



EAB

Academic Performance Solutions

Improving Course Completion

Insights Leveraging APS Benchmarking Capabilities

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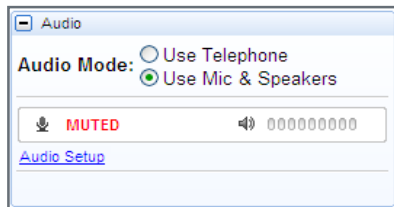
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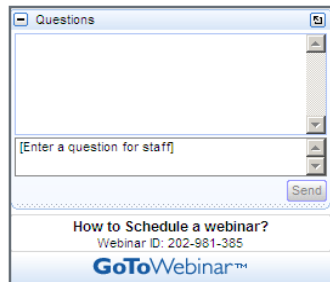
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Today's Speakers



Rachel Keller Eisman
Practice Manager



Lauren Sheram
Senior Analyst



Download the report

Available on EAB.com immediately following the webinar.



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APS Insights Series

Aligning Academic Resource Allocation and Student Outcomes



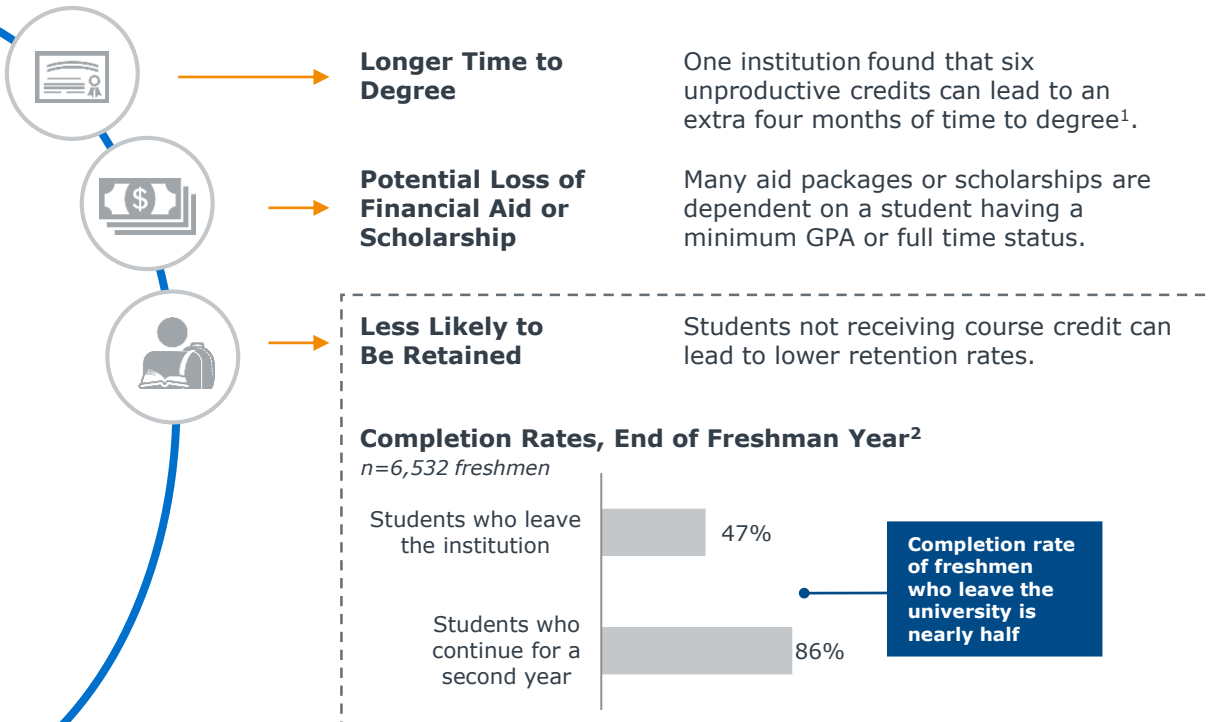
What is this Number?

1,714,419

Total unearned credit hours across the
APS Collaborative in AY 2015

Why Look at Completion Rates?

