

Comparisons of First-time, Full-time, Baccalaureate Degree-Seeking Student Persistence and Graduation Rates with National Averages

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Executive Summary

- Mason's persistence and graduate rates were **slightly higher** than the national averages of **moderately-selective public** institutions (2001 ACT Composite 21.0-22.4 or SAT Composite 990-1044) with student enrollment of 18,000 or higher and **lower** than those of the **selective** public institutions (2001 ACT Composite 22.5-24.0 or SAT Composite 1045-1100).
- Mason's overall one-year persistence was about **1.4% higher** than the national average for **moderately selective** public institutions.
- Mason's overall six-year graduation rate was **2.4% higher** than the national average for **moderately selective** public institutions.
- Mason's minority students (African American, Asian, Hispanic, American Indian & Non-resident Alien) have **much higher** persistence and graduation rates in comparison with the national norm for **moderately selective** public institutions.
- Using multi-year average, Mason's overall one-year persistence rate was about 4% lower than the national average for selective public institutions. However, for the 2002 cohort, Mason's one-year persistence rate was about 2% higher than the national index for selective public institutions.
- Mason's overall six-year graduation rate was **9% lower** than the national average for **selective** public institutions.
- Mason's minority students have **higher** one-year persistence AND six-year graduation rates than the national averages of **selective** public institutions.
- In comparison, Mason's Male and White student groups tend to have lower persistence and graduation rates than their female and minority peers.

The purpose of this study is to detect where Mason stands in terms of its one-year persistence and 6-year graduation rates in comparison with other public institutions. George Mason’s first-time, full-time, baccalaureate degree-seeking cohort persistence and graduation rates were compared with those of national averages of selective and moderately selective public institutions respectively based on the data collected by Consortium of Student Retention Rate Exchange. Ninety-four (94) moderately selective and 60 selective public institutions participated in the 2002 CSRDE studies. College of William & Mary, James Madison, Norfolk State U., UVA, VCU and VT from VA participated in the 2002 studies. Multi-year averages were used for both CSRDE and Mason to assure data reliability.

Comparing With Moderately Selective Public Institutions

Mason’s rates were first compared with the average of moderately selective public institution whose 2001 ACT Composite scores ranged from 21.0-22.4 or SAT Composite scores ranged from 990-1044. Tables 1 exhibit the comparisons and Charts 1 – 4 provide visual depiction of the differences.

Table 1. Comparisons of Persistence/Graduation Rates Between Mason and CSRDE Participating Moderately Selective Public Institutions (SAT 990-1044)

	CSRDE					George Mason				
	Continuation Rates		Graduation Rates			Continuation Rates		Graduation Rates		
	To 2nd Yr	To 3rd Yr	4-Year	5-Year	6-Year	To 2nd Yr	To 3rd Yr	4-Year	5-Year	6-Year
	(1995-2001)	(1995-2000)	(1995-98)	(1995-97)	(1995-96)	(1995-2001)	(1995-2000)	(1995-98)	(1995-97)	(1995-96)
Total ¹	74.4	62.8	18.1	38.1	45.2	75.7	66.3	23.9	41.8	47.6
Male	70.8	57.8	12.9	31.1	37.8	72.4	63.1	16.7	33.9	41.2
Female	74.4	62.1	21.7	40.9	46.7	78.4	68.9	29.7	48.1	52.7
Black	77.9	65.7	10.8	26.4	32.9	77.7	67.5	22.1	39.2	43.9
Hispanic	75.2	62.7	10.4	26.7	34.1	76.2	69.5	20.3	38.0	47.3
Asian	82.3	71.5	13.4	31.6	41.4	81.2	74.8	24.0	43.9	51.7
American Indian	69.0	55.2	10.3	23.2	29.1	68.7	54.1	19.4	30.1	39.0
White	79.0	68.7	19.6	39.1	44.8	73.6	63.2	24.1	41.6	46.5
Nonres. Alien	78.4	66.5	23.3	37.2	40.8	80.4	72.2	35.3	56.6	63.4

