OIRA

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH & ASSESSMENT

Report on Ungraduated Seniors: Part I

February 2015

Objectives

Ungraduated seniors are students who, at the start of senior year, appear reasonably able to graduate on time, but do not finish their degrees by the summer of their senior year. They represent a significant portion (8.7%) of all enrolled seniors who are not in 5-year programs, and have a detrimental impact on the 4-year and 6-year graduation rates.

The primary objective of this inquiry is to gain insight into why these students do not graduate at the end of senior year. Part I of the report also describes outcomes of Ungraduated Seniors, how they are represented within the SU population, and their academic qualifications at entry.

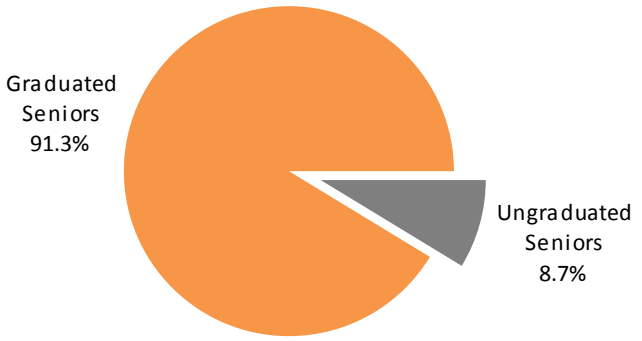
Summary of Findings

- Most Ungraduated Seniors graduate from SU, but their rate of graduation lags about a year behind the rate that includes all first-time, full-time students. Almost 40% graduate in 4.5 years, about 68% by the end of their 5th year, about 76% by their 6th year, and about 82% by their 7th year. Intervention and support at the right times may facilitate graduation within 4 years or 6 years for many students and improve graduation rates.
- Increasingly, Ungraduated Seniors who depart SU enroll elsewhere, with about half enrolling at 2-year schools that do not grant Bachelor's degrees. This demonstrates intent to complete a degree, possibly by transferring credits from two-year schools to SU, but degree completion is almost never accomplished. Intervening directly after senior year may engage students in continuing to pursue and complete their degrees at SU.
- Ungraduated Seniors were enrolled across the University, but disproportionately concentrated in specific school/colleges. This may provide a starting point for further inquiry.
- Ungraduated Seniors fell into five groups, or clusters, each with a distinct profile that sheds light on different reasons for not graduating at the end of senior year:
  - Students with a Low Number of Credits Attempted Senior Year: good students who, on average, only attempted one semester's worth of credits their senior year, leaving them with too few credits to graduate on time
  - Athletes: low-performing students involved in athletics throughout most of their first four years; half participated in athletics during their fifth year
  - Very Low Performers: students with very poor academic performance who fell behind in meeting degree requirements, and also have high student loan debt
  - Low Average Performers: students with academic performance on the low end of average, some of whom fell behind in meeting degree requirements
  - High Performers: very good, ambitious students who strived to achieve more than may be possible to accomplish in 4 years
- Three recurrent patterns emerged for Ungraduated Seniors with lower performance:
  - Many lower-performing students experienced an academic decline at some point during their time at SU. For some students, this appeared abruptly in the senior year, while for others it was a gradual decrease beginning early on. In many cases, it may be possible to identify these students and intervene to provide support to keep students on track for on-time graduation.
  - Many lower-performing students had higher course loads than might be expected. For some students, course loads increased from freshman-senior year. This suggests that students may be attempting to make up for credits lost due to withdrawn, dropped, or failed courses. If this is the reason for high course loads, it is a counterproductive strategy because students continue to earn fewer credits than they attempt, and they remain behind in meeting requirements.
  - The lowest performing students had the highest average levels of debt.
- A higher proportion of Non-White than White students became Ungraduated Seniors, but the large majority of enrolled seniors in both groups graduated on time.
- At entry, Graduated and Ungraduated Seniors overlapped in their academic qualifications, making it difficult to predict at the start who would graduate in four years and who would not.
- In many cases, explanations for why students did not graduate at the end of senior year are not readily apparent from the currently available data. Many students accumulated enough credits by the end of senior year to reach the minimum requirement, but still did not graduate. It is unclear if these students were missing required courses, if they had majors that require more credits than they have accumulated (50% of degree programs require more than 120 credits), or if there are other reasons. Future inquiry will explore these areas.

Office of Institutional Research and Assessment
400 Ostrom Avenue • Syracuse, NY 13244-3250
Phone: (315) 443-8700 • Fax: (315) 443-1524 • E-mail: oira@syr.edu • Web: http://oira.syr.edu

Who are the Ungraduated Seniors?

- have senior standing (earned at least 90 credits) by the end of their third year
- are enrolled at some point during senior year
- are not in a 5-year program (Architecture, Industrial Design, Teacher Certification, HEOP)
- have not graduated by summer of senior year

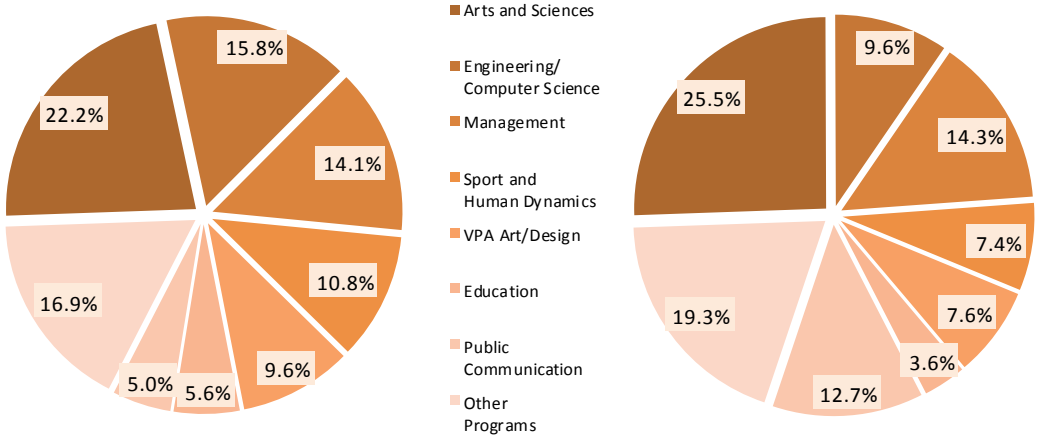


How many SU seniors are ungraduated?

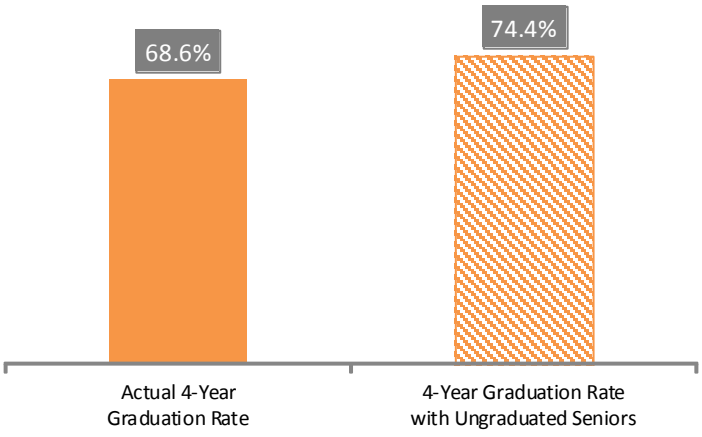
Of the 10,689 students in cohorts 2006-2010 who met the first three criteria, 926 (8.7%) did not graduate by the summer of their senior year.

What programs are Ungraduated Seniors enrolled in?

Relative to Graduated Seniors, the percentages of Ungraduated Seniors enrolled in Engineering/ Computer Science, Sport and Human Dynamics , VPA Art/Design, and Education are disproportionately high.



Ungraduated Seniors **Graduated Seniors**



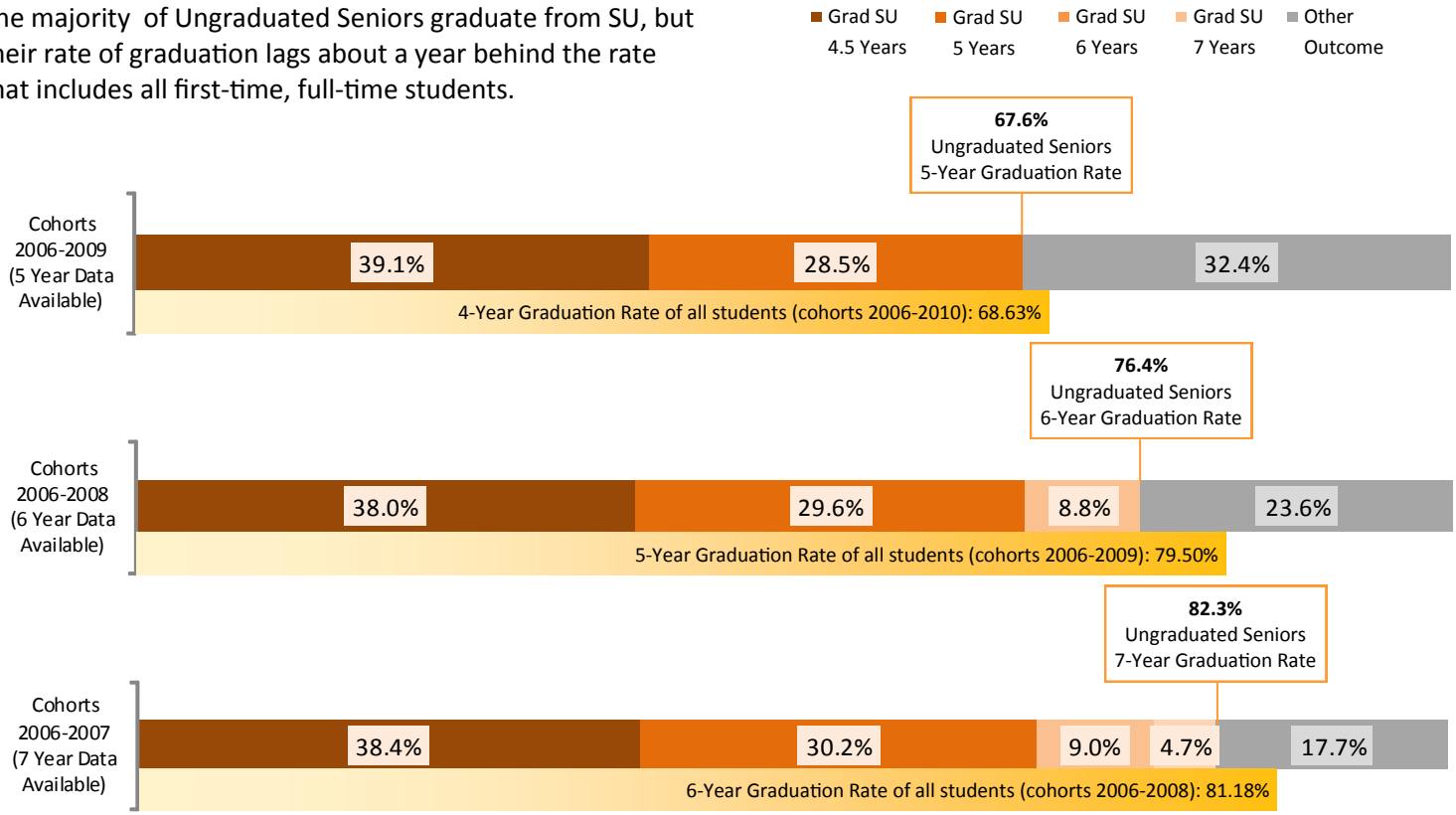
What impact do Ungraduated Seniors have on the graduation rate?

If all Ungraduated Seniors in these five cohorts had graduated on time, the average 4-year graduation rate would have increased by 5.8 percentage points, from 68.6% to 74.4%.

