Administrators and staff members from the Office of Research and Information Services at Belmont Technical College report graduation rate data to the Ohio Board of Regents (OBR). These data are published by OBR for the University System of Ohio (USO) in reports accessible through the Higher Education Information (HEI) system. Institutions of higher education and members of the public can use these data to compare graduation completion rate data between and among USO public institutions. This report compares graduation rate data for Ohio's community colleges. Comparing graduation rates at BTC with rates at comparable institutions is one way the Board of Trustees and administrators monitor the college's progress and improvement toward helping students achieve their educational goals (Board of Trustees, *Ends Policies*, Section IV, 400.0200.00 *Degree Completion*).

This report relies upon data from the HEI system that has been systematically gathered, organized, and presented to facilitate meaningful comparisons across institutions within the USO. These data are readily available to members of the public who have computer access and interest in knowing about graduation rates in Ohio's public institutions, and the college community benefits from being knowledgeable about Belmont data that is accessible to the public. The data have been standardized across all institutions. Thus, as in the first table, the columns showing, "time-to-degree credit hours" for institutions are expressed in semester hours. Overall, comparisons are more valid and reliable when systematic processes such as HEI have been implemented to standardize measurements. The responsibility for interpreting Belmont's publicly available data resides within the College community.

Data

Graduation rate data are presented in tables and figures. OBR uses data gathered through the HEI system to monitor progress of students and to create reports on various groups of students. All data in this report reflect associate degrees, only, awarded to students who completed those degrees within six years and during the 2008/2009 academic year. Data are aggregated for the number of credits students have earned and the elapsed time students have taken to earn their degrees.

In Table 1, *Time and credits to associate degree for Belmont students graduating in 2008/2009*, the total number of students receiving associate degrees during the academic year is categorized by percentages of graduates within *time-to-degree* periods. Data for Belmont are shown first in Table 1, with columns showing from left to right: number of degrees awarded in 2009; average credits to degree; median[1] years to degree; the percentage of students in 2009 (N= 238) who earned degrees in 2 years or less (n= 40); more than 2 years and equal to or less than 3 years (n= 86); more than 3 years and equal to or less than 4 years (n= 40); and more than 4 years and equal to or greater than 6 years (n=72).

The second table includes the same data for Belmont as is shown in Table 1, and also includes data for the other 22 community colleges in the USO.

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[1] The *median* value from the range is used in the descriptive statistics because this mid-point value is less sensitive to outliers in the data.

Table 1, *Time and credits to associate degree for Belmont students graduating in 2008/2009*

	# degrees awarded	Avg. credits to degree	Median years to degree	Percent graduating in:			
				2 years or less	> 2 years, <= 3 years	> 3 years, <= 4 years	> 4 years, <= 6 years
Belmont Technical College	238	85	3.0	17%	36%	17%	30%

Table 2, *Time and credits to associate degree for Ohio community college students graduating in 2008-2009,* displays comparable data[2] for the 23 community colleges within the USO. Institutions are arranged alphabetically in this table.

Table 2, *Time and credits to associate degree for Ohio community college students graduating in 2008-2009*

USO Community Colleges	# degrees awarded	Avg. credits to degree	Median years to degree	Percent graduating in:			
				2 years or less	> 2 years, <= 3 years	> 3 years, <= 4 years	> 4 years. <= 6 years
Belmont Technical College	238	85	3.0	17%	36%	17%	30%
Central Ohio Technical College	401	83	3.3	12%	33%	24%	31%
Cincinnati State Tech. & Comm. College	905	86	4.0	9%	24%	22%	46%
Clark State Community College	291	80	4.8	6%	16%	16%	62%
Columbus State Community College	1,381	85	4.5	5%	21%	19%	55%
Cuyahoga Community College	1,367	89	5.7	3%	10%	15%	72%
Eastern Gateway Community College	152	89	3.0	26%	26%	20%	28%
Edison State Community College	233	76	4.0	12%	23%	17%	48%
Hocking Technical College	431	79	3.0	16%	35%	14%	34%
James A. Rhodes State College	447	83	3.5	14%	28%	26%	32%
Lakeland Community College	640	82	4.7	8%	21%	15%	55%
Lorain County Community College	863	89	5.0	7%	13%	18%	62%
Marion Technical College	175	85	3.8	9%	25%	26%	39%
North Central State College	288	82	4.0	15%	18%	17%	50%
Northwest State Community College	258	75	3.7	17%	27%	16%	40%
Owens State Community College	1,108	84	4.3	8%	18%	18%	55%
Rio Grande Community College	212	101	2.7	38%	22%	14%	27%
Sinclair Community College	1,336	69	5.3	3%	16%	15%	66%
Southern State Community College	284	82	4.3	15%	23%	11%	51%
Stark State College of Technology	853	88	3.7	11%	22%	25%	41%
Terra State Community College	175	65	4.0	11%	23%	18%	47%
Washington State Community College	308	87	3.5	12%	31%	18%	39%
Zane State College	283	80	3.0	18%	37%	17%	27%