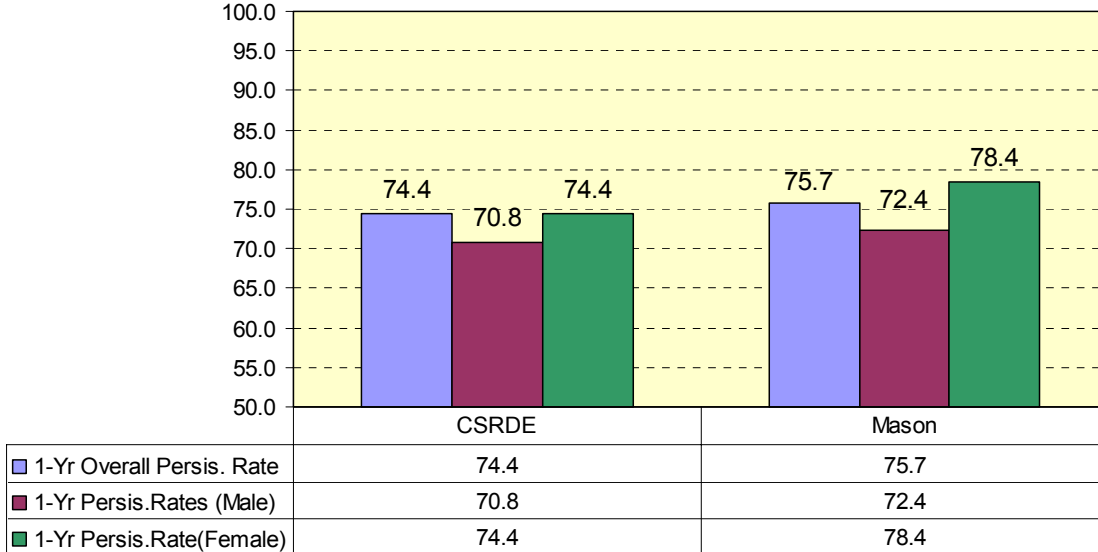
One-Year Persistence Rate

According to Table 1, Mason’s one-year persistence rate was 1.2% higher than the national average (75.7% vs. 74.4%). Chart 1 is a visual depiction of the comparisons of student one-year persistence rates between Mason and other moderately selective public institutions participating in the CSRDE studies. According to Chart 1, Mason’s female student 1-year persistence rate was about 4% higher than its national norm (78.4% vs. 74.4%). Mason’s overall rate and the rate for male students were

¹ The Total rates were based on the averages of CSRDE moderately selective participating institutions’ with student enrollment of 18,000 or larger whereas the rates for the sub-groups based on race and gender were based on ALL CSRDE moderately selective participating institutions regardless of institution size. CSRDE data indicates that bigger public institutions tend to have slightly higher continuing and graduation rates than their smaller peers.

slightly higher than the national averages (75.7% vs. 74.4%, 72.4% vs. 70.8% respectively).

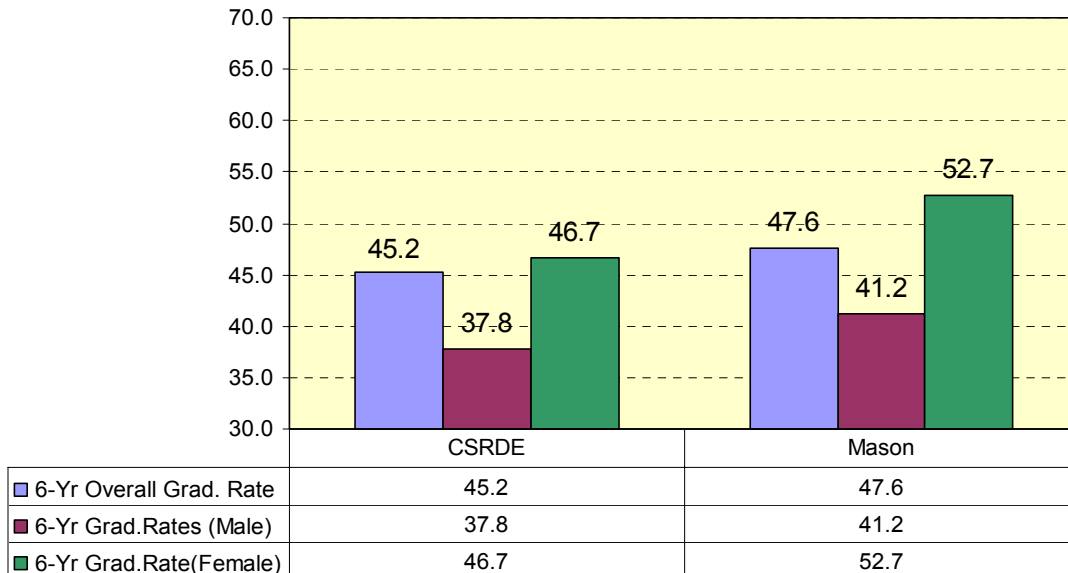
Chart 1. Comparisons of 1-Yr Persistence Rates Between Mason and National Average of Moderately Selective Public Institutions