Outcomes of Ungraduated Seniors

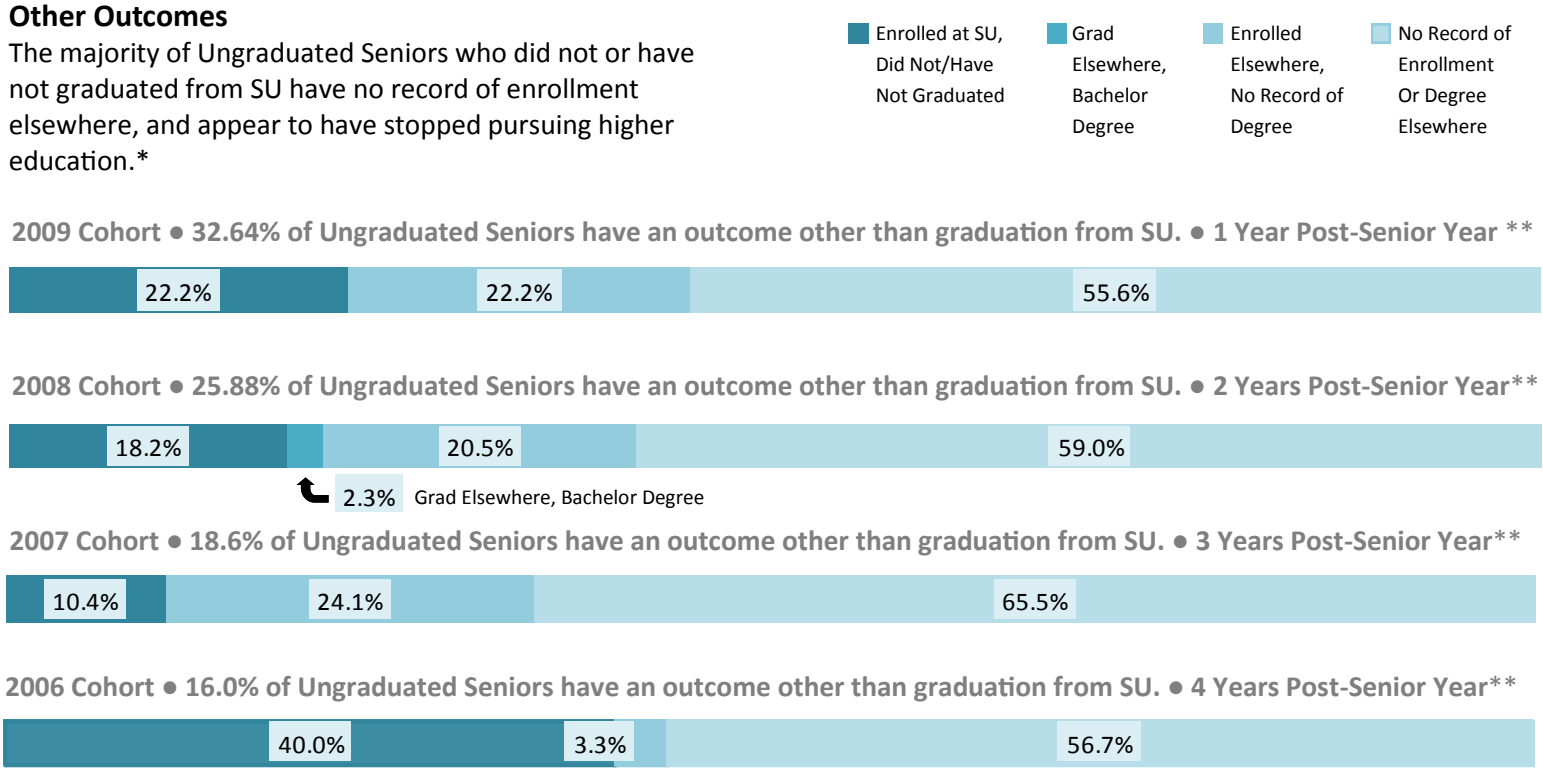
Graduation from SU

The majority of Ungraduated Seniors graduate from SU, but their rate of graduation lags about a year behind the rate that includes all first-time, full-time students.



Other Outcomes

The majority of Ungraduated Seniors who did not or have not graduated from SU have no record of enrollment elsewhere, and appear to have stopped pursuing higher education.*

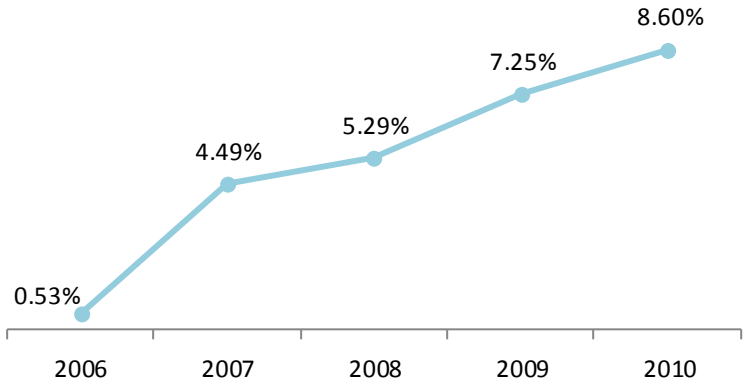


*See footnote on following page for more detail.

**Data on student enrollment and degrees elsewhere was obtained in mid-semester Fall 2014. Enrollment elsewhere is thus accurate for an additional 1/2 year post-senior year than described. At the time of the study, the most recent "enrolled at SU but not graduated" data was from Summer 2014. These data were therefore not available for the 2010 cohort, which is not included in this section for this reason. Some data on enrollment elsewhere for the 2010 cohort is provided on the following page.

Enrolling Elsewhere but Not Earning a Degree

The percentage of Ungraduated Seniors who left SU after their senior year and enrolled elsewhere, but did not finish their degrees*, rose steadily across cohorts 2006-2010. About half of these students enrolled at two-year schools that do not grant Bachelor's degrees. One possible explanation for this is that students are attempting to earn credits that they can transfer toward completing their SU degree, but they do not follow through with this.



2006 Cohort
Columbia College

2007 Cohort
Columbia College
Colorado Mountain College
Montclair State University
Sauk Valley Community College
SUNY College of Technology at Canton
University of Phoenix
Texas Christian University

2008 Cohort
Community College of Allegheny County
CUNY Queens College
San Francisco State University
SUNY Buffalo, then SUNY OCC, then SUNY Albany, then Le Moyne College, then SUNY Erie Community College
SUNY Cayuga County Community College
SUNY Cortland
SUNY Erie Community College
SUNY ESF
SUNY Onondoga Community College

2009 Cohort	
Brookdale Community College, then Santa Monica College	SUNY Cayuga County Community College
CUNY Queens College	SUNY Hudson Valley Community College
CUNY York College, then Le Moyne College	SUNY Tompkins Cortland Community College
Fullerton College	SUNY Ulster County Community College
Nassau Community College	University of Phoenix
Schenectady County Community College	University of Phoenix
Schoolcraft College	Northeastern University

2010 Cohort	
Bergen Community College	SUNY Brockport
Berkeley College	SUNY Broome Community College
Berkshire Community College	SUNY Buffalo
Brookdale Community College	SUNY Farmingdale and SUNY Suffolk County Community College
Columbia College	SUNY Old Westbury
Columbia College	SUNY Onondaga Community College
CUNY Hunter College	SUNY Purchase
CUNY Hunter College and CUNY Lehman College	Temple University
Northern Essex Community College	University of North Dakota
SUNY Albany	

Each cell in each table represents one student.

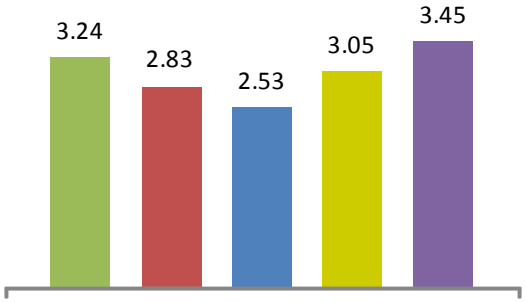
*Data on enrollment in institutions other than SU was obtained mid-semester in Fall 2014 from the National Student Clearinghouse, which provides enrollment and graduation information on 95% of college students. Of all Ungraduated Seniors, there was only one record of a student earning a degree elsewhere. However, due to the reasons outlined below, there is a small chance that additional Ungraduated Seniors were enrolled elsewhere and/or earned degrees, but we do not have records of them.

Students can have no record in the Clearinghouse because they enrolled at one of the small minority of schools that does not participate in the Clearinghouse, or they have opted for their information to not be reported to the Clearinghouse. Students can have incomplete records if they have received a degree, but the type of degree was not provided to the Clearinghouse.

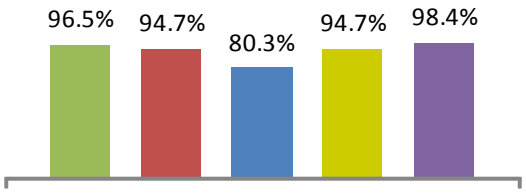
Clustering Ungraduated Seniors

To understand why seniors would not graduate at the end of senior year, factors were chosen for study that represented students' academic performance, progress toward degree, financial situation, and athletic participation. A preliminary set of factors was narrowed to seven for analysis: cumulative GPA at the end of senior year, the percentage of attempted SU credits that were earned, the number of credits attempted senior year, the number of transfer credits, the number of cumulative credits at the end of senior year, amount of student loan debt, and the percentage of years of athletic participation*.

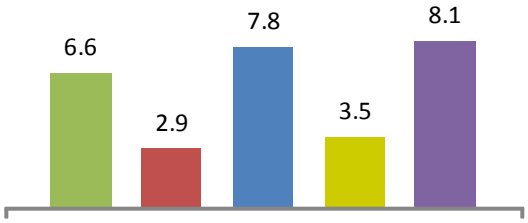
A statistical procedure called a cluster analysis placed students into groups based on how similar they were on these factors. This approach was chosen because of its potential to reveal multiple explanations for why seniors would not graduate. The analysis identified five clusters of ungraduated seniors**, each defined by one or more of these factors.



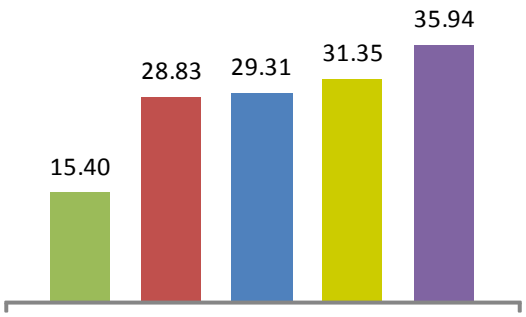
Cumulative GPA, End of Senior Year



Percentage of Attempted SU Credits Earned



Number of Transfer Credits



Credits Attempted Senior Year

Which factors define each cluster?

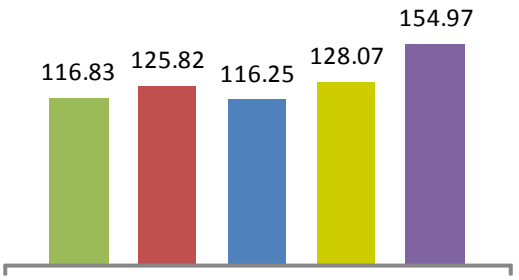
Low Credits Attempted Senior Year
low number of credits attempted senior year, low debt

Athletes
high athletic participation, low GPA, low debt, low amount of transfer credits

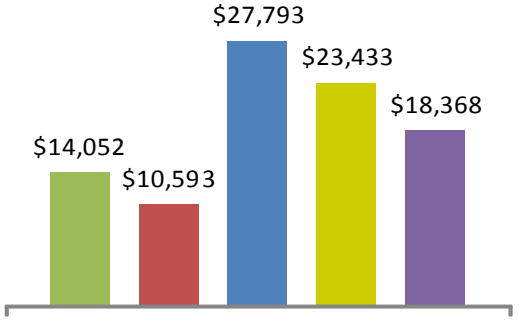
Very Low Performers
low percentage of attempted credits earned, low GPA, high debt, high amount of transfer credits

Low Average Performers
low to average GPA, low amount of transfer credits, moderate debt

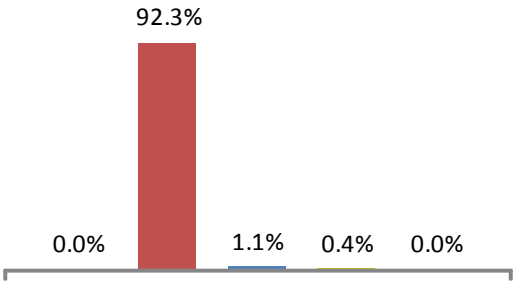
High Performers
high GPA, high amount of cumulative credits, high amount of credits attempted senior year



Cumulative Credits, End of Senior Year



Amount of Student Loans



Percentage of Years Athletic Participation

*Athletic participation includes involvement on a sports team as a recruited player, non-recruited player, or manager.

**Three Ungraduated Seniors could not be definitively placed into any of the five clusters. They are excluded from descriptions and analyses of the clusters.

A Closer Look

As shown in average levels of GPA and the percentage of attempted SU credits earned, the clusters of Ungraduated Seniors had different levels of academic performance.

