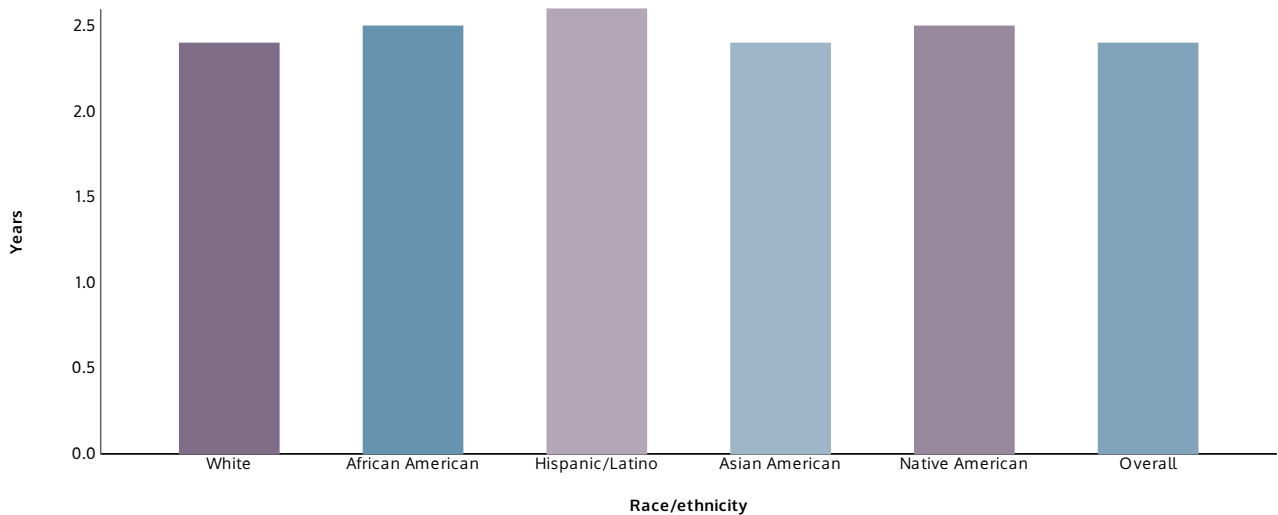


## TRANSFER AND COMPLETION

### AVERAGE TIME TO A CERTIFICATE AND AN ASSOCIATE DEGREE: IOWA

Average time to certificate or degree



#### What Is Measured?

Average time to certificate or degree

#### Who Is Counted?

First-time, full-time students entering Iowa Community Colleges in 2006 who completed a certificate or associate degree within five years

#### What It Tells Us

Iowa Community College students who entered in 2006 took an average of 2.4 years to complete a community college certificate or associate degree. The average number of years was similar across racial/ethnic groups.

#### Why It's Important

How long it takes to complete a degree is one of the most commonly asked questions about postsecondary education (Adelman, 2006, p. 159). This measure is particularly relevant to community colleges because the longer a student is enrolled, the more it costs both the students and the college in terms of direct costs and opportunity costs. The students may continue paying tuition and fees and forgoing employment, while the college continues to spend on instruction and other services while possibly turning away other students. But this measure only includes students who actually earn a credential, and the result depends on how long the students are followed. For example, if students are tracked for five years, students who take six years or longer to complete are not counted, though doing so would inevitably increase the average time to degree.

#### ABOUT THE DATA

Estimates are from the Iowa Community College information system. Earlier cohorts of entering students were tracked up to five years to determine the average time it took them to complete a degree, though this cohort was tracked for fewer years.

#### DATA SOURCE

Iowa Department of Education, Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation, Bureau of Community Colleges and Career and Technical Education Services. (2010). *The annual condition of Iowa's Community Colleges 2010*. Des Moines, IA: Author.