UAF Mission Fulfillment Indicators

Updated AY 2023-2024

Student Success and Degree Attainment

Indicator 1: First-Time, Full-Time Bachelor Student Retention

Target

Current threshold: 70-72%
Recommended threshold: 72-75%

Assessment

In the assessment of First-Time, Full-Time Bachelor Student Retention at UAF, the retention rates for the academic years 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 were 78.2%, 67.9%, and 69.7%, respectively. These figures indicate that UAF did not consistently meet the target retention range during this period.

Analysis

The drop in retention rates can likely be attributed to the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, a trend observed nationally during this period.

Equity Gaps

Retention rates dropped across all gender, race, and ethnicity categories from FY21 to FY22, except for Pell Grant recipients in FY22. AY23 saw a slight increase across most categories; however, these rates have not yet surpassed FY21 levels.

Notable Concerns:

- Alaska Native/American Indian: 62%
- First-Generation Students: 68%
- Pell Grant Eligible Students: 65%

Indicator 2: Associate, Bachelors, Masters, and PhD Persistence

Target

Current thresholds:

- Associate 55-59%
- Bachelor's 73-75%
- Master's 83-85%
- PhD 90-92%

Recommended thresholds:

- Associate 56-60%
- Bachelor's 74-76%
- Master's 83-85% (no change)
- PhD 90-92% (no change)

Assessment

Persistence rates for Associate and Bachelor's students from FY20 to FY22 were within the target thresholds but showed a slight decline, averaging 57% for Associate degrees and 74% for Bachelor's degrees. Master's and PhD students remained within their target thresholds, with Master's persistence fluctuating between 82% and 85%, and PhD persistence ranging between 90% and 93%, both maintaining steady performance during this period.

Analysis

The COVID-19 pandemic likely contributed to the drop in persistence, with national trends reflecting similar declines. Lower persistence among female, Alaska Native, and older students may be linked to limited graduate assistantship support and increased social and family responsibilities during this time. PhD students, who had greater access to assistantships, showed higher persistence than MS students.

Equity Gaps

Associate:

- Slight but steady decline in persistence rates for students ages 25+
- Males had a 6% lower persistence rate than females
- Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students saw a 6% increase from FY20-21, followed by a 15.5% drop from FY21-22

Bachelor's:

- Students aged 25+ did not meet benchmarks (70% average), while students ≤ 24 exceeded benchmarks (77% average)
- Both groups showed growth from FY20-21 but saw a decline in FY22
- First-gen students consistently fell below benchmarks (71% average) compared to non-first-gen (77% average) with similar growth and decline patterns

Master's:

- Persistence was lowest in FY21 across most student categories except Black students
- Lower persistence rates for males (81%) vs. females (84%), AKN students (79%), and older students (82%) compared to younger students (87%)

PhD:

- Lower persistence rates for females (89%) vs. males (94%), AKN students (87%), and older students (25+ = 91%) compared to younger students (< 25 = 97%)

Indicator 3: Associate, Bachelors, Masters, and PhD Graduation Rates

Target

Current thresholds:

- Associate 23-25%
- Bachelor's 42-45%
- Master's 83-85%
- PhD 90-92%

Recommended thresholds:

- Associate 24-26%
- Bachelor's 43-44%
- Master's 83-85% (no change)
- PhD 90-92% (no change)

Assessment

Over the FY20-22 period, the average graduation rate was 23% for Associate students and 43% for Bachelor students.

Analysis

The drop in graduation rates during the COVID-19 pandemic mirrors national trends, with female and Alaska Native students particularly affected due to underrepresentation in programs offering graduate assistantships. Additionally, restricted access to facilities and increased family responsibilities contributed to delays in degree completion.

Equity Gaps

Associate:

- Female students' graduation rates were 2% below the benchmark and 5% below males
- Alaska Native/American Indian students' graduation rates were significantly below the benchmark (12% average) and dropped by 7% between FY21-22 (15% to 6.8%)
- Students aged 25+ graduated at nearly double the benchmark (40%)
- Hispanic students' graduation rates almost doubled, from 25% in FY20 to 41.2% in FY22
- Black students had a 0% graduation rate in FY20 and FY 21, improving to 25% in FY 22 (3-year average 8%)

Bachelor's:

- Alaska Native/American Indian students' graduation rates were significantly below the benchmark (18% average) and dropped by 14% between FY20 and FY22 (24.2% to 10.6%)
- Hispanic and first-gen students consistently fell below benchmarks, with first-gen rates declining by 6% over 3 years
- Pell Grant recipients' graduation rates dropped by 6% from FY 21-22

