

Time to Degree at COM

Degrees Earned at COM in Academic Years 2013-14 and 2014-15

Introduction

College of Marin’s 3-year Strategic Plan includes an objective to decrease the average time to degree in order to improve student access and success. This report summarizes the length of time in years, terms enrolled, and units earned for AA, AS, AA-T or AS-T degrees awarded at COM in academic years 2013-14 and 2014-15.

Time to degree was calculated in three metrics: 1) chronological time, calculated as the number of years from the first term a student enrolled at COM through the term the degree was awarded; 2) the number of Fall/Spring terms enrolled, showing the amount of time students actually attended COM; and 3) unit load, to show enrollment intensity. These three ways of examining time to degree are intended to help COM personnel see patterns they may be able to influence to reduce time to degree.

A number of students completed more than one degree at COM. This impacts the average time to degree for these students because of additional coursework to be completed, and because students often stop out between degrees. Of the students earning a degree in AY 2013-14 or 2014-15, 18% completed 2 or more degrees during that period, and 36 (about 4%) had completed a degree at COM prior to AY 2013-14. These students are represented in the data one time for each degree earned, and the total number of units earned for each degree reflects the total earned from the student’s first term through the term the degree was awarded.

Average Time to Degree—All Degrees

COM students took 7 years on average to earn a degree, with a median of 5 years (Table 1). The average number of terms enrolled was about 10, with a median of 8-9, indicating that stopouts are contributing to a longer average span between first term and degree award.

The baseline measure of time to degree in COM’s Strategic Plan is 6.5 years, based on degrees earned in academic year 2012-13. A oneway ANOVA comparing mean years to degrees awarded in academic years 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15 was not statistically significant. However, in practical terms, given the goal of reducing time to degree, the increase in 2013-14 and 2014-15 over the baseline is a concern.

Table 1. Time to Degree in Years and Terms Enrolled by Academic Year

Academic Year	# of Degrees	Mean Years	Median Years	Mean Terms Enrolled*	Median Terms Enrolled*
2013-2014	310	7.2	5.0	10.2	9.0
2014-2015	301	6.8	5.0	9.7	8.0

*Fall/Spring terms only

Disaggregating by type of degree earned shows that transfer degrees were completed in fewer average years and terms enrolled than terminal AA/AS degrees (Table 2). The AA-Transfer degree was completed in the shortest time and fewest terms enrolled. The terminal AS degree took the longest in years and terms enrolled.

Table 2. Time to Degree in Years and Terms Enrolled by Academic Year and Degree Earned

Academic Year	Degree Earned	# of Degrees	Mean Years	Median Years	Mean Terms Enrolled	Median Terms Enrolled
2013-14	AA	188	7.0	5.0	11.7	10.0
	AS	90	8.6	6.0	13.1	12.0
	AA-T	20	3.1	3.0	6.9	7.0
	AS-T	12	6.1	4.8	10.3	9.0
2014-15	AA	158	6.6	4.8	10.8	9.5
	AS	81	8.4	6.0	12.8	11.0
	AA-T	31	4.3	3.0	8.4	8.0
	AS-T	31	5.6	4.0	10.1	10.0

Time to Degree by Program

Table 7, presented at the end of this report due to its size, lists time to degree in years and terms enrolled by program and degree type. The majority of degrees are awarded in three programs: Social/Behavioral Science, Natural Science, and Nursing. The average years to degree decreased for the AA in Social/Behavioral Science (6.3 to 5.2 years) and Natural Science (7.8 to 6.7) in 2014-15 from 2013-14. Time to degree for the AS in Nursing remained at 8.6 for both years.

Enrollment Patterns

Unit Load

On average, students earning degrees at COM attended with just under a full-time (12 units) unit load. Students earning transfer degrees had a slightly higher than full-time unit load on average (Table 3).

Students earned more units on average at COM than were needed to meet the minimum degree requirement of 60 units (Table 3). This suggests a number of possibilities, including but not limited to: students taking additional elective credits, needing developmental courses, changing their majors, earning multiple degrees, taking extra courses of interest, or perhaps other reasons. Discussion is needed to determine the reasons for additional course-taking, and whether any institutional practices contribute to unnecessary course-taking.

Students awarded the terminal AS degree earned the most units, on average, while maintaining the lowest average unit load. Those earning the AA-Transfer earned the fewest units.

Table 3. Mean Units Earned at COM and Mean Unit Load/Term by Degree Earned

Degree Earned	# of Degrees	Mean Units Earned at COM	Mean Unit Load/Term
All degrees	611	85.9	11.3
AS	171	93.4	10.1
AS-T	43	88.3	12.8
AA	346	84.1	11.6
AA-T	51	70.9	12.7

Stopouts

As suggested in Table 1, where time to degree in years was longer than the total number of Fall/Spring terms enrolled, stopouts were an important factor in time to degree. Half of all degrees earned included a stopout of at least one semester (Table 4). As shown in Table 4, about two-thirds of degrees earned included a stopout of 2 terms (1 year) or longer, substantially increasing the years to degree.

