

The Fast & The Studious:
Comparative Methodological
Approaches to 15-to-Finish
Messaging at UTSA

UTSA[®]

The University of Texas at San Antonio™

Kelsey Mattingly, M.A.

Institutional Research and Analysis

Overview of UTSA

- Established 1969
- Mission of access and excellence
- Carnegie R1, Public, HSI
- Over 34,000 students*
- 86% undergraduate*
- Over 5,800 bachelor degrees awarded**
- Over 5,600 FTIC students*
- 95% in-state (50% Bexar County)*
- 44% first-generation*
- Majority minoritized students*



Complete College America “15 to Finish”

- **15 to Finish originated at the University of Hawaii**, encouraging students who can take more credits to graduate on time, accessing future earnings faster
- **Targeted for first-time, full-time populations** (Liu, Texas A&M Corpus Christi, TAIR 2022)
- **Recent analysis shows promising outcomes for transfer students** who take 14-16 hours compared to those who take 12-13 regarding one-year retention, and 2-year graduation rate (Gipalo et al., Florida State University, SAIR 2022)



Study Background

- **Institutional leadership** initiative to increase 15-hours messaging
- **Partnership** with strategic communications office for academic affairs publication in Fall 2022
- **Initial analysis** with Roadrunner Cohorts (first-time, full-time freshman) who attempted 15+ hours in
 - their first term (Fall 2017 - 2021)
 - their first fall and spring (Fall 2017 - 2020)
 - each fall and spring through graduation term (Fall 2017 - 2018)

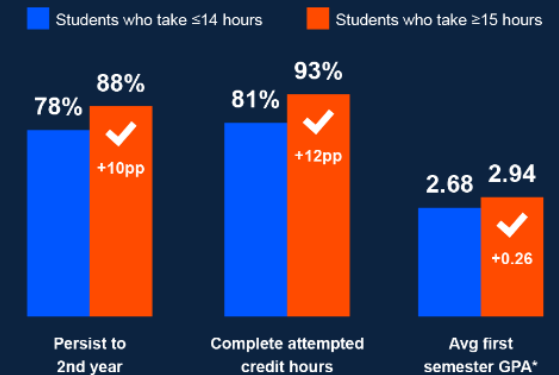


STUDENT SUCCESS

Roadrunners registering right

As students register for next semester, they should know the number of hours they take impacts their overall academic success. We crunched the numbers and the results are clear. First-time freshmen at UTSA who register for 15 hours or more per semester have higher rates of retention, get better grades, and are on a quicker path to graduation.

Students who take ≥ 15 credit hours per semester have the advantage



Methodological Approaches

Starting population

- First-time, full-time freshman
- Transfer students
- Starting cohort
- Graduation cohort

Outcomes

- First term
- First year
- Graduation outcomes
- Selection effects
- Differences by populations

Hours

- 15+ per fall and spring semester
- 30+ per year including summer (CCA)
- 12-13 hours vs 14-16 hours (FSU)

Starting cohort

- First-time, full-time Roadrunners
- Fall 2018-2022

15+ continuous semester hours

- Fall and Spring

Our Study

Graduation cohort

- First-time, full-time Roadrunners
- Spring/Summer 2018-2022

30+ yearly hours

- Including summer

Methods by Outcome

	Starting Cohort	Graduation Cohort	15+ Semester Hrs	30+ Yearly Hrs
First Fall	X		X	
First Year	X		X	X
Graduation	X	X	X	

First Fall Methods

- SQL query Banner tables
 - Freshman cohort, SHRTGPA
- Attempted 15+ hours, yes or no

CASE

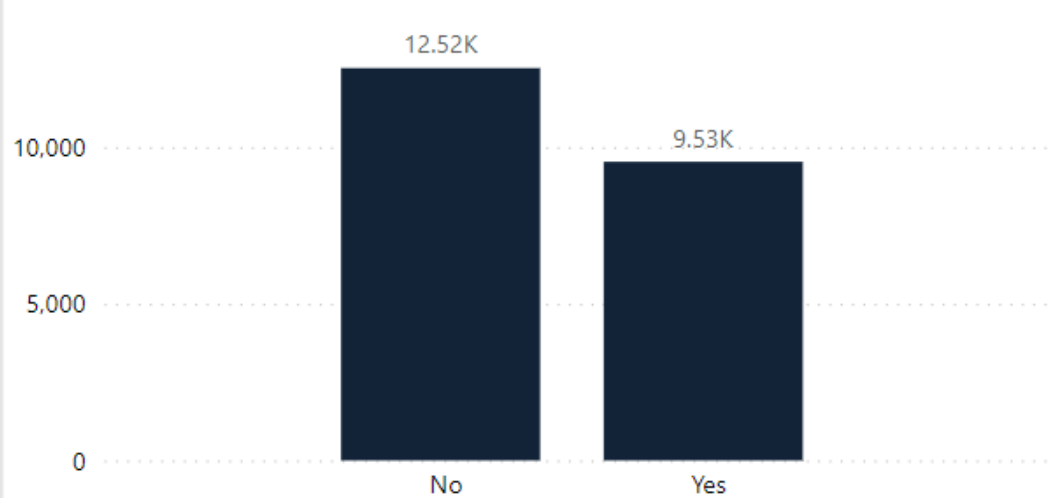
WHEN SHRTGPA_HOURS_ATTEMPTED >= 15

THEN 'Yes'

