

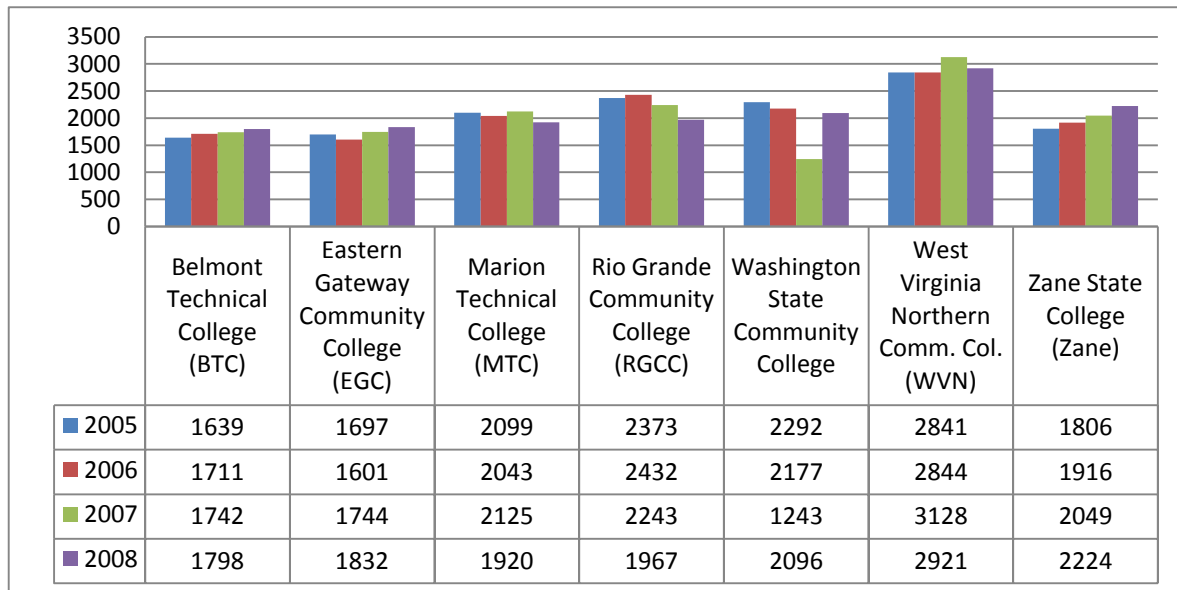
AGENDA ITEM C2: DEGREE COMPLETION
BOARD RULE 400.0200.00
DEMOGRAPHIC STUDIES OF STUDENTS COMPARED TO OTHER INSTITUTIONS
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING: DECEMBER 2, 2010

Demographic studies of students enrolled in postsecondary education institutions serve as key indicators of performance for the Board of Trustees (*Policy Manual, Ends, Section IV, 400.0200.00, Degree Completion, 2007*). One way of examining demographic profiles of students is to compare data reported by institutions to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). These data are gathered through annual surveys administered by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Demographic profiles of students from public institutions are available to institutions and to the public through the *College Navigator*¹ and include student characteristics related to attendance status, age, and gender.

Data

This report compares demographic profile data for Belmont students with data for six other two-year public institutions: Eastern Gateway Community College (EGC); Marion Technical College (MTC); Rio Grande Community College (RGCC); Washington State Community College (WSCC); West Virginia Northern Community College (WVN); and Zane State College (Zane). Variables used for comparison are: 1) Total fall enrollments; 2) Enrollments by attendance status; 3) Enrollment of students age 25 years and older; 4) Retention rates; 5) Graduation and transfer-out rates.