Table 4. Time to Degree in Years and Terms Enrolled by Length of Longest Stopout

Length of Longest Stopout	# of Degrees	% of Degrees	Time to Degree in Years	Total Terms Enrolled
No stopouts	301	49.3	3.8	9.0
1 term	89	14.6	5.9	12.1
2 terms	36	5.9	7.5	14.5
3 terms	38	6.2	8.5	14.8
4 terms	27	4.4	7.5	11.7
5 terms	13	2.1	9.5	15.5
6 terms	15	2.5	10.2	13.1
7 terms	15	2.5	11.3	14.5
8 terms	7	1.1	16.9	20.7
9 terms	9	1.5	13.2	16.2
10 or more terms	61	10.0	18.3	14.5

Students whose first educational goal at COM was to meet a requirement for a 4-year degree completed in the shortest average time in years and in terms enrolled, followed by those intending to transfer (Table 5). Those entering with a goal of earning a terminal degree and those whose goal was to acquire basic skills both completed in about 6 years. Students with a goal of career development, certificate, educational development, or undecided all took longer than average in years and terms enrolled.

Table 5. Time to Degree by First Educational Goal

First Educational Goal	# of Degrees*	% of Degrees	Time to Degree in Years	Total Terms Enrolled
Certificate	10	2.1	9.4	9.6
Educational Development	15	3.1	7.9	9.1
Career Development	57	11.9	7.7	9.7
Undecided	55	11.5	7.5	9.5
Basic Skills	21	4.4	6.1	9.6
AA/AS Degree	222	46.3	5.9	8.7
Transfer-no degree	86	18.0	4.7	6.8
Meeting 4-year college requirement	13	2.7	3.5	6.7

*N=479 -- educational goal data was missing for 132 students.

Demographics

Native American/Alaska Native and White students took the longest to complete degrees in terms of years (Table 6). African-American, Asian, and Hispanic/Latino students completed in about the same number of years and total terms enrolled.

Table 6. Time to Degree by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	# of Degrees	% of Degrees	Time to Degree in Years	Total Terms Enrolled
Native American/Alaska Native	7	1.1	9	13.1
White	309	50.6	7.4	9.7
Black/African-American	27	4.4	6.6	10.9
Asian	62	10.1	6.4	10.4
Hispanic/Latino	117	19.1	6.3	10.4
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	2	0.3	4.8	9.5
Two or more races	10	1.6	3.2	6.0
Unknown	77	12.6	7.7	10.8

Table 7. Time to Degree in Years and Terms Enrolled by Program and Degree Type

	AY 2013-14					AY 2014-15				
	# of Degrees	Mean Years	Median Years	Mean Terms Enrolled	Median Terms Enrolled	# of Degrees	Mean Years	Median Years	Mean Terms Enrolled	Median Terms Enrolled
AA Art	7	6.2	4.5	13.3	10.0	3	5.2	4.0	10.7	8.0
AA Business Administration	7	9.1	4.0	10.6	10.0	1	4.0	4.0	16.0	16.0
AA COMM Mass Communications	1	19.5	19.5	32.0	32.0	-	-	-	-	-
AA Communications Filmmaking	2	3.8	3.8	8.0	8.0	-	-	-	-	-
AA Dance	1	11.0	11.0	23.0	23.0	6	13.5	12.3	15.8	15.0
AA Drama	-	-	-	-	-	3	7.8	9.0	15.7	16
AA French	2	3.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	1	6.5	6.5	12.0	12.0
AA Kinesiology and Health	2	18.0	18.0	21.0	21.0	1	22.5	22.5	12.0	12.0
AA LA: Communication Studies	8	5.7	6.0	12.6	12.0	9	11.8	8.0	12.6	13.0
AA LA: Lang. Arts and Humanities	7	7.2	7.5	15.1	18.0	8	7.3	5.3	11.1	10.0
AA LA: Social & Behavioral Sc.	95	6.3	4.5	10.3	9.0	72	5.2	4.0	10.0	8.0
AA LA: Visual and Performing Arts	4	8.6	7.3	14.0	14.0	2	4.5	4.5	10.5	10.5
AA Liberal Arts: Natural Science	42	7.8	5.6	12.4	11.0	37	6.7	6.0	10.9	10.0
AA Mathematics	2	4.3	4.3	9.0	9.0	4	6.1	4.5	11.0	10.5
AA Music	1	22.0	22.0	21.0	21.0	1	3.0	3.0	9.0	9.0
AA Political Science	1	6.0	6.0	26.0	26.0	-	-	-	-	-
AA Spanish	6	7.1	5.6	12.8	13.5	10	7.2	6.0	9.5	8.5
AA-T Communication Transfer	5	2.3	3.0	6.2	7.0	5	6.2	3.5	10.4	9.0
AA-T Economics Transfer	-	-	-	-	-	1	3.0	3.0	7.0	7.0
AA-T English Transfer	1	2.5	2.5	6.0	6.0	2	4.8	4.8	7.0	7.0
AA-T Political Science AA-Transfer	1	3.5	3.5	7.0	7.0	6	2.8	2.5	6.2	5.5
AA-T Psychology	10	3.3	2.8	6.9	7.0	11	4.2	4.0	9.1	9.0
AA-T Sociology	3	4.0	4.0	8.3	9.0	6	4.6	3.3	8.5	8.0
AS Administration of Justice	3	6.7	5.0	12.7	16.0	3	3.3	2.0	8.3	7.0
AS Applied Accounting	4	9.3	8.8	16.5	17.5	3	6.2	2.5	9.7	10.0
AS Applied Design Interior	-	-	-	-	-	2	7.0	7.0	15.0	15.0
AS Auto Master Repair Technician	1	4.0	4.0	8.0	8.0	-	-	-	-	-
AS BOS: Office Management	1	15.5	15.5	24.0	24.0	-	-	-	-	-
AS Biology	2	4.5	4.5	13.5	13.5	2	4.5	4.5	9.5	9.5

