

# *Profile of Students Age 24 and Older*

*With Special Focus on Older Hispanic Students*

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*Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness  
Palm Beach Community College*

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## Introduction

Non-traditional students—generally those in their mid-20s and beyond—make up a large proportion of the enrollment at most community colleges. At Palm Beach Community College, students 24 years of age or older comprised 43% of the total headcount and 37% of the credit, college preparatory and postsecondary adult vocational (PSAV) headcount during the Fall 2007 term.

Furthermore, as the population of Palm Beach County shifts due primarily to domestic and international migration, the ethnic makeup of PBCC shifts as well. Nowhere is this seen more than with the college's Hispanic and Latino enrollment, which has risen dramatically in recent years.

Using registration and student performance data, this report gives a brief description of this population of older students—those at least 24 years of age—with a special focus on older Hispanic and Latino students. The following information has been included:

- Headcount
- Race and ethnicity
- Gender
- Term credit load
- Type of classes taken
- Time blocks of classes (day, evening, etc.)
- Declared term objective
- College preparatory requirements for FTIC students
- Course success and withdrawal rates
- Retention

## Executive summary

In the fall of 2007, Palm Beach Community College served nearly 9,000 credit, college preparatory and PSAV students who were at least 24 years of age at the start of the term, representing approximately 37% of students. Among Hispanic and Latino students, about 36% are 24 or older.

The credit, prep and PSAV headcount of these older students has declined about 9% over the last three fall terms. Hispanic and Latino headcount, on the other hand, has increased more than 10% over the same time frame. The change in total headcount, including continuing education and avocational areas, shows similar patterns.

Among this older population, the proportion of white students has declined from 51% in Fall 2004 to 47% in Fall 2007. Hispanic students, meanwhile, increased from 15% to 18% during the same time frame. Black students made up about 28% of the credit and PSAV student body.

The majority (62%) of older credit and PSAV students in Fall 2007 were women. Among Hispanics, women represented 65% these students—an increase from 61% in Fall 2004.

Students over the age of 24 tend to be part-time. Only 15% of credit and college prep students in Fall 2007 were registered for at least 12 hours of classes. Hispanic and Latino students are even less likely to be full-time (12%). These older students averaged less than seven hours of credit and prep classes.

Credit, prep and PSAV students 24 years of age or older are mostly in advanced and professional (A&P) courses, though about one in five take PSAV classes. The majority of older Hispanic students are in A&P classes, as well, but they are somewhat more likely to be enrolled in PSAV and prep than the older student body as a whole.

Older students are slightly more likely to be evening students than day students, although many opt for a mix of day, evening and weekend classes. There also is a trend toward taking more distance-learning classes. Hispanic students, however, are nearly twice as likely to be enrolled in evening courses than day courses, and slightly less likely to be in a distance-learning class than other students.

Among all older students, credit and non-credit, nearly three in ten were seeking the associate in arts (AA) degree in Fall 2007, while nearly four out of ten had declared a vocational program.

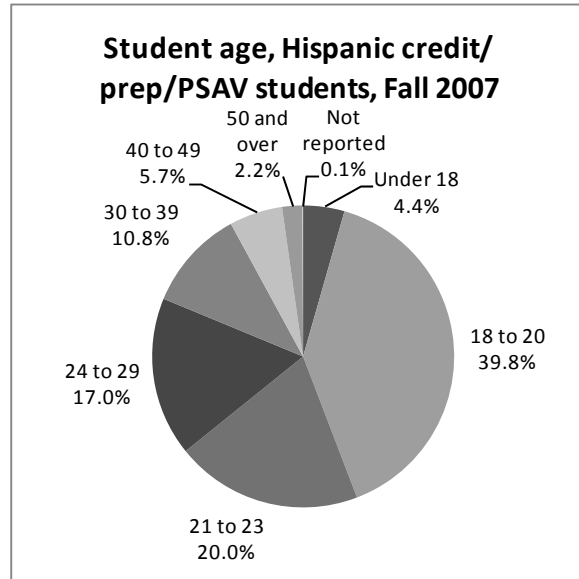
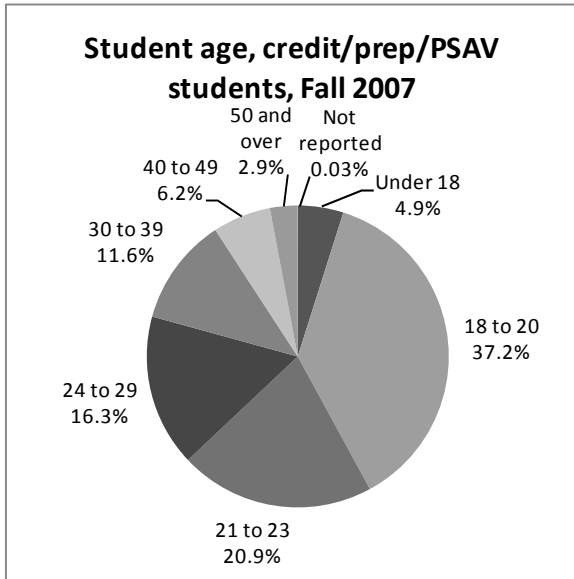
Nearly all first-time-in-college (FTIC) students age 24 and older test into at least one college preparatory area. The greatest need is in math prep, although the need for English prep has increased the last two fall terms. English is the second-highest area of need for older Hispanic and Latino students. The need for reading prep among FTIC Latinos, however, has declined steadily over the last three fall terms.

About three-quarters of class attempts made by older students in A&P courses result in successful outcomes (A, B, C or P). Hispanic students showed similar success rates in credit and PSAV courses, but higher rates in prep courses. About 13% of all students and 14% of Hispanic students withdraw from A&P courses. Hispanics withdraw from prep classes at a lower rate than the student body as a whole.

Fall-to-spring retention of students age 24 and older has averaged about 73% for the last four fall term cohorts. Retention drops to just over 60% by the following fall.