Data from an August 2010 draft of another OBR report, *Getting to Goal*, shows enrollment numbers for each of the 23 community colleges during the 2008 fall quarter. Fall enrollments are interesting to consider in comparisons of graduation rates as the numbers of

[2]Retrieved August 23, 2010 from: http://regents.ohio.gov/perfrpt/statProfiles/Time-to-Degree_Report_FY2009.pdf
And http://regents.ohio.gov/perfrpt/statProfiles/Completions_FY_2000-2009_Report.pdf

students enrolled at various institutions is a variable that could affect graduation rates. Consider then, that one can look at the number of associate degrees awarded in one academic year in relation to the number of associate degrees earned in that same year, and see that the ratio between degrees earned and students enrolled in that same year offers another perspective that degrees-awarded counts and enrollment counts taken in isolation does not reveal. Such a comparison is a way of looking at the probability that incoming students will be able to earn a degree. The third table shows the counts that are proposed to generate this type of ratio.
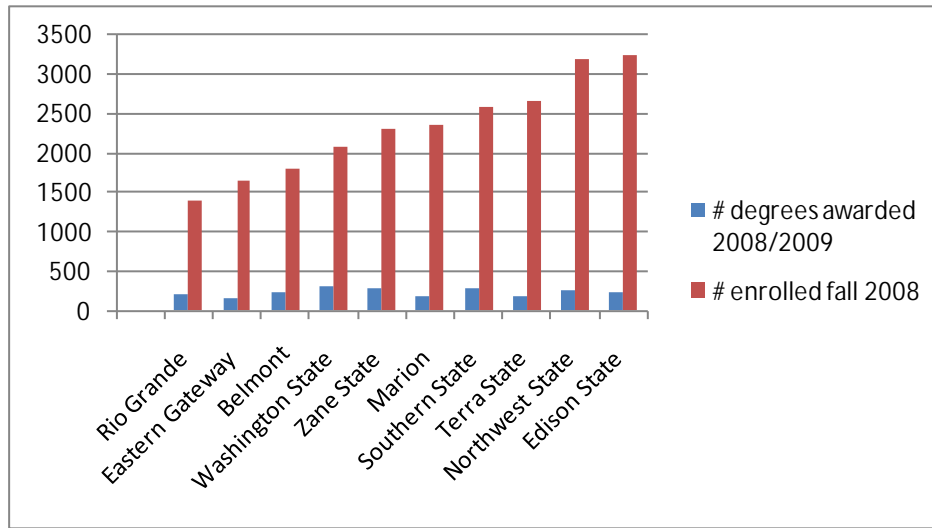
Table 3, *Associate degrees awarded 2008/2009 and fall 2008 enrollment* shows both the number of associate degrees awarded during 2008/2009 and fall 2008 enrollments. Colleges are arranged by enrollment numbers rather than alphabetically as they were in the second table. These data suggest that on the basis of enrollment counts, Belmont was third smallest of the 23 Ohio community colleges. Looking at the data in Table 3, *Associate degrees awarded 2008/2009 and fall 2008 enrollment*, it appears that colleges with higher enrollments granted higher numbers of associate degrees; colleges with smaller enrollments awarded lower numbers of associate degrees.