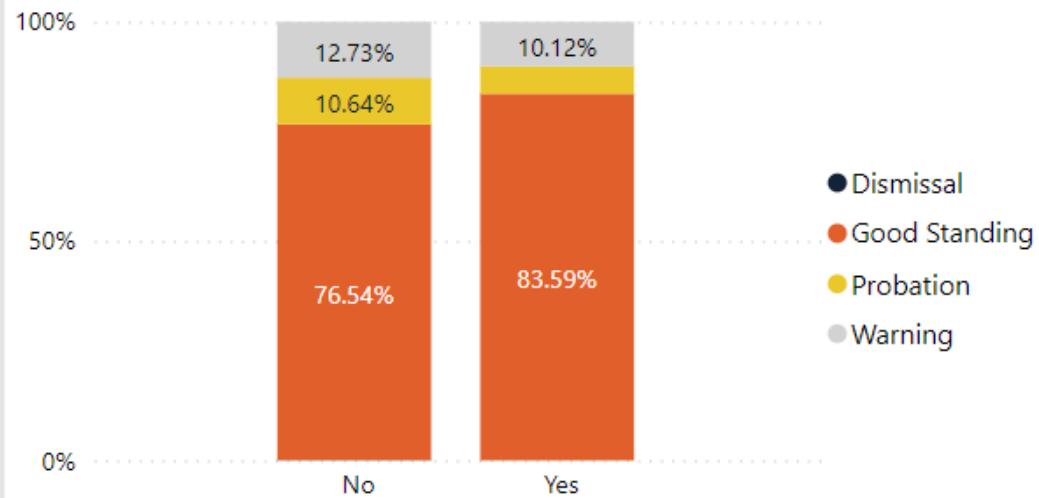
ELSE 'No'

END AS FIRSTFALL_15

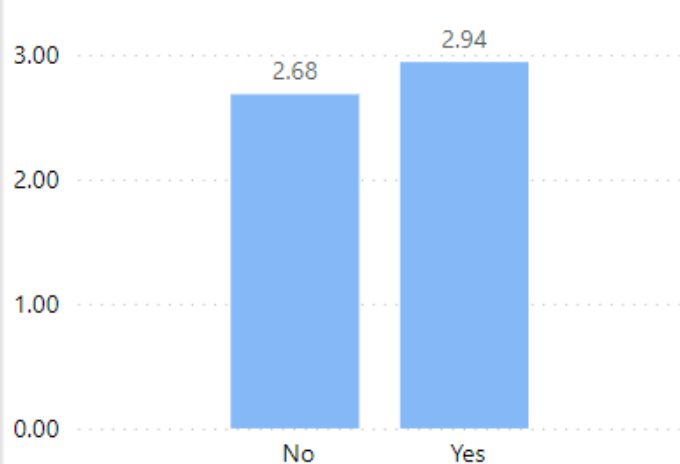
Students Enrolled in 15 Hours Their First Fall



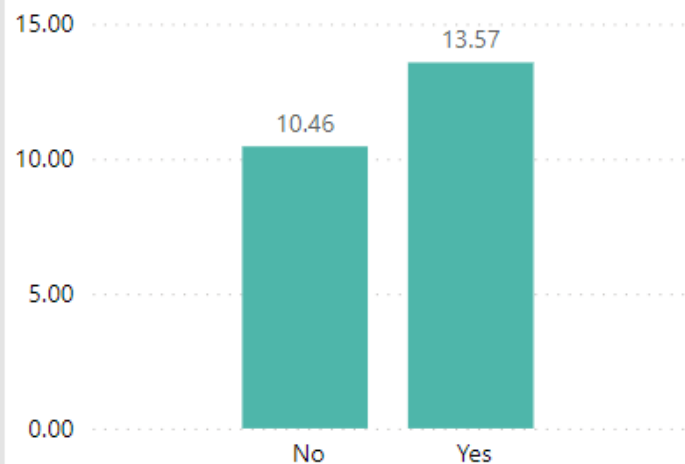
First Fall Academic Standing by 15 Hours



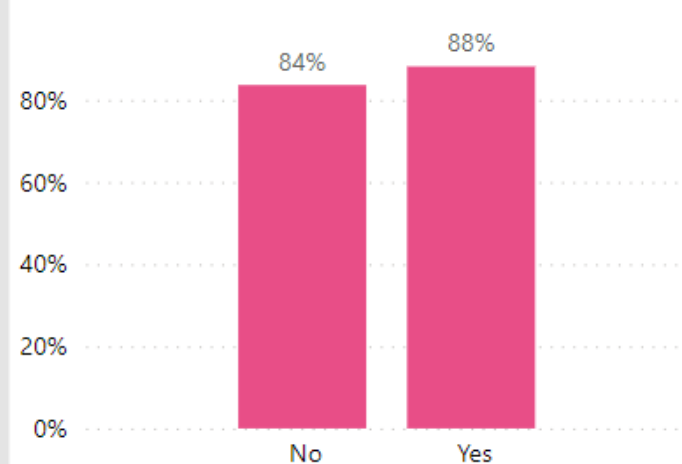
Avg First Fall GPA by 15 Hours



Avg First Fall Hours Earned by 15 Hours



Avg First Fall Credit Rate by 15 Hours



Methods by Outcome

	Starting Cohort	Graduation Cohort	15+ Semester Hrs	30+ Yearly Hrs
First Fall	X		X	
First Year	X		X	X
Graduation	X	X	X	