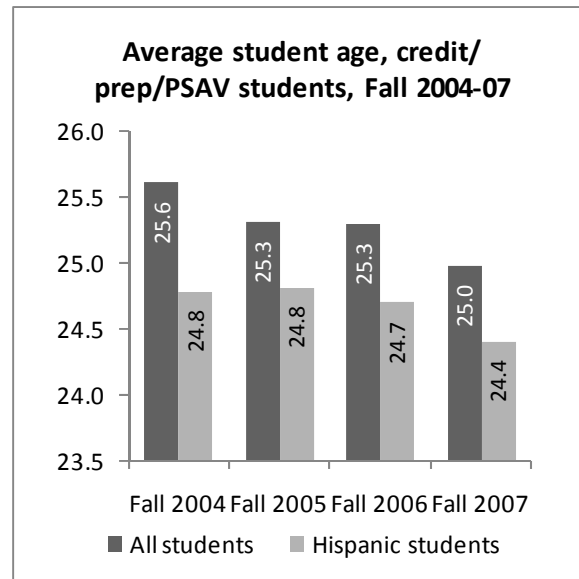
## Student age

Students 18 to 20 years of age and those age 24 or older each made up about 37% of the credit, college preparatory and PSAV student body in Fall 2007. Those proportions are similar among Hispanic and Latino students; 40% are between 18 and 20, while 36% are 24 or older.



The average age of students has declined slightly over the last three fall terms. In Fall 2004, students in credit, prep and PSAV classes averaged 25.6 years of age. By Fall 2007, this figure had fallen to 25 years.

Hispanic and Latino students are slightly younger than the general student body. The average age of a Fall 2007 Hispanic credit, prep or PSAV student was 24.4—down from 24.8 in Fall 2004.



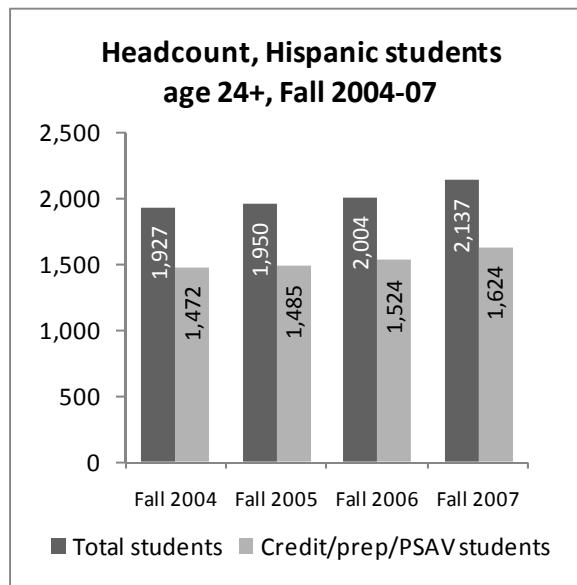
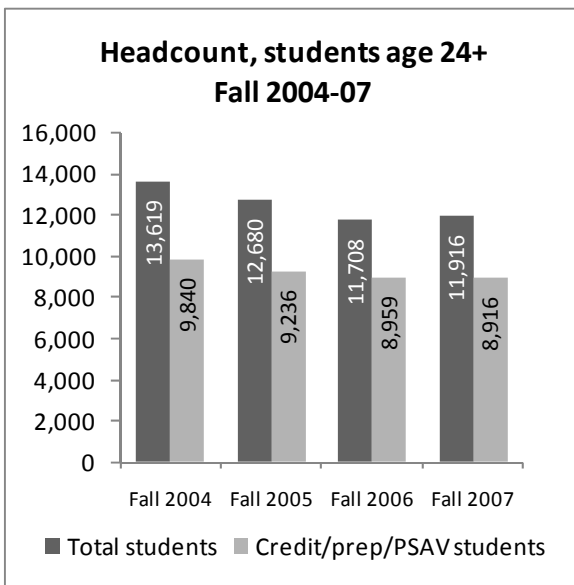
## Headcount

Total headcount of students aged 24 and older has declined over the last three fall terms. Among all students, credit and non-credit, PBCC had nearly 12,000 students in that age group in Fall 2007, a decline of 12.5% from Fall 2004.

The number of credit, college prep and PSAV students at least 24 years old has decreased by about 9%, from nearly 10,000 students to fewer than 9,000.

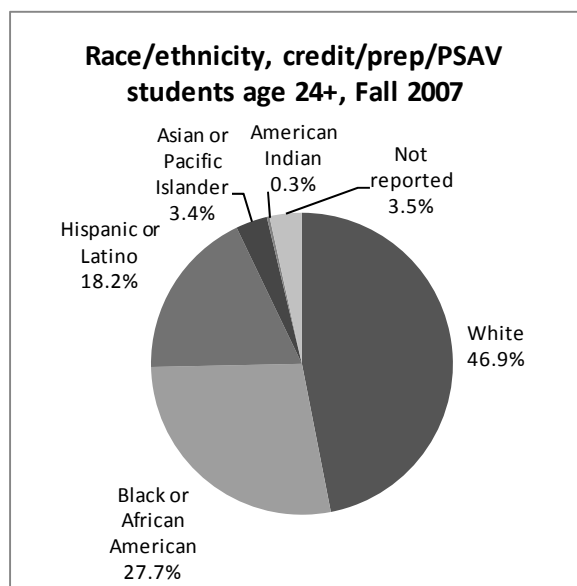
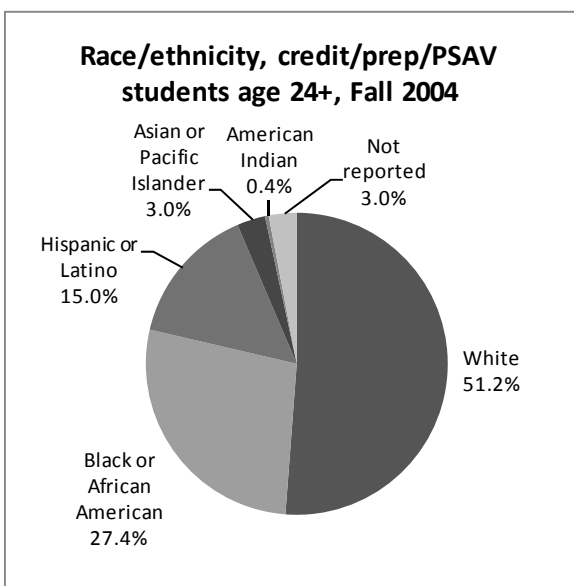
Hispanic and Latino enrollment, however, has been on the increase in recent years. PBCC had more than 2,100 Hispanic students at least 24 years old in the Fall 2007 term—up nearly 11% in

three years. Of these, more than 1,600 were credit, prep and/or PSAV students, an increase of more than 10% over Fall 2004.



