



# Montana University System Graduation Rates

## ANALYSIS

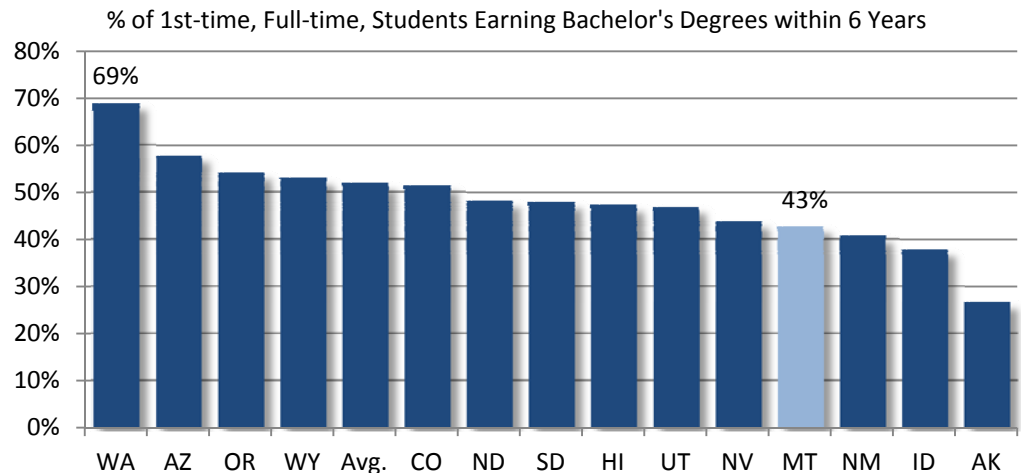
A strong correlation exists between graduate rates and the degree of admissions selectivity at an institution. MSU and UM are considered *moderately selective* institutions. A national sample of colleges reveals that the average graduation rate for moderately selective institutions is 46%. The 2010 aggregate graduate rate for MSU and UM is 45%.

One of the primary criticisms of the federally defined measure for graduation rates is the fact that transfer students are counted as dropouts. Through the system-wide data warehouse we are able to include transfer students within the MUS in system graduation rate totals. When using this approach, graduation rates for the MUS increase from 43% (federally defined) to 47% (including students who transferred within the MUS).

## MEASURE

Percentage of first-time, full-time students at 4-year colleges earning bachelor's degree within six years

### Graduation Rates in the Western States, 2010



source: IPEDS

### 6-year Graduation Rates – Pros & Cons

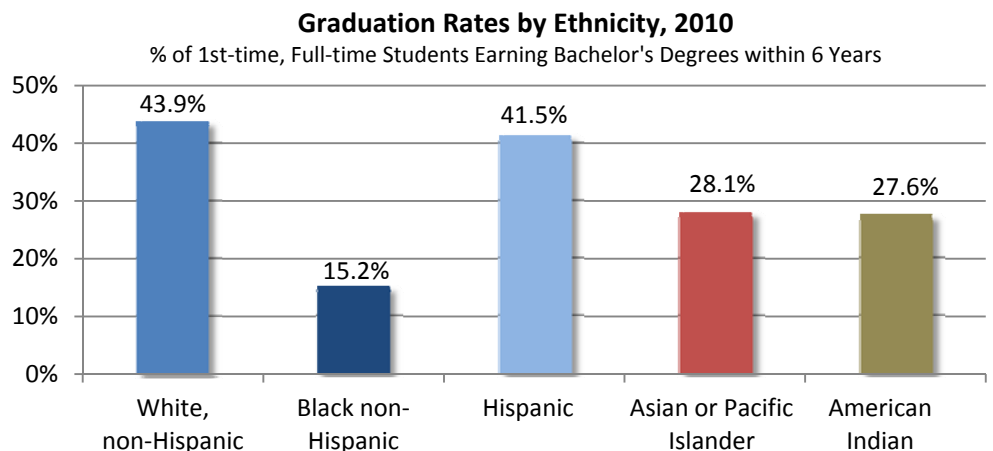
#### PROS...Graduation Rates are:

- a good metric for comparing trends over a period of time within a campus, or rates between institutions with similar admissions standards.
- a useful tool for drawing comparisons between states.
- defined and measured consistently across the nation.

#### CONS...Graduation Rates are:

- institutionally based, meaning they only measure student completion within a single institution. In other words, transfer students are NOT counted as continuing or completing (even if they earn a degree at the transfer institution).
- retrospective measures, tracking the success of students that entered an institution six years earlier. Thus, they are not good measures for gauging the effectiveness of current efforts and strategies.

### 6-year Graduation Rates by Ethnicity



source: IPEDS

Updated: 9/27/11