Six-Year Graduation Rates

Mason’s six-year graduation rates (overall, by gender, by ethnic background) were all above the national averages of moderately selective public institutions. The overall 6-year graduation rate was 2.5% higher than the national bench-mark (47.6% vs. 45.2%). The rate for female student was about 6% higher than the national norm (52.7% vs. 46.7%). For male, the rate was about 3% higher than the national average. Chart 2 is a graphic presentation of the difference between Mason and the national averages in terms of 6-year graduation rates for the overall cohorts as well as those of male and female students respectively.

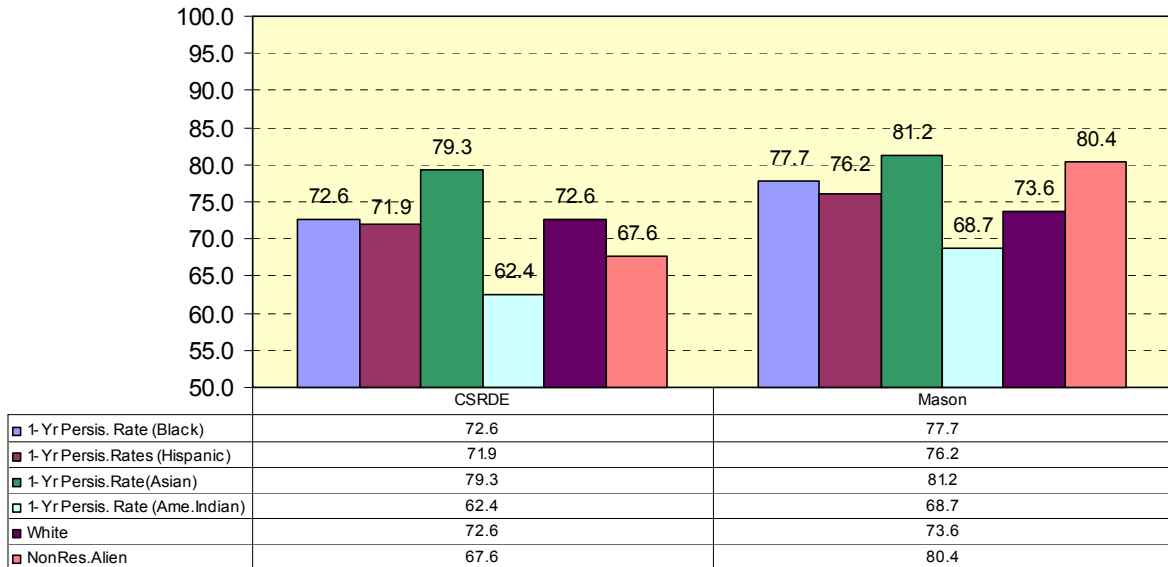
Chart 2. Comparisons of 6-Yr Graduation Rates Between Mason and National Averages of Moderately Selective Public Institutions



