

DEGREE COMPLETION
BOARD RULE 400.0200.00
GRADUATION AND COMPLETION RATES
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING: SEPTEMBER 24, 2009

Graduation and completion rates for degrees and certificates serve as a key indicator of Belmont Technical College’s progress toward helping students achieve their educational goals (Board of Trustees, *Ends Policies*, Section IV, 400.0200.00 Degree Completion). BTC’s systematic approach to monitoring graduation and completion rates tracks degree and certificate completions for students by counties of residence and by years of completion. This report explores college data for a ten year period, 1998 through 2008, and reports the number of degrees and certificates awarded by county of residence and year of completion. The report is based upon records for 3,449 associate degrees and certificates awarded by the college for the ten-year period.

The master plan for the University System of Ohio (USO) set educational attainment goals for Ohio’s public institutions. “Associate...degrees are awarded through the University System of Ohio. In addition, many University System of Ohio schools offer training leading to professional certification. These completions serve as the ultimate measure of success for individual students and for the system as a whole. Total degrees and certificates awarded provide a competitive advantage that can bolster growth and increase economic vitality for the state of Ohio” (OBR, *The University System of Ohio Master Plan*, retrieved Nov. 30, 2007 from: http://universitysystem.ohio.gov/master-plan/goal_one.php).

Data:

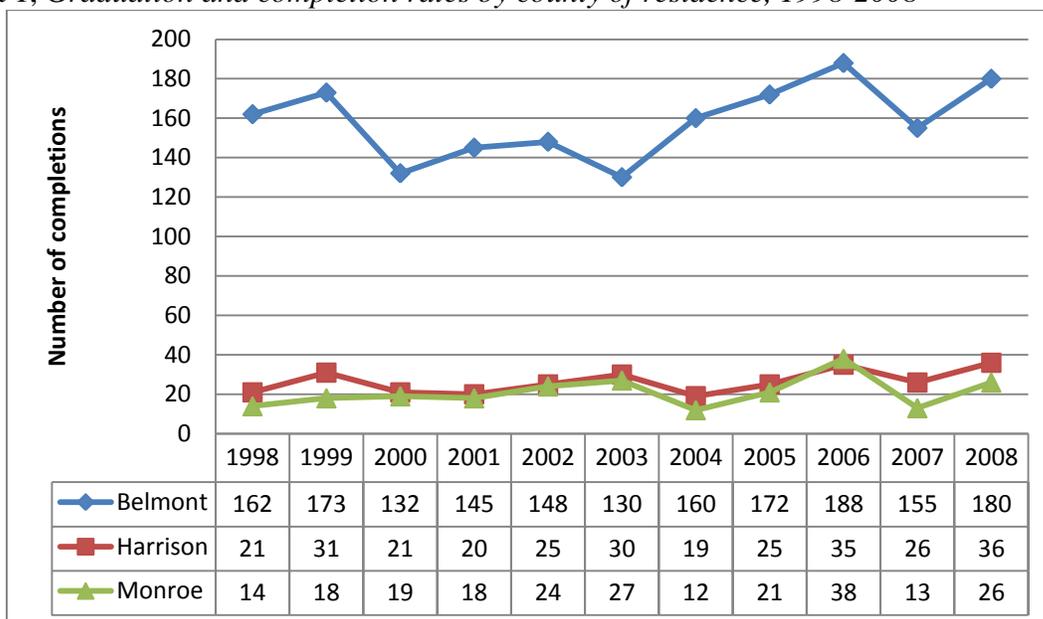
Graduation and certificate completion rate data for students who live in Belmont, Harrison, and Monroe counties are presented in Table 1, *Graduation and completion rates by county of residence, 1998-2008*. The table displays degrees and certificates awarded between 1998 and 2008 to students who designated Belmont, Harrison, and Monroe counties as their county of residence (n= 2,264 degrees and certificates¹). Chart 1, *Graduation and completion rates by county of residence: 1998-2008*, displays the same data in a graph.

Table 1, *Graduation and completion rates by county of residence, 1998-2008*

Year	Belmont	Harrison	Monroe
1998	162	21	14
1999	173	31	18
2000	132	21	19
2001	145	20	18
2002	148	25	24
2003	130	30	27
2004	160	19	12
2005	172	25	21
2006	188	35	38
2007	155	26	13
2008	180	36	26
Total by county	1745	289	230

¹ These data are for graduations and completions of only those students who designated Belmont, Harrison, and Monroe counties as their county of residence. The number of certificate completions and graduations represents a partial total for the college over the ten-year period.

Chart 1, *Graduation and completion rates by county of residence, 1998-2008*



Data displayed in the table and chart for graduation and completion rates by county of residence reveals that completion and graduation rates for students from Belmont, Harrison, and Monroe counties peaked in 2006, when the graduation and completion rates for the college overall were the highest they had been in the history of the college. Rates declined somewhat in 2007, and recovered in 2008 approaching the rate reported in 2006.

