

DEGREE COMPLETION
BOARD RULE 400.0200.00
FALL TO FALL AND QUARTER TO QUARTER STUDENT RETENTION
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING: JULY 22, 2010

Belmont Technical College makes a strong commitment to recruit, admit, and enroll both traditional and non-traditional students. BTC provides support services and programs intended to assist students in the successful completion of their educational goals, including but not limited to, degree completion. This report focuses on Belmont’s progress in retaining students. Included in this report are the fall to fall and fall to summer retention rates for the past four years.

Data

The first table, *Fall to fall retention rates*, shows four years of data for fall to fall retention studies beginning with the Fall 05/06 to Fall 06/07 cohort of first-time, full-time, degree seeking students. The retention rate is calculated by tracking this cohort of students to determine how many of the original fall cohort was still enrolled at BTC in the following fall. The first year of data shows that of the original cohort of 181 students, 49% were retained and were enrolled in the following fall. The third year of data showing Fall 07/08 to Fall 08/09 retention rate shows a decrease in the size of the cohort from the previous year but an increase in the percentage of students retained. The percentage of fall cohort students who were still enrolled in the following fall increased each of the last four years.

Table 1, *Fall to fall retention rates*

	Year	BTC FALL COHORT*	BTC FALL TO FALL RETENTION %
Belmont Technical College	Fall 05/06 to Fall 06/07	181	49%
	Fall 06/07 to Fall 07/08	220	50%
	Fall 07/08 to Fall 08/09	202	57%
	Fall 08/09 to Fall 09/10	243	63%

Chart I, *Fall to fall retention rates*, displays the same data as a bar chart.

Chart 1, *Fall to fall retention rates*

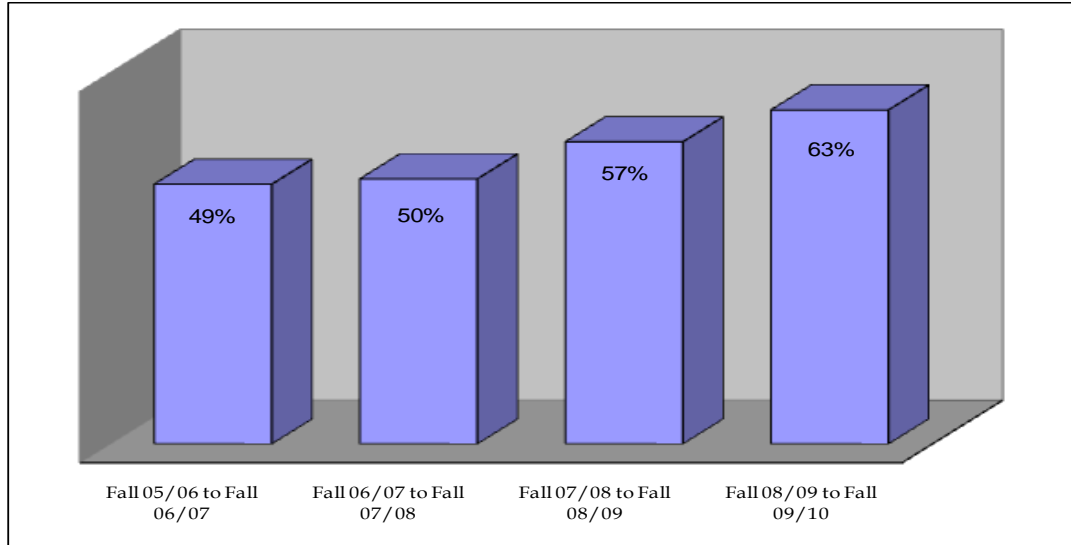
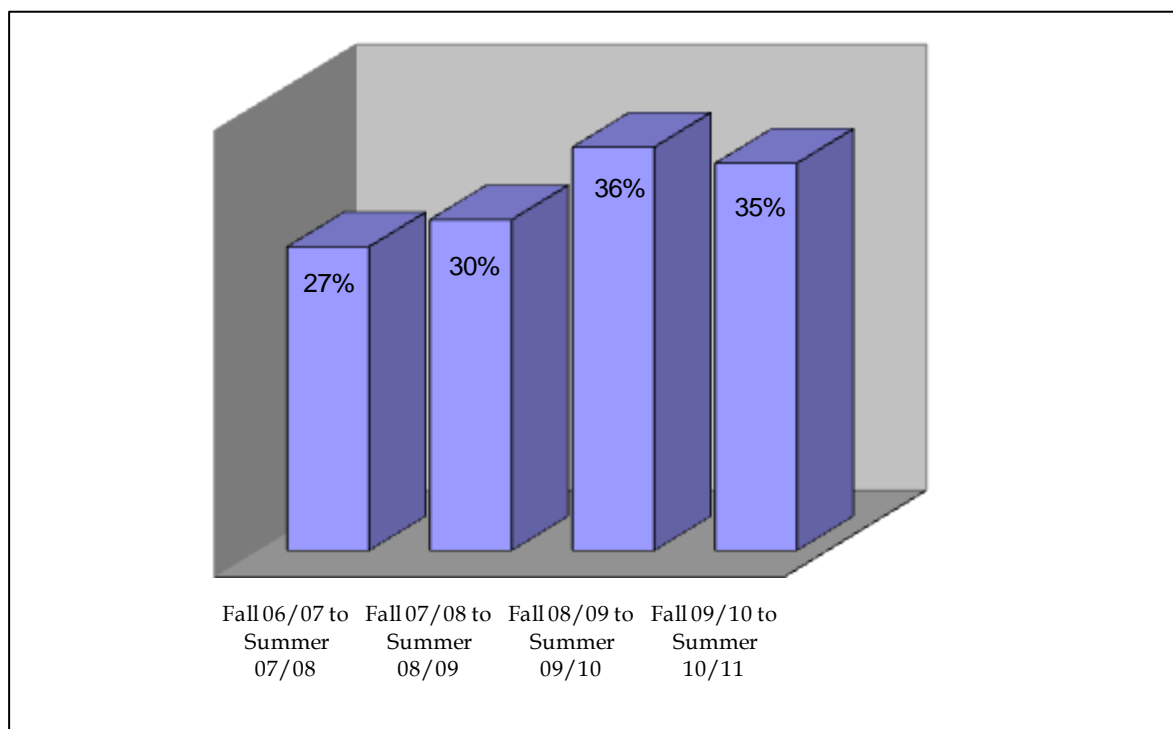