Minority Students

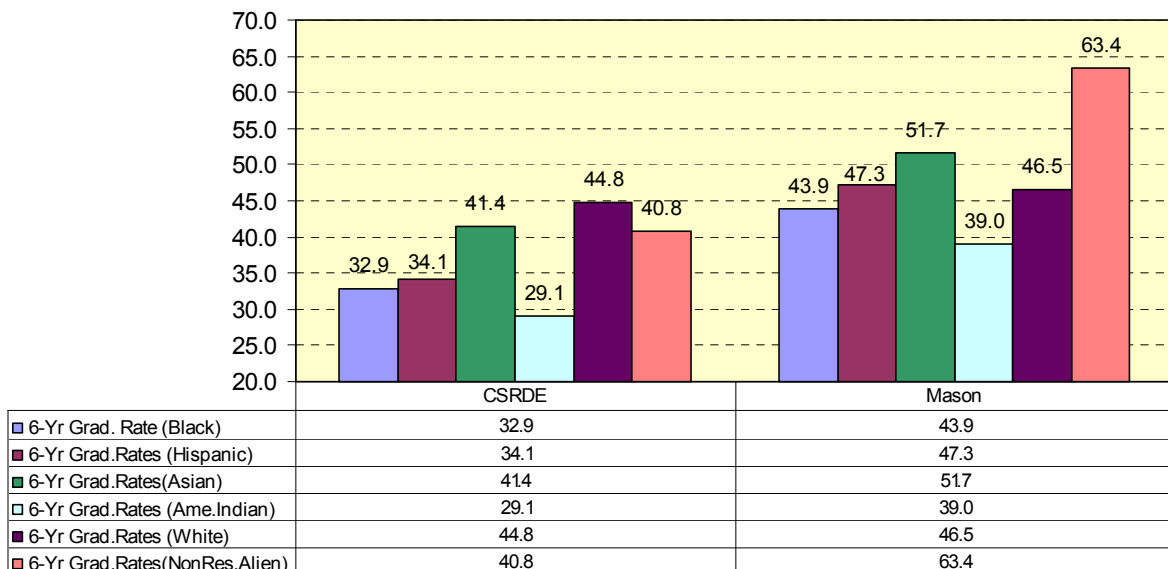
While one-year persistence rate for the White students were very comparable with that of the national average (73.6% vs. 72.6%), Mason’s minority student persistence rates were a lot higher than the national averages. For African American students, the national average was 72.6% and for Mason, it was 77.7%, about 5% higher. For Hispanic students, the national average was 71.9%. For Mason, the rate was 76.2, about 4% higher than the national average. For Asian students, the national average was 79.3%. For Mason, the rate was 81.2, about 2% higher than the national average. For American Indian students, the national average was 62.4%. For Mason, the rate was 68.7, about 6% higher than the national average. For Non-Resident Alien students, the national average was 67.6%. For Mason, the rate was 80.4, about 13% higher than the national average.

Chart 3. Comparisons of 1-Yr Persistence Rates Between Mason and the National Average of Moderate Selective Public Institutions Based on Ethnic Background



Mason’s higher-than-the-national-average persistence rates were mirrored in the 6-year graduation rates as well. Chart 4 showcased the differences visually.

Chart 4. Comparisons of 6-Yr Persistence Rates Between Mason and the National Average of Moderate Selective Public Institutions Based on Ethnic Background



Comparing With Selective Public Institutions

With Mason being more selective in the past few year, its persistence and graduation rates were also compared with those of selective public institutions (SAT 1045-1100). Table 2 presents the comparative summaries.

Table 2. Comparisons of Persistence/Graduation Rates Between Mason and CSRDE Participating Selective Public Institutions (SAT 1045-1100)

	CSRDE					George Mason				
	Continuation Rates		Graduation Rates			Continuation Rates		Graduation Rates		
	To 2nd Yr	To 3rd Yr	Four-Year	Five-Year	Six-Year	To 2nd Yr	To 3rd Yr	Four-Year	Five-Year	Six-Year
	(1995-2001)	(1995-2000)	(1995-98)	(1995-97)	(1995-96)	(1995-2001)	(1995-2000)	(1995-98)	(1995-97)	(1995-96)
Total ²	79.6	69.5	27.9	50.8	56.6	75.7	66.3	23.9	41.8	47.6
Male	77.5	66.8	20.1	44.0	50.9	72.4	63.1	16.7	33.9	41.2
Female	80.0	69.5	32.4	53.6	58.4	78.4	68.9	29.7	48.1	52.7
Black	77.9	65.7	15.9	35.1	42.0	77.7	67.5	22.1	39.2	43.9
Hispanic	75.2	62.7	16.6	36.4	43.3	76.2	69.5	20.3	38.0	47.3
Asian	82.3	71.5	20.7	44.1	53.0	81.2	74.8	24.0	43.9	51.7
American Indian	69.0	55.2	14.1	31.0	35.8	68.7	54.1	19.4	30.1	39.0
White	79.0	68.7	28.5	51.7	57.1	73.6	63.2	24.1	41.6	46.5
NonRes. Alien	78.4	66.5	31.5	49.0	54.8	80.4	72.2	35.3	56.6	63.4