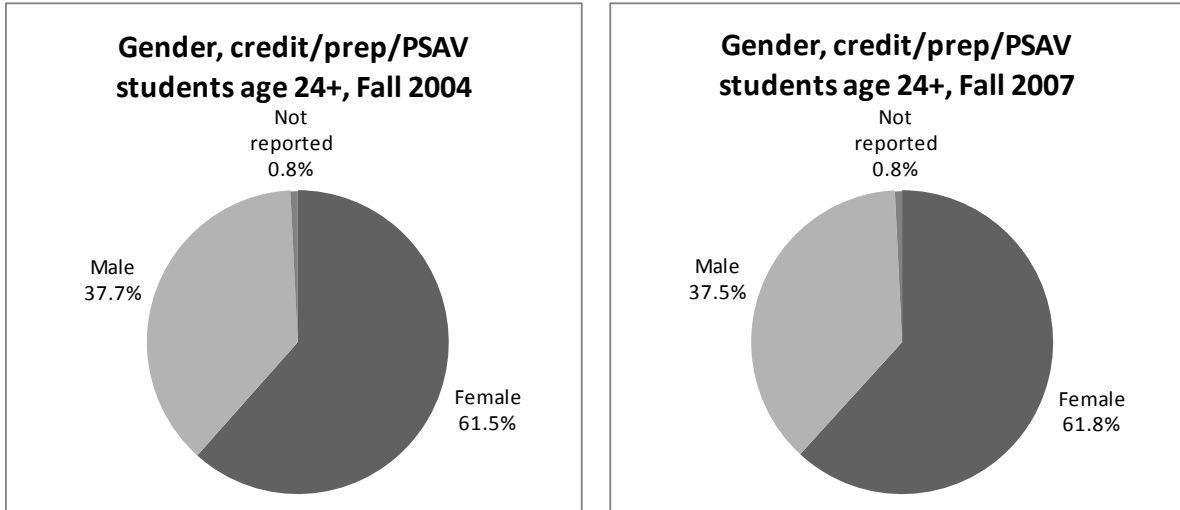
## Race and ethnicity

The racial makeup of older students—those aged 24 years or more—has changed somewhat over the last three fall terms. In Fall 2007, older students were 47% white, 28% black and 18% Hispanic. The trend over the last three fall terms has been toward more Hispanic students (+3 percentage points) and fewer white students (-4 percentage points).

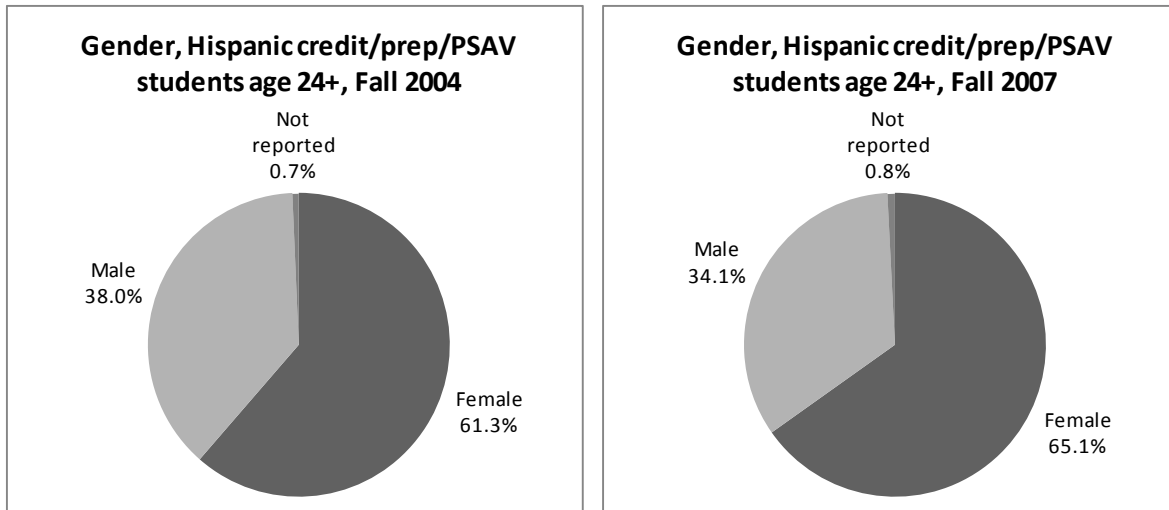


## Gender

Women made up nearly 62% of all PBCC credit, college prep and PSAV students aged 24 or older in the Fall 2007 term. These figures have not changed significantly over the last few years.



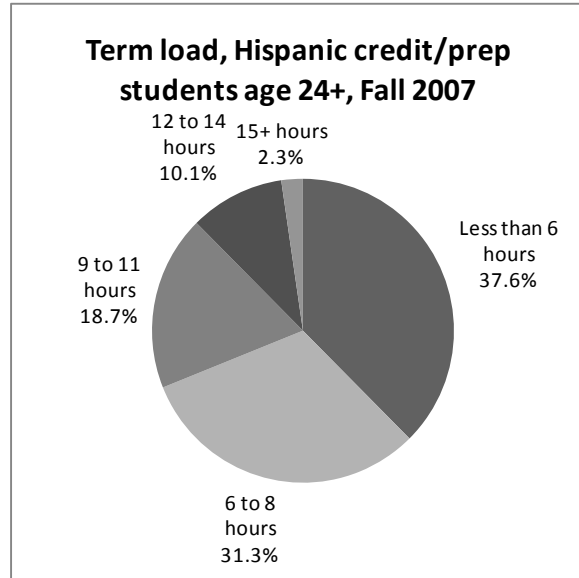
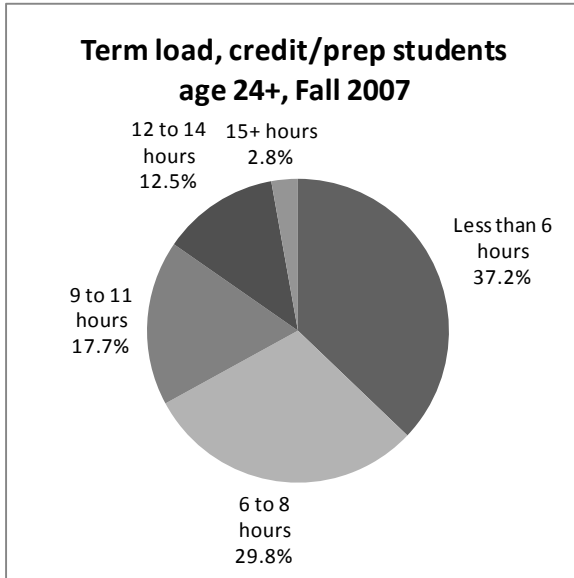
However, the proportion of older Hispanic and Latino students has trended more female over the last three years. In Fall 2004, women made up about 61% of Hispanic and Latino students. By Fall 2007, nearly two out of every three Hispanic students (65%) were female.



