

Fewer community college students transfer, get degrees

By Carla Rivera, Los Angeles Times

Fewer than half of California's community college students transferred to a four-year school or earned an associate's degree in 2011-12, the lowest level of completion in five years, according to data released Tuesday by the chancellor's office.

Statewide, 49.2 percent of students who enrolled in 2006 achieved those goals after six years, compared with 52.3 percent of students who enrolled in 2002.

The completion rate for students needing remedial math and English was about 41 percent. By comparison, 71 percent of students who entered prepared to do college-level work in those subjects earned degrees or transferred.



Students in an LTCC food class. Photo/LTN file

The figures are among a raft of information available on the system's newly released Student Success Score Cards, which highlight student performance statewide and at all 112 campuses.

The score cards are available on the college chancellor's website and on those of individual campuses. They include other measures such as retention of students and job training success, in an easy-to-use format.

The numbers are also broken down by age, sex, race and ethnicity.

During a telephone media briefing, community colleges Chancellor Brice Harris said the "softening" of completion rates reflected a financial crisis that resulted in more than \$1 billion in state funding cuts, slashed course schedules, a 17 percent increase in class size and other pressures.

"These have been five of the most stressful years California community colleges have suffered in decades," Harris said. "It doesn't surprise me we've seen the numbers soften as a result. It's a clarion call that in spite of the difficult financial times we've had, we have to redouble our efforts and focus on student success."

Harris said he hoped that students paid particular heed to the stark differences in success for those prepared and unprepared for college work.

"We're frankly very pleased by that 70 percent-plus number, but we have to make clear to students and their parents the importance of being prepared ... to come to college," he said.

Harris said the score cards were not designed as a method of ranking institutions – which have different mixes of programs, student bodies and locations – although comparisons are inevitable, he conceded.