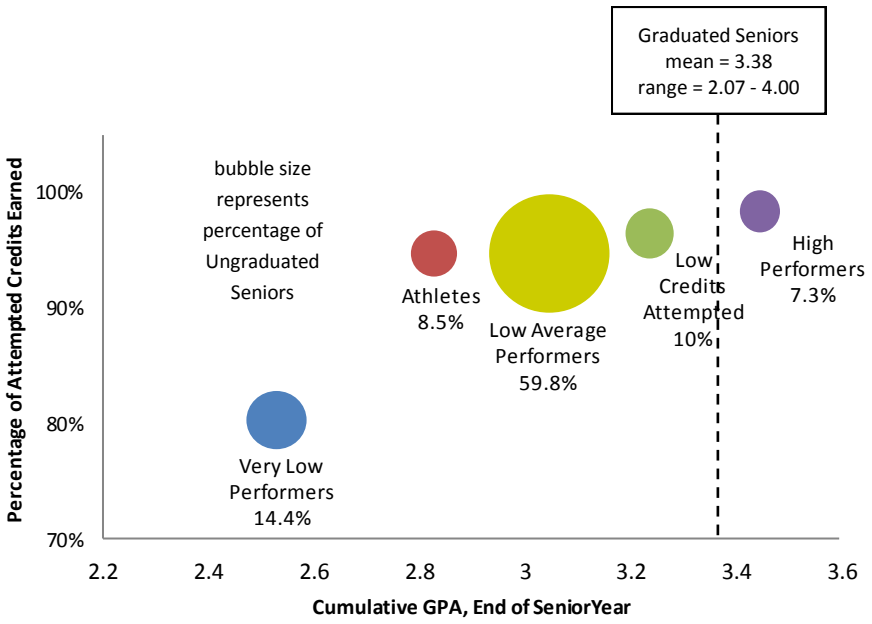
On one end of the spectrum, students in the High Performers cluster earned almost all of the credits they attempted, and had high cumulative GPAs.

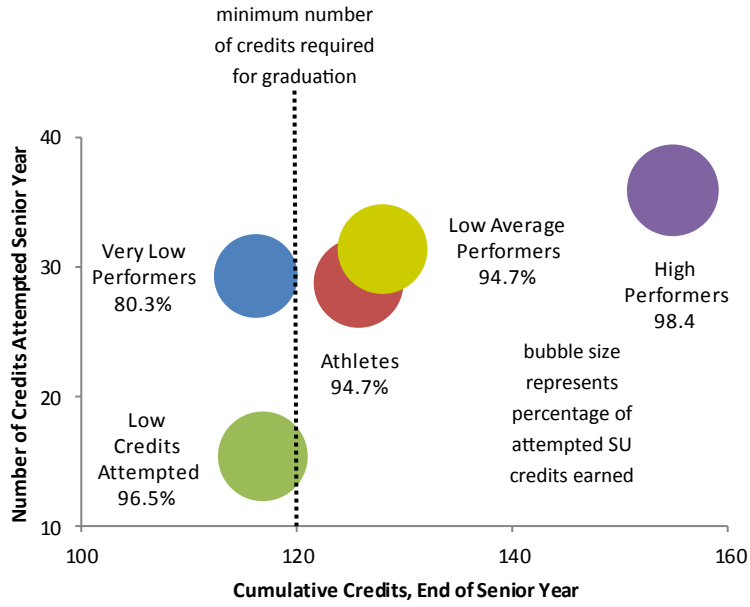
On the other end, students in the Very Low Performers cluster earned only about 80% of the credits they attempted, and had low cumulative GPAs. Failure to earn nearly 20% of attempted credits appears to have hampered progress toward degree—at the end of their senior year, the Very Low Performers had, on average, too few credits to graduate.

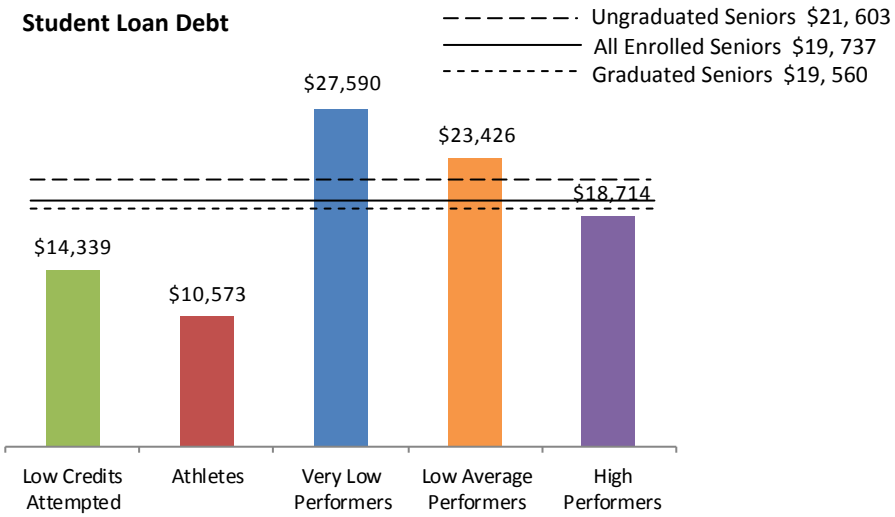
Students in the Low Credits Attempted cluster were also likely to have too few credits to graduate. However, this appears to be due to attempting too few credits during their senior year. Their high percentage of attempted credits earned and good GPAs suggest that they would have surpassed the minimum number of credits required for graduation if they had attempted enough.

Students in the other two clusters, Athletes and Low Average Performers, were likely to have low GPAs, but still tended to accumulate enough credits to meet the minimum graduation requirement.

Student loan debt may also be a source of turbulence for some Ungraduated Seniors. On average, Ungraduated Seniors have higher student loan debt than the SU student population. This is driven by the particularly high levels of debt among students in the Very Low Performers and Low Average Performers clusters.







Investigating Each Cluster

To gain greater depth in our understanding of Ungraduated Seniors, we delved further into each cluster of students. With each group, the first step was to perform a new cluster analysis using six of the original factors*, to determine if any sub-clusters were apparent within each larger cluster. Then, additional factors specifically relevant to the characteristics of each group were examined to reveal potential explanations for failure to graduate at the end of senior year. Results follow from the clusters with the most straightforward profiles to those with the most complex.

Detailed findings, including programs and outcomes, are presented in the Appendix.

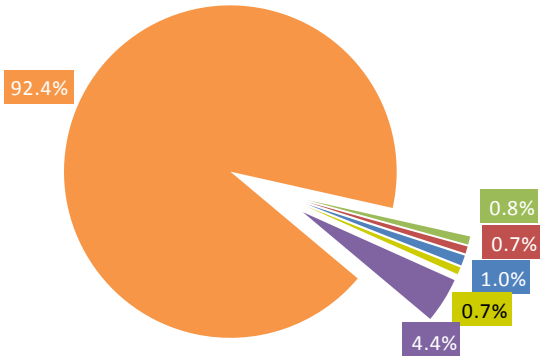
Summary of Findings

Cluster	Cluster Characteristics	Sub-Clusters	Sub-Cluster Characteristics
High Performers (n=67)	had courses of study that may be too lengthy to complete within four years	None	N/A
Athletes (n=78)	participated in athletics throughout most of their first four years low debt	Low Average Performers (n=59)	have enough credits to graduate senior year, but most participate in athletics during their 5th year
		Very Low Performers (n=19)	most do not participate in athletics during their 5th year, but have not accumulated enough credits to graduate by senior year
Low Credits Attempted Senior Year (n=92)	took only about one semester's worth of credits senior year low debt	High Performers (n=72)	low GPAs that drop very low abruptly during senior year; most enrolled only fall semester senior year
		Low Performers (n=20)	high academic performance; would probably be able to graduate if more credits were taken senior year
Very Low Performers (n=133)	low academic performance that gradually declined from freshman-senior year high debt	Very Low Performers/High Debt (n=96)	attempt high amount of credits all four years, but do not earn enough to graduate senior year; high debt
		Very, Very Low Performers/Low Credits Attempted Senior Year (n=21)	low credits attempted senior year, but performance would likely prevent graduation anyway
		Very Lowest Performers/Very High Debt/High Transfer Credits (n=14)	transfer credits appear to compensate for low percentage of SU credits earned; very high debt
Low Average Performers (n=553)	low to average academic performance explanations for many students not apparent at this time	Good Performers (n=300)	about half have lengthy courses of study; other half have no apparent explanation
		Low Performers (n=179)	decline in performance spring senior year, but most have minimum credits required for graduation
		Very Low Performers/High Debt (n=67)	very low, inconsistent performance, but all have minimum credits required; high debt

*Athletic participation during students' first four years was not included in sub-cluster analyses. 5th-year athletic participation was included in analysis of the Athletes cluster.

How are Graduated and Ungraduated Seniors represented within the SU population?

Pell Eligibility

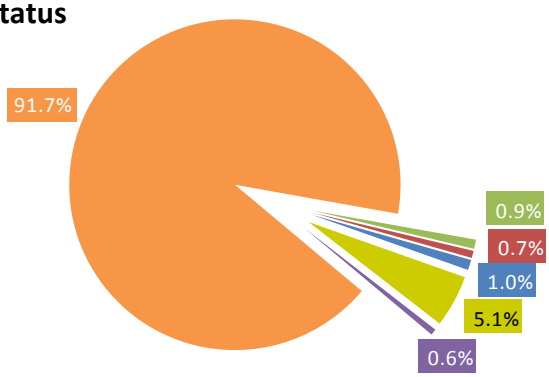


Non-Pell Eligible Enrolled Seniors
(n=8488)

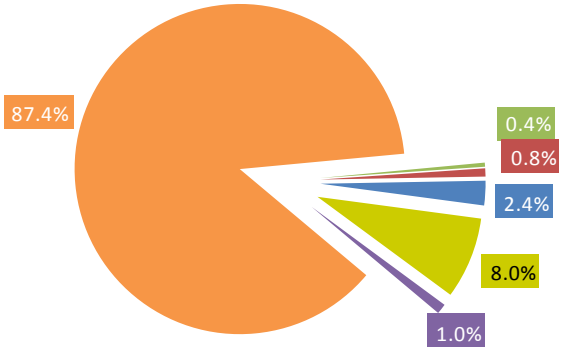


Pell Eligible Enrolled Seniors
(n=2201)

Generational Status

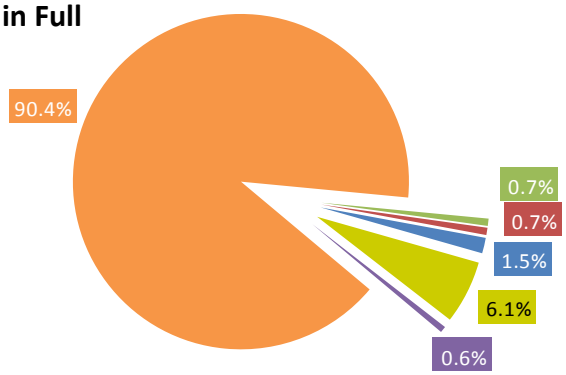


Non-First Generation Enrolled Seniors
(n=9687)

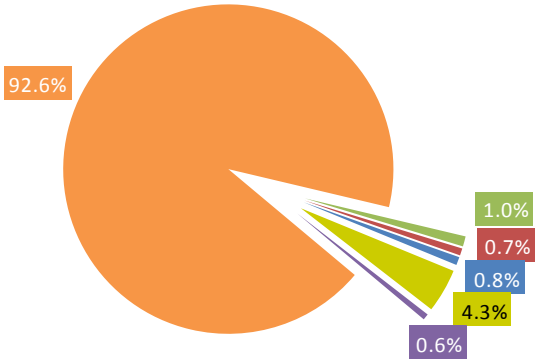


First Generation Enrolled Seniors
(n=1002)

Ability to Pay in Full



Non-Full Pay Enrolled Seniors
(n=6163)