Table 3, *Associate degrees awarded 2008/2009 and fall 2008 enrollment*

USO Community Colleges	# degrees awarded	Fall 2008 enrollment
Rio Grande Community College	212	1,386
Eastern Gateway Community College	152	1,649
Belmont Technical College	238	1,798
Washington State Community College	308	2,081
Zane State College	283	2,312
Marion Technical College	175	2,350
Southern State Community College	284	2,584
Terra State Community College	175	2,650
Northwest State Community College	258	3,185
Edison State Community College	233	3,251
North Central State College	288	3,257
Clark State Community College	291	3,597
Central Ohio Technical College	401	3,599
James A. Rhodes State College	447	3,640
Hocking Technical College	431	5,681
Cincinnati State Tech. & Comm. College	905	8,606
Lakeland Community College	640	9,201
Stark State College of Technology	853	9,516
Lorain County Community College	863	11,180
Owens State Community College	1,108	22,178
Sinclair Community College	1,336	23,465
Columbus State Community College	1,381	24,482
Cuyahoga Community College	1,367	27,814

The data displayed in Figure 1, *associate degrees awarded 2008/2009 and fall 2008 enrollment,* show the same data as are in Table 3. However, in Figure 1, only the ten smaller institutions are displayed. There are two columns for each institution. The bar in blue on the left represents the number of degrees awarded during 2008/2009. The column in red on the right represents the number of students enrolled at that institution during fall 2008. The graphical view makes it easier to see comparisons of relationships between 2008/2009 associate degrees awarded and 2008 fall enrollments.

Figure 1, *2008/2009 associate degrees awarded and fall 2008 enrollment*

Analysis

Based on data from OBR's *Getting to Goal* report and shown in Table 3, *Associate degrees awarded 2008/2009 and fall 2008 enrollment*, Belmont's enrollment for fall 2008 was 1,798 placing the College as third smallest in enrollment. During the 2008/2009 academic year, Belmont granted 238 associate degrees. (This number does not include certificates.) A comparison of student enrollments in fall quarter to associate degrees awarded in the 2008/2009 academic year at Belmont, suggests that for each eight student enrolled at Belmont during fall quarter, one associate degree was awarded during the academic year. In comparison, at the other end of the range shown in the bar graph displayed as Figure 1, the relationship between students enrolled in fall 2008 and associate degree awards for 2008/2009 at Edison State Community College was nine enrollments for each degree awarded.

When relationships between enrollments and degrees awarded at larger institutions are examined, the data show that for every 18 students enrolled at Columbus State Community College during fall 2008, Columbus state awarded one associate degree during the 2008/2009 academic year. These relationships suggest that while larger institutions award greater numbers of associate degrees, the absolute numbers of degrees awarded do not necessarily give a complete picture of graduation rates.

This report reveals that Belmont Technical College compares favorably with other institutions on time-to-degree-completion. Of the 23 community colleges, only three colleges have a median number of years to completion rate, equal to that of Belmont students. Only one institution has a better median score which was 2.7 at Rio Grande Community College. The

percent graduating in greater than two years and less than or equal to three years at Belmont was second from the highest at 36 percent. This is a completion rate that speaks well for the College.

Conclusions/Recommendations

As already mentioned, data on graduation rates for Ohio public institutions is public information. Thus, questions arise as to why this information is important and to whom. Furthermore, what can Belmont do to become even more attractive to interested stakeholders?

A major concern regarding the time students take to complete their degrees is financial. Parents of traditional-age college students and non-traditional students must plan for the cost of attending college. Additional time to degree completion adds to the financial costs to students if students are accumulating more credit hours. Longer time to completion may also translate into costs for institutions in the form of institutional resources. Some might argue that in the past colleges could benefit from extended time to completion because more credit hours translated into additional state and federal funding. However, new funding formulas emphasize completions rather than enrollments. Issues such as this are driving changes in the state funding formula which now provide targets for institutional improvements.

Belmont has a number of programs in place that encourage students to complete degrees in less time. A Time to Completion project published by the Lumina Foundation[3] contains an Idea Library where policies, programs and practices implemented by other systems and colleges are shared on how to address time to completion. Ideas presented in the Idea Library listed a number of strategies that have been implemented at Belmont. These include: *Student Success Programs, Intrusive Advising and Early Warning Systems, Alternative Course Delivery***,** *Dual Enrollment,* and *Alignment of Degree Requirements*. Additional suggestions include having a *Comprehensive Tracking System* that allows better tracking of students across institutions. Products like Student Tracker are helpful but limited on the scope of information provided. Additional efforts to offer academic and support services online and in ways that meet the needs of non-traditional students in particular are areas where Belmont will continue to investigate and develop initiatives.

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[3] Idea Library : *College Productivity*. Lumina Foundation for Education, n.d. Retrieved 3 Sept. 2010, from http://www.collegeproductivity.org/page/projects/time-completion-ttc/idea-library