



PRINCIPLE

1

Far too few full-time students graduate on time. College graduation rates suggest that “four-year” and “two-year” degrees have become little more than modern myths for most American college students. 40% of full-time students at four-year institutions graduate in four years, and only 29% of two-year students graduate within two years (NCES, 2016). Additionally, most students are not earning the 30 credits needed each academic year to graduate on time. Students must be given key information about how to get to graduation day in a timely manner, and academic advisors play an important role in teaching students this essential set of facts.

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2

Graduating late or “taking an extra year” comes at great cost for students and their families. The cost of higher education has drastically outpaced increases in median family income, and the financial burden of extra semesters or quarters on campus has skyrocketed. Faculty and academic advisors must work collaboratively with financial aid counselors and other campus partners to teach students about the financial burden – including increased debt and lost wages - of lengthy academic plans, delayed major declaration and program changes, and taking fewer credits.

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3

Advisors play a critical role in boosting student success. Academic Advising offers students an opportunity to learn the importance of early major exploration, credit accumulation, connections with faculty, and the advantages of institutional programs that promote timely completion. Institutions should create strong advising systems that teach students how to be successful in college and graduate on time. It is also important that academic advisors work collaboratively with other units on campus to develop a curriculum that teaches students, parents and families why taking 15 credits a semester or 30 credits a year saves time and money.

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4

Many more students can take 15 credits per semester or term, greatly increasing their likelihood of on-time completion. While 12 credit hours is technically the minimum to be considered “full-time,” it takes at least 15 credits a semester or term (or 30 credits a year) to ensure on-time completion. Research has shown that students who take at least 15 credits are not only more likely to complete, they do better academically as well (University of Hawai’i System, 15toFinish.com). Academic advisors are able to discuss these benefits and provide support in major exploration, life issues, and time management issues that might be roadblocks to taking 15 credits.

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#15toFinish is an effective campaign for states and institutions to begin the important conversation of how to inform students of their choices and ensure they know what it takes to graduate on time. Dozens of states and hundreds of institutions around the country are working to boost on-time graduation rates by launching #15toFinish campaigns. Advisors can help students reach graduation day by participating in these efforts. The materials needed to launch a campaign are available at completecollege.org/15tofinishmaterials