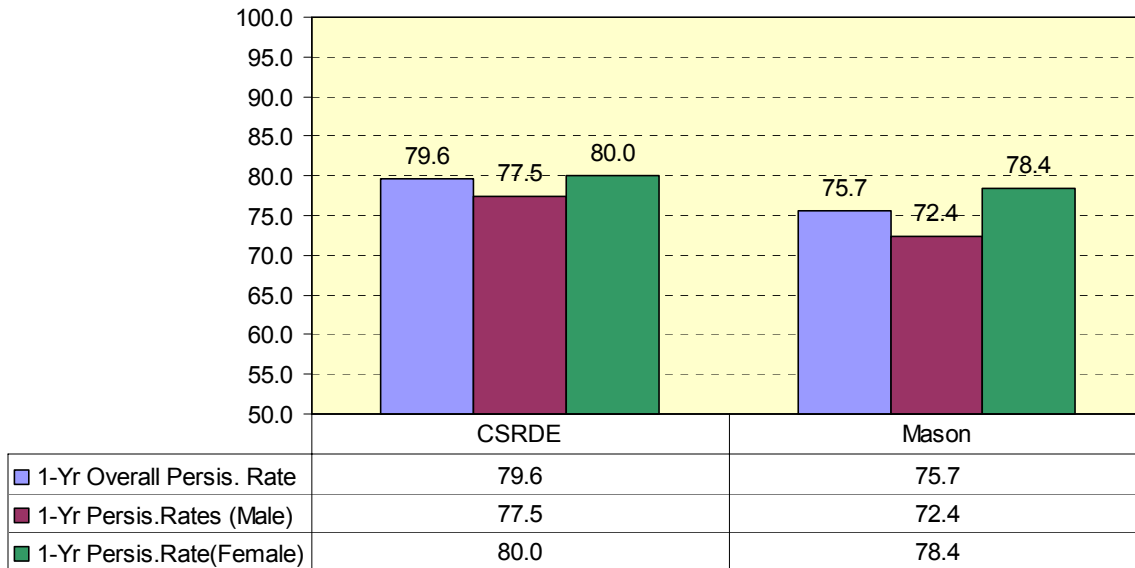
One-Year Persistence Rate

Since the comparison data were based on multi-year average (1995-2001 cohorts) by CSRDE, Mason’s ever-improving one-year persistence rates in the past three years were not reflected in this multi-year average. For example, for 2002, Mason’s overall one-year persistence rate was 82.2%, about 2% higher than the national index for selective institutions. However, for 1995 and 1997, the one-year persistence rates were 74.7% and 71.1% respectively (per IRR Report No.5). Based on the multi-year composite score Mason’s one-year persistence rate was about 4% lower than the national average. Chart 5 presents a visual illustration of the

² The Total rates were based the averages of CSRDE selective participating institutions with student enrollment of 18,000 or larger whereas the rates for the sub-groups based on race and gender were based on ALL CSRDE selective participating institutions regardless of institution size. CSRDE data suggests that bigger public institutions tend to have slightly higher continuing and graduation rates than their smaller peers.

differences in student one-year persistence rates between Mason and other selective public institutions.

Chart 5. Comparisons of 1-Yr Persistence Rates Between Mason and National Average of Selective Public Institutions

