Identify Opportunities for Course Completion Improvement

Background

One critical measure of student progress is whether or not students earn credit for attempted courses, which impacts time-to-degree, financial aid eligibility, and persistence. Institutions can prioritize course completion improvements by targeting courses in which a large number of students are struggling to earn credit.

> **Key Metric Definition**
>
> *Completion Rate:*
>
> $$\frac{\text{\# Earned Student Credit Hours}}{\text{\# Attempted Student Credit Hours}}$$

Five Principles for Addressing Course Completion

1

Size the Opportunity

Analyze the data to pinpoint which courses have low course completion rates and high DFW rates.

2

Identify Root Causes

While it's important to consider factors outside the classroom, like student characteristics and preparedness, instructor variation is one cause of low course completion that can be easily monitored.

3

Prioritize Resources

Consider courses with high DFW rates, enrollment, and absolute number of credit hours lost, as well as gateway courses and courses where leaders and instructors are excited about improvement.

4

Engage Faculty

Since faculty are responsible for what happens in the classroom, engage directly with instructors to support their work and help eliminate barriers they may face, such as lacking time to evaluate new pedagogical approaches.

5

Measure Results

After implementing a new initiative, measure its results to assess its success and proactively plan for the next initiative.

Download the APS Toolkit

Download the *APS Course Completion Toolkit* online for guidance on designing and implementing a data-informed course completion initiative.

> **Inside this Resource**
>
> *Learn how APS supports your goals to improve student progress*
>
> - Page 2-4: How to Identify Course Completion Opportunities
> - Page 5: Best Practice Resources

How to: Identify Course Completion Opportunities

Get Started: Recommended Filters

- Department Name: Select a department name
- Course Division: Select Lower Division to focus on general education and prerequisite courses
- Course Type: Remove course types that might skew course data, such as *Individual Instruction, Practicum,* and *Studio*
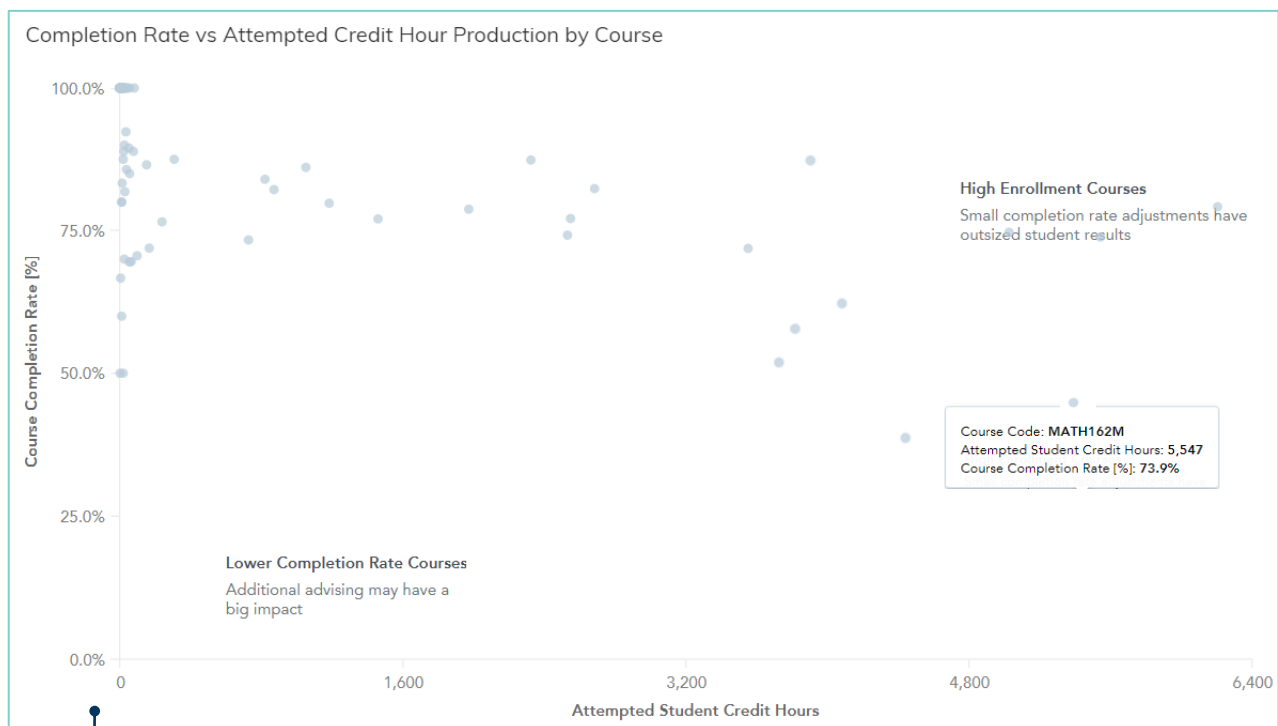- Student Classification: Select student classification(s) of interest, such as Freshman

Note: Filters in the Partner Benchmarks dashboard contain standard benchmarking values

① Completion Rate vs. Attempted Credit Hour Production by Course

Find it: Department & College Analytics dashboard, Course Completion tab

Use it to: *Analyze courses with both high enrollment and low course completion rates, signifying a large impact on students*

Use the chart to view completion rates compared to attempted credit hours for each course in the department. To determine which courses your institution should prioritize, focus on courses in the lower right of the chart. These courses have high enrollment and lower course completion, so improvement efforts will have an outsized effect on students.

