Overview

The Completion and Student Success (CASS) Advisory Board identifies *the six-year graduation rate of first-time, full-time students* as a criterion of student achievement for the University of Mississippi, and it is published on the UM website: https://irep.olemiss.edu/institutional-research/student-success/. CASS reviews institutional and peer data to evaluate institutional progress toward six-year graduation rate goals.

> The threshold of acceptability (minimum expectation) for the six-year graduation rate of first-time, full-time students is 59%. The goal for graduation of first-time, full-time students within six years is to meet or exceed the average of peer institutions. Additionally, CASS, with support from institutional leaders, expects continuous improvement in graduation rates and aspires to achieve a six-year graduation rate that exceeds the average of peer institutions and approaches the average of the SEC public institutions and SUG institutions.

UM and Comparative Graduation Rates

Examination of institutional and peer institution data support the establishment of the graduation threshold of acceptability, goal, and aspirational achievements. Figure 1 depicts UM graduation rate trends with threshold of acceptability. Table 1 and Figure 1 depict graduation rates of comparison groups. UM admissions requirements allow for access to higher education and are the same as all other IHL institutions; however, UM exceeds the IHL average graduation rate. UM graduation rates are below those of its selected and convenience comparison groups, whose institutions have more selective admissions requirements.

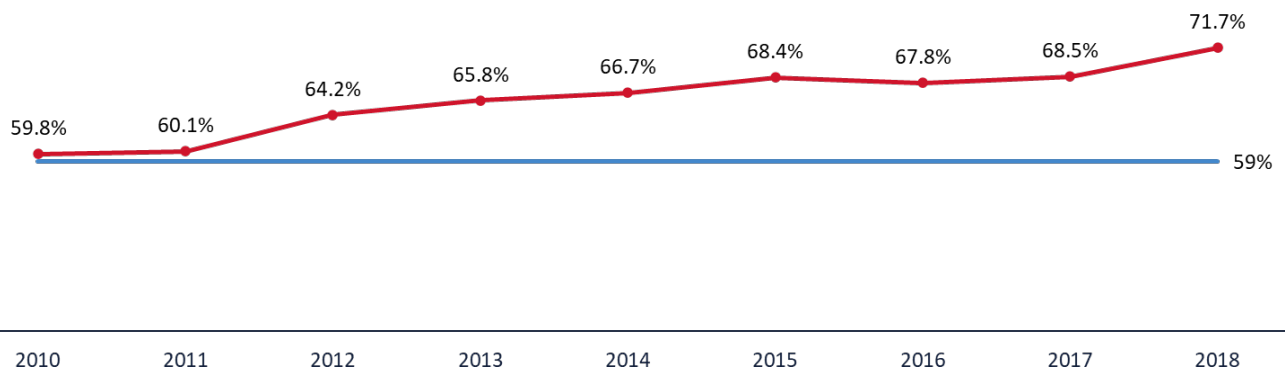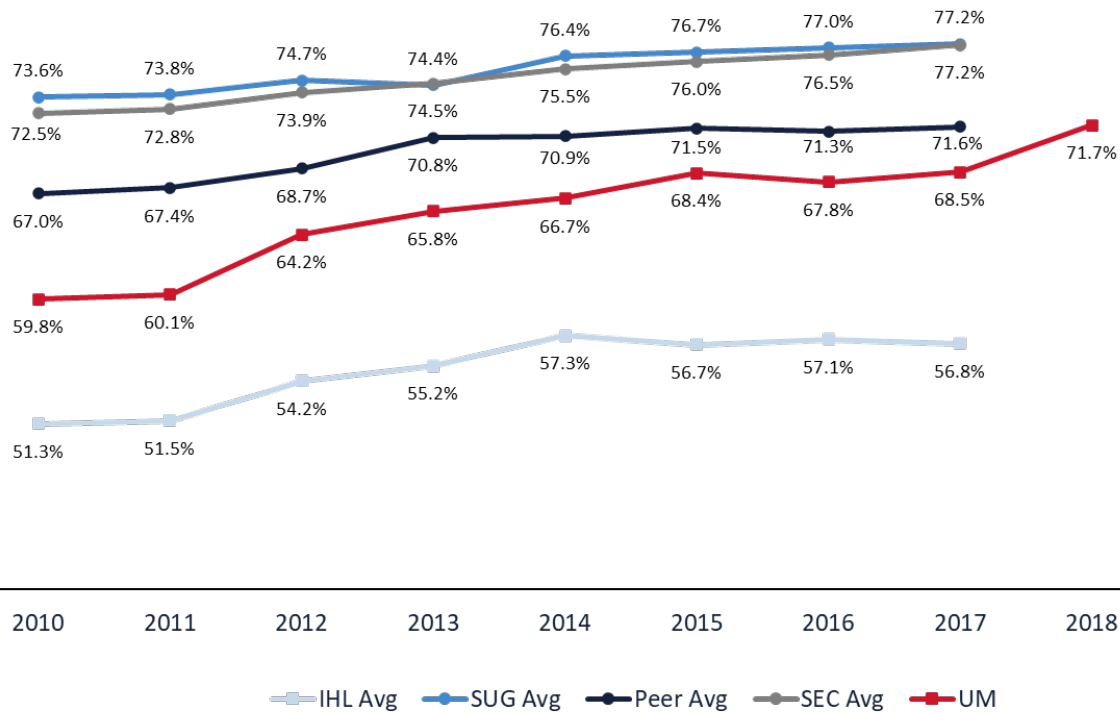Figure 1. UM Overall Graduation Rate Trends by Cohort Year