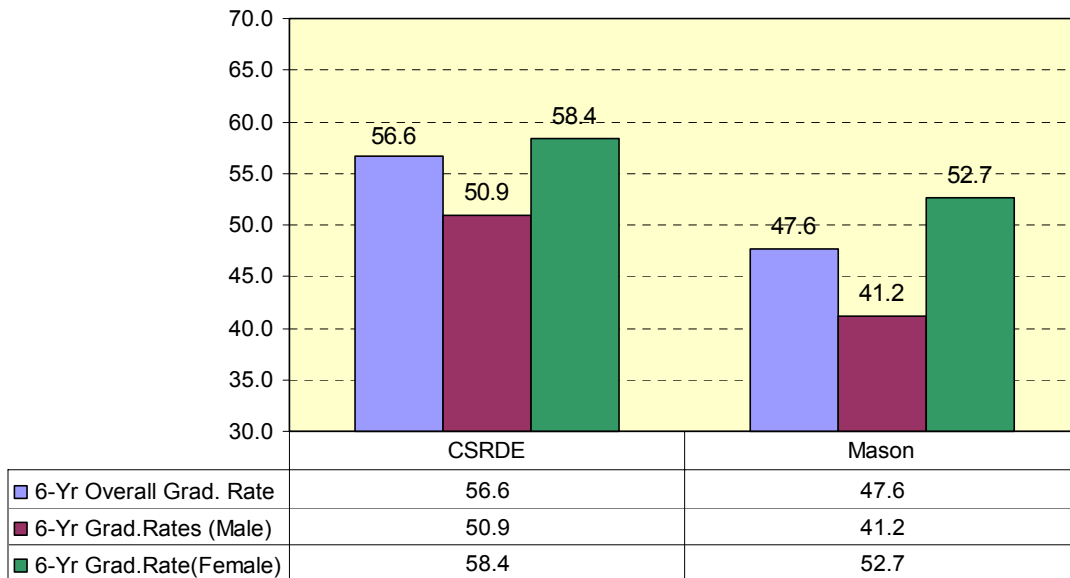


According to Chart 5, Male students seemed to have the biggest difference (about 5%) with their national peers. For Female students, the difference was 1.6%.

Six-Year Graduation Rates

Chart 6 displays the differences in 6-year graduation rates between Mason and other selective public institutions.

Chart 6. Comparisons of 6-Yr Graduation Rates Between Mason and National Averages of Selective Public Institutions

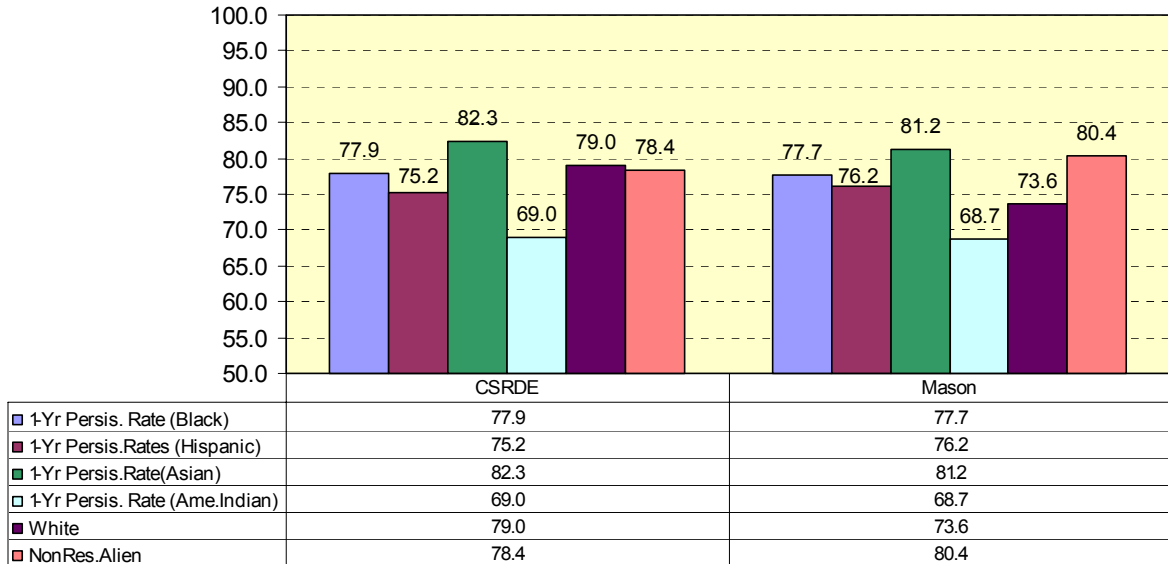


In comparison with the national averages, Mason’s overall 6-year graduation rate was about 10% below the national index. For the 95-96 cohort, the 6-year overall graduation rate for Mason was 47.6% in comparison with 56.6% for the national averages, about 9% lower than the national average..