Completion Rate vs Attempted Credit Hour Production by Course

High Enrollment Courses
Small completion rate adjustments have outsized student results

Course Code: **MATH162M**
Attempted Student Credit Hours: **5,547**
Course Completion Rate [%]: **73.9%**

Lower Completion Rate Courses
Additional advising may have a big impact

Focus on Courses That Affect the Most Students
Which courses have both high enrollment and low course completion rates?

Source: Academic Performance Solutions.

2 **Courses with Highest Unearned Credit Hours**

Find it: Department & College Analytics dashboard, Course Completion tab

Use it to: Identify courses with the highest number of unearned credit hours

Use the table to identify courses with the highest number of unearned credits and lowest completion rates. In the Course Code column, click on a course code to open a drill-in report to view section-level data. Identify if there is variability in course completion rates across sections. Prioritize course completion improvement efforts by improving the consistency of student experiences across sections of the same course, such as by standardizing assessment materials.

Courses with the Highest Unearned Credit Hours

Course Code	Course Name	Attempted Credits	Unearned Credits	Completion Rate [%]
MATH162M	MATH162M	5,547	1,449	73.9%
STAT130M	STAT130M	6,210	1,293	79.2%
MATH103M	MATH103M	5,031	1,272	74.7%
MATH211	MATH211	3,556	1,000	71.9%
MATH200	MATH200	2,535	654	74.2%
MATH212	MATH212	2,552	584	77.1%
MATH102M	MATH102M	2,688	474	82.4%
MATH163	MATH163	1,977	420	78.8%
MATH312	MATH312	1,464	336	77.0%
MATH101M	MATH101M	2,328	294	87.4%
MATH307	MATH307	1,188	240	79.8%
STAT330	STAT330	732	195	73.4%
MATH316	MATH316	876	156	82.2%

Understand Potential Impact of Your Improvement Efforts

- Which courses have the highest number of unearned credit hours?
- Of these courses, which courses have the lowest completion rates?

Identify Variability in Course Completion Rates Across Sections

- How much variability in course completion rates exists between sections of the same course?

---

3 **Earned Credits and Final Grades by Course Code**

Find it: Department & College Analytics dashboard, Course Completion tab

Use it to: Find courses with high DFW rates and courses with high section variation in course completion

Use the chart to calculate the DFW rate and understand the percentage of students not earning credit for critical courses, such as general education courses and prerequisite courses for majors. To calculate the DFW rate, use the Final Grade filter to select any grades where students will not earn credit for the course – typically any D grades, F grades, and withdrawals. The '% Students Receiving Selected Grade' column shows the DFW rate.

Earned Credits and Final Grades by Course Code

Filter on Course Code for the following report. The Final Grade filter only applies to the last column of the report. Click on metrics in this table to view trends and drill on Course Code to view the grade distribution by section.

FINAL GRADE: D, D+, F, W ⌄

Course Code	Course Name	# of Sections	# of Students	% of Students Earning Credit	% of Students Receiving Selected Grade(s)
BIO195	BIO195	2	3	66.7%	100.0%
BIO117N	BIO117N	5	190	71.1%	44.2%
BIO229	BIO229	16	34	64.7%	38.2%
BIO112N	BIO112N	1	110	77.3%	36.4%
BIO110N	BIO110N	2	183	85.8%	34.4%
BIO121N	BIO121N	5	644	80.3%	33.9%
BIO103	BIO103	3	420	78.1%	29.0%
BIO105N	BIO105N	7	119	86.6%	21.8%

Pinpoint Courses with Poor Student Outcomes

- Which courses have the highest percentages of DFW rates?
- Does the course have multiple sections?

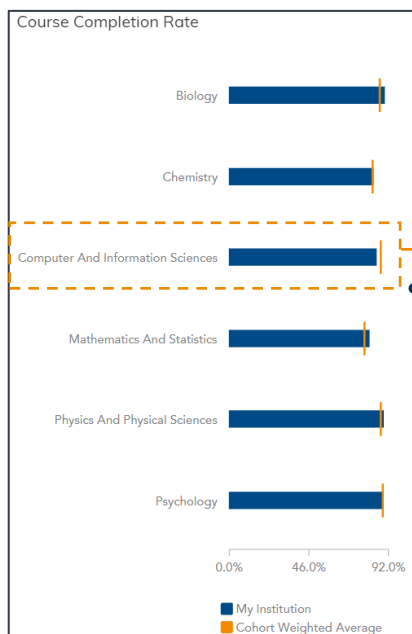Source: Academic Performance Solutions.