## Term credit load

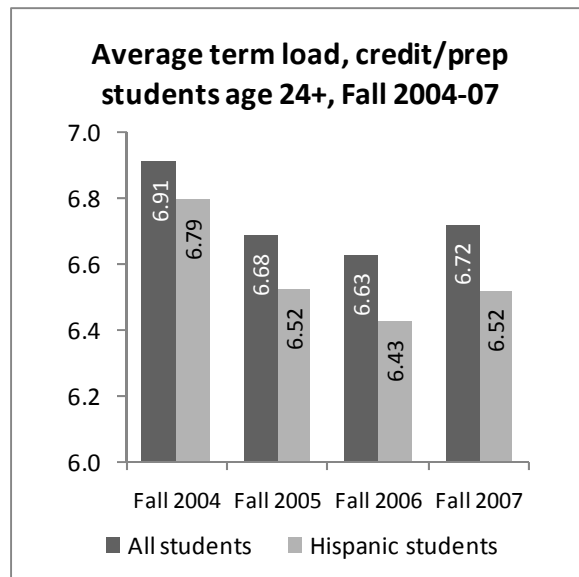
Among credit and college prep students aged 24 and older, about 15% were considered full-time—registered for 12 credit hours or more—in Fall 2007. Only about 12% of older Hispanic and Latino students were full-time.

About 37% of older students register for fewer than six credit hours, including college preparatory classes. The proportion is similar for Hispanics and Latinos.



On average, credit and college prep students 24 years of age or older registered for 6.72 credit hours, on average, in the fall of 2007. This is down a little from Fall 2004 but represents a slight rebound from 2006.

Hispanic and Latino students averaged 6.52 credit hours, including prep classes—slightly lower than the average for all students.

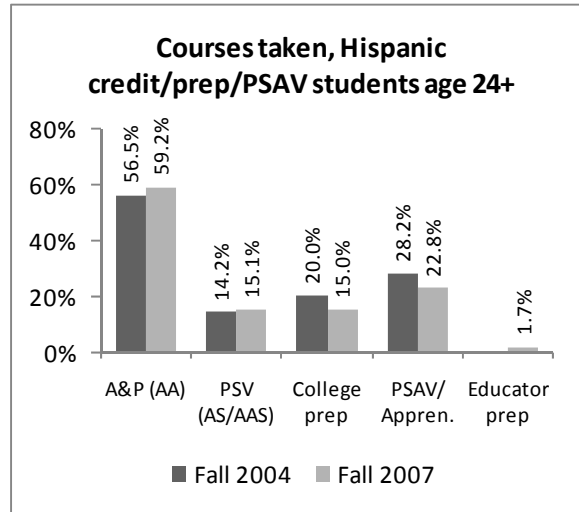
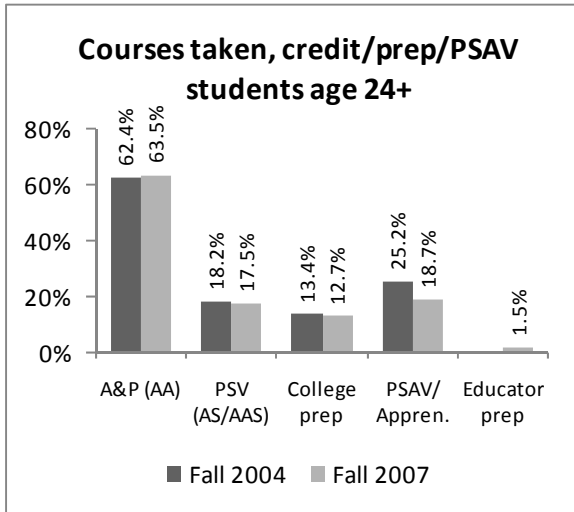


## Types of classes taken

In Fall 2007, more than three out of every five students (63%) aged 24 and older were registered in courses classified as advanced and professional (A&P), which lead to an associate in arts degree. Nearly one in five (18%) were enrolled in postsecondary vocational (PSV) classes, which generally are associated with an associate in science or associate in applied science degree, or a college credit certificate. Thirteen percent were enrolled in one or more college preparatory classes.

Registration in PSAV and apprenticeship classes, which lead to vocational certificates, has dropped among students age 24 and older, from 25% in Fall 2004 to 19% in Fall 2007.

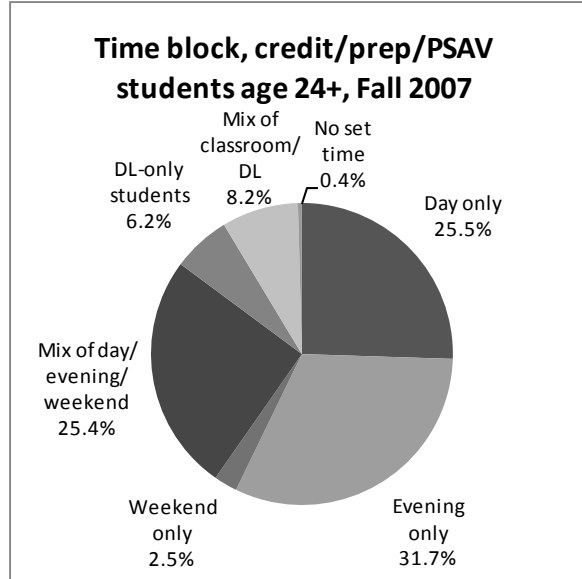
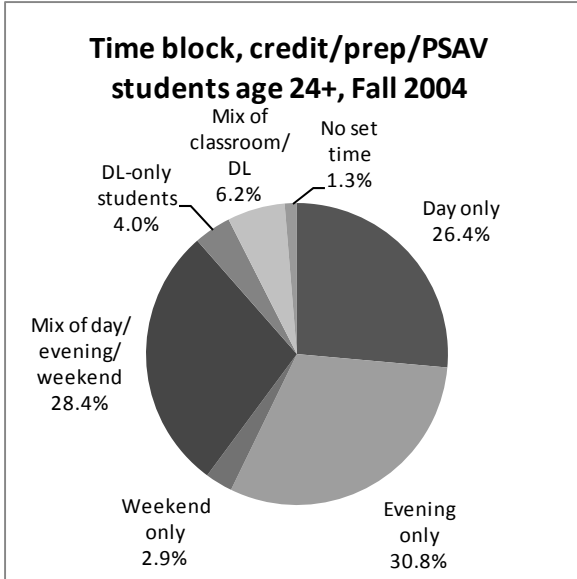
Enrollment by older Hispanic and Latino students follows a similar pattern, but skewed slightly toward PSAV and college prep. Fifty-nine percent are enrolled in A&P courses, while 23% are enrolled in PSAV areas. Registration in PSAV and college prep classes has declined some over the last three years.



