and procedures, such as testing accommodations and access to school facilities for service animals. Accommodations and program modifications should be individually designed to meet the needs of the student with a disability.

¹ For the purposes of this report, the terms disability services and disability services office will be used throughout for consistency. It is important to note that the name of this office can vary from campus to campus.

² Surveys are administered annually to Maryland's 16 community colleges, 13 four-year public institutions, and 13 state-aided independent colleges and universities.

³ <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>

⁴ <https://adata.org/faq/what-are-public-or-private-college-university-responsibilities-students-disabilities>

Accommodations and modifications of policies and practices are not required when it would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity or give rise to an undue financial or administrative burden.

Postsecondary institutions often have an office that coordinates accommodations for students with disabilities. The student should notify the appropriate person or institutional office well in advance of the needed modification or accommodation.”

Under these laws, students in higher education must self-identify as having a disability (with appropriate documentation) to receive necessary supports and accommodations. Evidence shows that less than a third of students who identify in K-12 school as having a disability go on to self-identify as such in post-secondary education. As self-reporting is the only way to identify these students, **figures in this report should not be interpreted as representative of all students with a disability in higher education.**⁵

In fiscal year 2020, 15,873 undergraduate students and 1,468 graduate students were registered with their institutions’ disability services office as students with disabilities⁶, which represents **3.8% of all students enrolled in fiscal year 2020** (the same percentage as in fiscal year 2019). Specifically, this represents **4.4% of undergraduate students and 1.7% of graduate students enrolled.**

Four-Year Institutions

In fiscal year 2020⁷, Maryland’s four-year public and state-aided independent institutions reported that 9,436 students were registered as students with disabilities with disability services. Four-year public institutions reported 5,141 undergraduate students and 809 graduate students while state-aided independent institutions reported 2,827 undergraduate students and 659 graduate students (see Appendix 1).

Maryland’s four-year public and state-aided independent institutions also reported on the retention rates of first-time, full-time, degree- or certificate-seeking students who were registered with the disability services office and enrolled in Fall 2019. Appendix 2 compares these data with the outcomes of the entire cohort of first-time, full-time, degree- or certificate-seeking students starting that year. To understand their retention rates, institutions reported the number of students who were registered with disability services and enrolled in Fall 2019, and who returned to the institution in Fall 2020. Appendix 2 compares the data for undergraduates with the general undergraduate population. The data show that undergraduate students attending Maryland’s four-year public institutions and state-aided independent institutions who are registered with their disabilities services office **have retention rates comparable to those for the general undergraduate population.**

⁵ For citations and more complete background information on students with disabilities in Maryland and the nation, please refer to [previous MHEC reports on this subject](#). For a deeper discussion about data in these reports not representing all disabled students, please refer to our [2018 Report on Students with Disabilities at Maryland Colleges and Universities](#).

⁶ Students registered with their institutions’ disability services office in this report’s analysis include those who have permanent or temporary disabilities.

⁷ July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020.

Community Colleges

In fiscal year 2020, 7,905 undergraduate students registered with the disability services office of their community college campus. **This represents 5% of the total undergraduate enrollment at Maryland's community colleges** (see Appendix 1).

Maryland's community colleges report outcome data for these students using the Degree Progress Analysis model⁸. Appendix 3 compares outcomes between all students starting in Fall 2016, and the subset of this group who registered with disability services. The Degree Progress Analysis shows that **44.5% of the undergraduate students registered with disability services offices either graduated or transferred within four years** after initial enrollment. The rate is **8.5 percentage points lower than the statewide graduation/transfer rate of 53%** (Fall 2016 cohort), but this gap is smaller than the 10-point gap in the 2021 report.

Appendix 3 also indicates that undergraduate students registered with disabilities services offices **have a successful persister rate (74%) comparable to the statewide rate (71%)**. A successful persister rate is a rate which includes students within the cohort who, within four years, graduate or transfer, are still enrolled at the institution, or who complete at least 30 credits or more with a GPA of 2.00 or better⁹.

The successful persister rate for the 2016 cohort is 2 points higher than that of the 2015 cohort despite 40 fewer successful persister students registered with disability offices students in the 2016 class. **There was a 5% drop in the number of students registered with disability services between 2015 and 2016.**

Conclusion

Data collected from Maryland's community colleges, four-year public institutions, and state-aided independent institutions indicate that students are seeking accommodations for their disabilities. Students attending Maryland's colleges and universities who were identified in the survey as registering for disability services had second-year retention rates and successful persister rates that were comparable to the overall cohort. **This suggests that students who seek disability services are obtaining the support and accommodations needed to successfully persist in their studies.**

For next year's report, the data collected by MHEC will allow for additional outcome measures to be analyzed for students with disabilities, including six-year graduation rates for students enrolled in the state's four-year institutions. MHEC will also continue to collect Degree Progress Analysis data for this population to help community colleges track their success, gain insight into how these students compare to the overall student population, and help identify ways to ensure they are receiving the supports they need.