- Black students' graduation rates fluctuated from 0% in FY20, 37.5% in FY21, and 16.7% in FY22 (average: 18%)

Masters/PhD:

- Graduate degrees awarded averaged 270 per year, with a decline in PhDs (40 to 32) and MS degrees (192 to 182), while Graduate Certificates increased (35 to 40)
- MS graduation rates remained steady at benchmark levels (67%)
- PhD rates fluctuated (48-67%, 57% on average) but remained at benchmark levels
- Female PhD graduation rates were lower (48%) compared to males (68%)
- Small numbers prevented race-based PhD analysis

Indicator 4: Gateway Course Pass Rates

Target

Current threshold: 60-70%
Recommended threshold: 60-70% (no change)

Assessment

The pass rates for gateway courses remained steady at 67.5% in both FY20 and FY21 before dropping to 63.7% in FY22. This resulted in a 3-year average pass rate of 66.2%.

Analysis

The drop in gateway course success rates for FY22 is likely attributed to the academic impact of COVID-19, which has left many students underprepared for college. Additionally, a loss of full-time faculty may have contributed to this decline. In contrast, FY21 experienced fewer enrollments but a stronger focus on student success, resulting in increased pass rates for gateway courses. Gender disparities in success rates align with national trends, influenced by challenges in the job market and childcare responsibilities. Furthermore, four demographic categories—Alaska Native/American Indian students, Black students, Pell Grant recipients, and those who chose not to report their gender—fall at or below UAF's benchmark, while white and Asian students are performing at or above the benchmark.

Equity Gaps

On average, 68% of females, 64% of males, and 42% of students who did not report their gender passed their gateway courses, with notable declines in success rates for females and non-reporting students in FY22. Disaggregated data by race reveals average pass rates ranging from 56% to 73%, with all categories experiencing drops in FY22. Key findings include:

- Alaska Native/American Indian students: 56%
- Black students: 57%
- Hispanic students: 63%

There is a 7% gap in success rates between students with Pell Grants (60%) and those without (69%). Additionally, a 6% gap exists between female (63%) and male (69%) students. Age differences in success rates are minimal, with first-gen students averaging 63% and non-first-gen students averaging 69%.

Furthermore, three gateway courses—PSY F101X, COM F121X (online), and BA F151X—have no prerequisites or placement requirements, raising questions about whether adding such prerequisites could improve success rates.

Research

Indicator 5: Graduate Degrees Awarded

Target

Current threshold: 236-280
Recommended threshold: 270-290
Request: Breakdown degrees awarded to Master's and PhD levels

Assessment

Master's degrees comprised approximately 70% of all graduate degrees awarded from FY20 to FY22.

Analysis

Mentoring graduate students is typically not included in faculty workloads, and this practice varies by department. There is a need for a more consistent approach to mentoring and for robust support systems to ensure that graduate students can complete their degrees, particularly if a faculty member leaves the university.

Equity Gaps

- Approximately 70% of students obtaining graduate degrees are white, indicating a significant disparity that needs to be addressed.
- There is a need to examine efforts and resources aimed at improving diversity in graduate programs.
- Aligning data with institutional breakdowns for the same time periods would be beneficial in analyzing whether the distribution of graduate degrees awarded reflects the university's demographics in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, and first-gen status.

Indicator 6: Research Expenditures by Faculty FTE

Target

Current threshold: $189K-$245K
Recommended threshold: $189K-$245K (no change)

Assessment

Over the past three years, research expenditures per faculty (FTE) have significantly exceeded benchmarks. For instance, research income from the Geophysical Institute (GI)—which accounts for roughly half of UAF's total—has doubled during this period. The GI benefits from numerous large contracts and grants associated with facilities like ASF and HAARP, which support research efforts but involve only a limited number of faculty, contributing to a higher expenditure ratio.

Analysis

Over the past three years, UAF's research expenditures per faculty member (FTE) have significantly surpassed benchmarks, indicating strong performance relative to R1 goals and accreditation thresholds. Notably, the Geophysical Institute (GI), which accounts for approximately half of UAF's total research income, has doubled its research funding during this period. The GI benefits from substantial contracts and grants associated with facilities like the Alaska Satellite Facility (ASF) and the High-Frequency Active Auroral Research Program (HAARP), which, while supporting research, involve only a small number of faculty members, contributing to a high expenditure ratio.

While overall research expenditures reflect positively on the university, consolidating these figures may obscure disparities between different units on campus. For instance, parsing funding by individual colleges or research institutes could reveal differences in support levels, particularly between STEM-focused and humanities-based units. A more granular approach could enhance our understanding of which units are increasing their expenditures over time and which may require additional support. Establishing separate targets for individual units could also be beneficial.