Figure 1, *Total postsecondary enrollment trends, fall 2005 through fall 2008*

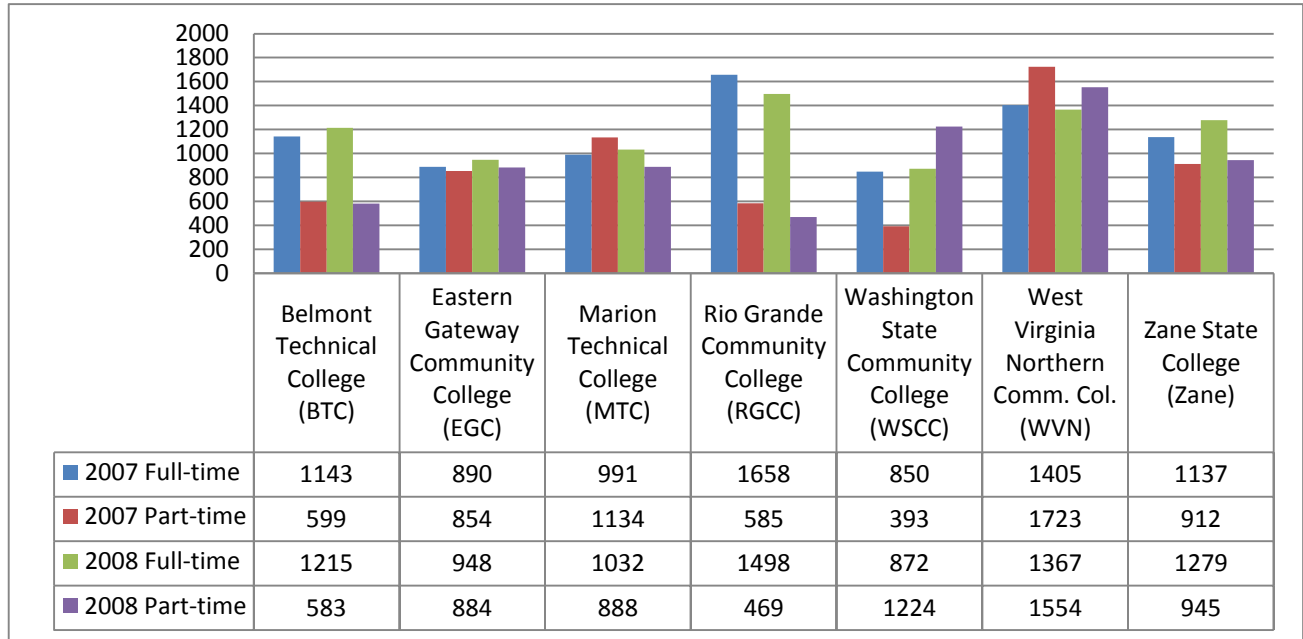


Fall enrollment totals, as shown in Figure 1, *Total postsecondary enrollment trends, fall 2005 through fall 2008* reveal that Belmont and Zane have experienced steady increases over the four-year time period in enrollment. There is more variability in fall enrollment

¹ The Web site for College Navigator is accessed through the National Center for Education Statistics. Data for this report were retrieved on November 7, 2010 from: <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>

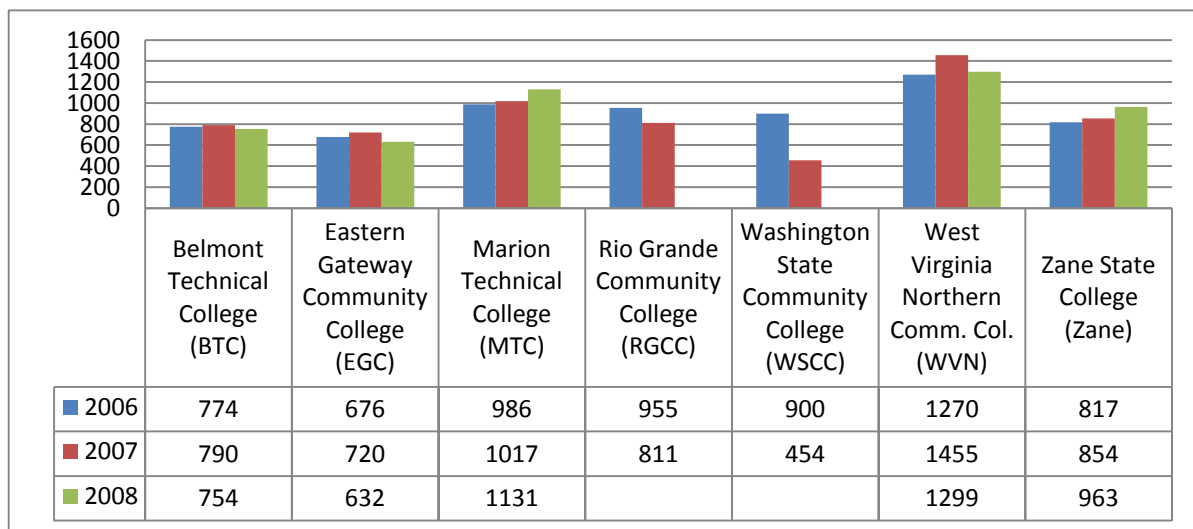
totals for the other five institutions, and enrollments have declined in at least one year for these institutions.