First Year Methods

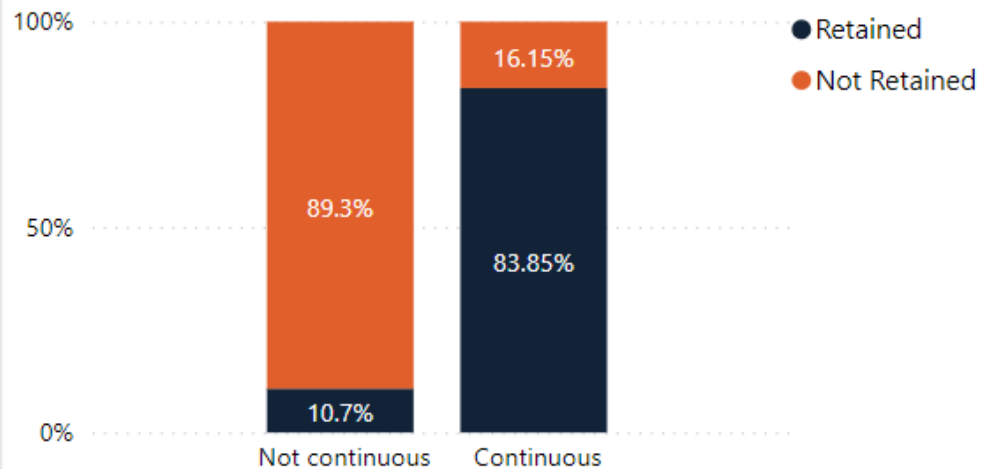
- SQL query Banner tables
 - Freshman cohort, SHRTGPA

CASE

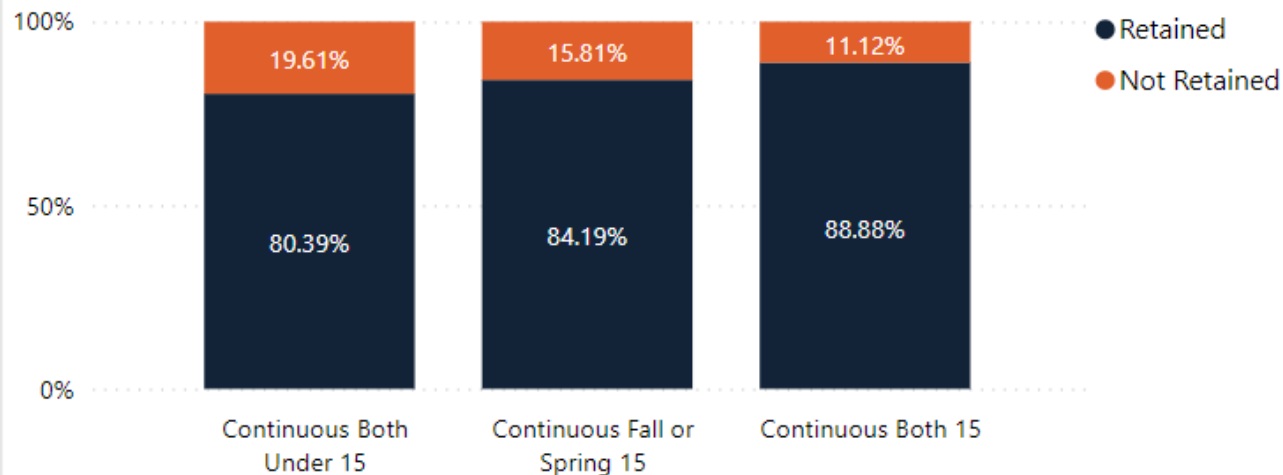
```

WHEN (FIRSTFALL_HRS_ATTEMPT > 0 AND FIRSTFALL_HRS_ATTEMPT < 15)
      AND (FIRSTSPRING_HRS_ATTEMPT > 0 AND FIRSTSPRING_HRS_ATTEMPT < 15)
THEN 'Continuous Both Under 15'
WHEN (FIRSTFALL_HRS_ATTEMPT >= 15 AND FIRSTSPRING_HRS_ATTEMPT >= 15)
THEN 'Continuous Both 15'
WHEN (FIRSTFALL_HRS_ATTEMPT > 0 AND FIRSTFALL_HRS_ATTEMPT < 15
      AND FIRSTSPRING_HRS_ATTEMPT >= 15)
      OR (FIRST_FALL_HRS_ATTEMPT >= 15 AND FIRSTSPRING_HRS_ATTEMPT > 0
      AND FIRSTSPRING_HRS_ATTEMPT < 15)
THEN 'Continuous Fall OR Spring 15'
ELSE 'Not Continuous'
END AS FIRSTYEAR_15_CONTINUOUS
    
```