Indicator 7: Dissemination of Research (Publications per Faculty FTE)

Target

Current threshold: 1.1-1.6
Recommended threshold: 1.1-1.6 (no change)
Commentary: Without context on how thresholds were determined, it's challenging to assess their appropriateness. One way to consider a range is to use unit peer criteria for expectations regarding promotion and tenure. For instance, in Fisheries (CFOS), the unit criteria require an average of at least one paper per year, regardless of authorship contribution. While the current threshold seems reasonable and attainable for tripartite faculty, it may be low for research faculty. Additionally, exploring thresholds at comparably sized/funded R1 schools could provide valuable benchmarks, although a quick search of Oklahoma University's website did not yield such information, indicating that comparisons may require a more in-depth investigation.

Assessment

From FY20 to FY23, UAF faculty consistently exceeded the target publication range of 1.1 to 1.6 publications per faculty FTE, with publication rates of 1.8, 2.0, and 1.9 in those years, respectively. It's important to note that this data only includes faculty members with research responsibilities in their workloads.

Analysis

Current assessments of research dissemination at UAF do not differentiate between colleges or between bi-partite and tri-partite faculty. Similarly, they do not account for roles such as lead, co-author, or senior author, nor do they consider collaborations with community or Indigenous authors. Additional metrics, including citation counts and journal impact factors, could greatly enhance the evaluation of research quality alongside quantity. The current publication rate per faculty FTE also does not capture other significant creative outputs, particularly those co-produced with communities and Indigenous partners, which are equally rigorous and impactful.

Additionally, UAF could consider reporting the total number of publications alongside the publication rate per FTE. This would provide a broader perspective on overall research output and serve as a complementary metric to publication rate per faculty.

Indicator 8: Undergraduate Student Participation in Research

Target

Current threshold: TBD
Recommended threshold: 45-50% of programs report participation in undergraduate research, aiming for 60% over time.

Assessment

Two units (CBSM and CTC) reported no participation in undergraduate research, while three units (CLA, CEM, and CNSM) showed about one-third participation. Two other units (CRCD and INDS) reported approximately two-thirds participation. Of the 72 programs assessed, 22 (30.6%) indicated undergraduate student participation in research. Notably, CFOS had not yet undergone academic program review, and other units had incomplete reviews for all their programs.

Analysis

The undergraduate research participation rates are based on self-reported data from the program review process. Given that most UAF programs require capstone or applied-theory courses, a higher level of participation in undergraduate research and scholarly activities would be expected across programs. To improve future reporting, the program review process could benefit from clearer definitions and examples of what constitutes undergraduate research and scholarly activities within different disciplines. Additionally, incorporating student-level data would provide a more comprehensive view of research participation, as program-level reports do not account for extracurricular activities, such as paid research roles, volunteer work, or interdisciplinary research outside a student's major.

In 2021-2022, 45% of UAF undergraduate students completed research, thesis, or honors project. Considering both program-level and student-level data may reveal equity gaps across disciplines and student populations, offering valuable insights for future improvements.

Skilled Workforce

Indicator 9: Graduates in High-Demand Workforce Areas

Target

Current threshold: 800-960
Recommended threshold: 800-960 (no change)

Assessment

Between FY20 and FY22, the total number of graduates consistently fell within the expected range of 800 to 960. In FY20, UAF had 915 graduates, and in FY21, 872 graduates, both above the five-year average of 880. However, the number dropped to 846 in FY22, signaling an overall downward trend in graduation numbers across these three years—915 in FY20, 872 in FY21, and 846 in FY22.

Analysis

Graduates serve as a lagging indicator, making it beneficial to compare admission data in high-demand workforce areas to forecast future trends. During the COVID years of FY20 to FY22, admittances trended downward, suggesting that graduation numbers may continue to decline for one or two more years. However, with an increase in admissions observed in FY23 and FY24, we can anticipate a potential rise in the number of graduates soon.

Indicator 10: Student Participation in Internships and Practicums

Target

Current threshold: 250-300 enrolled students
Recommended threshold: 250-300 enrolled students (no change)

Assessment

Between FY21 and FY23, the number of students passing internship and practicum courses remained within the benchmark range of 250-300. Notably, female participation in these courses was nearly three times higher than that of male students. This disparity raises questions about how these participation rates compare to the overall populations of female and male students at UAF.

Analysis

Between FY21 and FY23, the number of students passing internship and practicum courses remained within the benchmark range of 250-300. Female participation in these courses was nearly three times higher than that of male students, prompting a need to analyze how these participation rates compare to the overall populations of female and male students at UAF.