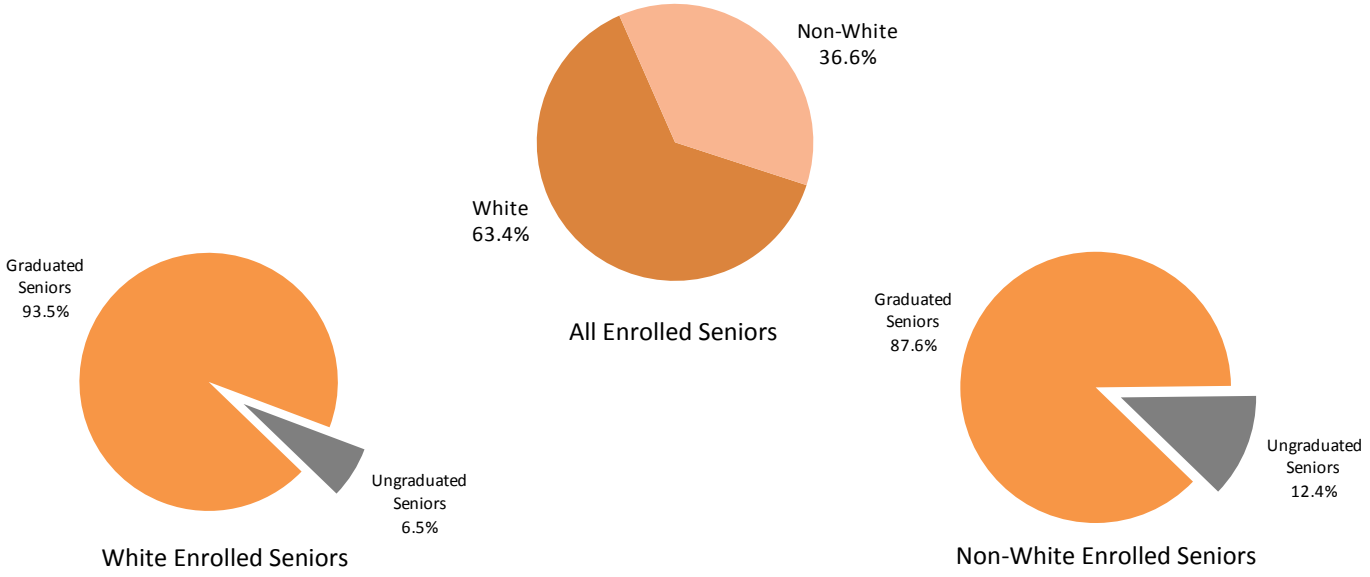


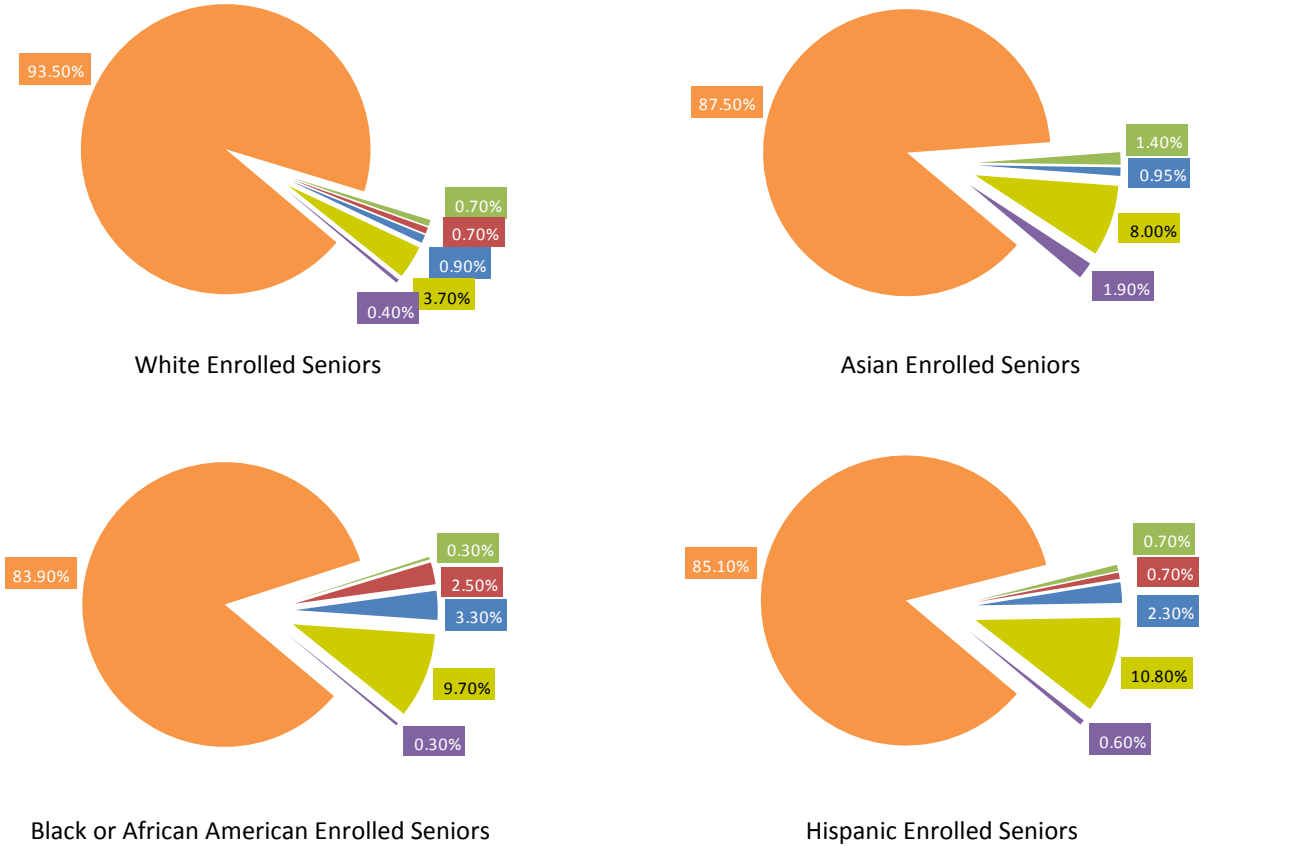
Full Pay Enrolled Seniors
(n=4526)

Graduated Seniors
Ungraduated Seniors Low Credits Attempted
Ungraduated Seniors Athletes
Ungraduated Seniors Very Low Performers
Ungraduated Seniors Low Average Performers
Ungraduated Seniors High Performers

Note: "Enrolled Seniors" does not include students who are enrolled in 5-year programs.

How are Graduated and Ungraduated Seniors represented within different racial/ethnic groups?

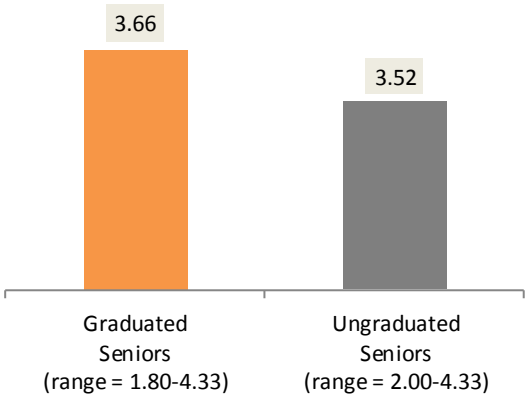


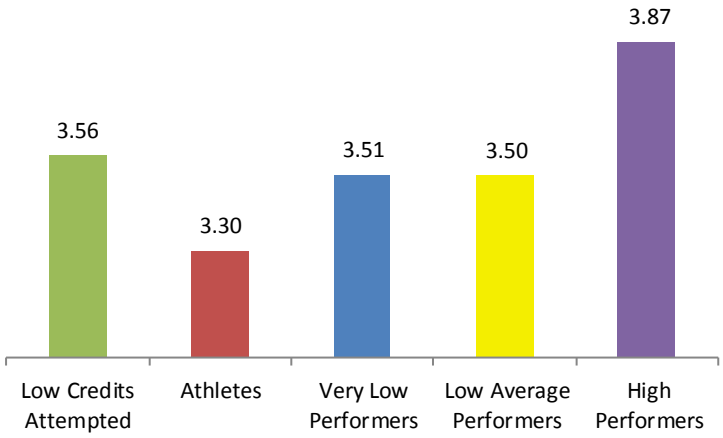


Note: "Non-white" includes students who self-identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hawaiian, Hispanic, Two or More Races, or chose not to identify their race/ethnicity, as well as Non-Resident Aliens. Breakdowns into Graduated Seniors and clusters of Ungraduated Seniors are not included for racial/ethnic groups that have low numbers of students. "Enrolled Seniors" does not include students who are enrolled in 5-year programs.

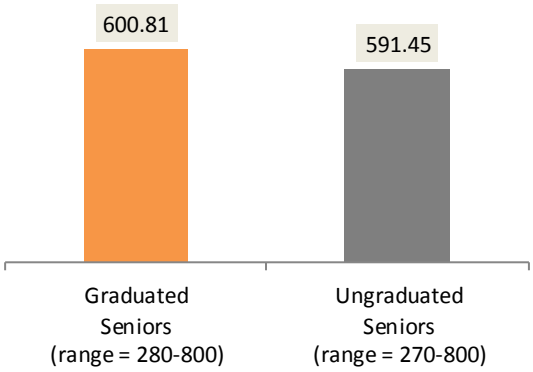
Academic Qualifications at Entry

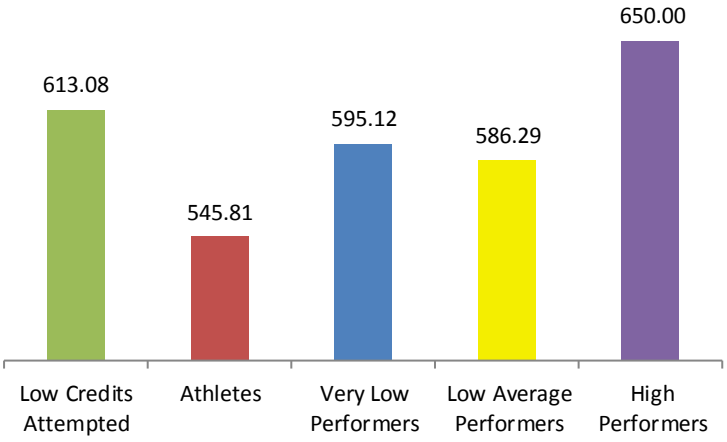
High School GPA



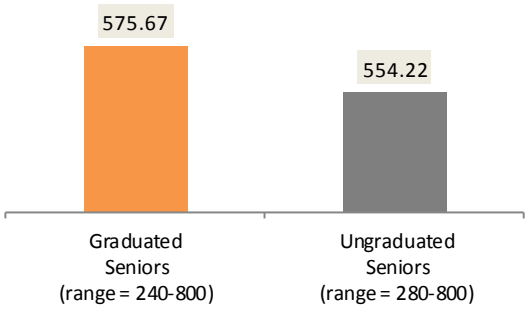


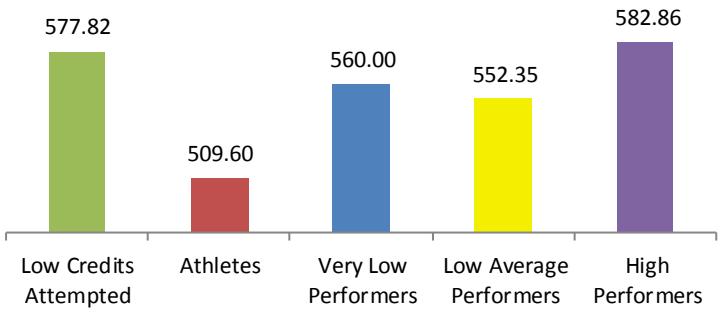
SAT Math





SAT Verbal





Future Directions

The inquiry into Ungraduated Seniors is ongoing. The information presented in this report relied on analysis of readily available institutional data. The next step in our investigation is to gather information that can answer questions where our institutional data fall short. Beginning in the spring 2015 semester, we will be administering a survey that asks Ungraduated Seniors to reflect on why they did not graduate on time, and about their experiences at SU. A slightly different version of the survey will be given to Graduated Seniors, which will allow us to compare the experiences of the two groups. We anticipate that this comparison will reveal factors that can help to predict who might and might not become an Ungraduated Senior.