The High Cost of Credits Taken But Not Earned



1) University of Wisconsin-Madison, Predictors of Time-to-Degree for Recent UW-Madison Undergraduates, December 2014: https://apir.wisc.edu/timetodegree/Predictors_TimetoDegree_2014.pdf

2) Average end-of-freshman-year completion rate at one regional comprehensive university.

Leveraging APS to Improve Course Completion



Our Roadmap for Today's Webinar

1

Key Findings From APS Benchmarking Report

- Collaborative-wide performance
- Course-level comparisons
- Departmental outliers

2

Root Causes of Low Completion

- Factors inside vs. outside the classroom
- Common pushback for improvement
- Section variation as one place to look

3

Next Steps and Further Analyses

- DIY APS analyses on completion
- Stories of faculty-led improvement

- 1 Key Findings from APS Benchmarking Report
 - 2 Root Causes of Low Completion
 - 3 Next Steps and Further Analyses
-

Behind the Curtain: Our Benchmarking Process



Developing Apples-to-Apples Comparisons

Member Data

Identified all members who have completed the APS data validation and configuration process

APS Benchmark Dataset

- Developed standardized data dictionary
- Transformed each member's data into comparable data points

APS Platform Benchmarks

- In September 2017, an initial set of benchmarks will become available on the platform
- Members will have the opportunity to select their own cohort of peers in 2018

Out of the **43** benchmarked institutions, more than **400** distinct final grades were standardized.

Key Terms

Completion Rate

Earned student credit hours divided by attempted student credit hours.

D, F, and W Grades¹

Percent of students earning a D, failing, or withdrawing from a course.

1) The DFW rate is commonly defined as the inverse of completion and includes only D grades where credit was not received; however, the APS benchmarking data include all D grades, whether or not the student received credit for the course.

43 Institutions Grouped into Four Cohorts



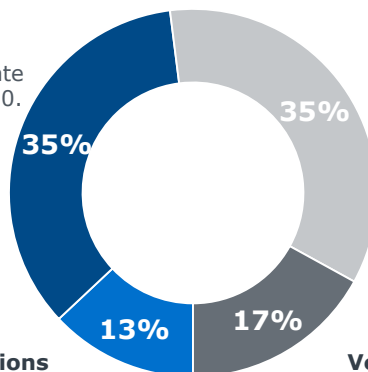
APS Benchmarking Cohort Distribution (N = 43)

High-Research Comprehensive Institutions

Institutions with more than \$10M in research activity and an undergraduate enrollment between 5,000 and 10,000.

Regional Comprehensive Institutions

Institutions with less than \$10M in research activity and an undergraduate enrollment around 10,000.



Small, Teaching-Focused Institutions

Institutions with little to no research activity and an undergraduate enrollment less than 5,000.

Very Large Research-Intensive Institutions

Doctoral institutions with high to very high research activity and an undergraduate enrollment greater than 10,000.

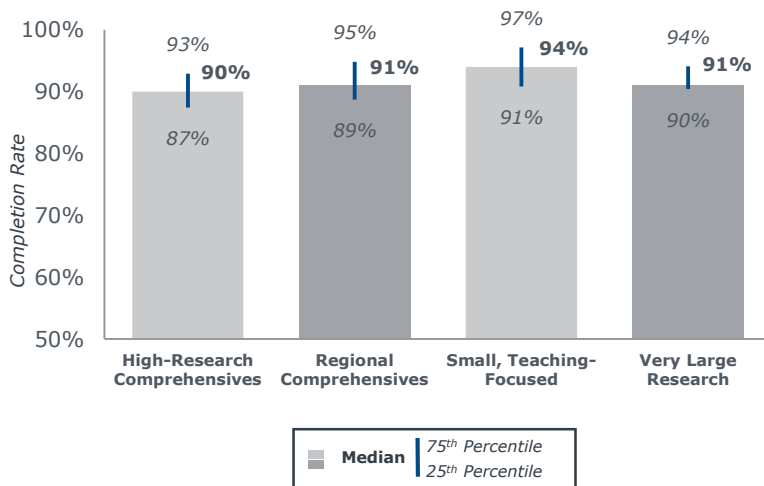
1) The four APS Benchmarking Cohorts are derived using undergraduate student population size, research activity, and Carnegie Classification.