Table 1. UM and Comparison Institution Graduation Rates by Cohort Year

	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018
UM	59.8%	60.1%	64.2%	65.8%	66.7%	68.4%	67.8%	68.5%	71.7%
IHL Average	51.3%	51.5%	54.2%	55.2%	57.3%	56.7%	57.1%	56.8%	
Peer* Average	67.0%	67.4%	68.7%	70.8%	70.9%	71.5%	71.3%	71.6%	
SEC Public Average	72.5%	72.8%	73.9%	74.5%	75.5%	76.0%	76.5%	77.2%	
SUG Average	73.6%	73.8%	74.7%	74.4%	76.4%	76.7%	77.0%	77.2%	

*Peer Institutions include the 20 UM prospective peer institutions identified by Faculty Excellence Task Force and approved for use in AY 2018 and AY 2019. Prospective Peer Institutions include Auburn University, Clemson University, Colorado State University, Iowa State University, Kansas State University, Louisiana State University, Mississippi State University, Ohio University, Oregon State University, University of Alabama at Birmingham, University of Arkansas, University of California-Irvine, University of Cincinnati, University of Kansas, University of New Mexico, University of Oklahoma, University of Oregon, University of South Carolina, Virginia Commonwealth University, West Virginia University.

Figure 2. UM and Comparison Institution Graduation Rates by Cohort Year

Demonstrating Student Achievement: Background

The *2018 Principles of Accreditation: Foundation for Quality Enhancement* include standards specifically focused on student achievement. Principle 8.1 is a core requirement and states: "The institution identifies, evaluates, and publishes goals and outcomes for student achievement appropriate to the institution's mission, the nature of the students it serves, and the kinds of programs offered. The institution uses multiple measures to document student success. (Student achievement) [CR]" (SACSCOC, 2017).

To demonstrate compliance with this standard, "student achievement goals (target levels of performance) must be identified; data for student achievement must be presented and evaluated (outcomes); and both the goals and the outcomes must be published" (SACSCOC, 2018, p. 64). Similarly, the University of Mississippi must "demonstrate its success with respect to student achievement and indicate the *criteria* and *thresholds* of acceptability used to determine that success" (SACSCOC, 2018, p. 64)

- The *criteria* are the items to be measured (and published); the *thresholds of acceptability* are the minimal expectations set by the institution to define its own acceptable level of achievement – a minimum target.

- The institution is responsible for offering a justification for both the criteria it utilizes and the thresholds of acceptability it sets. The items measured and the thresholds of acceptability should be consistent with the institution's mission and the students it serves. (SACSCOC, 2018)

In July 2018, the Strategic Planning Council identified the six-year graduation rate as a criterion of student achievement and set 59% as the minimum acceptable threshold (Strategic Planning Council, 2018). The Retention Advisory Board identified the retention rate of first-time, full-time students as a criterion of student achievement, and faculty from undergraduate programs with licensure requirements for practicing professionals set threshold and goal exam passing rates for an additional measure of student achievement.

CASS was founded as "to serve as a coordinating and advisory group to matters relating to student degree persistence and completion" (Charge to CASS Advisory Board, 2018) and is the most appropriate group to identify an appropriate measure of student achievement related to persistence and completion and evaluate progress on that measure.

References

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. (2017). *2018 Principles of accreditation: Foundation for quality enhancement.* Author. Decatur, GA. Retrieved from: http://sacscoc.org/pdf/2018PrinciplesOfAcreditation.pdf

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. (2018). *Resource manual for the principles of accreditation: Foundation for quality enhancement.* Author. Decatur, GA. Retrieved from: http://sacscoc.org/pdf/2018%20POA%20Resource%20Manual.pdf

Strategic Planning Council. (2018, August). *Strategic Planning Council Meeting*. Retrieved from https://olemiss.app.box.com/file/316561376475

University of Mississippi. Statement of Institutional Philosophy. (2018) Retrieved from http://olemiss.edu/aboutum/mission.html