Table 2, *Fall to summer retention*, displays retention rate for the past four years for students who entered BTC in the fall as first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students. In the fall of 06/07, a cohort of 220 students entered BTC and 27 percent (44 of the original cohort) remained at Belmont the following summer. The table shows fall to summer data for subsequent years, beginning with Fall 06/07 through Summer 07/08 and ending with Fall 09/10 through summer 10/11. These data show an increase in the retention rate from 27% to 30% (60 students) for the Fall 07/08 to Summer 08/09. During the Fall 08/09 to Summer 09/10 period, 36% of the original fall cohort was retained. From Fall 09/10 to Summer 10/11 the percentage retained declined by 1%. The second chart provides a bar graph of the information shown in this table.

Table 2, *Fall to summer retention*

	Year	BTC FALL COHORT*	BTC FALL TO SUMMER RETENTION %
Belmont Technical College	Fall 06/07 to Summer 07/08	220	27%
	Fall 07/08 to Summer 08/09	202	30%
	Fall 08/09 to Summer 09/10	243	36%
	Fall 09/10 to Summer 10/11	374	35%

Chart 2, *Fall to summer retention*



Analysis

Fall to fall retention of the first-time, full-time, degree-seeking cohort of students has increased in each of the last four years. Over this period of time, retention rates have risen from 49 percent to 63 percent.

Fall to summer retention rates have moved from 27.3 percent to 34.8 percent. The most recent year shows an increase from beginning of the tracking period, but a slight decline from last year. The current year's decline is one percent point. Examination of the numbers of students in the current year's cohort shows that the cohort increased from 243 to 374 students. The fall to fall retention rate is seemingly higher when compared to the same year of fall to summer data. This indicates that some students who begin in the fall do not attend in the following summer but they return to Belmont in the fall to continue their education. **Conclusions/Recommendations:**

There are internal and external factors that influence whether a student remains in college which makes it difficult to cite any single explanation for an increase or decrease in retention. While a poor economy is believed to have a direct impact on the number who enroll in college, it may also be a factor in explaining why students stay in college.

During the spring of 2009, Noel Levitz a Web-based poll among two and four-year institutions was conducted. The report on student retention trends¹ suggests benchmarks for public and private and two-year and four-year institutions. Across these sectors there was agreement that the following retention practices were among the most effective in 2009: academic support programs, programs designed to retain first-year students, and placing an institution-wide emphasis on teaching and learning.

¹ Noel-Levitz, (2009). 2009 Student Retention Practices and Strategies at Four-Year and Two-Year Institutions. *Higher Ed Benchmarks*. Retrieved (2010, July 7) from www.noellevitz.com

1. *Academic Support Programs*

Belmont has engaged in Academic Support Programs such as Supplemental Instruction in courses considered to be especially challenging to entering students, tutoring/coaching services, and an early alert process for students experiencing academic difficulty. Faculty development and support in online technology and online teaching pedagogy were also listed in the Noel-Levitz report as effective retention practices. BTC continually provides development opportunities for faculty and staff and has created new positions when needed, such as the appointment of an E-Learning Coordinator. Technical support to address online connection issues was also indicated as being effective in retention. The Information Services department at BTC has been structured to support students who experience password issues, and staff needs are addressed through a ticketing system. BTC has surveyed students to determine their levels of engagement, this is also listed as a successful retention strategy used by two-year public institutions.

2. *Programs designed to raise the retention rates of first-year students.*

Initiatives such as new-student group registrations, the Right Start Program and the Student Learning and Success course, PSY 104, have been in place during much of the time period noted in this our retention analysis. In the fall of 2005/06 BTC conducted nine PSY 104 classes and this past fall, thirteen sessions were conducted for new students. Many of the participating students were recipients of Trustee Scholarships.

3. *Placing an institution-wide emphasis on teaching and learning.*

BTC has developed a set of Core Learning Outcomes which place expectations and accountability on faculty and students. The Core Learning Outcomes competencies are integrated into courses and course activities.

Belmont Technical College is doing many things right to increase the retention and success of our students. In addition to current effective strategies, the College has embedded student success strategies into the strategic plan. New initiatives are being implemented such as the Student Awards Ceremony and Student Leadership Retreats. Both of these are expected to create an even better connection with our students and thereby increase retention.