Indicator 11: Graduates Employed in Alaska

Target

Current threshold: 75-85%
Recommended threshold: 75-85% (no change)

Assessment

Only one year of data is available for this indicator. In FY22, the percentage of graduates employed in Alaska within one year falls within the benchmark range of 75% to 85%.

Analysis

There is a discrepancy between the percentage reported on the Mission Fulfillment Dashboard (75.1%) and the FY20-27 Indicators Data spreadsheet (81.7%) for this indicator.

Indicator 12: Graduates Continuing on to Further Education

Target

Current threshold: 41-47%
Recommended threshold: 43-51% (expected average of 47%)

Assessment

The reporting years for the Mission Fulfillment Dashboard and the FY20-27 Indicator Data span FY16 to FY19, which do not align with the current accreditation reporting years.

Analysis

It could be valuable to analyze past majors to identify patterns or trends in the degrees students are graduating with and pursuing for further education. The current benchmark range for student continuation across all levels is 41 to 47 percent. However, from FY16 to FY19, the percentages varied, with all levels averaging 48-45%, associates at 53-60%, bachelors at 42-46%, and masters at 33-40%. To better reflect these trends, it is recommended that the benchmark range for all students be adjusted to 43-51%, aiming for an average of 47%.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Indicator 13: Diversity in Staff and Faculty

Target

Baseline Student Performance Expectations for DEIA 2023

1. Increase total underrepresented student enrollment from 11.2% to 12% by AY27.
2. Increase the percentage of students receiving Pell grants from 14% to 20% by AY27.
3. Increase Indigenous student enrollment from 20% to 22% by AY27.
4. Increase six-year graduation rates for Indigenous students from 19.1% to 28% by AY27.

Baseline Staff/Faculty Performance Expectations for DEIA 2023

1. Increase total underrepresented faculty employment from 9% to 10% by AY27.
2. Increase Indigenous faculty representation from 5% to 8% by AY27.
3. Increase historically underrepresented staff from 5% to 8%

No changes to the recommended thresholds for DEIA 2024.

Assessment

- The 2022 UA Affirmative Action Report shows notable progress:
- Minority faculty representation: Increased from 18% in 2018 to 22% in 22.
- Women faculty representation: Consistently at 44% during this period.
- Alaska Native/American Indian: Slight decrease from 8.6% in FY20 to 8.1% in FY22.
- Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: Small increase from 0.9% in FY20/FY21 to 1.1% in FY22.
- Asian: Gradual rise from 5.1% in FY20 to 6% in FY22.
- Black: Steady increase from 2% in FY20 to 2.5% in FY22.
- White: Gradual decline from 76.4% in FY20 to 73% in FY22.
- Other: Steady growth from 7.1% in FY20 to 9.3% in FY23.

Analysis

At the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), we are focused on improving demographics, retention, and closing equity gaps for both students and staff. Key areas for enhancement include institutionalizing the Climate survey to assess DEI efforts, leveraging current investments in DEI initiatives to engage the broader community, and collaborating with HR to offer implicit bias training for hiring and search committees to diversify applicant pools. Additionally, we aim to encourage departments to update position descriptions to attract more diverse candidates and expand faculty mentorship programs alongside leadership development opportunities.

Indicator 14: Campus Climate Survey Results

Target

Current threshold: 65-70%
Recommended threshold: 70-75%

Assessment

In the 2021 climate survey, 67% of participants expressed satisfaction with UAF's campus climate. This percentage rose slightly to 68% in the 2023 survey. Our current target for campus climate satisfaction is 65%-70%. This report assesses the relevance of this target and offers recommendations to improve overall satisfaction levels.

Analysis

Creating a stronger sense of satisfaction with the climate at UAF requires a multifaceted approach that addresses various aspects of campus life. Setting a target range for campus climate satisfaction at 75% is a proactive step toward enhancing the overall experience for students, faculty, and staff. This new target reflects a commitment to continuous improvement and elevating the quality of campus life.

To achieve this, it is essential to develop a more coordinated approach to survey delivery to effectively assess climate satisfaction. Additionally, focusing on hiring and retaining high-quality faculty members will enable them to lead and mentor students throughout their academic journeys, as institutions with higher satisfaction rates tend to attract and retain students, faculty, and staff more effectively, giving UAF a competitive advantage.

Investing in recruitment, training, and development of high-quality staff members will also support diversity and equity efforts across campus. Promoting cultural attunement among students, staff, and faculty through workshops and professional development opportunities is another important strategy.

Furthermore, utilizing a data-driven approach to investigate unknown factors related to student success and engagement will provide insights for continuous improvement. Finally, publicly stating the satisfaction target percentage demonstrates transparency and accountability to stakeholders, ensuring that progress toward the target is monitored and reported.