4 **Course Completion Rate Benchmarks**

Find it: *Partner Benchmarks dashboard, Course Completion tab*

Use it to: *Pinpoint departments in which course completion rates are lower than the cohort benchmark*

Use the chart to compare course completion rates for departments to your institution's selected cohorts. Focus on departments that are lower than the cohort benchmark.
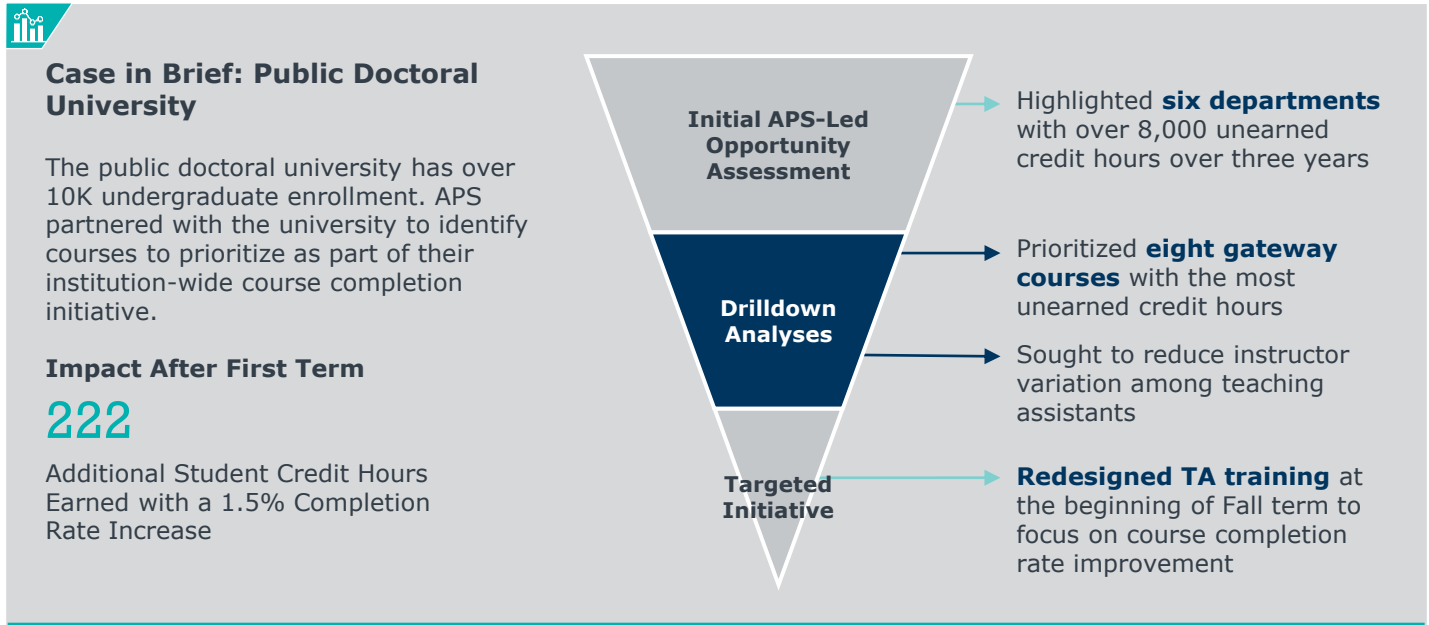
Course Completion Rate

Biology		
Chemistry		
Computer And Information Sciences		
Mathematics And Statistics		
Physics And Physical Sciences		
Psychology		

0.0%   46.0%   92.0%

■ My Institution
■ Cohort Weighted Average

Institution vs Cohort [Comple... » Computer And Information Scie... [...]

Standard Department Name	Department Name	Cohort Weighted Average	My Institution	Difference (My Inst - Cohort)
Computer And Information Sciences	Computer Science	87.9%	85.7%	-2.2%
Rollup		87.9%	85.7%	-2.2%

Focus on Departments That are Below the Benchmark

Which departments have course completion rates below the cohort median?

Source: Academic Performance Solutions.

eab.com

Best Practice Resources

Case in Brief: Public Doctoral University

The public doctoral university has over 10K undergraduate enrollment. APS partnered with the university to identify courses to prioritize as part of their institution-wide course completion initiative.

Impact After First Term

222

Additional Student Credit Hours Earned with a 1.5% Completion Rate Increase

Initial APS-Led Opportunity Assessment

→ Highlighted **six departments** with over 8,000 unearned credit hours over three years

Drilldown Analyses

→ Prioritized **eight gateway courses** with the most unearned credit hours

→ Sought to reduce instructor variation among teaching assistants

Targeted Initiative

→ **Redesigned TA training** at the beginning of Fall term to focus on course completion rate improvement

Resources Available on EAB.com

Toolkit: Guide to Building a Data-Informed Course Completion Initiative

- Toolkit that provides guidance on embedding data in initiatives that promote improved student outcomes
- Includes six tools for creating and implementing a course completion initiative, including communication templates
- Download the toolkit

Brief: The Course Completion Playbook

- Academic Affairs Forum research detailing four key steps to increase course completion rates without reducing academic rigor
- Includes nine tactics for improving course completion rates, such as standardized assessments and course behavior alerts
- Download the playbook or watch the webinar on EAB.com

Source: Academic Performance Solutions.