Minority Students

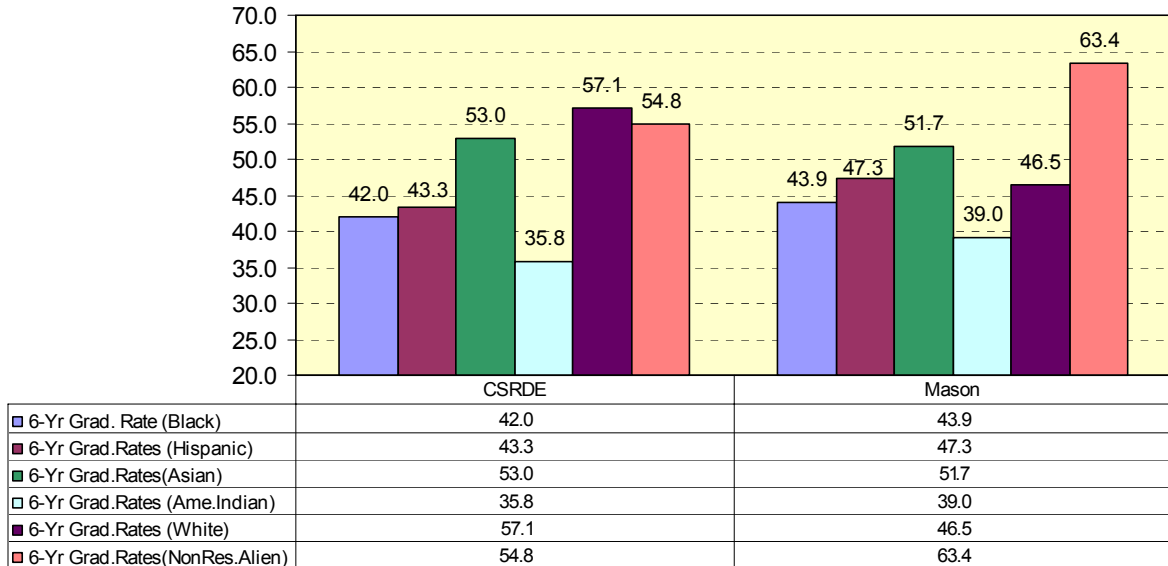
While Mason’s overall persistence and graduation rates tend to be lower than the national average, the same rates for its minority student groups were very comparable. Chart 7 demonstrates the close matches. In terms of one-year persistence rates, Mason’s rate for the White students were about 5% lower than the national average whereas the African American, Hispanic and Asian students all had similar rates as their peers in other public selective institutions (about 1% or less in terms of differences).

Chart 7. Comparisons of 1-Yr Persistence Rates Between Mason and the National Average of Selective Public Institutions Based on Ethnic Background



These persistence momentum was carried over to the 6-year graduation rates for Mason’s ethnic minority groups. An examination of Chart 8 reveals that Mason’s minority student 6-year graduation rates tend to be higher than those of the selective institutions.

Chart 8. Comparisons of 6-Yr Graduation Rates Between Mason and the National Average of Selective Public Institutions Based on Ethnic Background



Based on Chart 8, the 6-year graduation rate for African American students in Mason was 43.9% whereas the national average for African American students in selective public institutions was 42%. Likewise, Mason’s Hispanic student 6-year graduation rate was about 4% higher than its national average (47.3% vs. 43.3%). As far as Asian American students are concerned, Mason’s 6-year graduation rate was 51.7% and the national average was 53%. Please note that the numbers of American Indian and Non-resident Alien students tend to be small in George Mason. As a result, even though their graduation rates also tend to be higher than the national average, when the rates transferred to headcount, the number of students could be very small.

Summary

In general, Mason’s persistence and graduation rates were higher than those for moderately selective public institutions, but lower than those of the selective institutions except for its minority students. Minority student persistence and graduation rates in Mason is highly comparable with, and sometimes higher than the national averages for selective public institutions. Given the tendency that commuter institutions tend to have much lower persistence and graduation rates than residential schools, considering that the majority of Mason’s students were commuters, Mason’s higher-than-average persistence and graduation rates in the overall comparison were highly commendable. Mason’s much-higher-than-average minority student persistence and graduation rates were truly outstanding.

For further inquiries into this issue, please contact IRR (3-8841 or mzhai@gmu.edu) for assistance.