Current State of Completion in the Collaborative



Completion Rates Across the Collaborative

Median Course Completion Rate and 25th-75th Percentile Range by Cohort, AY 2015



Weighted Average of Unearned Credits by Cohort

AY 2015

54,748

High-Research
Comprehensives

52,603

Regional
Comprehensives

14,705

Small, Teaching
Focused

101,707

Very Large
Research

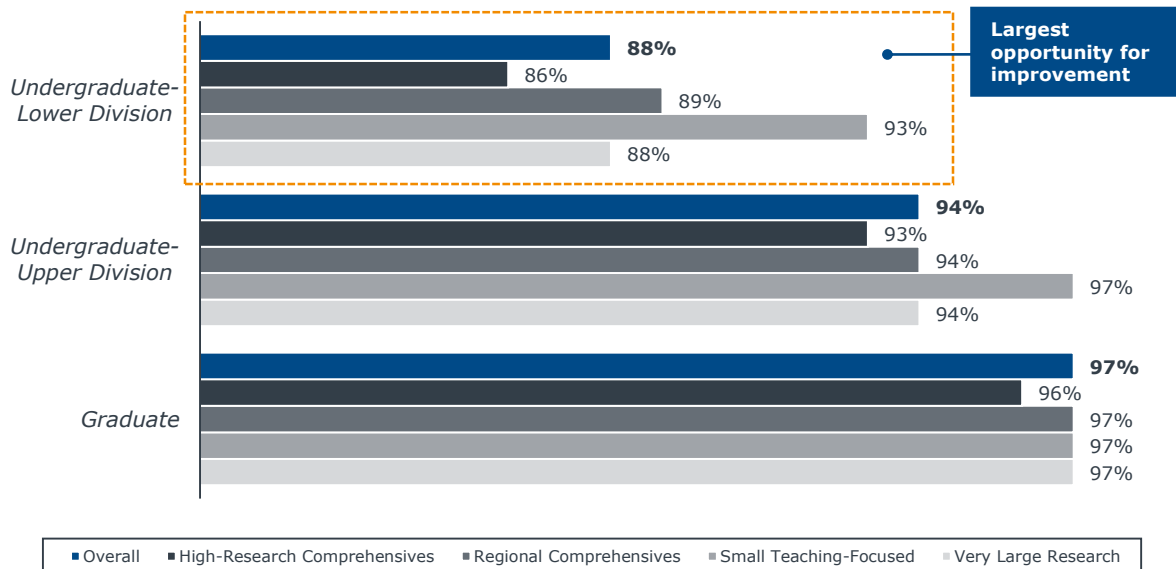
1) The chart includes all undergraduate and graduate courses in the 2015 academic year.