Appendix

Detailed Findings for Each Cluster: Sub-Clusters, Programs, and Outcomes

High Performers Cluster

Sub-Clusters

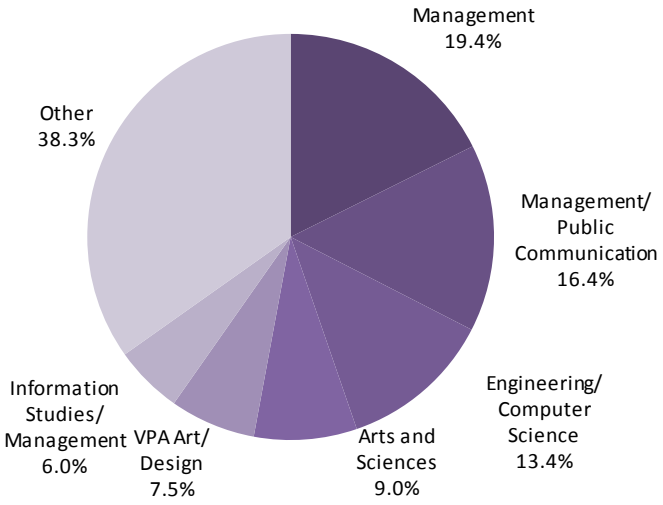
Students in the High Performers cluster (n=67) are clearly very hard workers—they earned on average over 150 credits by the end of senior year with an average cumulative GPA of 3.45. No sub-clusters were found within this group. Given the exceptionally high academic effort and performance of students in this cluster, the additional factors chosen for investigation focused on academic ambition. **Several findings provide insight as to why these students did not graduate at the end of senior year, despite their high performance:**

- **71.1% underwent an Intra-University Transfer (IUT), changing enrollment from one school/college to another. Once they transfer, students may be behind in meeting the requirements of their new program.**
- **68.7% had more than one major. The more majors students have, the more requirements they need to meet.**
- **49.3% IUT'd *and* had more than one major.**

The majority of High Performers have taken on ambitious courses of study that may be too lengthy for a 4-year timeline. Only seven students (10.4%) did not IUT and had only one major. Four of these students were in Engineering and Computer Science, two were in VPA Art/Design and Education, and one was in Arts and Sciences.

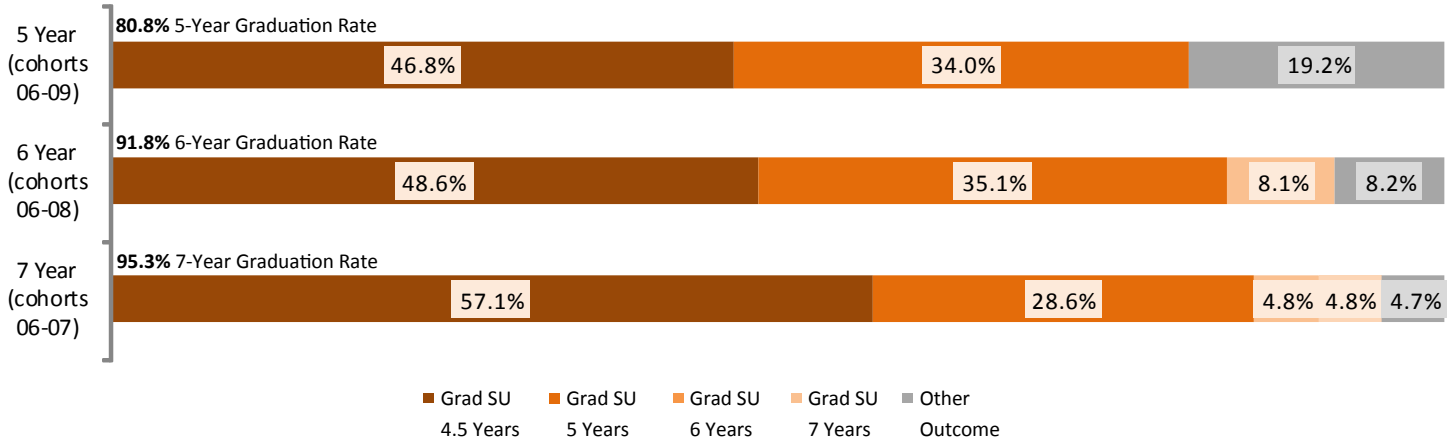
Programs

High Performers were most concentrated in Management, Management/Public Communication, and Engineering/ Computer Science, but generally widely distributed across the University.



Outcomes

The majority of High Performers graduate from SU in their 5th year, and almost all of the rest graduate from SU in later years. In the cohorts for which 5-year data are available (2006-2009), only two students were enrolled but not graduated from SU, and only three students had no record of enrollment or degree elsewhere.



Athletes Cluster

Sub-Clusters

This cluster (n=78) was best characterized by high rates of athletic participation during students' first four years, a low amount of transfer credits, and low debt. Athletic participation during the 5th year was included in the sub-cluster analysis. **Two sub-clusters were found, primarily differentiated by students' academic performance and to a lesser degree by whether they participated in athletics in their 5th year. The sub-clusters were termed "Very Low Performers" and "Low Average Performers."** 24.4% of students in the larger cluster were Very Low Performers (n=19) and 75.6% were Low Average Performers (n=59).

26.3% of Very Low Performers and 57.6% of Low Average Performers participated in athletics in their 5th year (50% of all students in the Athletes cluster).

The middle figure shows the academic performance of the two sub-clusters during each of students' first four years at SU. The factors pictured are the percentage of attempted SU credits earned and GPA. GPA is non-cumulative at each point in time, and reflects an average across the fall and spring semesters that a student was enrolled in each academic year.

The bottom figure shows the average cumulative credits that students in each sub-cluster had earned by the end of their senior year.

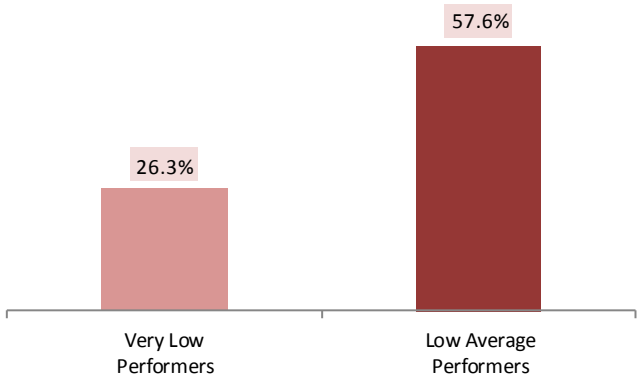
These data suggest two explanations for why athletes would not graduate on time. Given that Low Average Performers appear on average able to graduate at the end of senior year, it is likely that the majority are continuing on to their fifth year to participate in athletics.

Some **Very Low Performers** may also stay a fifth year to participate in athletics, but on average these students are only at the cusp of meeting the minimum number of credits required for graduation. **Regardless of whether they plan a fifth year of athletic participation, students in this group may need extra time to meet their program requirements.**

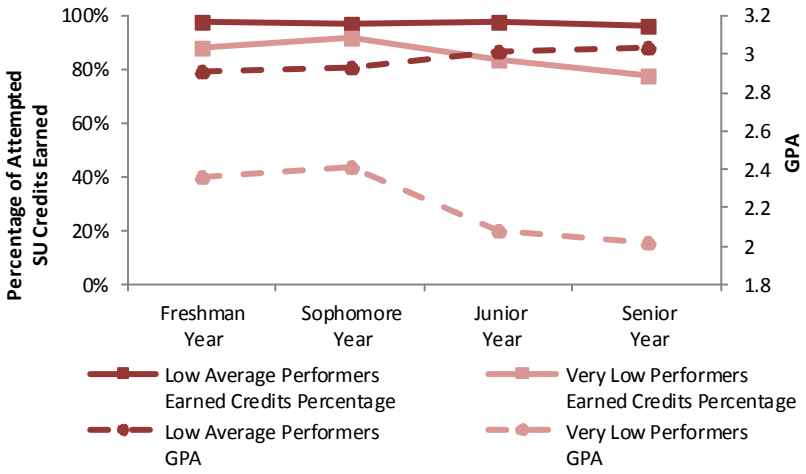
While generally poor academically, Very Low Performers experience a decline in GPA and the percentage of attempted credits earned starting in their junior year. It may be possible to identify these students before their senior year and potentially intervene to provide guidance that may be needed. This might facilitate on-time graduation for those who do not plan on a fifth year of athletic participation.

For all Athletes, sports schedules that take precedence may prevent students from completing academic requirements in a timely manner.

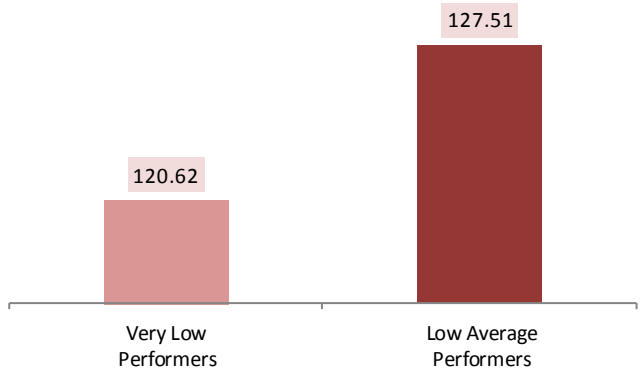
5th Year Athletic Participation



Academic Performance



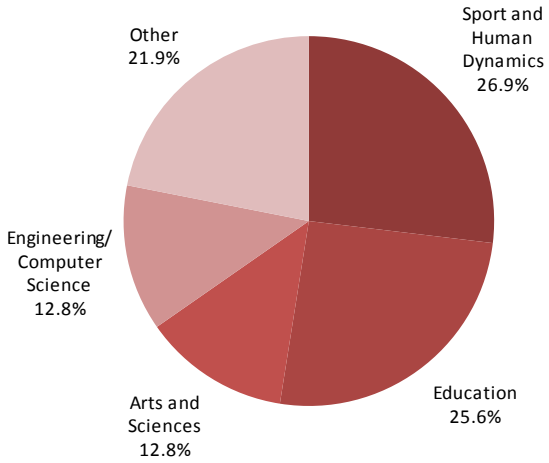
Cumulative Credits, End of Senior Year



Athletes Cluster

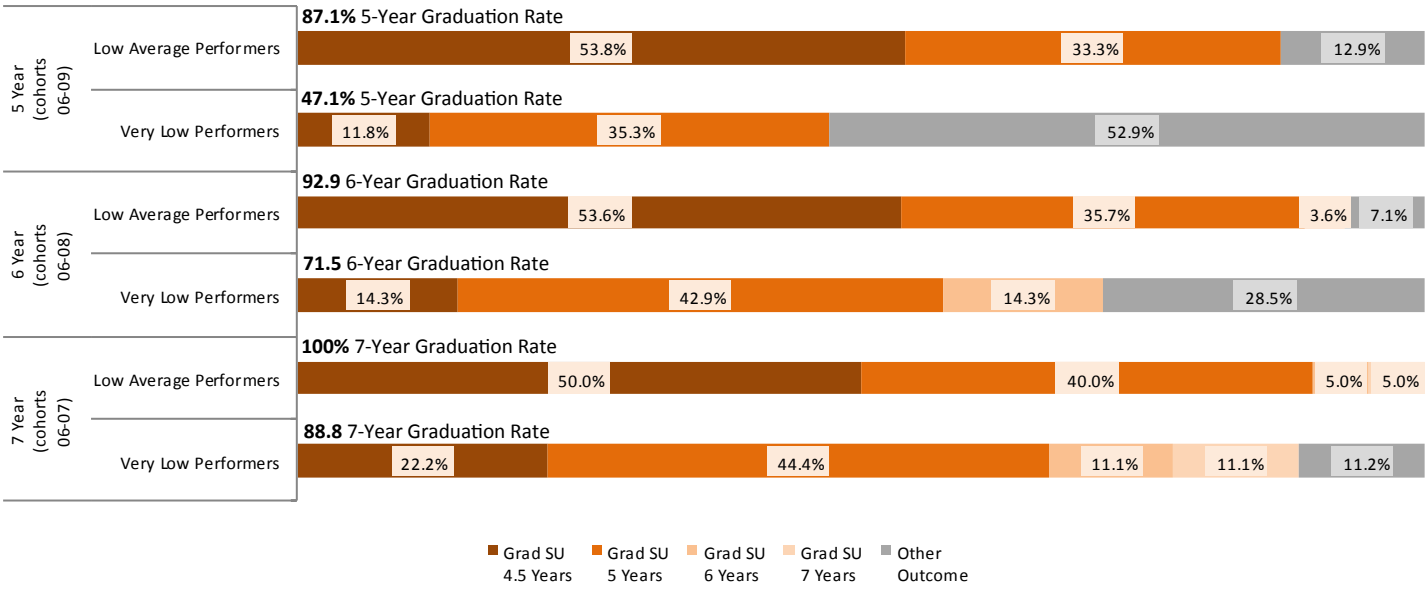
Programs

Students in this cluster were most concentrated in Sport and Human Dynamics, Education, Arts and Sciences, and Engineering/Computer Science. Distribution across programs was roughly the same for the two sub-clusters.



