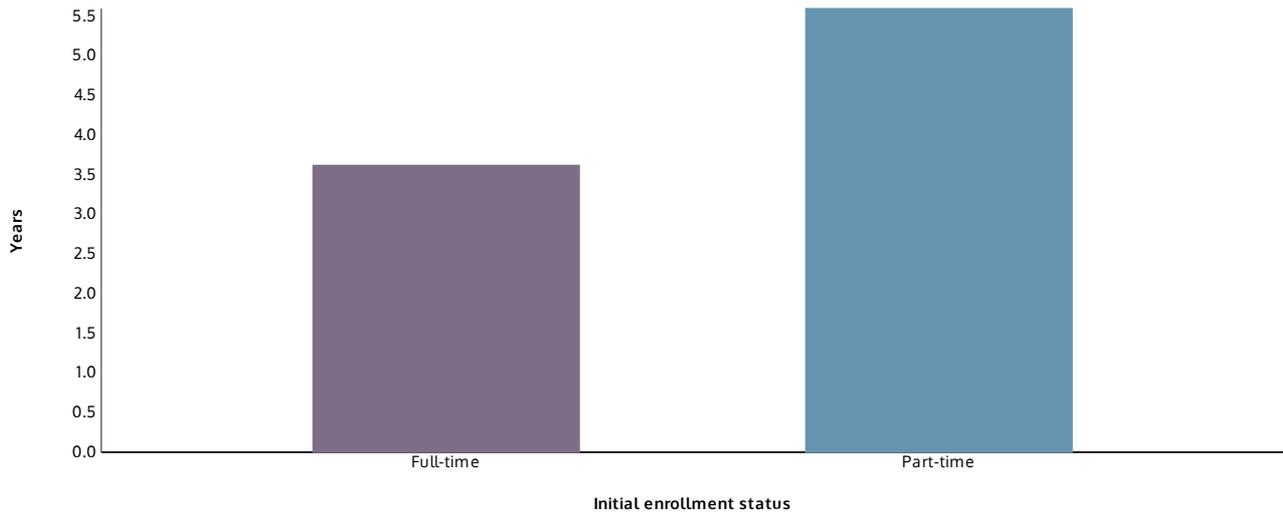


TRANSFER AND COMPLETION

AVERAGE TIME TO AN ASSOCIATE DEGREE: VIRGINIA

Average time to degree



What Is Measured?

Average time to degree

Who Is Counted?

First-time degree-seeking Virginia Community College students who completed an associate degree in 2008-09

What It Tells Us

First-time Virginia Community College students who completed an associate degree in 2008-09 and were initially enrolled full time took an average of almost four years to complete their degree. Students initially enrolled part time took on average nearly six years to complete an associate degree.

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

Data were collected from Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) participating states. Estimates from institutions identified by SREB as technical institutes or colleges may not be included due to their offerings of short-term programs. Data from community colleges were restricted to associate degree completers. Data shown in the figure include only those who completed an associate degree from the institution in which they first enrolled; transfer students are not included.

To calculate average time to complete a degree, participating states and institutions were asked determine the first term of enrollment for the cohort receiving associate degrees in 2008-09. Time to degree was counted using the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System academic year definition. Thus, the summer session and fall through spring terms constitute an academic year.

DATA SOURCE

[Southern Regional Education Board Data Exchange. \(2010, December\). *Time and credits attempted to degree, public colleges, by college 2008-09.*](#)