Drilling into Course Level Differences

Lower Division Has Lowest Median Completion Rates

Completion Rates Across the Collaborative by Course Division¹

Median Completion Rate by Cohort, AY 2015

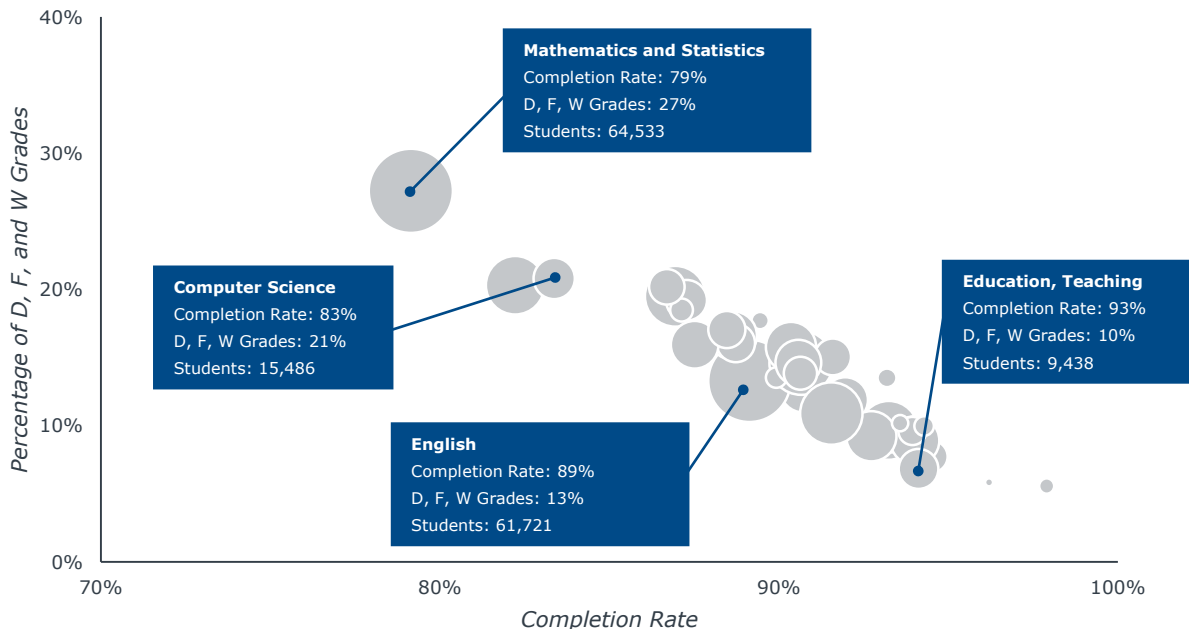


1) Course level definitions: lower division includes 100 and 200 level; upper level includes 300 and 400 level; graduate includes 500 level and above

The Highs and Lows By Department

Departmental Differences Across the Collaborative

Median Course Completion Rate, Median Percentage of D, F, and W Grades, and Number of Students in Lower Division Courses, AY 2015, All Cohorts







1) This chart shows the median course completion rate, median DFW rate, and the number of students enrolled in a Lower Division course by department in 2015 across the APS collaborative.

How Do Gateway Courses Compare?

Some Intro Courses Outperform Lower Division Department Medians

Introductory Courses as Compared to Department Median for Lower Division¹

Median Completion Rate, AY 2015, All Cohorts

Introductory Level Course		Completion Rate	% Difference from Department ²
	Intro to Biology	89%	+2%
	Intro to Psychology	89%	-1%
	Intro to Chemistry	87%	+3%
	Calculus I	74%	-3%

- 1) Similar courses were identified at each of the 43 institutions using level, class size and course description, but due to differences between course descriptions across the collaborative, we are not able to offer course-level benchmarking in the APS platform at this time.
- 2) Percentage point difference between the introductory course median completion rate and the department Lower Division median completion rate.

Access Benchmark Data By Cohort, Department, and Division

How does my institution compare to peers for upper division completion rates?

What is the expected difference in completion rates between lab and lecture course types across the collaborative?

How does my philosophy department compare to peer philosophy departments?

Tables 14 – 18: By Department for Each APS Cohort, All Lower Division

**Available for
Download
Today!**

1

Key Findings from APS Benchmarking Report

2

Root Causes of Low Completion

3

Next Steps and Further Analyses

Common Root Causes of Low Completion

Low Course Completion

1

Academically Unprepared

- Students with low high school GPAs or who attended academically weak institutions and lack critical study skills
- Contributing factor, but high school GPA and standardized test scores are often poor predictors of classroom performance

2

First Year Struggles

- Financial, personal or emotional issues can prevent students from being fully engaged in coursework
- Challenging to address in classroom, better suited for counseling and advising staff

3

Student Demographics

- Factors such as socioeconomic background or status as a first generation student have been associated with performance
- Institutions can address disparities related to demographic characteristics through support services or inclusive pedagogical approaches