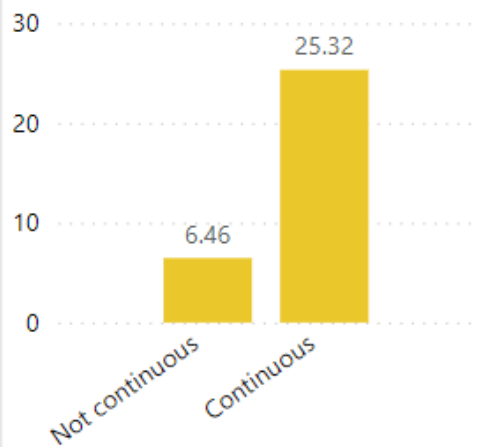
Fall-to-Fall Retention by Continuous Enrollment



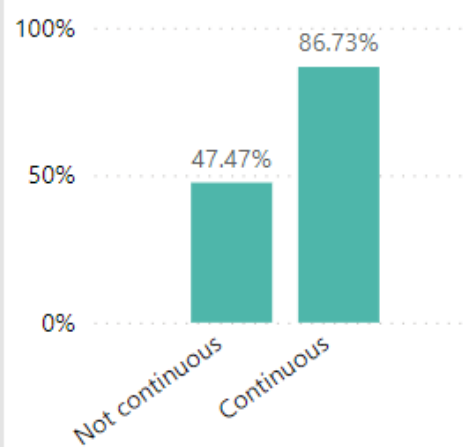
Fall-to-Fall Retention by 15 Hours



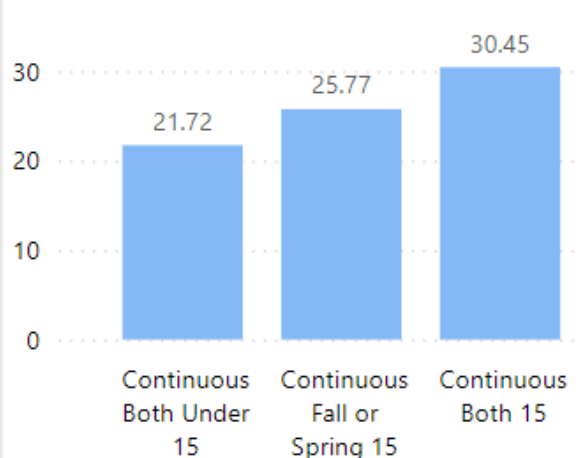
Avg First Year Hours Earned by Continuous Enrollment



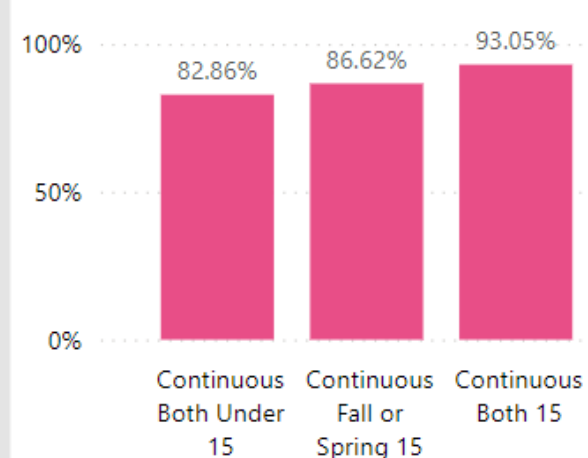
Avg First Year Credit Rate by Continuous Enrollment



