

2025 Survey of Community College Outcomes (SCCO) Success Rate Component Detail

This methodology describes the construction of the 2025 Richmond Fed Success Rate. This documentation is organized into three sections: Cohort, Outcomes and Terminology.

Constructing the Denominator: Building the Credit Cohort

The credit cohort serves as the denominator for the Richmond Fed Success Rate. Included in an institution's cohort are award- and degree-seeking students who enter the institution during the 2020-2021 cohort entry year and who meet the following three criteria:

1. Enrolled as credit award- or degree-seeking **for the first time at this institution** during the 2020-2021 study year. This may include:
 - Students who previously attended any other post-secondary institution as credit or non-credit students.
 - Students who previously enrolled at this community college as:
 - high school students for dual/joint/concurrent enrollment or dual credit *even if they were classified as award-seeking prior to high school graduation.*
 - non-award seeking students (credit or non-credit).
2. Enrolled for at least 15 days in a program of up to and including one year in length OR at least 30 days in a program of greater than one year in length.
3. **Already graduated high school**

Assuming they meet the three criteria above, the credit cohort may include:

- Students who are enrolled in non-credit courses.
- Students who are part-time or full-time during their first semester or term.
- Students taking remedial/developmental courses if the student is considered award-seeking for the purpose of student financial aid determination. This includes students who, during the 2020-2021 cohort entry year:
 - Received any type of federal financial aid.
 - Received any state or locally based financial aid with an eligibility requirement that the student must be enrolled in a degree, diploma, certificate, or transfer-seeking program.
 - Obtained a student visa to enroll at a U.S. postsecondary institution.

Who to Exclude from the Credit Cohort

Community colleges serve many students who entered the institution during the 2020-2021 cohort entry year but did not meet the inclusion criteria outlined above. The following types of students should NOT be included in the credit cohort:

- Students enrolled in a certificate/credential program requiring fewer than 9 credit hours.
- Students enrolled in high school.
- Students enrolled previously as a post-secondary (after graduating high school/obtaining a GED) award-seeking student prior to the 2020-2021 cohort entry year **at this institution**
- Enrolled exclusively in non-credit courses.
- Exclusively audited credit courses.

Cohort Tracking

Data providers will track these cohort students from initial entry during the cohort entry year and report on these students based on the highest outcome achieved through the end of the 2023-2024 study year (see terminology). A student who is designated as a member of the 2020-2021 cohort remains in the cohort, even if the student:

- Transitions from full time to part time (or vice-versa). The student's attendance status is reported as of entry to the institution for the first full term (i.e., fall or spring) of the time frame.
- Transfers to another institution.
- Drops out of the institution.
- Stops out of the institution.
- Has not fulfilled the institution's requirements to receive an award.
- Went on a study abroad program the first year upon entering the institution.

A student may be removed from the cohort in the event of:

- death,
- permanent disability,
- military deployment, or
- service on an official church mission or with a foreign aid service of the federal government.

Constructing the Numerator: Assigning Student Success Outcomes

The students in the credit cohort who succeeded through one of the five success pathways make up the numerator of the Richmond Fed Success Rate. For the 2025 data collection, students in the credit cohort are tracked through the end of the 2023-2024 study year.

When determining how to categorize cohort students, it is important to ensure students are counted only once. The success rate is most useful if it can be disaggregated by success type, so it is also important to define success in order through the awards below. The awards are presented in a hierarchy such that an associate degree supersedes diploma/certificate and so on.

Awarded a degree

Universe of Applicable Students: All Credit Cohort Students

Count all students who were awarded a degree by this institution by the end of the 2023-2024 study year. Degrees include:

- Associate degree: Recognized postsecondary degree conferred as the result of completing an academic program of study (below the baccalaureate degree) in at least two but less than four full-time study years.
- (In rare cases) Bachelor's degree issued by the community college: An award (baccalaureate or equivalent degree, as determined by the Secretary, U.S. Department of Education) that normally requires at least 4 but not more than 5 years of full-time equivalent college-level work.