Analysis:

Graduation and completion rates fluctuated throughout the ten-year period reported. Data for the 2008 year shows an increase in graduation and completion rates with 349 completions for the college overall. The college expects to sustain that increase in 2009.

To gain a better understanding of what may have influenced past trends, a comparison of graduations by programs was conducted. The program showing the greatest increase in degree awards from 2007 to 2008 was Associate Degree Nursing (ADN). In 2007 16 degrees were awarded in the ADN program, and 55 were awarded in 2008. This may be due in part to the first class of an evening cohort of ADN students. This cohort of students received degrees in September of 2008. Certificate completion rates were affected by other factors. In the medical assisting program, 16 certificates were awarded in 2008 for Medical Coding compared to only 8 awarded in 2007. Seven more Medical Coding certificates were awarded to Belmont County residents in 2008 than were awarded in 2007.

Data for the 2006 year includes a higher than average number of completions for residents of Monroe County. The average number of completions for residents of Monroe County between 1998 and 2008 is 23 completions. The lowest number was 12 in 2004 and 13 in 2007. It appears that some factor may have encouraged students who resided in Monroe County to complete degrees and certificates in 2006. In the next year, 2007, there were fewer students ready to complete degrees and certificates. Looking at 2006 and 2007 by programs reveals that the greatest fluctuation in awards was in the Information Technology (IT) programs. There were three completions in 2005, ten completions in 2006, and three completions in 2007. While there

are no confirming data to support any particular conclusion, the program chair in the IT program recalls that during that time period an individual proposed establishing a networking business in Monroe County. That individual interviewed students from Belmont and suggested that there would be position openings for networking specialists. This may have been a factor that encouraged students to complete certificates and degrees on an accelerated timeline.

From time to time, a number of factors have been identified as contributing to periodic decreases and increases in completion rates. The economy has undoubtedly had an effect, as when the economy is stronger and jobs are readily available, fewer students postpone paid employment opportunities to begin, or to continue working on educational goals. The low numbers of degree and certificate completions in 2003 may have resulted in part from economic factors.

The college is always looking to strengthen and revitalize programs, especially so in periods of lower graduation and completion rates. The effects of efforts working to upgrade some programs and initiate others may be responsible for the increases in completions that were experienced in 2005. Resources were expended to add concentrations in leadership and entrepreneurship to the business program; the criminal justice program with new courses was developed from the former program in corrections; the evening LPN program was added in 2004 and contributed to an increase in LPN graduates in 2006. A comparison of data for completions by programs for 2000 and 2006 showed an increased number of completions in Medical Transcription, and Building Preservation programs. An increase in completions is noted in the LPN program, with 33 more graduates in 2006 than in 2000. While 2007 data showed a decline in graduates, the next cycle of LPN evening program students completed their program in the 2008 cohort, and those completions may have contributed to the demonstrated increase in the number of degrees for the year in which they finished.

Realizing that a number of variables influence enrollment trends and that a combination of variables can drive graduation and completion rates, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact factors that cause fluctuations. Changes in economic conditions are believed to impact the number of students who enroll for and complete degrees and certificates. Current increases in enrollment at Belmont Technical College are thought to be a result of current economic conditions, and the increase in enrollment is expected to have a positive impact on future graduation and completion rates. Belmont Technical College does not view uncontrollable economic conditions as the only factor that influences graduation rates. Proactive measures have been established such as a systematic process of program review to assure the relevancy of BTC program offerings to attract new students. Courses are also updated to provide a better match with Transfer Assurance Guide (TAG) courses. New programs continue to be developed which are also designed to attract new markets of students.

Conclusions/Recommendations:

The Ohio Board of Regents established benchmarks and defined measurements for student success that can be used to guide institutions on ways to measure and assess progress in achieving the University System of Ohio metrics. Measurements for degrees and certificates are to be calculated as percents of “original cohort[s]” of entering students. Success rates for students who complete a degree or certificate and for students who transfer without receiving an award will be measured. The “total success rate” will be calculated from a combination of success rates for six categories: 1) Award of less than associate’s degree without transfer, a certificate; 2) Award of associate’s degree or higher without transfer; 3) Award of less than

associate's degree and transferred; 4) Award of associate's degree or higher and transferred; 5) Transferred without an award; and 6) Still enrolled with 30 or more college hours.

In all instances, measurements will be reported by the college and recorded in the state data base. At this point in time, the state data base is understood to be the Higher Education Information System and the reporting is referred to as reporting of HEI data. HEI reports are submitted by the college on a schedule that has been set out in the HEI system. At the present time, the Database System Administrator submits HEI reports with data that has been gathered from the student information system and formatted according to HEI specifications. Reporting on the developing "Benchmarks of Student Success" has not yet begun.

The working draft for definitions and measurements of student success was distributed to HEI reporting contacts during a meeting at the OBR offices in May 2009. The numerous data elements that are to be captured by institutions as a part of success reporting were included in the definitions. Reporting of the new data elements has yet to be called for. However, data collection along the dimensions prescribed has been initiated at BTC. When the Degree Completions monitoring reports are prepared for 2010, success measures will be defined and reported according to the USO definitions.