Avg First Year Hours Earned by 15 Hours

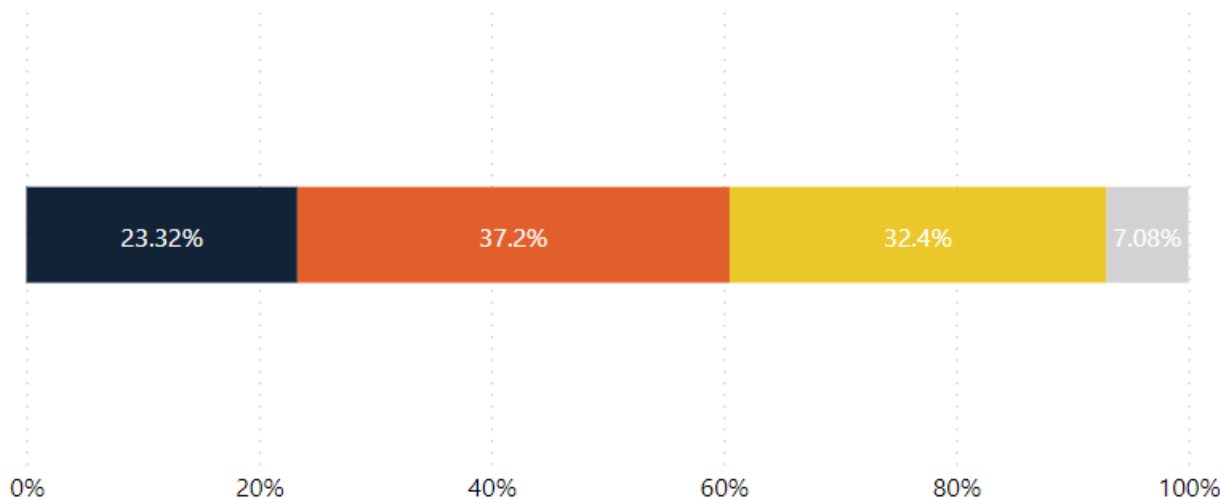


Avg First Year Credit Rate by 15 Hours



First Year Continuous, 15+ Hours In Fall, Spring

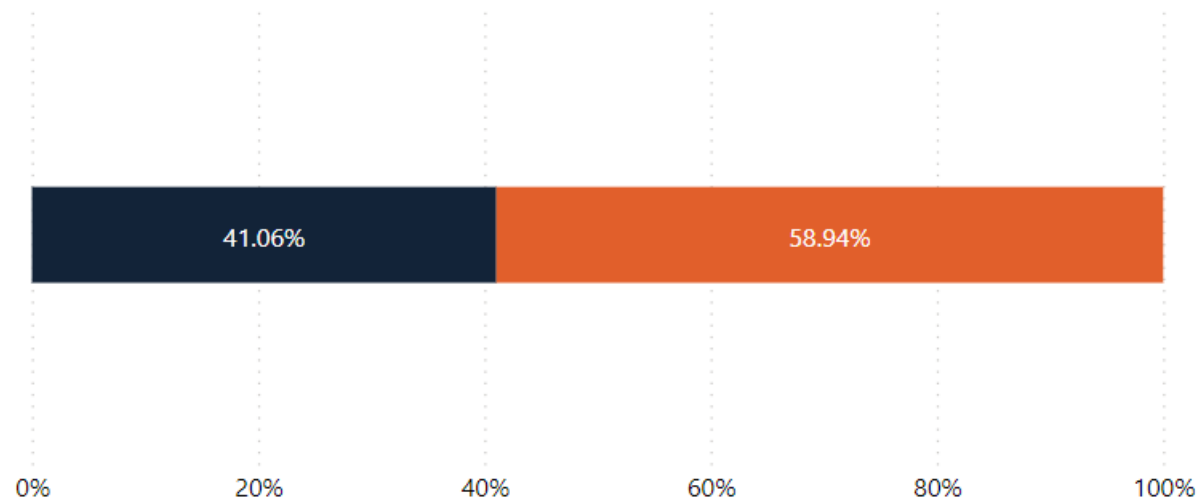
● Continuous Both 15 ● Continuous Both Under 15 ● Continuous Fall or Sp... ● Not continuous



15+ Hours in First Fall and Spring	Count	Pct
Continuous Both 15	5144	23.32%
Continuous Both Under 15	8206	37.20%
Continuous Fall or Spring 15	7146	32.40%
Not continuous	1561	7.08%
Total	22057	100.00%

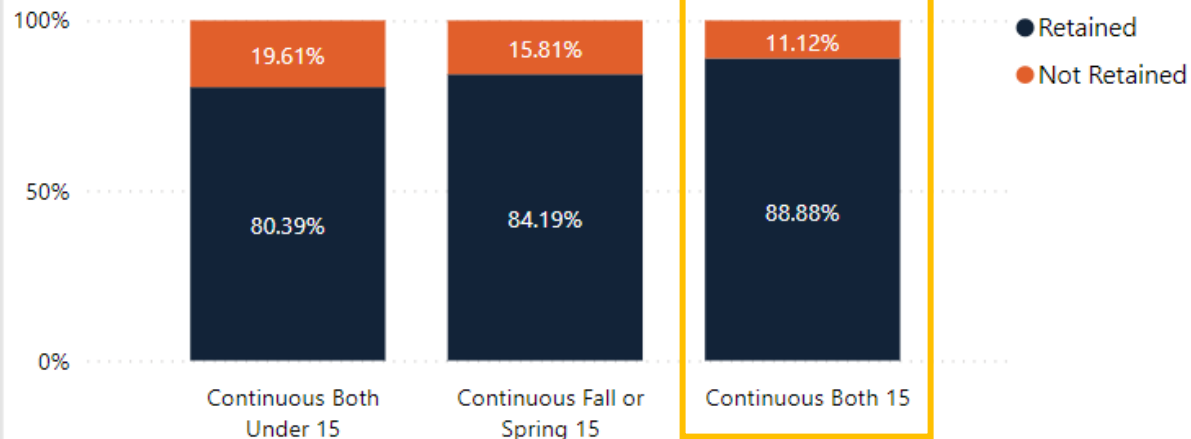
First Year 30+ Hours in Fall, Spring and Summer

● 30 or More ● Under 30

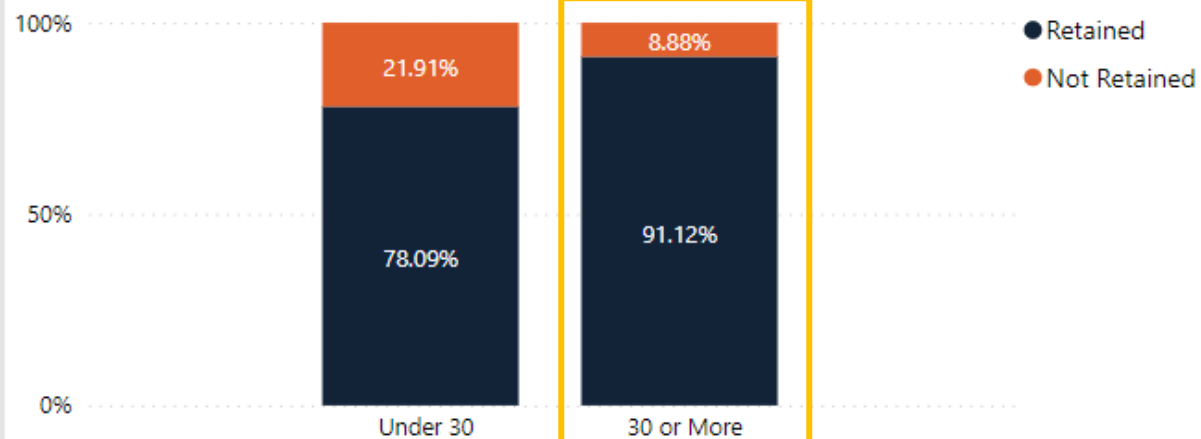


30+ Hours in First Year	Count	Pct
30 or More	9056	41.06%
Under 30	13001	58.94%
Total	22057	100.00%