Table 7. Time to Degree in Years and Terms Enrolled by Program and Degree Type, continued

	AY 2013-14					AY 2014-15				
	# of Degrees	Mean Years	Median Years	Mean Terms Enrolled	Median Terms Enrolled	# of Degrees	Mean Years	Median Years	Mean Terms Enrolled	Median Terms Enrolled
AS Business Management	2	4.3	4.3	5.5	5.5	3	6.5	3.0	14.0	9.0
AS Business, General	1	9.5	9.5	10.0	10.0	-	-	-	-	-
AS CIS Microcomputer Manager	1	5.5	5.5	12.0	12.0	-	-	-	-	-
AS CIS Microcomputer Programmer	1	10.0	10.0	17.0	17.0	-	-	-	-	-
AS Certified Shorthand Reporter	-	-	-	-	-	3	14.2	12.5	33.0	25.0
AS Computer Information Systems	-	-	-	-	-	3	11.3	8.0	11.0	12.0
AS Computer Science	-	-	-	-	-	1	4.5	4.5	10.0	10.0
AS Dental Assisting: Registered	1	5.5	5.5	15.0	15.0	2	3.0	3.0	8.5	8.5
AS ELND Lands Construction & Design	1	12.5	12.5	9.0	9.0	-	-	-	-	-
AS ELND Org Farm & Garden Pro.	1	6.0	6.0	17.0	17.0	-	-	-	-	-
AS Early Childhood Education	9	8.4	6.5	14.1	13.0	1	4.0	4.0	9.0	9.0
AS Engineering Mechanical	1	4.5	4.5	10.0	10.0	-	-	-	-	-
AS Engineering Transfer	-	-	-	-	-	1	6.5	6.5	11.0	11.0
AS Machine Shorthand	1	6.5	6.5	20.0	20.0	-	-	-	-	-
AS Medical Assist: Admin & Clinical	3	13.5	13.0	21.7	29.0	6	11.1	10.8	20.2	22.5
AS Medical Assist: Administrative	1	8.0	8.0	11.0	11.0	-	-	-	-	-
AS Multi Studies: Authoring	1	5.0	5.0	11.0	11.0	1	24.0	24.0	24.0	24.0
AS Multi Studies: Design	1	35.5	35.5	24.0	24.0	-	-	-	-	-
AS Multi Studies: Entertainment	-	-	-	-	-	1	6.5	6.5	14.0	14.0
AS Multimedia Visual Design	-	-	-	-	-	1	9.5	9.5	19.0	19.0
AS Physical Science	8	5.8	5.0	13.3	11.5	4	4.9	4.5	11.8	12.0
AS Real Estate	2	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	1	18.0	18.0	21.0	21.0
AS Registered Nursing	44	8.6	6.0	11.7	11.0	43	8.6	5.5	10.9	10.0
AS-T Admin of Justice Transfer	-	-	-	-	-	2	4.0	4.0	9.0	9.0
AS-T Business Admin Transfer	12	6.1	4.8	10.3	9.0	27	5.7	4.0	10.0	9.0
AS-T Early Childhood Education	-	-	-	-	-	1	6.5	6.5	14.0	14.0
AS-T Mathematics Transfer	-	-	-	-	-	1	5.0	5.0	11.0	11.0