Figure 2, *Fall enrollments, full-time/part-time 2007 and 2008*



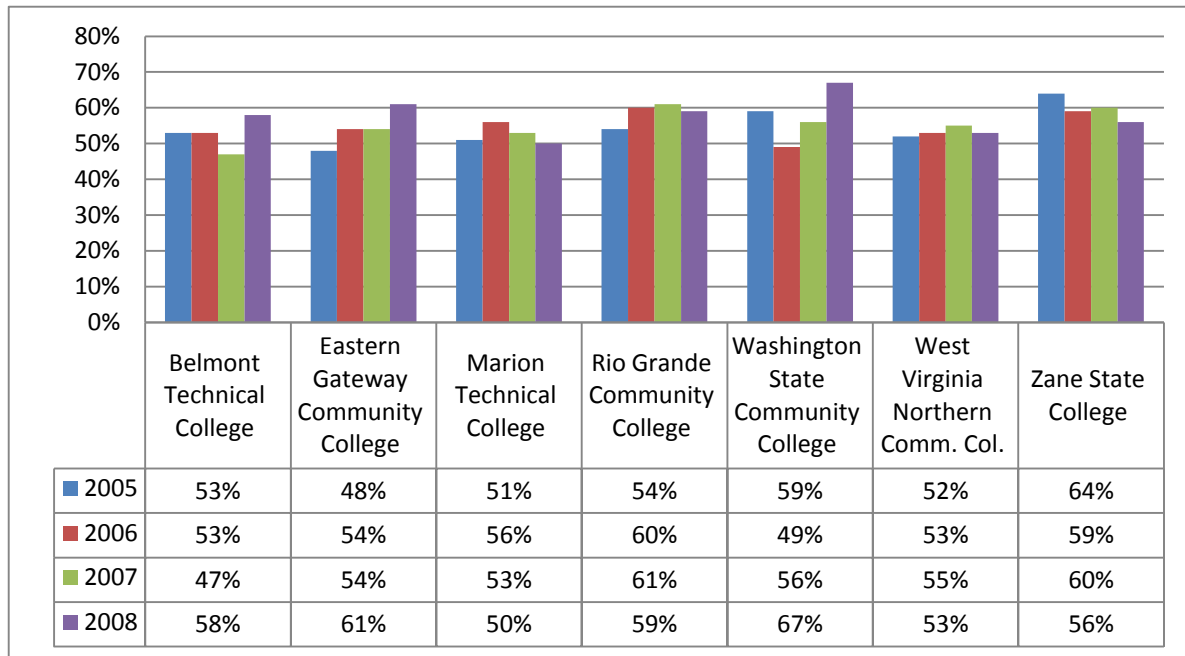
Comparisons across institutions based on the numbers of full-time and part-time students enrolled during 2007 and 2008 show that Marion Technical College and West Virginia Northern Community College are different from the other five institutions in that these two had a greater number of part-time students than full-time students in 2007 fall enrollments. Eastern Gateway, Washington State, and Zane State colleges have reported increases in part-time enrollments from 2007 to 2008; while the other four institutions have shown decreases in part-time students. Belmont is the only institution of the seven examined for this report that had a decrease in the number of part-time students and an increase in enrollment overall.

Figure 3, *Enrollment of students age 25 years and older*



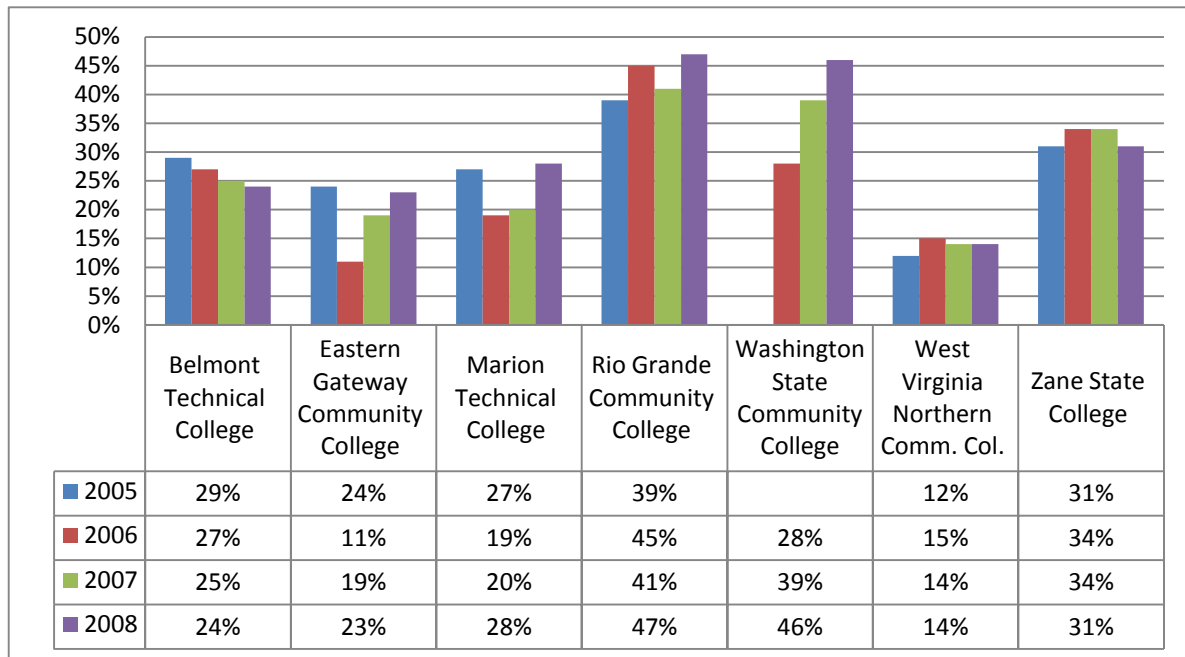
Of the seven institutions examined for this report, two did not report student enrollments by age for all three of the years. Marion Technical and Zane State colleges showed increases in the numbers of students age 25 years and older in 2008 over the numbers in 2007. Belmont, Eastern Gateway, and West Virginia Northern reported decreases from 2007 in enrollment of students age 25 years and older in 2008. Belmont showed the least amount of variability in numbers of students age 25 years and older over the three-year period reported through IPEDS data. The difference in enrollments of the 25 and over students at Belmont between 2006 and 2008 was a net decrease of 20 students.