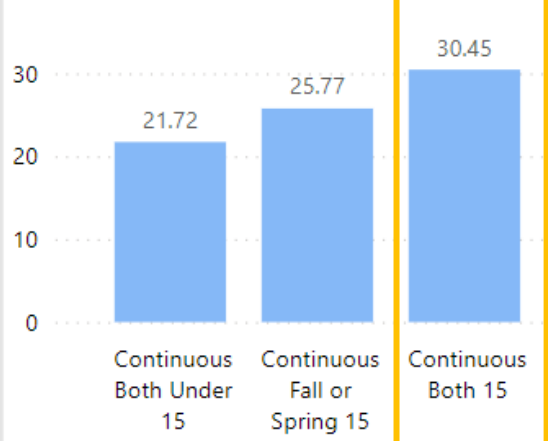
Fall-to-Fall Retention by 15 Hours



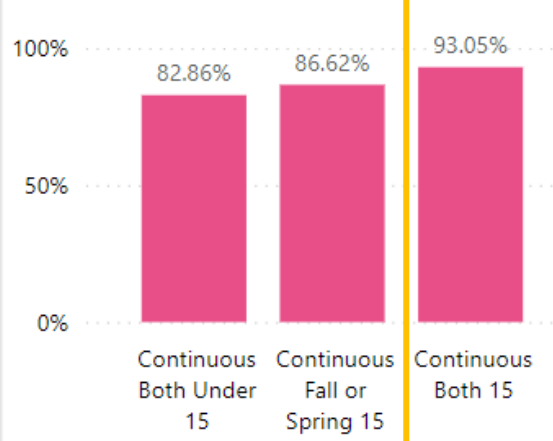
Fall-to-Fall Retention by 30 Hours



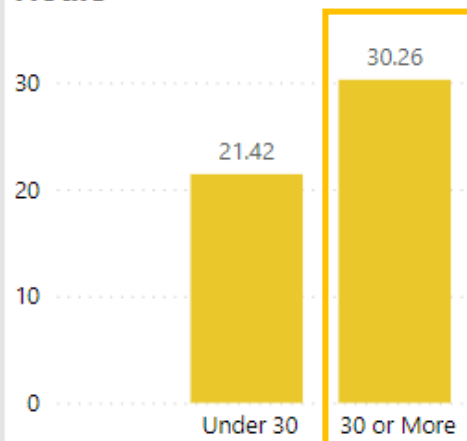
Avg First Year Hours Earned by 15 Hours



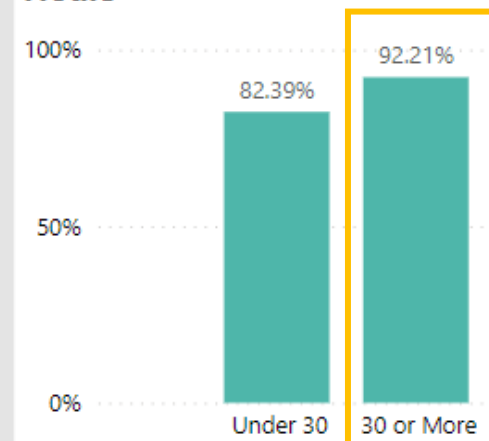
Avg First Year Credit Rate by 15 Hours



Avg First Year Hours Earned by 15 Hours



Avg First Year Credit Rate by 15 Hours



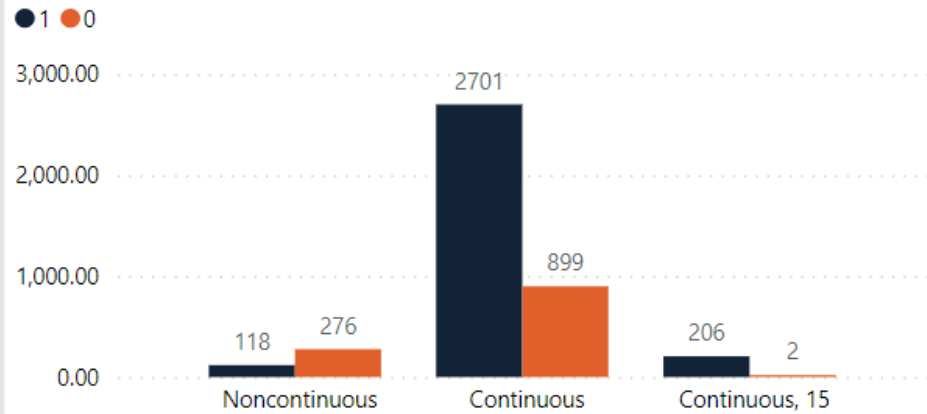
Methods by Outcome

	Starting Cohort	Graduation Cohort	15+ Semester Hrs	30+ Yearly Hrs
First Fall	X		X	
First Year	X		X	X
Graduation	X	X	X	