### Time blocks of classes taken

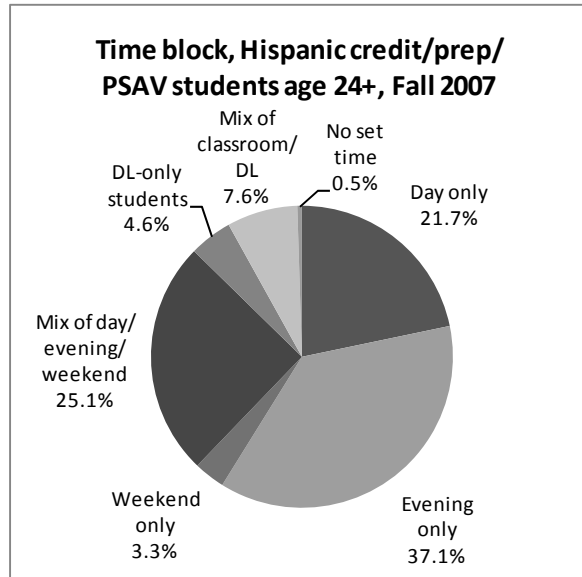
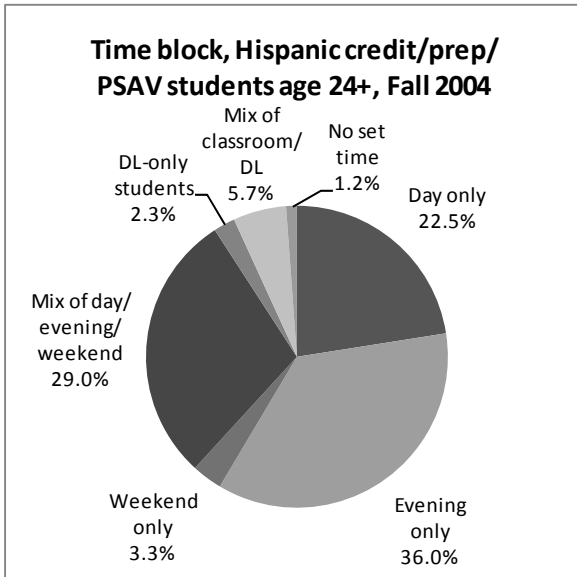
Evening-only students made up nearly a third (32%) of older students enrolled in credit, college prep and PSAV classes in Fall 2007. Day-only students made up about one-quarter (26%) of students aged 24 and over, while another 25% took a mix of day, evening and weekend classes.

One interesting, but not unexpected, shift is toward distance-learning classes. A total of 14% of older credit, college prep and PSAV students registered for at least one pure distance-learning class in the fall of 2007, up from 10% three years earlier. Six percent of older students were enrolled *only* in distance-learning classes in the Fall 2007 term.



Hispanic and Latino students are more likely to be enrolled in evening classes than the student body as a whole. In Fall 2007, 37% of older Hispanic students were evening-only students, while only 22% were day-only. A quarter (25%) were taking a mix of day, evening and weekend classes.

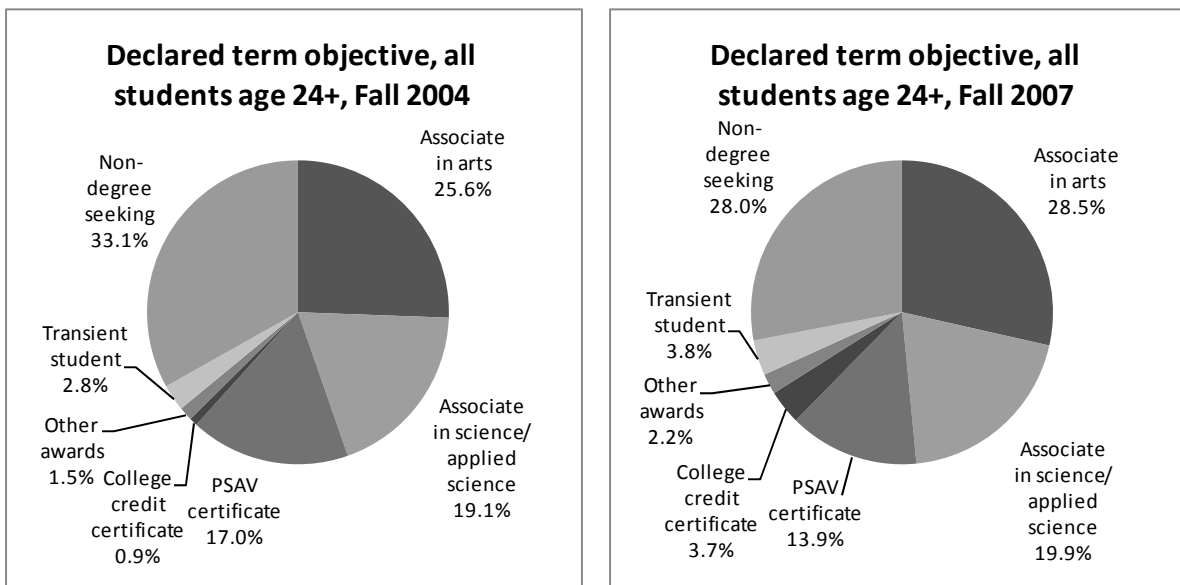
Distance-learning enrollment is up among Hispanics and Latinos. Twelve percent were registered for at least one pure distance learning class in the fall of 2007, an increase from only 8% in 2004.



## Declared term objective

Looking at all older students, credit and non-credit, nearly three in ten (29%) had declared for an associate in arts (AA) degree in Fall 2007. Another 20% were seeking an associate in science (AS) or associate in applied science (AAS), while 14% had declared a PSAV certificate or apprenticeship. More than a quarter (28%) were classified as non-degree seeking.