4

Instructor Variation

- Differences in grading philosophy and pedagogical style can impact student success in the classroom
- A major driver of higher DFW rates that can be addressed with support for improved pedagogy

Outside the Classroom

Inside the Classroom

Improvement Efforts Often Met With Skepticism



Faculty Concerns to Addressing Course Completion in the Classroom



Student Characteristics

Belief that course failures are a result of unprepared students



Quality Concerns

Perception that improving completion rates is at the expense of instructional rigor



Unfair Solutions

Concern that redesign increases class size and workloads, or rewards bad teachers with additional resources



Screening Students

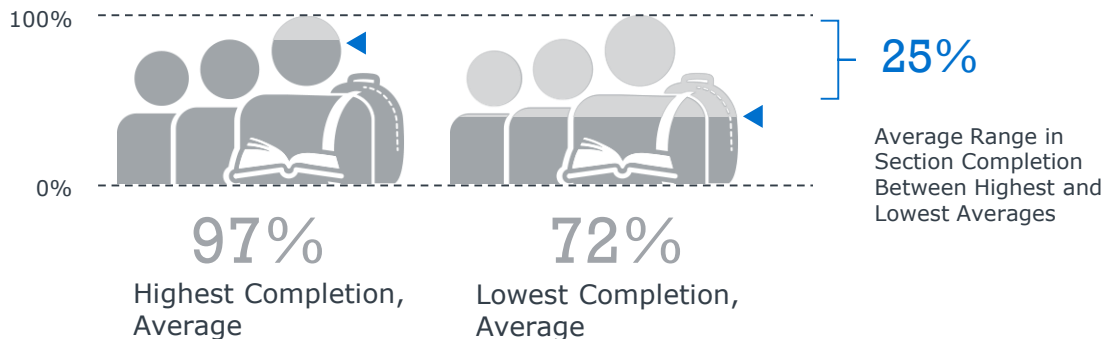
Use of gateway courses to limit entrance to oversubscribed or competitive majors



How Much Variation Is Expected Across Sections?



Range of Section Completion Rates¹



Range of Section Completion Rate

The difference between the highest and lowest completion rates for sections of the same course



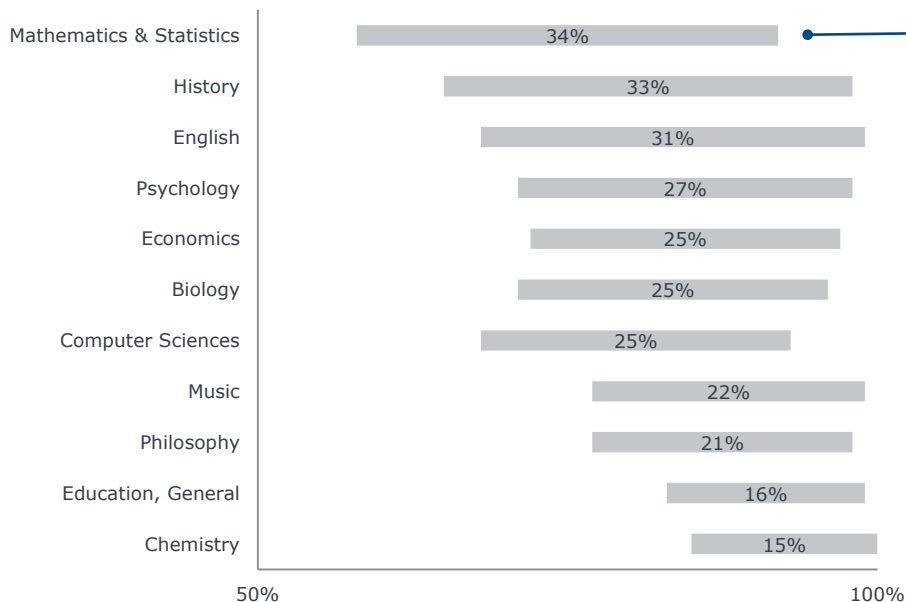
¹) Methodology: Found the range of completion rate for each course with five or more sections at each school in the collaborative, then took the average.

