

AGENCY NAME: Oregon Student Assistance Commission

II. KEY MEASURE ANALYSIS

Agency Mission: To assist Oregon students and their families in attaining a postsecondary education and to enhance the value, integrity, and diversity of Oregon’s college programs

KPM #9	COMPLETION RATES FOR OOG RECIPIENTS AT 4-YEAR INSTITUTIONS Completion rates (graduated within 6 years) for students at 4-year institutions who are eligible and awarded an OOG vs. eligible nonrecipients.	Measure since: New
Goal	Goal 1: Increase college attendance and completion in Oregon	
Oregon Context	Oregon Benchmarks #24, #25, #26	
Data source	OSAC database; National Student Clearinghouse	
Owner	Oregon Opportunity Grant Program, Susan Degen, Administrator, (541) 687-7451	

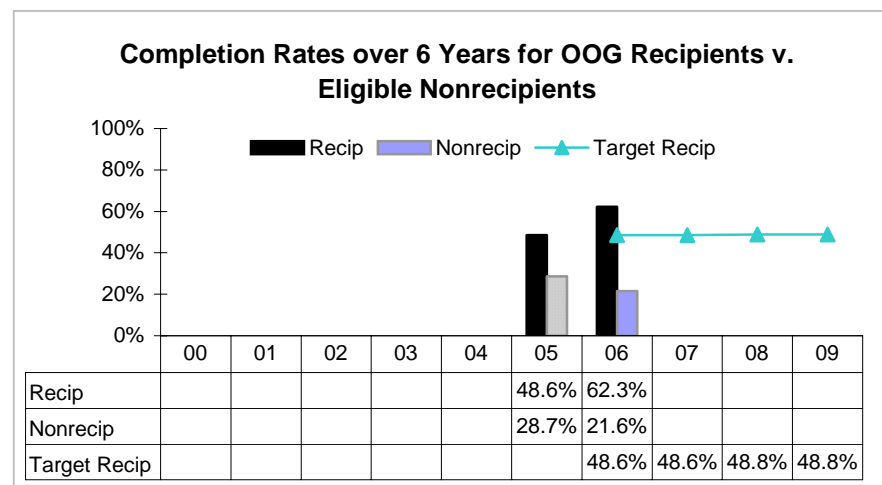
1. OUR STRATEGY

For each academic year, OSAC identifies a cohort group of first-year, first-time Opportunity Grant recipients and, if possible, a similar group of eligible nonrecipients. “Eligible nonrecipients,” or “late-filers,” refers to students who would have been eligible to receive an Opportunity Grant if sufficient funding had been available to serve all students for that particular academic year. In years when funding was limited, OSAC has used cutoff dates, based on institutional type, as the primary cost-control mechanism. Cutoff dates were based on application filing rates, by institutional segment, during award processing each year.

OSAC uses an in-house database to randomly select a representative sample of approximately 500 student records from recipient and nonrecipient groups for each institutional segment and conduct a completion match with the National Student Clearinghouse at a cost of \$.25 per record.

By federal definition, students enrolled full time meet satisfactory academic progress if they complete their undergraduate program of study within 150 percent of the program’s published length (i.e., complete a 4-year program within 6 years). The most recent cohort group for whom data are available is first-year students from 2001-02 who completed their programs by 2006-07.

In 2006-07, funds were available to serve all eligible full-time and part-time students, so there will be no group of late-filing eligible nonrecipients to compare the cohort group against in future years. Increased funding and implementation of the Shared Responsibility Model for determining OOG award amounts, starting in 2008-09, may also affect completion rates as students from higher-income groups become eligible for OOG funds for the first time. OSAC will modify future targets if this change in funding indicates new trends. Data for KPMs are compiled after the end of the academic year, usually in August. Over time, this will provide an indicator of the effectiveness of Opportunity Grants for students enrolled at 4-year institutions.



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2. ABOUT THE TARGETS

Targets are only for grant recipients; no targets will be set for late-filing eligible nonrecipients. The higher the percentage, the more grant recipients are successfully completing their programs of study within 6 years. The original data on which the targets were based were collected during the 2005 legislative session.