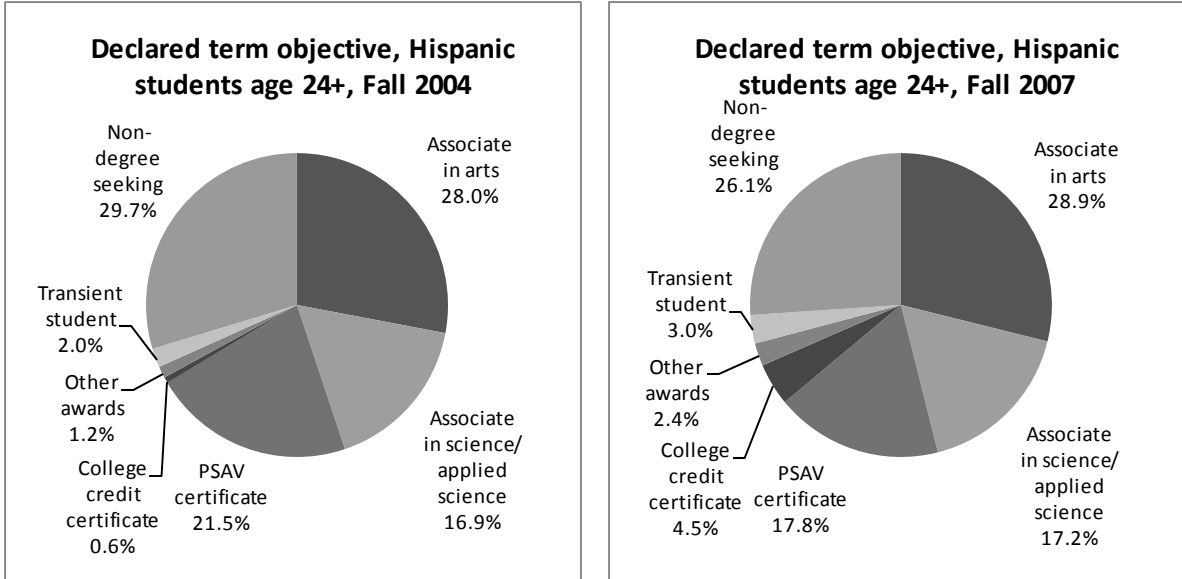
A few changes are noted between declared awards in Fall 2004 and those three years later. A higher proportion of students had declared an AA degree (+3 percentage points), while fewer were seeking a PSAV certificate (-3 points). Students seeking college credit certificates, while only 4% of students aged 24 and older, has increased significantly from less than 1% three years earlier. The percentage of non-degree students has fallen, as well, from 33% to 28%.



Similar patterns and shifts in declared programs exist among Hispanic and Latino students 24 years of age or older. Nearly three in ten (29%) were seeking the AA degree, while 17% had declared an AS or AAS program in Fall 2007, although these figures have not changed appreciably since Fall 2004.

Eighteen percent of older Hispanic and Latino students were seeking a PSAV certificate or apprenticeship—higher than the student body as a whole but down from almost 22% in Fall 2004. Students seeking a college credit certificate had increased among Hispanics to nearly 5% by the fall of 2007, up from less than 1% in 2004.

Hispanic students aged 24 or older not seeking any award totaled 26% of credit and non-credit students, down from 30% in Fall 2004.

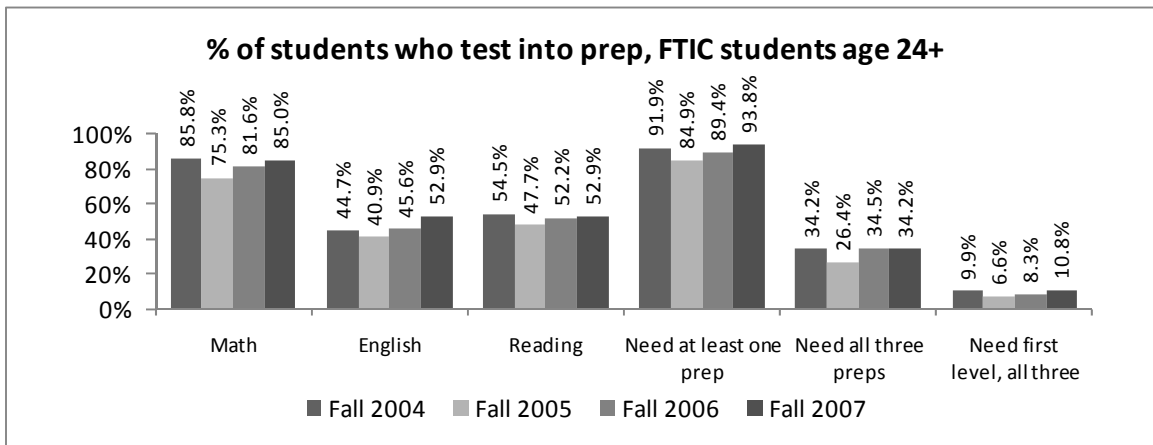


### College preparatory requirements

Older first-time-in-college (FTIC) students aged 24 or older are almost certain to test into one or more college preparatory areas. In Fall 2007, 94% of older FTICs—the highest total in the last four fall terms—were required to take at least one prep class.

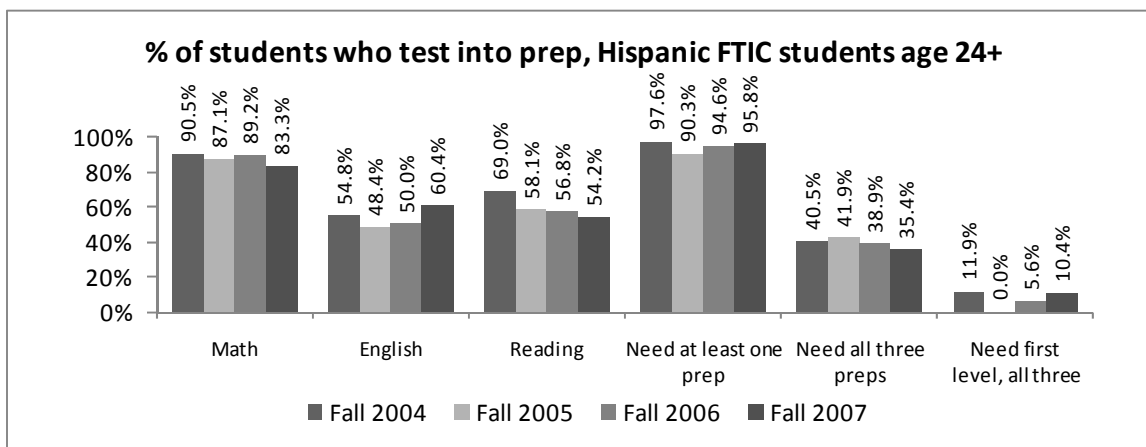
Prep math is the most likely area into which older students are likely to test. Eighty-five percent of FTICs aged 24 and older required math remediation. English and reading prep were each required by about half (53%) of students tested. About a third (34%) of older students tested into prep in all three areas, while 11% tested in the first level of prep in all three areas.

Older FTIC students testing into prep has been on the increase over the last two fall terms.