Range of Variation By Department



Average Range in Course Completion Rate by Department¹

Lower Division Courses, Fall 2015, All Cohorts



Of the four intro-level courses benchmarked, Calculus I had the widest degree of variation at 32%

1) Methodology: Found the range of completion rate for each course with five or more sections at each school, then took the average by department.

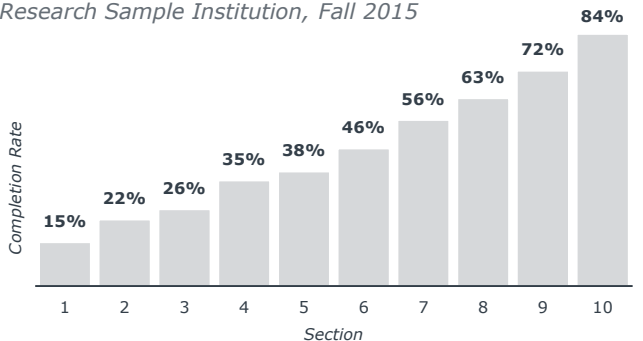
2) Similar courses were identified at each of the 43 institutions using course division, class size and course description, but due to differences between course descriptions across the collaborative, we are not able to offer course-level benchmarking in the APS platform at this time.

Instructor Variation in a Single Course

Large Range in Section Completion Rates for Calculus I

Variation in Calculus Section Completion Rates¹

Section Completion Rates Across Very Large Research Sample Institution, Fall 2015



Class Size **41 45 39 34 47 50 45 44 43 51**

69%

Range for Calculus I completion, compared to collaborative average of 32%

Digging into the APS Platform

- 1 Click on the **Students** tab and set your filters for a specific department or course prefix.
- 2 Scroll to the **Completion Rates** section of the page to view the Courses with the Highest Unearned Credit Hours report.
- 3 Click on any **Course Code** to open a more detailed report with completion rates by Course Ref No (section).

Unproductive Credit Courses > MATH101M

Course Ref No	Attempted Credits	Unearned Credits	Completion Rate [%]
21014	120	57.00	52.5%
27130	114	42.00	63.2%
17384	126	27.00	78.6%
22676	57	21.00	63.2%
22027	120	21.00	82.5%
11262	126	21.00	83.3%
30136	66	18.00	72.7%
13094	126	18.00	85.7%
17383	120	15.00	87.5%
21066	120	15.00	87.5%

1) Sample data from one institution in the collaborative. All sections with class size greater than 25.

- 1 Key Findings from APS Benchmarking Report
 - 2 Root Causes of Low Completion
 - 3 **Next Steps and Further Analyses**
-

Additional APS Analyses for Course Completion



Three Steps to Determine Your Improvement Strategy

Size the Opportunity

Quantify unproductive credits, examining both the rate and absolute number

Critical APS analyses:



Completion Rates at the Institutional, Department and Course Division



Completion Rates v. Attempted Student Credit Hours



D, F, and W Grade Distributions¹

Identify Root Causes

Analyze specific courses with low completion rates and consider factors, both in the classroom

Critical APS analyses:



Median Course Completion Trends by Instructor



Completion Rate Analyses with Drilldown to Course Reference Number



Intercurricular Dependencies

Prioritize Resources

Focus on courses where you can have the largest impact on students, such as high enrollment and capacity constrained courses

Critical APS analyses:



Courses with Highest Unearned Credit Hours



Bottom 30 Courses by Completion Rate



Impact of Course Bottlenecks on Course Completion

1) Future capability in APS platform

Pairing Your APS Data with Best Practices

Nine Tactics for Improving Course Completion

A+



Assessment

Instruction

Course-Level Advising

Pre- and Post-course Support

#1: Early and Frequent Low-Stakes Assessment

#2: Standardized Assessment

- *Understand the pitfalls of grading practices*
- *Provide faculty with resources on assessment*
- *Support use of shared materials by instructors*