⁸ The Degree Progress Analysis is a cohort model used to report the progress toward degree completion of community college students. It incorporates measures of success including completion and transfer rates to other institutions and successful persisting as indicators of progress. Specifically, the measure tracks the success of first-time full- and part-time students over four years who have attempted at least 18 credit hours within the first two years of initial enrollment.

⁹ Students included in the Graduation/Transfer Rate are also included in the Successful Persister Rate.

Appendix 1

**Students Registered with Disability Services at Maryland Colleges and Universities: 2020-2019
Enrollment Trends**

	FY 2020: Undergraduate Students			FY 2019: Undergraduate Students		
	12-month enrollment	Registered with disability services office	Percent of total population	12-month enrollment	Registered with disability services office	Percent of total population
Four-Year Public Institutions	176,058	5,141	2.9%	174,660	4,961	2.8%
State-Aided Independent Institutions	29,073	2827	9.7%	29,223	2,830	9.7%
Community Colleges	159,058	7905	5.0%	163,749	8,023	4.9%
	FY 2020: Graduate Students			FY 2019: Graduate Students		
	12-month enrollment	Registered with disability services office	Percent of total population	12-month enrollment	Registered with disability services office	Percent of total population
Four-Year Public Institutions	51,493	809	0.9%	52,080	776	1.5%
State-Aided Independent Institutions	36,565	659	1.1%	36,638	641	1.7%

Appendix 1 continued

Students Registered with Disability Services at Maryland Colleges and Universities: 2018-2017 Enrollment Trends

	FY 2018: Undergraduate Students			FY 2017: Undergraduate Students		
	12-month enrollment	Registered with disability services office	Percent of total population	12-month enrollment	Registered with disability services office	Percent of total population
Four-Year Public Institutions	172,181	4,567	2.7%	169,986	4,300	2.5%
State-Aided Independent Institutions	29,121	2,926	10.0%	29,277	2,692	9.2%
Community Colleges	165,375	7,809	4.7%	172,695	7,837	4.5%
	FY 2018: Graduate Students			FY 2017: Graduate Students		
	12-month enrollment	Registered with disability services office	Percent of total population	12-month enrollment	Registered with disability services office	Percent of total population
Four-Year Public Institutions	52,911	680	1.3%	52,422	692	1.3%
State-Aided Independent Institutions	35,713	493	1.4%	34,224	447	1.3%

Notes:

The trend data (Maryland and IPEDS data) does not include the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) for FY 2017, FY 2018 and FY 2019. In Spring 2020, MHEC was notified that the University's data were incorrect for the three years of submissions; therefore, MHEC removed the institution's data from analysis, which results in different totals and subtotals than previously published reports. FY 2020 data once again include UMES.

Data include counts of students registered with disability services office from the Maryland Survey and total 12-month enrollment from *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)*, U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC. FY 2020 data retrieved December 2021 from <http://nces.ed.gov>.

Appendix 2

First-time, Full-time Undergraduate Students Registered with Disability Services at Maryland Colleges and Universities: 2017-2020 Retention Trends

	Fall 2020		Fall 2019		Fall 2018		Fall 2017	
	Total	Registered with disability services office						
Four-Year Public Institutions	84.9%	84.4%	85.8%	85.5%	84.9%	83.4%	85.7%	87.1%
State-Aided Independent Institutions	81.8%	82.8%	84.8%	85.4%	84.8%	82.8%	85.3%	85.1%
Statewide	84.0%	83.7%	86.2%	85.4%	84.9%	83.1%	85.2%	86.1%

Notes: Retention rates at four-year colleges and universities give the percentage of a given cohort of first-time, full-time undergraduate students who returned to the same institution for the following fall.

Data for the University of Maryland Eastern Shore is not in the trend data for FY 2017, FY 2018, or FY 2019 due to the institution's inability to accurately or appropriately retrieve the data. Their data has been removed from the students with disabilities data and from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data which makes this report have different data from previous reports.

Total retention rates are obtained from *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)*, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Washington, DC. Fall 2019 cohort data (seen under 2020 above) was retrieved December 2021 from <http://nces.ed.gov>.

Appendix 3

Degree Progress Analysis Rates

Four Years after Initial Enrollment, Maryland Community Colleges, Entering Class of 2016

	Analysis Cohort	Total Associate and Certificate Graduates		Total Transfers		Graduated and/or Transferred		Successful Persister	
Registered with Disabilities Services Offices	731	194	26.5%	247	33.8%	325	44.5%	540	73.9%
Statewide	16,076	4,782	29.7%	6,918	43.0%	8,463	52.6%	11,459	71.3%

Four Years after Initial Enrollment, Maryland Community Colleges, Entering Class of 2015

	Analysis Cohort	Total Associate and Certificate Graduates		Total Transfers		Graduated and/or Transferred		Successful Persister	
Registered with Disabilities Services Offices	806	209	25.9%	244	30.3%	341	42.3%	580	72.0%
Statewide	16,870	4,831	28.6%	7,324	43.4%	8,806	52.2%	12,079	71.6%