Six Oregon postsecondary institutions do not report to the Clearinghouse, including two of the 40 institutions that participate in the Opportunity Grant Program—Oregon Health and Sciences University and Marylhurst University—each of which enrolls only a small number of grant recipients. Since nearly all Oregon postsecondary institutions, and most other institutions throughout the country report to the Clearinghouse, conducting data matches with the Clearinghouse provides OSAC with the most comprehensive information available to date on student completions.

3. HOW WE ARE DOING

Although this is a relatively new KPM, OSAC's strategy for compiling completion data has improved vastly, and OSAC anticipates no difficulties in continuing to retrieve reliable data. The OOG program has seen changes each year for the past 4 years. The last year of limited funding that required rationing by cut-off dates was 2004-05. For 2005-06, funding was sufficient to serve all eligible full-time students attending public institutions and approximately 90% of full-time students at private independent 4-year institutions. For 2006-07, funding was again available for all full-time students at all public institutions and, for the first time, for eligible students enrolled at least half time (6 to 11 credit-hours per term). Because the program has experienced so many changes, and will see more changes in the 2008-09 academic year, OSAC may not be able to determine trends for several more years.

4. HOW WE COMPARE

Institutions that participate in the Oregon Opportunity Grant Program also participate in federal Title IV student financial aid programs. Federal regulations require Title IV institutions to report data, including retention rates, annually to the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). IPEDS publishes graduation rates for all participating institutions on its College Navigator website (formerly the IPEDS COOL website).

For 4-year institutions, IPEDS defines a graduation rate as the percentage of students in a given entering cohort (group) who graduated within a specified period of time — 6 years for students enrolled full-time at 4-year institutions. The average of the most recent available completion rates for Oregon 4-year institutions is for the 2000-01 cohort (graduated by 2005-06). Completion rates for all Oregon 4-year institutions averaged 62.3%. Using only data from the Oregon University System, the average completion rates for Opportunity Grant recipients from public 4-year institutions is a somewhat lower 61.1%. Limiting information on completion rates to 4-year public Oregon institutions omits those students who complete their programs after transferring to schools in another state or to a 4-year private independent institution in Oregon. It is for this reason that OSAC conducts matches with the National Student Clearinghouse rather than with OUS or individual institutions. .

5. FACTORS AFFECTING RESULTS

OSAC developed this KPM in response to a budget note from a previous legislative cycle that instructed the Commission to develop measures to identify the impact of the Opportunity Grant on recipients' ability to complete degree programs. Taken together with persistence rates, completion rates indicate the potential for academic success of Opportunity Grant recipients compared to their peers. This KPM does not, however, show the direct effect of the Opportunity Grant on completion rates of grant recipients because there too many variables that affect a student's decision to persist and complete his/her programs—upturns/downturns in Oregon's economy, changing price differentials among schools over time, family crises (e.g., death of a parent, catastrophic medical costs, loss of job by primary wage-earner), changes in federal and institutional aid of various types, ease or difficulty of credit transfer, and so on. The OOG is just one element of many in providing access to higher education.

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6. WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

Currently the Opportunity Grant makes up the equivalent of approximately 11% of a student's average cost of attendance for the previous academic year. The award is available only to low-income students. For example, the income limit for a dependent student in a family of 4 is less than \$32,000, and the limit for a single independent student is less than \$9,500. Some research has suggested that award amounts of approximately 15% to 20% of a student's cost may have a more positive effect on an individual student's ability to complete his/her program of study, particularly for this low-income student population. Opportunity Grant awards are only available for the equivalent of 4 years (8 semesters or 12 quarters) of full-time enrollment.

An increase in award amounts and/or in the number of academic terms for which the award is available would help more grant recipients complete their programs on time. Increased program funding for 2007-09 and implementation of a completely new process for determining award amounts for all students in 2008-09 will have major, unknown impacts on this KPM. Maximum award amounts will increase for most low-income students. Increased funding will also make awards available to some middle-income students for the first time, but OSAC has no data on this cohort group yet. Research has shown that students in higher income groups tend to have higher completion rates, so OSAC anticipates increases in actual data and possible increases in targets.

7. ABOUT THE DATA

The reporting cycle for this data is the Oregon fiscal year, which is the same as the academic year (July to June). Institutions have up to 60 days after the end of a student's period of enrollment or the end of the academic year to report to the US Department of Education. However, since some postsecondary institutions in Oregon are on a semester system and others are on a quarter system, data are not available from all institutions in time to compile completions data for the current year's Annual Progress Report.