Do NOT include students who:

- Met all requirements for a degree that has not yet been conferred.
- Were awarded an honorary degree.

Awarded a diploma or certificate

Universe of Applicable Students: Credit cohort students who were not awarded a degree during the measurement period.

Include all credit cohort students who were not awarded a degree but were awarded a post-secondary diploma or certificate. Awards include:

- Recognized postsecondary certificate conferred as the result of completing an academic or occupational/vocational program of study that does not meet the criteria for a degree.

- Recognized postsecondary diploma conferred as the result of completing an academic or occupational/vocational program of study that does not meet the criteria for a degree.

The instructional activity completed as part of the program of study must be credit-bearing, and can be measured in credit hours, clock hours, or some other unit of measurement. The certificate or postsecondary diploma should require the completion of a minimum of 9 credit hours.

Do NOT include students who:

- Met requirements for recognized postsecondary credentials earned, but for whom the credential not yet conferred.
- Earned an honorary award.
- Earned a certificate requiring fewer than 9 credit hours (or the contact/clock hour equivalent).
- Earned a certificate not meeting the requirements outlined above, including those categorized as:
 - Merit
 - Completion
 - Attendance
 - ESL
 - Developmental/college preparatory
 - Standalone certificates in continuing ed courses such as CPR or defensive driving, or any other lifestyle-focused (rather than workforce-focused) non-credit programs

Awarded an industry- or workforce-recognized licensure or credential

Universe of Applicable Students: All Credit Cohort students who were not awarded a degree, certificate, or diploma.

Included in this category are students who did not earn a credit-bearing award during the measurement period but did earn workforce or industry recognized credential outlined below:

- **Industry- or workforce-recognized** credential or licensure conferred as the result of completing an academic or occupational/vocational program of study. The licensure or credential must be conferred to a student who is in the credit cohort, but the licensure or credential may result from a credit or non-credit bearing program. The program

leading to the licensure or credential can be measured in credit hours, clock hours, or some other unit of measurement.

- Students who do not meet the success criteria for degree in but earn at least one shorter-term credential (<9 credit hours) that qualifies an individual to get an entry-level skilled job may be included in this category. These credentials are often embedded in longer term degree and certificate programs.
- **Industry- or workforce-recognized** postsecondary credentials conferred by an entity other than the postsecondary institution **as part of the institution's curriculum**. Examples include, but are not limited to, state licensures required for employment and certifications offered by industry organizations.
- **Industry- or workforce-recognized** postsecondary credentials conferred by an entity other than the postsecondary institution **and are not embedded in the institution curriculum but are reported to the institution by the entity/issuer**. Examples include, but are not limited to, state licensures required for employment and certifications offered by industry organizations.
- **Industry- or workforce-recognized** postsecondary credentials earned as the result of a vocational, basic skills, residency, or other program not recognized by IPEDS as academic or occupational/vocational **as part of the institution's curriculum**.

Do NOT include students who:

- Met requirements for a licensure or credential that was not conferred by the end of the 2023-2024 study year.
- Were awarded an honorary award.

Examples of recognized postsecondary credentials to exclude:

- Merit
- Course completion without licensure or credential
- Attendance
- ESL/ELL course completions
- Developmental/college preparatory course completion
- Standalone certificate or award in continuing education courses such as CPR, defensive driving, or any other lifestyle-focused (rather than workforce-focused) non-credit programs

Transferred to a four-year institution prior to receiving an award

Universe of Applicable Students: Credit cohort students who did not earn a degree, certificate, diploma, or workforce-recognized credential.

Students reported in this category include those who transferred to a four-year institution by the end of 2023- 2024 study year without earning an associate degree, long-term certificate, postsecondary diploma, or workforce-recognized credential.

Exclude students who:

- Earned a degree, post-secondary diploma, certificate, or industry- or workforce-recognized credential or licensure PRIOR to transferring to a four-year institution.
- Transferred to a two-year institution.

Persisted

Universe of Applicable Students: Credit cohort students not captured in the four preceding success categories.