#3: Active Learning
#4: Supplemental Instruction

5#: Course Behavior Alerts
#6: Automated Withdrawal Advising

#7: Growth Mindset Priming

#8: Intensive Early Start Cohorts

9#: Accelerated Catch-Up Terms



Resource Immediately Available

Tactic in Action at Boise State

Boise State “Coherent Calculus” Scales Redesign Benefits to All Students

Case in Brief

- As part of a course-based faculty learning community (FLC), Boise State brought together instructors from a multi-section calculus course to improve teaching and learning through adoption of shared materials and approaches
- The began the reform process with a shared textbook and syllabus, which allowed instructors freedom in course assignments and grading
- Instructors soon agreed that they should establish a set of shared grading policies and weighting, as well as synchronized assignment of homework

A Coherent Multi-Section Course



Shared textbook and syllabus



Promotes consistent grading policies and material coverage



Synchronized homework and quizzes graded by individual faculty



Unifies content delivery timing across sections



High similarity between exams crafted by individual faculty, but reviewed by FLC



Guards against assessment disparities



Active-learning strategies incorporated across all FLC-influenced sections



Reinforces material and increases class engagement

Impact Highlights

13%

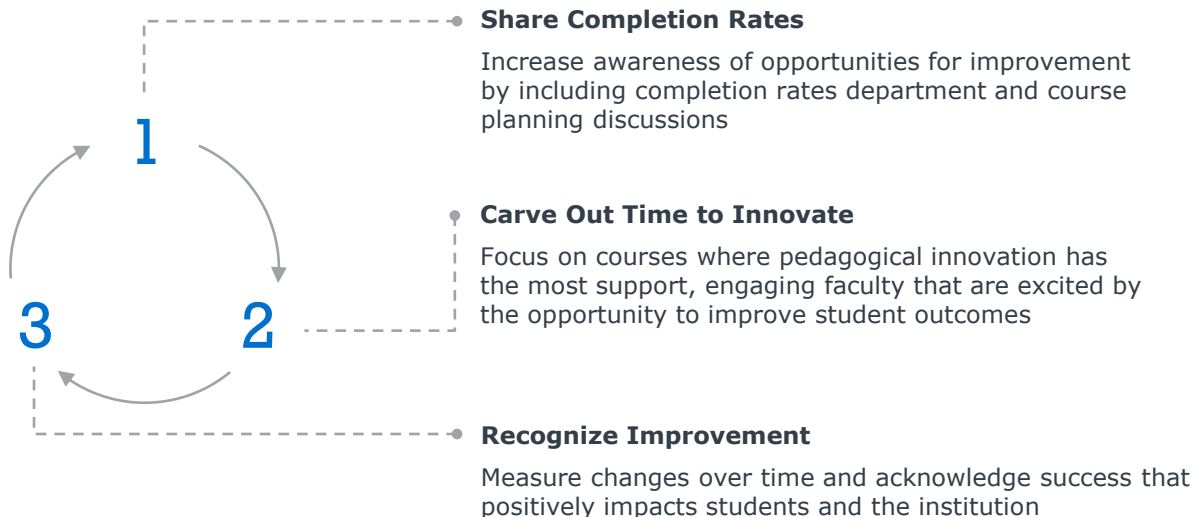
Increase in pass rates

100%

Non-FLC Calculus I instructors adopted redesigned structure and materials the following semester

Source: Bullock D, et al., “Coherent Calculus Course Design: Creating Faculty Buy-in for Student Success,” 122nd ASEE Annual Conference & Exposition, 2015; EAB interviews and analysis; Academic Affairs Forum, The Course Completion Playbook.

Principles for Improving Course Completion





Post-Webinar Survey

Please take our brief survey following webinar to let us know:

- What you thought of the webinar
- What you'd like to see in future benchmarking analyses
- If you'd like a copy of the *Course Completion Playbook*



Course Completion Benchmark Data Report

Check your inboxes for a copy of the *APS Benchmark Data Report*.

Questions?