Figure 4, *Retention rates of full-time students from fall-to-fall*



Retention rates measure fall-to-fall persistence of students enrolled in the institutions. In this examination, the retention rates for full-time students are displayed in Figure 4, *Retention rates of full-time students from fall-to-fall*. Students who enter as full-time students in fall of one year and return the following fall as either full-time or part-time students are included in counts. Three of the seven institutions, Belmont, Eastern Gateway, and Washington State show an increase in full-time student retention rates from 2007 to 2008. In the case of each of these three institutions, the retention rate in 2008 was higher than it had been in any of the three prior years. Retention rates for 2008 in the seven institutions varied between 50% at Marion Technical College and 67% at Washington State Community College. Belmont's 58% retention rate in 2008, places the institution in the middle of the range, with three institutions reporting lower rates and three reporting higher rates.

Figure 5, *Graduation rates, 2005 through 2008*



Graduation rates of first-time, full-time degree or certificate-seeking student cohorts range from a low of 14% at West Virginia Northern Community College to a high of 47% at Rio Grande Community College. Graduation rates at Rio Grande are higher than the rates at the other seven institutions. The higher rates for 2005 through 2007 at Rio Grande may result from the fact that Rio Grande is a public two-year institution with a four-year institution, Rio Grande University on the same campus. The range for the other two-year institutions in the comparison for 2008 is from 23% at Eastern Gateway to 46% at Washington State.

Graduation rates for the first-time, full-time degree or certificate seeking cohorts at Washington State Community College have increased steadily over the last three years. Data were not available for the cohort of students completing in 2005 from WSCC; however, since 2005, the graduation rate has increased from 28% in 2006 to 46% in 2008.

Analysis

Making comparisons among two-year public institutions in higher education is limited by availability of comparable data. The College Navigator provides the most reliable data for comparison. These data lag behind the data each institution gathers and reports to the Higher Education Information (HEI) system by as much as two years; however, HEI data includes only public institutions in Ohio. Institutions near state borders often find they need to look across borders for comparisons. The most recent data available for presentation in this report cover a four-year time period from 2005 through 2008. Increases in enrollment have occurred more recently in 2009 and 2010. Data reflecting these increases will not be available until the summer of 2011. The IPEDS data used in this report do allow for comparisons of institutions across state lines, and the data are reliable to the extent they are available.

Conclusions/Recommendations

Comparable data continues to be limited in usefulness for decision making. It is difficult to make conclusions or recommendations that reflect studies on demographics due to a two-year gap in information. However, the steady growth in enrollment at Belmont from 2005-2008 does indicate that Belmont had systems and processes in place that were growing enrollment even prior to the economic challenges of 2009 and 2010. Belmont's enrollment grew by 9.7% over the four years noted in this report and was surpassed by only one institution, Zane State.

Data reveals that Belmont has a decline in the number of part-time students yet an increase in full-time enrollments. A logical conclusion could be that the increase may be due to the number of individuals who have lost their full time employment and now are enrolled in training on a full time basis. However, a decrease in the number of students who were age 25 or older would not seem to support this conclusion. The increase could be a result of the college's student support and retention efforts, such as, college strategies of adding the college preparatory courses PSY104 and PSY100, more students have understood and enjoyed their Belmont experiences and converted from part-time to full-time status. A negative trend in graduation rate coupled with the decrease in the number of students age 25 or older are two trends the college needs to reverse. It is evident from this report that more work needs to be done to recruit students who represent non-traditional demographic groups. Recent work from the Admissions Office on an adult recruitment plan demonstrates that the college is headed in the right direction. Establishing and offering support services for such cohorts should also increase the rate of graduation. Additionally, the recent created Enrollment Management team is focusing on career pathways and the college "pipeline" for students, and one such area of focus is the graduation rate.