Include students who neither earned an eligible award nor transferred to but remain in good standing at the institution. A student is considered in good standing if they:

- Were enrolled in courses for credit any time during the 2023-2024 study year,
- Had a 2.0 or better GPA, and
- Had completed at least 30 credit hours through the end of the 2023-2024 study year.

Note: Continuous enrollment over the 2020-2021 through 2023-2024 period is not a requirement for good standing.

Terminology and Definitions

Study Year (SY)

The Study Year (SY) refers to the reporting period for a system/institution for the 2023-2024 cycle. This period either aligns with the 2023-2024 academic year or the fiscal year depending on the data reporting timeline of the participating system/institution. During the data collection process, we will verify with each data provider the timing of the cycle represented in the 2023-2024 data elements.

In some states, credit enrollment may be reported on an academic calendar (for example: September 1, 2023-August 31, 2024) while non-credit enrollment data and outcomes are reported on a fiscal year basis (for example: July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024). In this case, the Study Year reference in the data collection instrument refers to the September 1, 2023-August 31, 2024 for credit-related data and July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024 for non-credit data.

Cohort Entry Year (CEY)

The Cohort Entry Year (CEY) refers to data reporting period for a system/institution for the 2020-2021 cycle. Specifically, the CEY is the year-long period from which the student success rate cohort is derived. During the data collection process, we will verify with each data provider the exact start date and end date of this cycle. This should align with the study year cycle.

Award-Seeking (Applies to credit students)

A student is considered award- or degree-seeking if the student is enrolled in a credit-bearing course of study that leads to a credit-bearing award or degree upon successful completion. The program codes used to classify students as award or degree-seeking varies across states, but a student who meets any of the following criteria in the numbered list below is considered award- or degree-seeking:

1. The student is enrolled in a formal associate degree or certificate program requiring a minimum of 9 credit hours at the institution.

Note: Students who are award-seeking at Institution A but taking courses at Institution B are NOT considered award-seeking at Institution B.

2. The student considered award-seeking for the purpose of student financial aid determination. This includes students who:
 - Received any type of federal financial aid.
 - Received any state or locally based financial aid with an eligibility requirement that the student must be enrolled in a degree, diploma, certificate, or transfer-seeking program.
3. A student who obtained a student visa to enroll at a U.S. postsecondary institution.

Determining Award-Seeking Status:

- Award-seeking status should be determined based on their enrollment in a credit-bearing course of study during the first full semester they are enrolled during the 2020-2021 cohort entry year.

Credit Awards: Degree, Diploma and Credit-Bearing Certificate

- Recognized postsecondary credentials conferred as the result of completing an academic or occupational/vocational program of study. The instructional activity completed as part of the program of study should be credit-bearing and measured in credit hours.
- Degrees, post-secondary diplomas, and certificates are conferred directly by the postsecondary institution (rather than a third party).
- Credit awards must require at least 9 credit hours.
- Do not count the following types of awards as degrees, post-secondary diplomas or certificates.
 - Honorary
 - Merit
 - Completion
 - Attendance
 - ESL/ELL
 - Developmental/college preparatory
 - Awards that can be completed with fewer than 9 credit hours

Non-Credit Awards: Licensure, Non-Credit Certificate or Credential

- Recognized postsecondary credentials conferred as the result of completing an academic or occupational/vocational program of study. The instructional activity completed as part of the program of study may be credit-bearing or non-credit-bearing, and can be measured in credit hours, clock hours, or some other unit of measurement.
- Awards are conferred by the postsecondary institution or by a **recognized** entity other than the postsecondary institution (such as the state or a third-party licensing organization) **as part of the institution's curriculum**.
- All included awards should be **workforce** focused rather than self-improvement or lifestyle focused.
- Do NOT include non-credit certificates, licensures, or credentials that are:
 - Merit
 - Completion
 - Attendance
 - ESL/ELL

- Developmental/college preparatory
- Standalone certificates or awards from lifestyle-focused continuing ed programs like CPR, defensive driving, cake decorating, basic photography, etc.