

## Trends in Retention, Persistence, and Graduation Rates at UMass Boston

We report one-year retention and six-year graduation rates for first-time full-time freshman to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) annually. These rates are under consideration by USDOE as two of many possible proxies for institutional quality and are widely published. The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) considered them in our most recent accreditation process and requested that special attention to retaining students be addressed in our fifth-year interim report. Our retention and graduation rates have been problematic, but are improving.

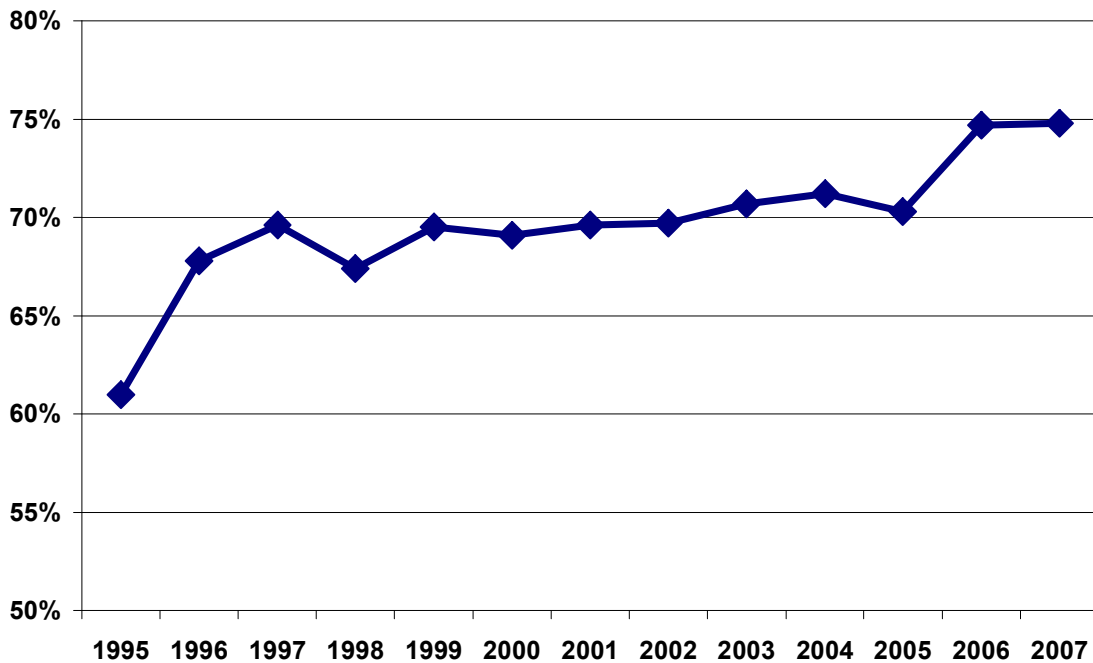
As part of our efforts to track retention, persistence, and graduation rates, each spring the Office of Institutional Research and Policy Studies calculates retention to the second year, year by year persistence through the seventh year, and four, five, and six year graduation rates for first time full time freshmen by race/ethnicity and gender. We report them to the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE) and receive information on comparable institutions in return.

### Retention to the Second Year

For the past five cohorts (2003 to 2007) the retention rate to the second year at UMass Boston has been at least 70%, with a high of 74.8% for the most recent cohort (2007). Prior to 2002, no cohort at least as far back as 1995 had a rate of 70% or more.

Details of the second year retention rates since 1995 are displayed in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Retention to the Second Year for 1995 to 2007 Fall Entering First-Time Full-Time Freshman Cohorts**



## Projected Six-Year Graduation Rate for the 2003 Cohort

We have been participating in the CSRDE for seven years. As noted earlier, we report multiple continuation and graduation rates for each cohort to the CSRDE. We have learned to look at the percentage of students who graduated within five years combined with the percentage of students who continued to the sixth year as a way of estimating the six-year graduation rate for that cohort. In preparing this year's CSRDE submission, we saw that the five-year graduation rate for the 2003 cohort was the highest since at least the 1995 cohort (30.5%). The highest previous five-year graduation rate was 28.6% for the 2000 cohort. That cohort had a six-year graduation rate of 35.6%, the highest six-year graduation rate we have reported to the USDOE in recent years.

The 2003 cohort also had the highest combined five-year graduation and six-year continuation rate we have seen since we began participating in the CSRDE in 2002 (45.7%). This spring we will report a six-year graduation rate of 33.2% for the 2002 cohort. When we report a six-year graduation rate for the 2003 cohort next year, it should be the highest that we have reported to the USDOE in the recent past.

Details of the six-year graduation rate and the combined five-year graduation and six-year continuation rate are presented in Figure 2. A preliminary six-year graduation rate for the 2003 cohort should be available in October 2009. We estimate that it will be approximately 37.2%, marked by the "+" in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Five and Six-Year Graduation Rates and Combined Five-Year Graduation And Six-Year Continuation Rates for the 1995 - 2003 Cohorts**