Findings are similar for Hispanic and Latino students age 24 and over. Nearly all FTICs (96%) tested into at least one prep area. In Fall 2007, the greatest need for remediation was in math (83%), but three out of every five (60%) required English, while 54% needed preparatory reading.

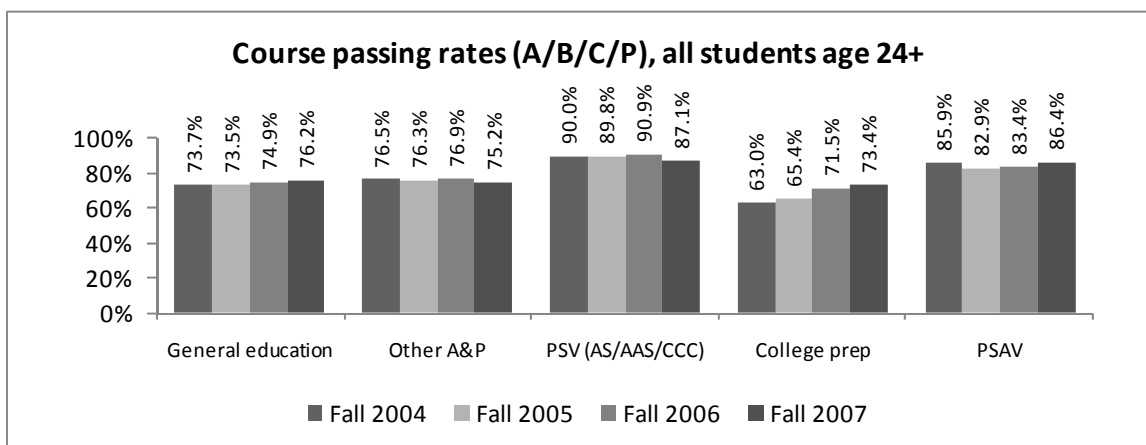
Similar to the overall student body, about a third (35%) require remediation in all three areas, while 10% tested into all three areas at the lowest level. Generally speaking, prep requirements have risen over the last two fall terms, driven largely by a higher need for English prep.



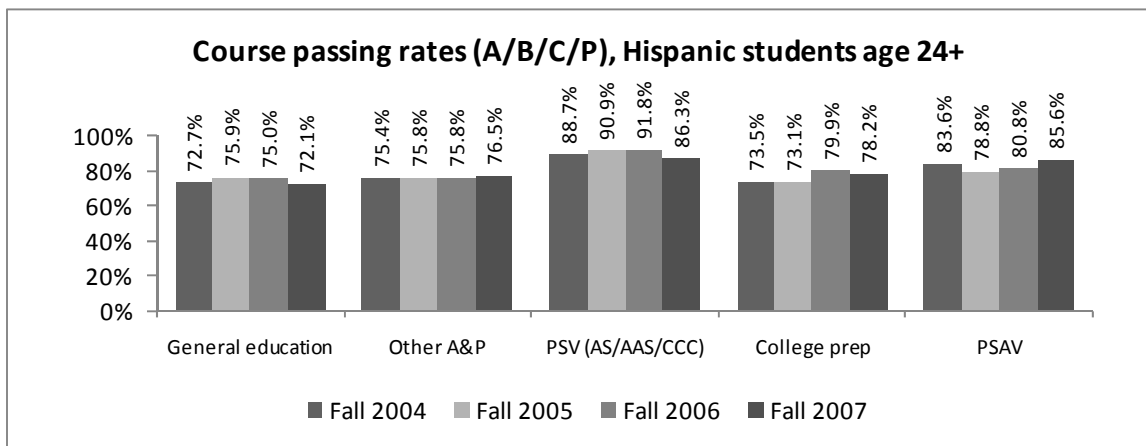
### Course success rates

About three quarters of attempts made by students aged 24 or older in A&P classes ended in successful outcomes—defined as those who earn an A, B, C or P—in Fall 2007. In vocational areas, about 87% of PSV and 86% of PSAV attempts ended in success.

In college prep classes, the course success rate was about 73%—up noticeably from 63% in Fall 2004.



Course success among older Hispanic and Latino students is not significantly different from that of the student body, as a whole. Over the last four fall terms, success rates in all A&P courses have been around 75%. Vocational success rates—both PSV and PSAV—were about 86% for the Fall 2007 term. Prep success was 78%, up from 73% three years ago.

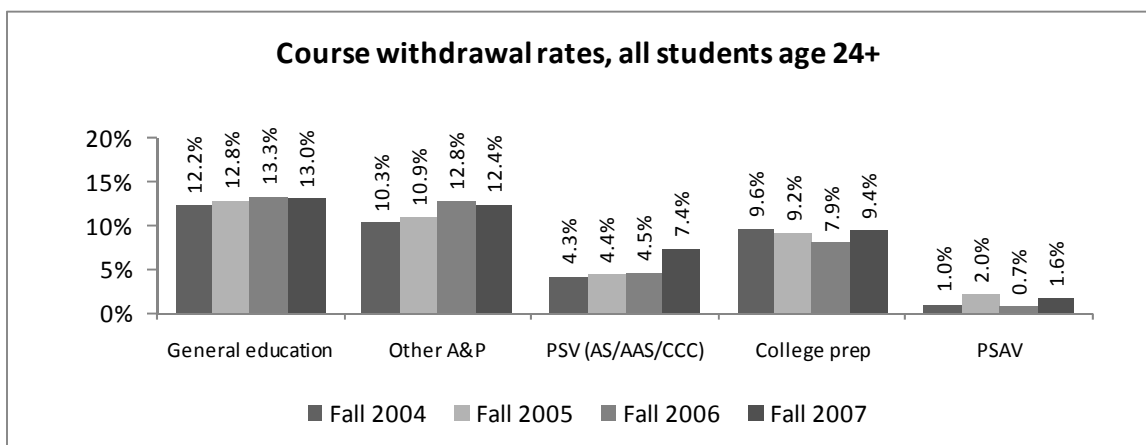


## Course withdrawal rates

Among students 24 years of age and older, 13% of general education class attempts and 12% of attempts in other A&P courses resulted in withdrawals in Fall 2007.