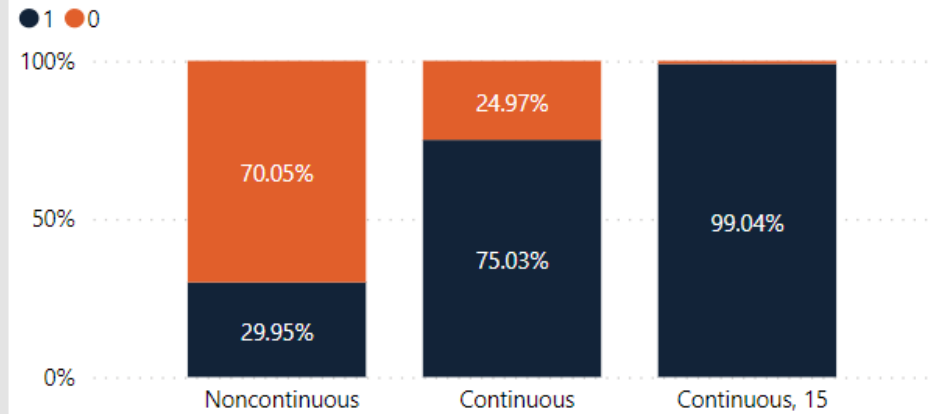
Graduation Methods

- SQL query of Banner tables
 - Freshman cohort, SHRTGPA, SHRDGMR
- Cohort start term
 - Adapted retention model measuring continuous semester enrollment (retention) and hours enrolled for 15+ attempted hours continuous up through graduation term
- Graduation cohort
 - Retention model worked backwards from graduation term until no more continuous enrolled/15+ hours in fall and spring
 - Longer span of time to evaluate, but higher N

Count Graduated Within Four Years by Continuous Enrollment, 15 Hours

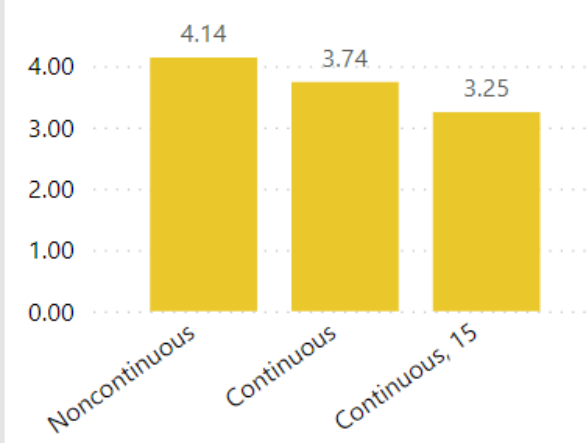


Percent Graduated Within Four Years by Continuous Enrollment, 15 Hours

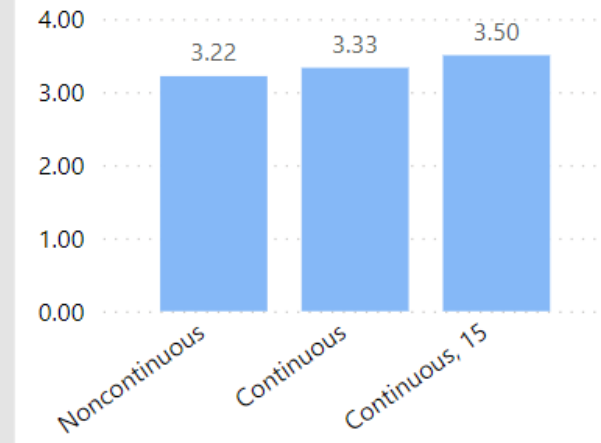


Enrollment Category	Count	Avg Years to Degree	Avg Grad GPA
⊕ Noncontinuous	272	4.14	3.22
⊖ Continuous	3808	3.71	3.34
Continuous	3600	3.74	3.33
Continuous, 15	208	3.25	3.50
Total	4080	3.74	3.33

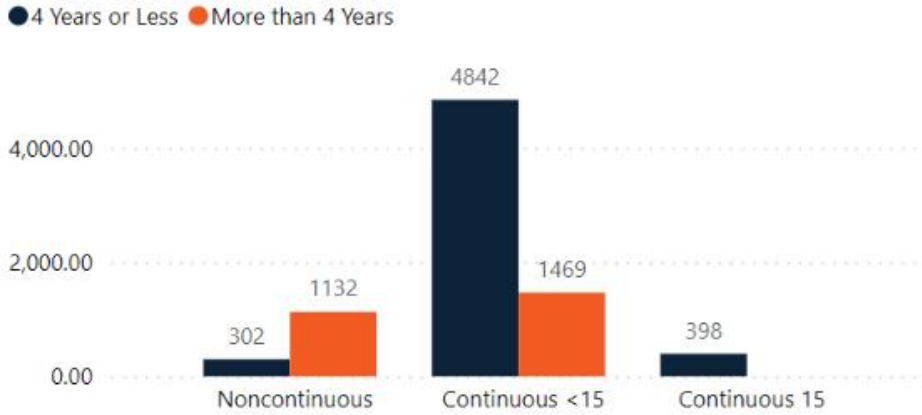
Average Years to Degree by Continuous Enrollment, 15 Hours