Outcomes

Most of the students in both sub-clusters of Athletes graduate from SU in later years. Only one student enrolled elsewhere but did not have a record of earning a degree, and only a few students continued enrollment at SU but did not or have not graduated.



Athletic Programs

Low Average Performers	
Men's Football (13)	Men's Basketball (3)
Men's Lacrosse (8)	Men's Soccer (3)
Men's Track (5)	Women's Softball (3)
Women's Field Hockey (5)	Women's Track (3)
Men's Crew (4)	Women's Basketball (2)
Women's Lacrosse (4)	Women's Ice Hockey (1)
Women's Rowing (4)	Women's Soccer (1)

Very Low Performers	
Men's Football (8)	Men's Soccer (1)
Men's Basketball (4)	Men's Swimming (1)
Men's Crew (2)	Women's Rowing (1)
Men's Lacrosse (1)	Women's Track (1)

Low Credits Attempted Senior Year Cluster

Sub-Clusters

This cluster (n=92) was best characterized by the low number of credits students attempted during their senior year, as well as low student loan debt. Within this larger cluster, **two sub-clusters were found, differentiated by students' academic performance, particularly during their senior year. The sub-clusters were termed "Low Performers" and "High Performers."** 21.7% of students in the larger cluster were Low Performers (n=20), and 78.3% were High Performers (n=72).

The figure to the right shows the academic performance of the two sub-clusters during each of students' first four years at SU. The factors pictured are the percentage of attempted SU credits earned and GPA. GPA is non-cumulative at each point in time, and reflects an average across the fall and spring semesters that a student was enrolled in each academic year.

High Performers tended to earn between 97% and 99% of the credits they attempted and had steadily good GPAs across their first four years.

Low Performers tended to earn between 92% and 95% of the credits they attempted and had steadily declining GPAs across their first *three* years at SU. They then experienced a precipitous drop in both factors during their fourth year.

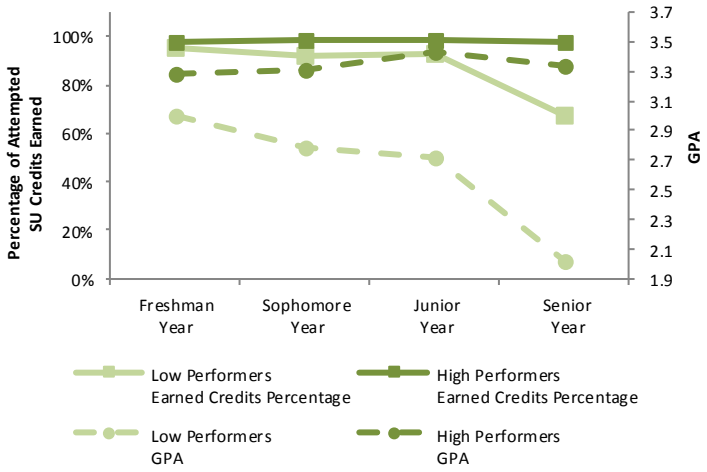
Reasons for the senior-year plunge among Low Performers are unclear at this time. However, 65% of Low Performers were enrolled in the fall semester only, perhaps making it possible to identify these students during their senior year and intervene to provide guidance that may be needed.

During senior year, the Low Performers attempted an average of 12.65 credits, while the High Performers attempted an average of 16.17 credits. **By the end of senior year, the Low Performers had earned well below the minimum graduation requirement of 120 credits. The High Performers, on the other hand, were on the cusp of achieving the minimum.**

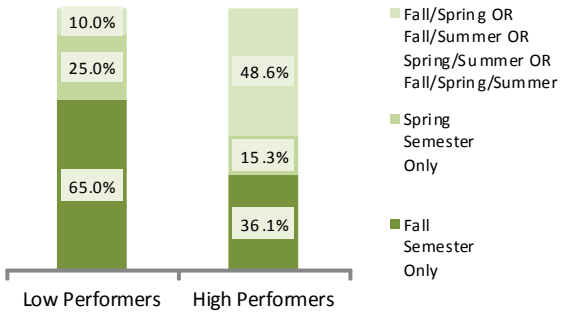
The High Performers who were only enrolled in one semester senior year (either fall or spring) took enough credits in their enrolled semester that if they had been enrolled in both semesters they would have likely been able to graduate. There is the possibility of intervention toward on-time graduation for those who are enrolled in the fall but then not in the spring.

The High Performers who were enrolled in both fall and spring attempted an average of only 10.12 credits in the fall and 8.40 credits in the spring. There is the possibility of intervention between the semesters toward on-time graduation for these students.

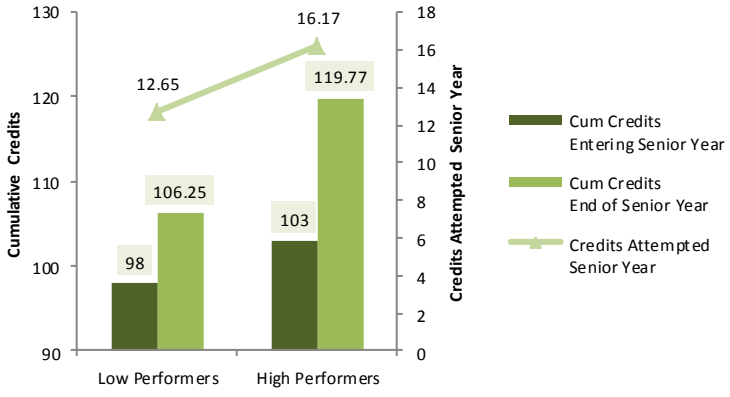
Academic Performance



Senior Year Enrollment



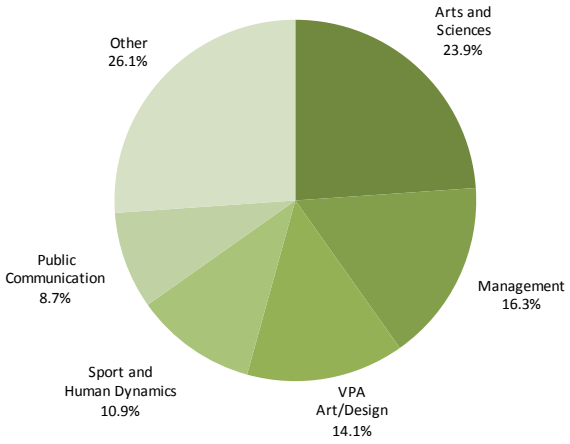
Credits Attempted Senior Year and Credits Earned, Entering and End of Senior Year



Low Credits Attempted Senior Year Cluster

Programs

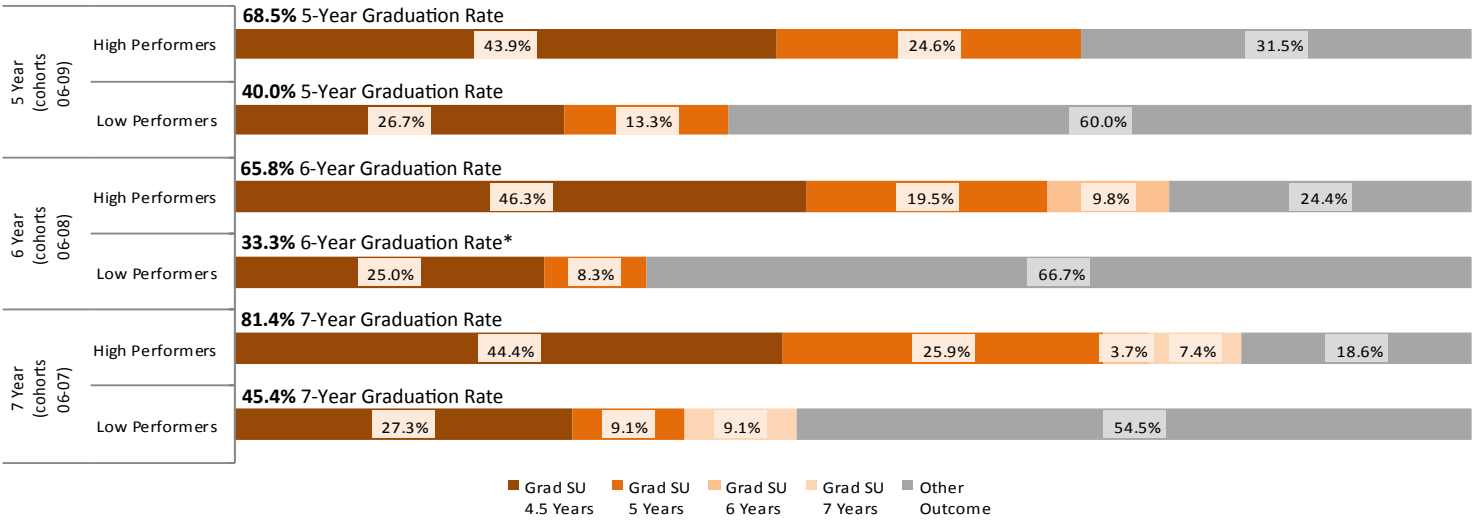
Students in this cluster were most concentrated in Arts and Sciences, Management, VPA Art/Design, and Sport and Human Dynamics. Low Performers were concentrated in Arts and Sciences (40%) and Sport and Human Dynamics (26.7%). High Performers were most concentrated in Arts and Sciences (19.3%) and Management (15.8%), but widely distributed across the university.



Outcomes

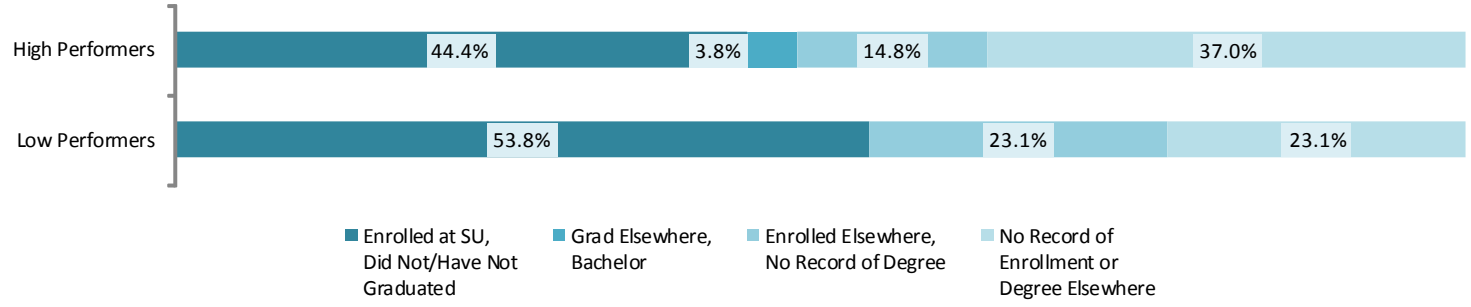
Graduation from SU

The 7-Year graduation rate of High Performers is about equivalent to that of all Ungraduated Seniors. Low Performers, however, have very low rates of graduation.



Other Outcomes

Because these data are not broken down by cohort, this figure includes students who have been post-senior year for different lengths of time.

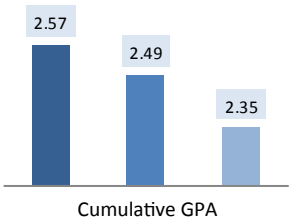


*For Low Performers, the 6-year graduation rate is lower than the 5-year graduation rate because no students in this sub-cluster graduated in the sixth year, but the calculation for the sixth year includes one more cohort, and therefore more students, than the 5-year calculation.