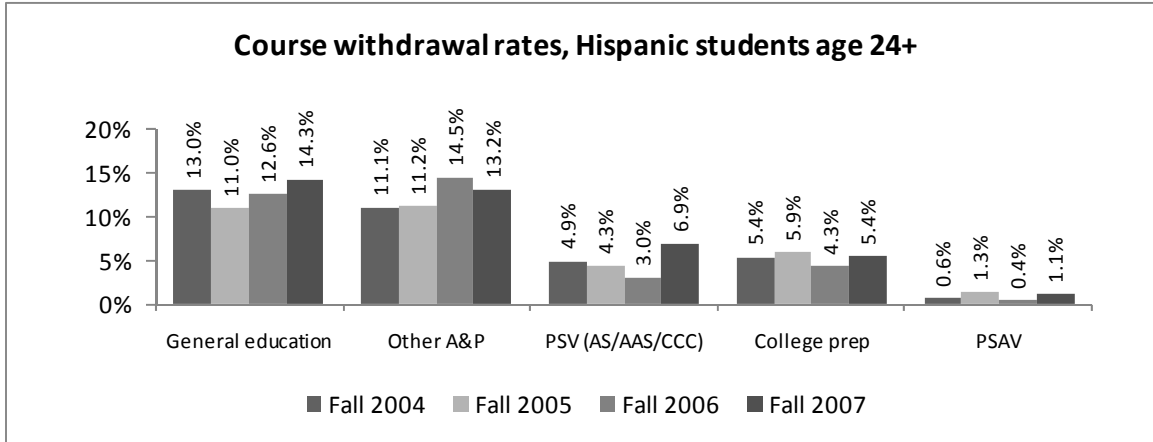
Vocational withdrawal rates are lower. Seven percent of PSV course attempts ended in withdrawals in the fall of 2007—an increase of nearly three percentage points from the prior fall term. Less than 2% of PSAV classes resulted in withdrawals.

Nine percent of prep attempts taken by older students ended in withdrawals. This is roughly in line with outcomes from the last three fall terms.



Hispanic and Latino student over 24 years of age have similar withdrawal rates in most cases. About 14% of general education and 13% of other A&P class attempts resulted in withdrawals in Fall 2007.

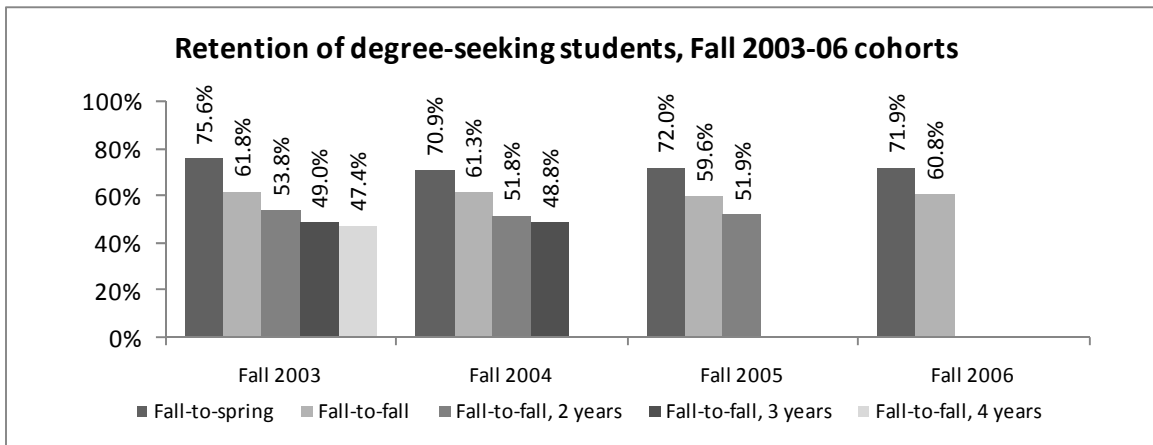
The withdrawal rate for older Hispanic students in PSV classes was 7%—up from 3% the year before. Only 1% of PSAV and 5% of prep attempts ended in withdrawals.



## Retention

For all credit and prep students aged 24 and older, fall-to-spring retention has been between 71% and 76% for the last four fall term cohorts (Fall 2003 to Fall 2006). For the most recent cohort, tracking students from Fall 2006 to Spring 2007, retention was 72%.

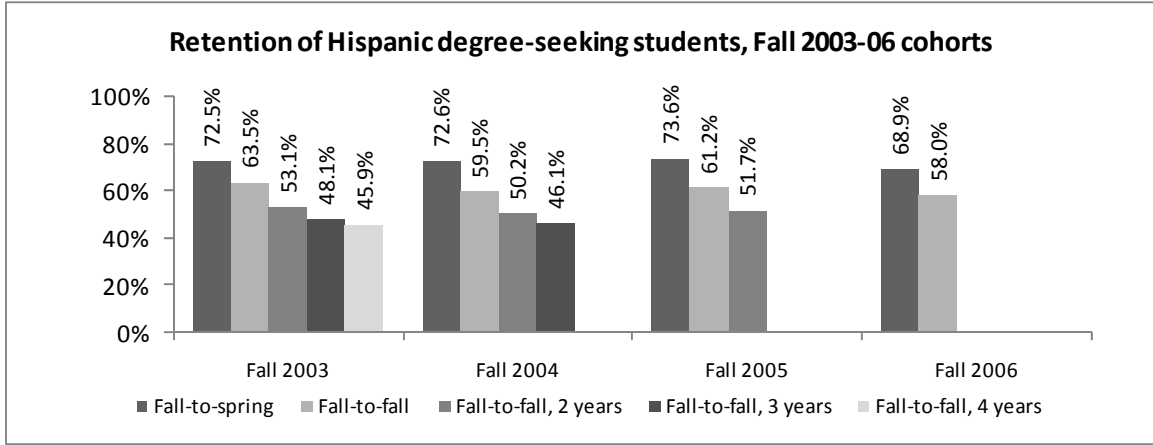
By the following fall, retention declines to between 59% and 62%, and then to about half (52-54%) of the original cohort by the second fall term. Based on the results from the Fall 2003 and Fall 2004 students, retention does not fall off in great numbers after the second year.



**To be included in a cohort**, a student must have 1) declared a degree program (AA, AS or AAS) during the cohort term, 2) been enrolled in at least one credit or college preparatory class during the cohort term, and 3) not received a formal award from PBCC before the cohort term. **To be considered retained**, a student must 1) be enrolled as a credit, college preparatory, or PSAV student during the follow-up term, **and/or** 2) have completed a degree or certificate program at PBCC between the cohort term and the follow-up term, inclusive.

Fall-to-spring retention rates among older Hispanic credit and prep students have been within a couple of percentage points of the student body as a whole, varying from 69% for the most recent cohort, to nearly 74% for the Fall 2005 students.

Fall-to-fall retention was 58% for the Fall 2006 cohort, but it has been as high as 64% in the last four years. By the second fall term, about half (50-53%) of the original cohort remain.



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