



A Comparative Analysis on 2nd Year Retention: Determining Agents in Persistence from Second to Third Academic Year Research Executive Summary

A plethora of data exists on first-year retention rates at Eastern Michigan University (EMU); however, widely published literature is scarce as it pertains to second year persistence. It has been a historical challenge to keep students between the end of the second year into their third year of study. The sharp decline in enrollment between the matriculation year and third year has hovered around 40%. To put this figure in perspective, of the roughly 2,800 new FTIAC undergraduate students that enrolled in the institution in the fall semester, only about 1,700 will be enrolled at the beginning of the third year.

Literature shows when a student returns to the same institution and continues into the third year, that student has a much higher chance to stay and complete his/her degree from the same institution within six years. To provide more information about factors that may be related to student attrition, this study explores two essential research questions:

From Year 2 to Year 3, are there achievement gaps (measured by cumulative GPA and 2nd to 3rd retention rate) concentrated within the following classifications: Gender, Ethnicity, and Pell Eligibility?

In the case of the first variable, males and females that persisted to their third year had higher cumulative GPAs than their student counterparts that did not. In fact, these populations collectively scored 0.6 more GPA points than students that did not return. However, within the population of students that were retained, females had GPAs that outperformed males by 0.18 points and had a retention rate of 83% compared to just about 79% for males.

There are salient gaps in retention for ethnicity as well. African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino students who did not return for a third year scored 1.02 and 0.83, respectively, less GPA points than their retained white peers. The attrition rates among

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these populations are quite stark as well. For African American/Black students, the figure sits at nearly 30% compared to about 19% for Hispanic/Latino students and just under 15% for white students.

Lastly, there appears to be two possible divergent arguments for Pell eligibility outcomes. Generally, students who are not eligible for Pell grants outperform the students that receive these financial awards by 0.16-0.20 GPA points (which is not to say that Pell eligibility has no bearing on student success.) In fact, it can be postulated that Pell awards enable students to overcome persistence issues tied to the affordability (or lack thereof) of higher/postsecondary education. While about 86% of the students in the study without Pell grants were retained, more than 77% of those who were eligible for Pell grants also persisted to a third year.

Comparison of Performance Measures

Gender	Number	Cumulative (end of 2nd year)	2nd to 3rd year retention rate
Male	2,790	3.10	78.88%
Female	4,543	3.28	83.07%

Ethnicity	Number	Cumulative (end of 2nd year)	2nd to 3rd year retention rate
African American	1,574	2.91	71.87%
Hispanic	312	3.22	80.21%
White	4,695	3.33	84.99%
All other	753	3.11	83.30%

Pell Eligibility	Number	Cumulative (end of 2nd year)	2nd to 3rd year retention rate
Yes	3,482	3.13	77.15%
No	3,852	3.29	85.71%