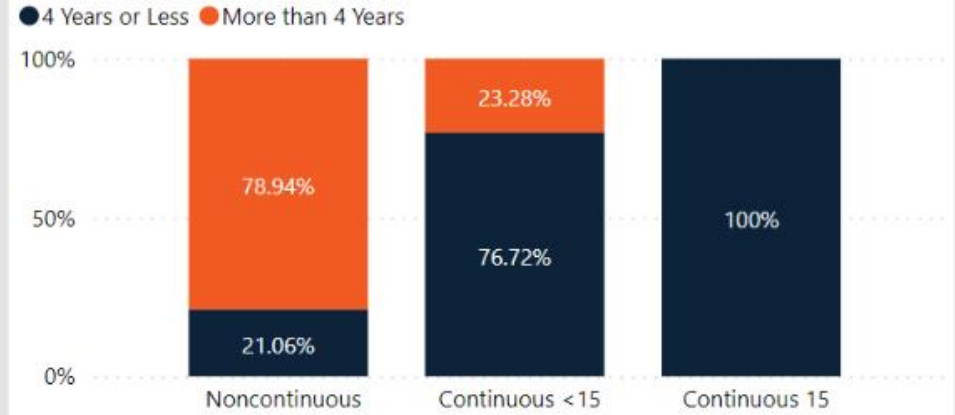
Average Institution Grad GPA by Continuous Enrollment, 15 Hours



Count Graduated Within Four Years by Continuous Enrollment, 15 Hours

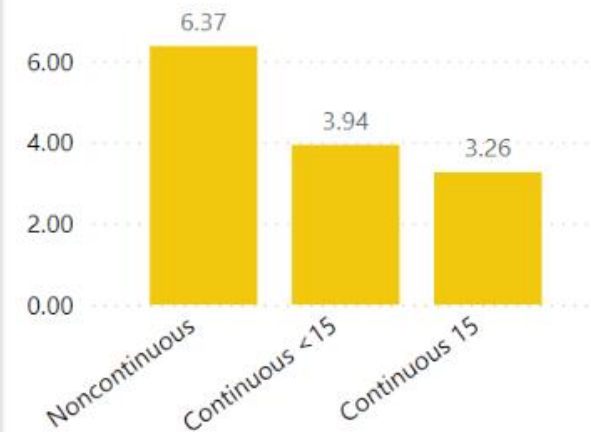


Percent Graduated Within Four Years by Continuous Enrollment, 15 Hours

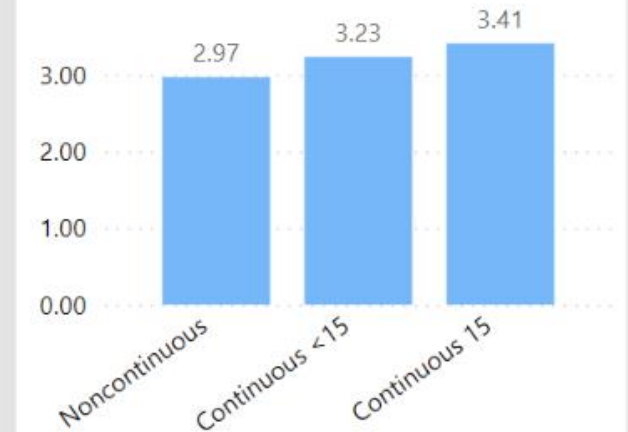


Enrollment Category	Count	Avg Years to Degree	Avg Grad Inst GPA
Noncontinuous	1434	6.37	2.97
Continuous	6709	3.90	3.24
Continuous 15	398	3.26	3.41
Continuous <15	6311	3.94	3.23
Total	8143	4.33	3.20

Average Years to Degree by Continuous Enrollment, 15 Hours



Average Institution Grad GPA by Continuous Enrollment, 15 Hours



Starting cohort

- Appropriate for first-term and first-year outcomes
- Able to compare who did or did not make it to graduation in same starting cohort, based on enrollment

15+ continuous semester hours

- Detailed coding
- May appear more intuitive
- Dosage analysis allows for flexible messaging

Our Study

Graduation cohort

- Yields higher N for graduation analysis
- Similar findings to starting cohort
- Longer span of time to query

30+ yearly hours

- Yields similar results to 15+ in fall and spring
- More efficient to code
- Supported in CCA methodology
- Inclusive of summer enrollment

Future Directions

Selection bias, populations more or less likely to take 15+ hours

Targeted hours comparison, 12-13 compared to 15-16

Earnings impact analysis

Advanced statistical analysis

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Brett Copeland, Steve Wilkerson, Brian Cordeau, and Lauren Apgar for collaboration on early iterations of this study and for the Institutional Research and Analysis team for feedback on this presentation.

References

- “15 to Finish/Stay on Track”, Complete College America, <https://completecollege.org/strategy/15-to-finish/>.
- Gipalo, Katherine, Samantha Nix, and Logan A. Poland. 2022. “15 to Finish in Two Years? The Efficacy of the Take 15 Initiative for Transfer Students.” Florida State University. *SAIR 2022*.
- Xiqian Liu. 2022. “15 to Finish: How Does Taking 15 or More Credits Impact First-Time Undergraduate Students?” Texas A&M Corpus Christi. *TAIR 2022*.

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