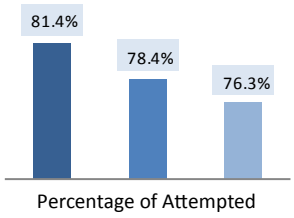
Very Low Performers Cluster

Sub-Clusters

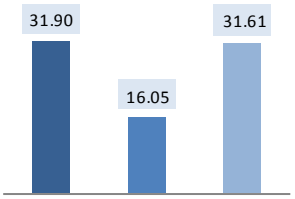
This cluster (n= 133) was best characterized by very low academic performance, a low number of cumulative credits at the end of senior year, and high debt. Within this larger cluster, **three sub-clusters were found* that represented gradations of poor academic performance. The sub-clusters were also differentiated by number of credits attempted senior year, number of transfer credits, and amount of student loan debt.**



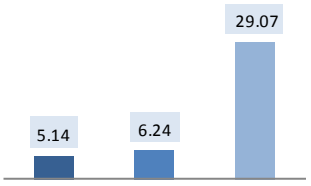
Cumulative GPA



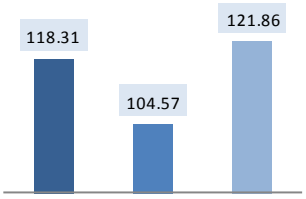
Percentage of Attempted SU Credits Earned



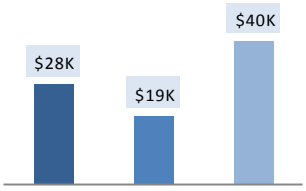
Number of Credits Attempted Senior Year



Number of Transfer Credits



Cumulative Credits End of Senior Year



Student Loan Debt

Very Low Performers/High Debt

low academic performance, high student loan debt

73.3% of larger cluster (n=96)

Very, Very Low Performers/Low Credits Attempted

lower academic performance, low number of credits attempted senior year, average student loan debt

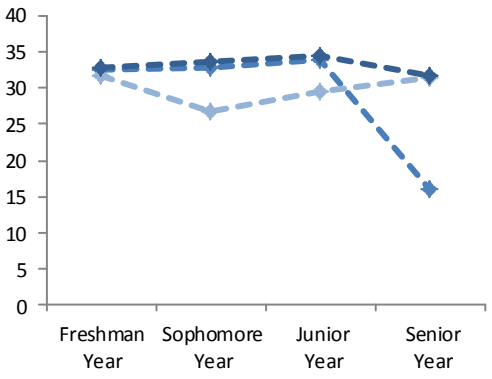
15.8% of larger cluster (n=21)

Very Lowest Performers/Very High Debt/High Transfer Credits

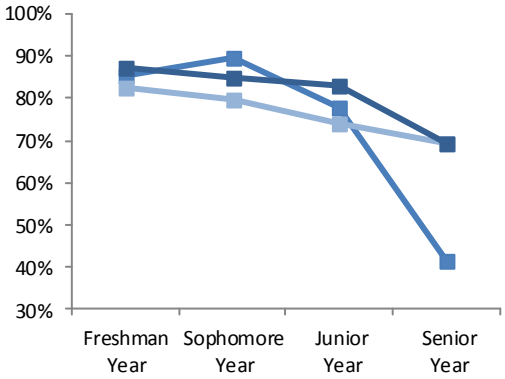
lowest academic performance, very high student loan debt, high transfer credits

10.7% of larger cluster (n=14)

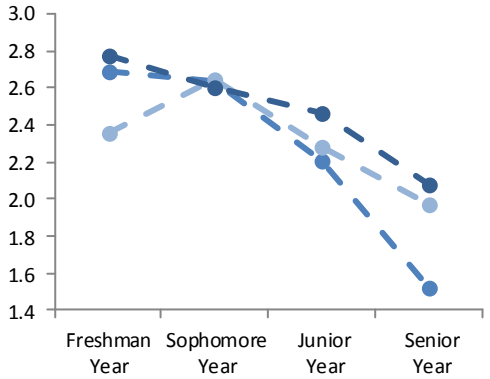
Number of Attempted SU Credits



Percentage of Attempted SU Credits Earned



GPA



GPA is non-cumulative at each point in time, and reflects an average across the fall and spring semesters that a student was enrolled in each academic year.

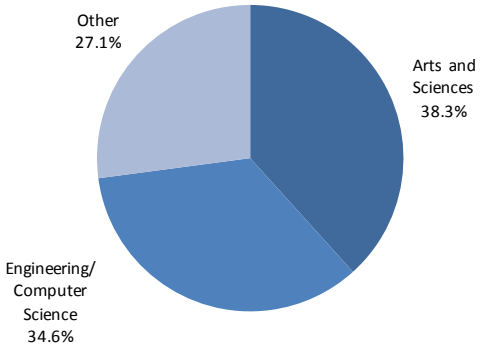
*Two students could not be placed definitively into any of the sub-clusters. They were not included in sub-cluster analyses.

Very Low Performers Cluster

Students in all three sub-clusters show poor academic performance from the outset of their time at SU, with a general decline from freshman to senior year. Average GPAs never rise to 3.0 and the average percentage of SU credits earned never surpasses 90%. By senior year, the average (non-cumulative) GPA is below a 2.0 and the percentage of SU credits earned has fallen to an average of 64%.

Programs

Across all three sub-clusters, Very Low Performers were concentrated in Arts and Sciences and Engineering/ Computer Science. **It is noteworthy that most programs in Engineering and Computer Science require more than 120 credits to graduate.**



Very Low Performers/High Debt

- tend to attempt a **high amount of credits each year** (between 32 and 35 on average); **earn only about 81%** of these credits
- **likely that they fall behind in meeting the requirements of their programs**; slightly below the minimum 120 credits to graduate
- **possible that students are attempting high credit loads to make up for lost credits due to failed, withdrawn, or dropped courses**
- **tend to have higher than average debt**; unclear at this time how debt may impact these students' pursuit of their degrees, but it is a factor worth investigating further

Very, Very Low Performers/Low Credits Attempted

- **tend to have too few credits to graduate on time; likely due to earning only about 78% of attempted credits and attempting a low number of credits senior year**
- **two-thirds enrolled only in the fall semester during their senior year**, perhaps making it possible to identify them and intervene to provide guidance that may be needed
- **even if enrolled both semesters senior year, questionable whether they would graduate on time**; some may need only one or two more classes, but some have more than a semester's work ahead of them; may be particularly true for students in Engineering and Computer Science who have majors with high credit requirements
- As seen on the next page, these students are **at particularly high risk for never graduating from SU**, even though many enroll after their senior year. Reasons for the extremely low graduation rates of students in this cluster are unclear at this time.

Very Lowest Performers/Very High Debt/High Transfer Credits

- **earned only about 76% of the SU credits they attempted**
- **sophomore year, attempted a relatively low amount of credits (27, on average) and saw increased GPAs; may suggest these students do better with lighter course loads**
- **tend to have a very high rate of transfer credits; transfer credits may compensate for unattempted or unearned SU credits**, putting students on average slightly above the minimum 120 credits required to graduate
- may be farther from graduation than it seems if they have majors with high credit requirements
- **tend to have *much* higher than average debt**; unclear at this time how debt may impact these students' pursuit of their degrees, but it is a factor worth investigating further

Conclusions

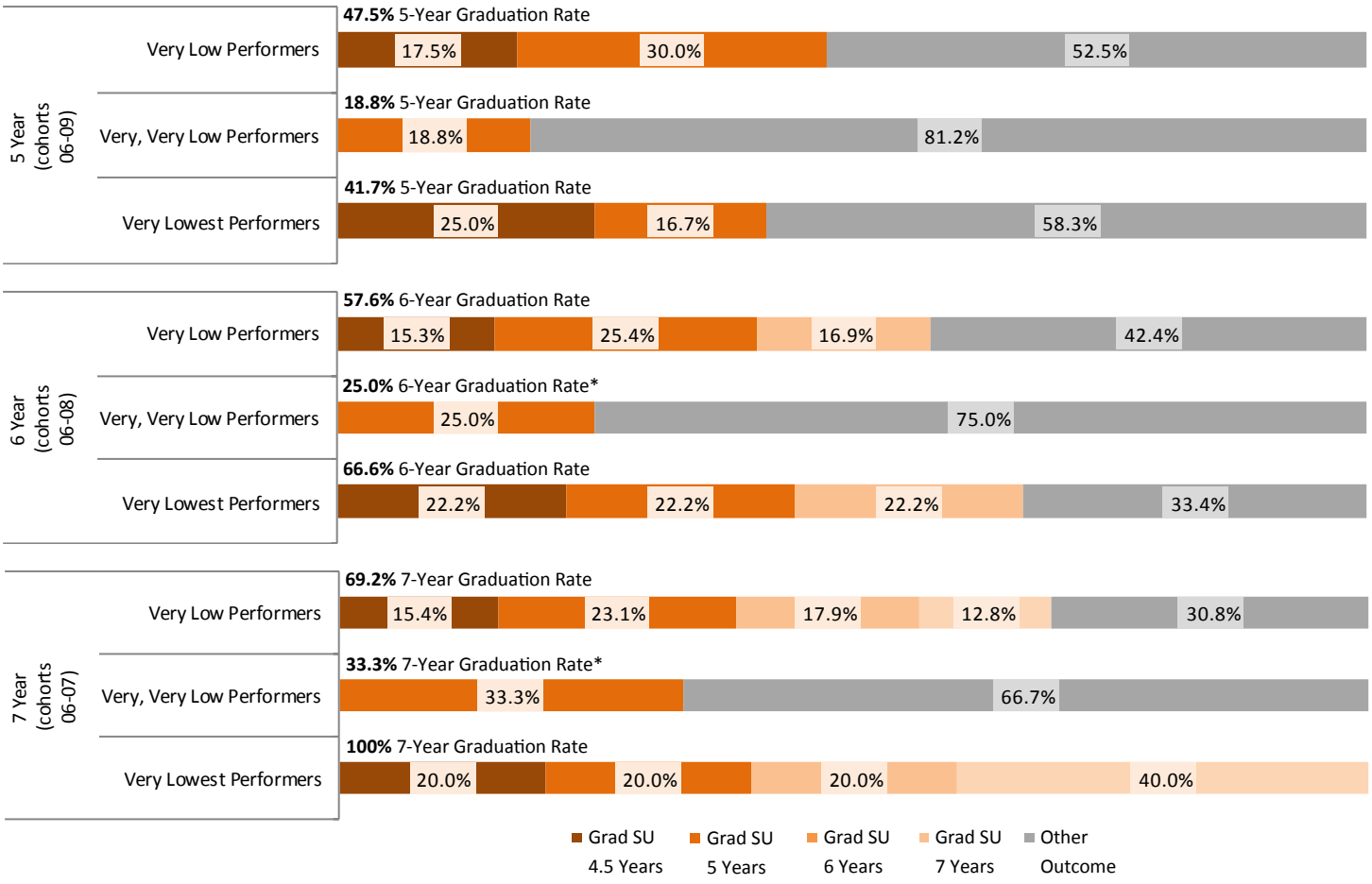
The poor performance of students in this cluster likely puts them behind in meeting graduation requirements. They may also be in programs with high credit requirements that are difficult to complete in four years. Given that these students tend to show a decline in performance beginning early in their time at SU, providing guidance from the start may help students succeed and graduate on time.

Very Low Performers Cluster

Outcomes

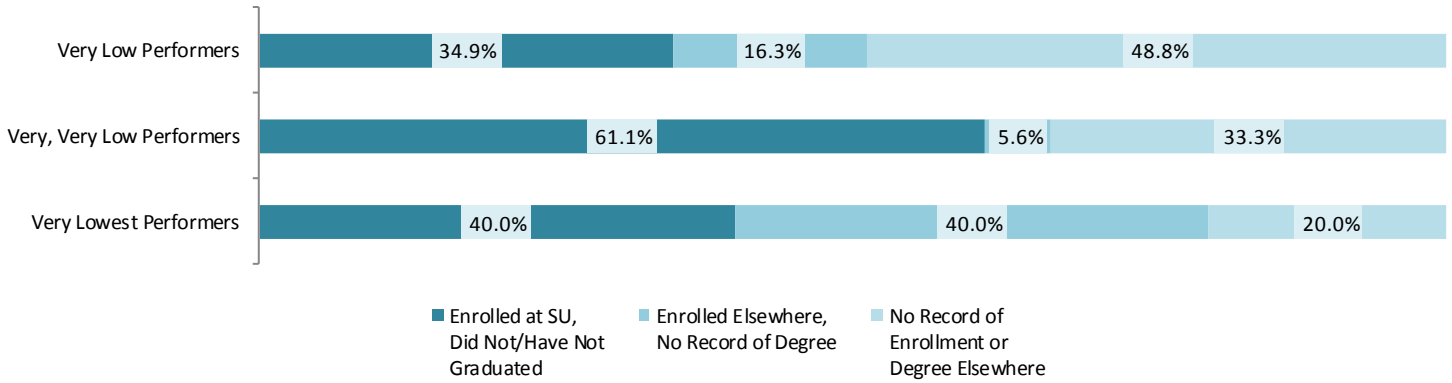
Graduation from SU

Surprisingly, the Very Lowest Performers sub-cluster had the highest graduation rate over time. The other two sub-clusters lagged behind, with the Very, Very Low Performers at strikingly low rates.



Other Outcomes

Because these data are not broken down by cohort, this figure includes students who have been post-senior year for different lengths of time.

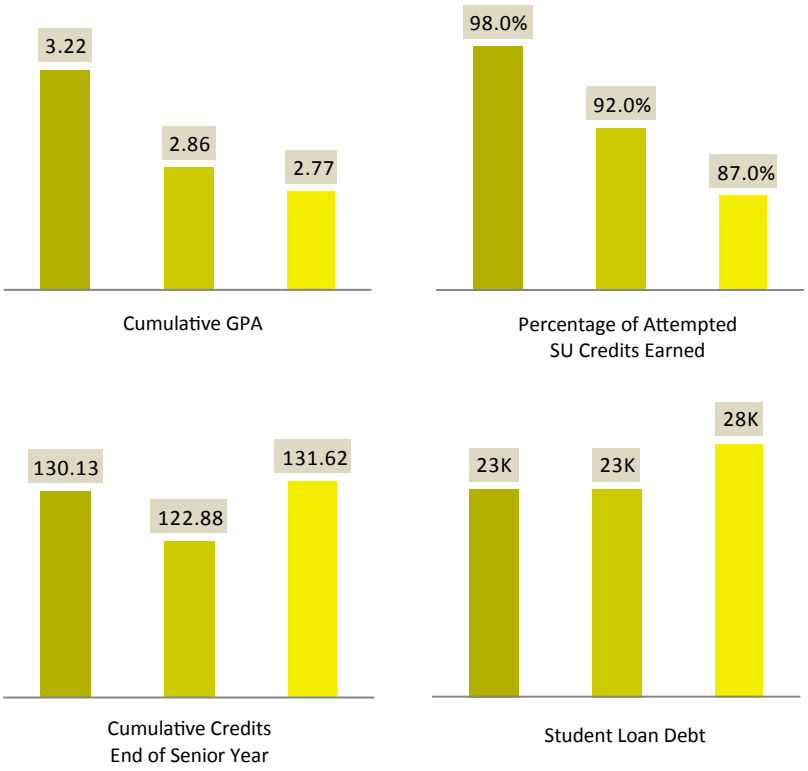


*Students in the Lower Performers sub-cluster who graduated from SU only graduated in their 5th year. The 6-year and 7-year graduation rates for this sub-cluster are higher than the 5-year rate for probably two reasons. One, the 6– and 7-year rates include more cohorts and thus more students, potentially producing an increasingly more accurate 5-year rate. Two, the 5-year graduation rate for this sub-cluster increased over time, with more recent cohorts producing a higher percentage of graduates.

Low Average Performers Cluster

Sub-Clusters

This cluster (n=553) was best characterized by academic performance on the low end of average, a low amount of transfer credits, and moderate debt. **Three sub-clusters were found,* which represented gradations of academic performance. The sub-clusters were differentiated to a lesser extent by amount of student loan debt.**



Good Performers

good academic performance

54.2% of larger cluster (n=300)

Low Performers

low academic performance

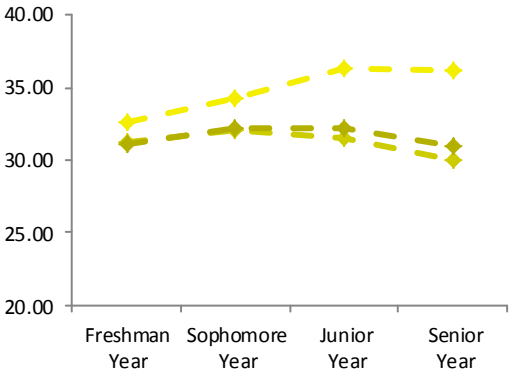
32.4% of larger cluster (n=179)

Very Low Performers/High Debt

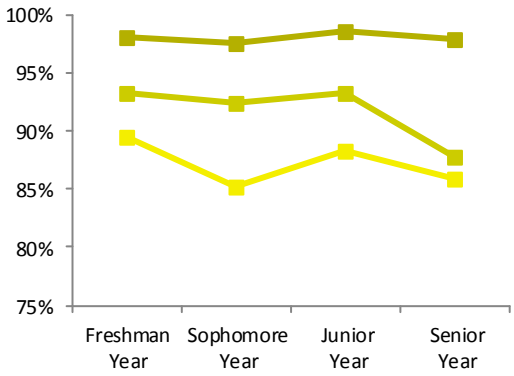
very low academic performance, high student loan debt

12.1% of larger cluster (n=67)

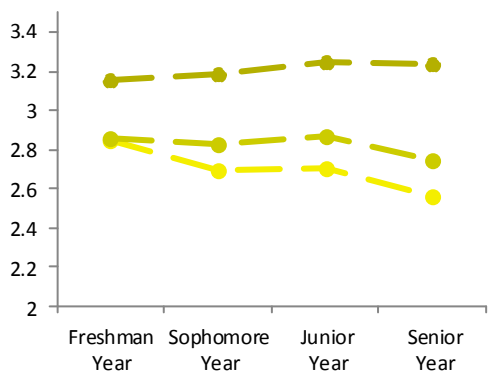
Number of Attempted SU Credits



Percentage of Attempted SU Credits Earned



GPA



GPA is non-cumulative at each point in time, and reflects an average across the fall and spring semesters that a student was enrolled in each academic year

*Seven students could not be placed definitively into any of the sub-clusters. They were not included in sub-cluster analyses.

Low Average Performers Cluster

Students in all three sub-clusters have, on average, enough credits to meet the minimum 120 credit graduation requirement, with averages for the Good Performers and Very Low Performers above 130. **Explanations for not graduating at the end of senior year are still apparent for some students, but not straightforward for others.**

Good Performers

- relative to other two sub-clusters, **Good Performers more likely to have more than one major (33.3%), IUT (49.3%), or both (17.3%)**; having high credit requirements due to having more than one major and being behind in meeting requirements due to IUT'ing **can explain why about half of students in this sub-cluster were ungraduated**
- **explanations for other half of students not evident at this time;** have, on average, good, steady GPAs across their first four years at SU, and maintain a high percentage of attempted SU credits earned
- **possible explanations:** students having majors that require more credits than the bare 120 minimum, students falling far enough below the sub-cluster average cumulative credits that they do not have enough to graduate senior year, and missing required courses

Low Performers

- **tend to be just above the minimum graduation requirement of 120 credits; 28.5% had fewer than the minimum required**
- **decline in average performance from junior to senior year; however, decline seen in spring semester of senior year, making it difficult to identify students in time to provide guidance for on-time graduation**
- **further explanations are not evident at this time; possible explanations:** students having majors that require more credits than the bare 120 minimum, students falling far enough below the sub-cluster average cumulative credits that they do not have enough to graduate senior year, and missing required courses

Very Low Performers/High Debt

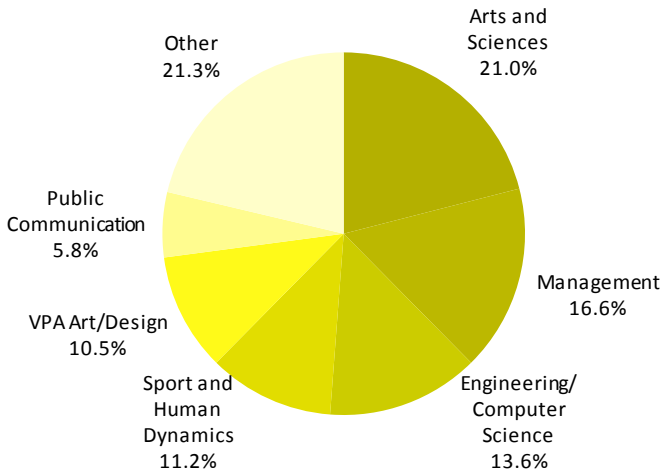
- **tend to have inconsistent performance within the very low range from freshman-senior year**
- **attempt a high amount of credits, on average, particularly junior and senior year; possible that students are attempting high credit loads to make up for lost credits due to failed, withdrawn, or dropped courses**
- **all students in sub-cluster earned at least 121 credits by end of senior year**, making it difficult to explain failure to graduate on time
- **possible explanations:** students having majors that require more credits than the bare 120 minimum, and missing required courses
- **tend to have higher than average debt**; unclear at this time how debt may impact these students' pursuit of their degrees, but it is a factor worth investigating further

Programs

Good Performers: Management (20.3%), Sport and Human Dynamics (14.7%), Arts and Sciences (15.0%), VPA Art/Design (9.7%), Other (40.3%)

Low Performers: Arts and Sciences (30.2%), Engineering/Computer Science (15.1%), VPA Art/Design (14.0%), Management (13.4%), Other (27.3%)

Very Low Performers: Engineering/Computer Science (40.3%), Arts and Sciences (22.4%), Management (10.4%), Other (26.9%)

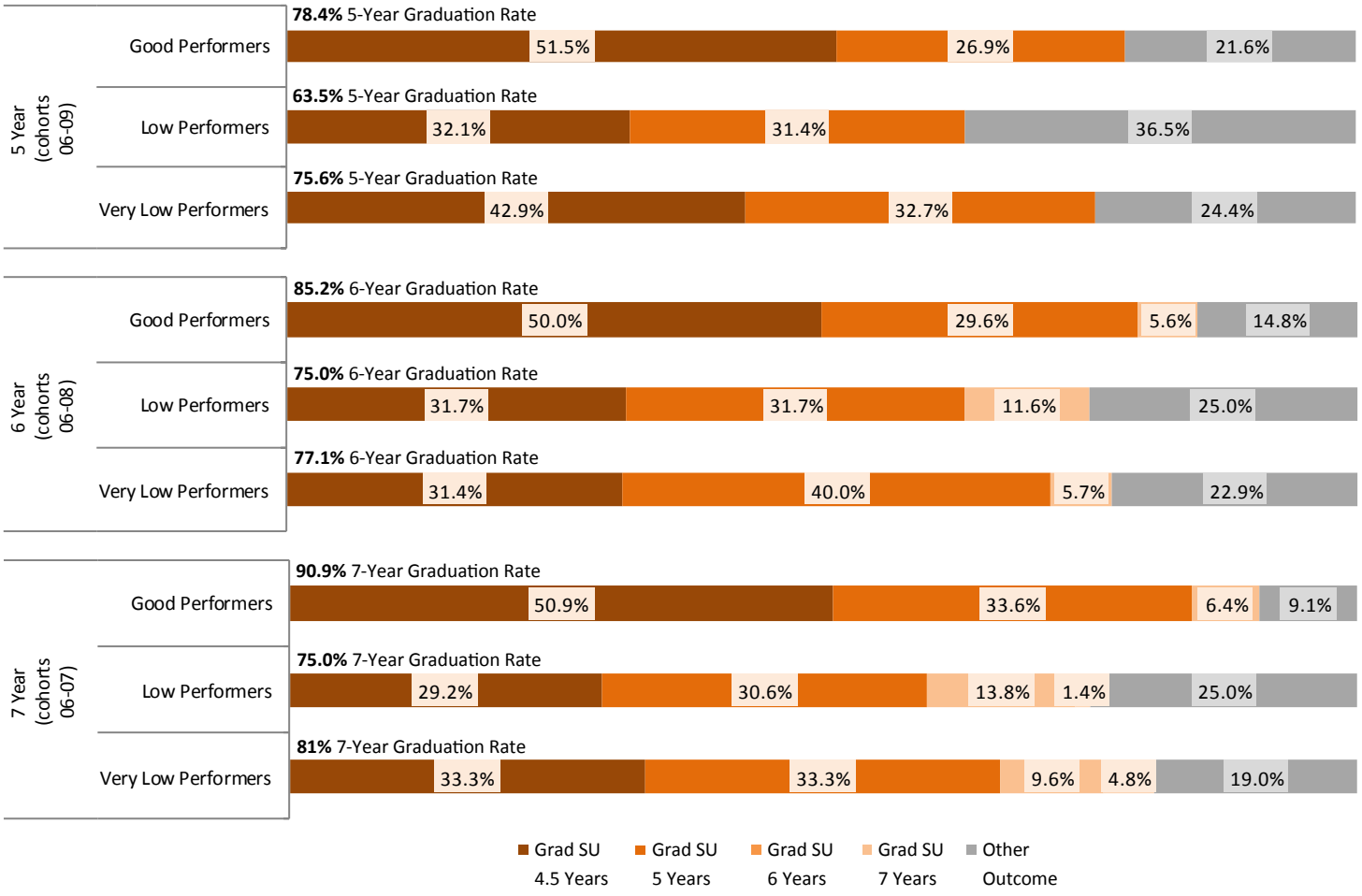


Low Average Performers Cluster

Outcomes

Graduation from SU

Most students in this cluster graduate from SU, with Good Performers having particularly high rates.



Other Outcomes

Because these data are not broken down by cohort, this figure includes students who have been post-senior year for different lengths of time.

