

# Trends

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## Persistence and Completion Update

Persistence and graduation rates at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University in this decade are the highest they have ever been. They have risen as the academic quality of the incoming students has risen and as characteristics indicating student – institutional fit have improved.

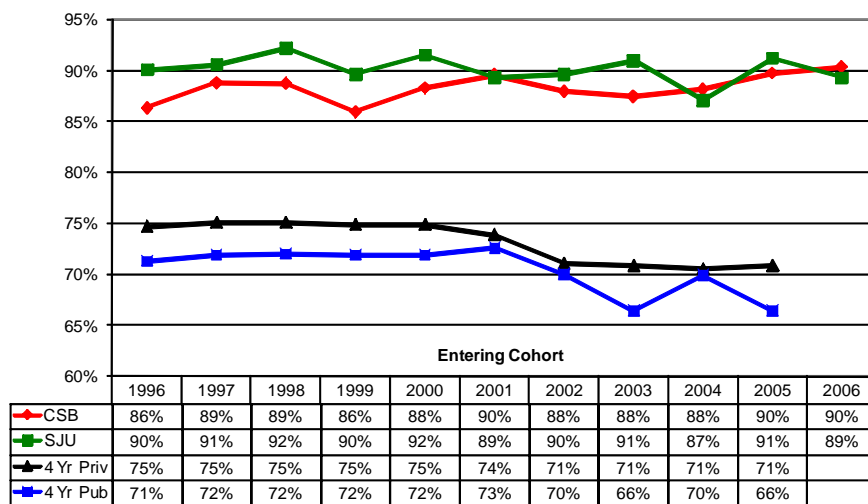
## First Year to Second Year Retention Rates

The first- to second-year retention rate, an important indicator of academic quality and student satisfaction, remained very high this fall. Ninety percent of fall 2006 new entering students were still enrolled as of the 10<sup>th</sup> day of classes in fall 2007. Since 1997, first-year to second-year retention rates at CSB/SJU have averaged nearly 90%, higher than averages for public and private colleges nationally and similar to rates for the most selective liberal arts colleges in the country. Retention rates at Saint Benedict and Saint John's rank in the top quartile of Minnesota's private colleges. Fall-to-spring retention rates of new entering first-year students has been 96-98% over the past ten years.

Retention and graduation rates at CSB and SJU are similar to those of the most selective liberal arts colleges in the country.

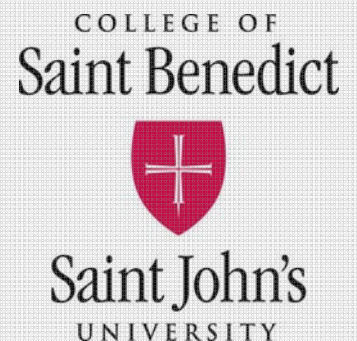
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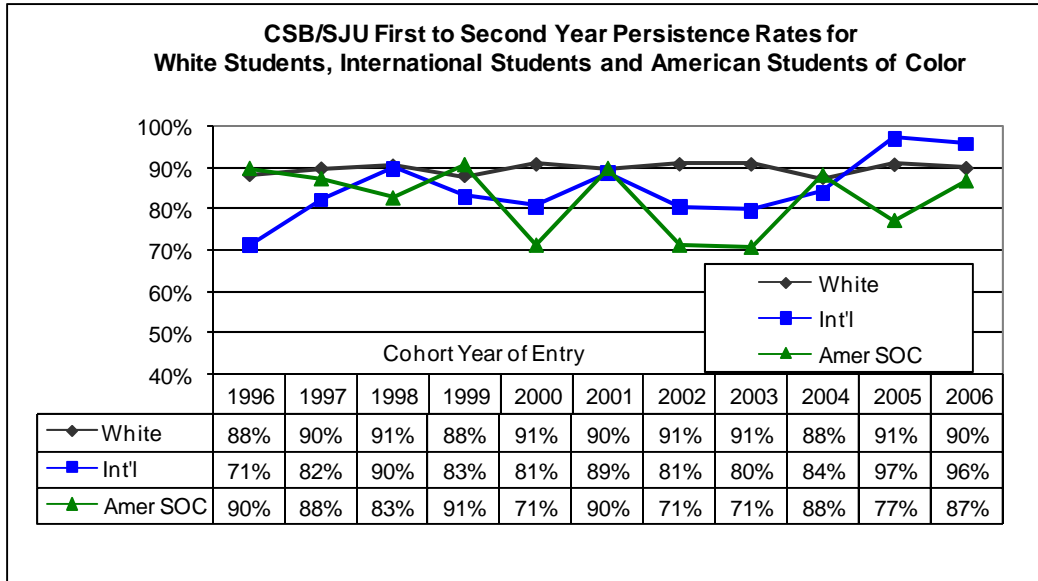
**First Year to Second Year Persistence Rates:  
CSB/SJU vs 4 Yr Private & Public Colleges**



Source: ACT, 2007

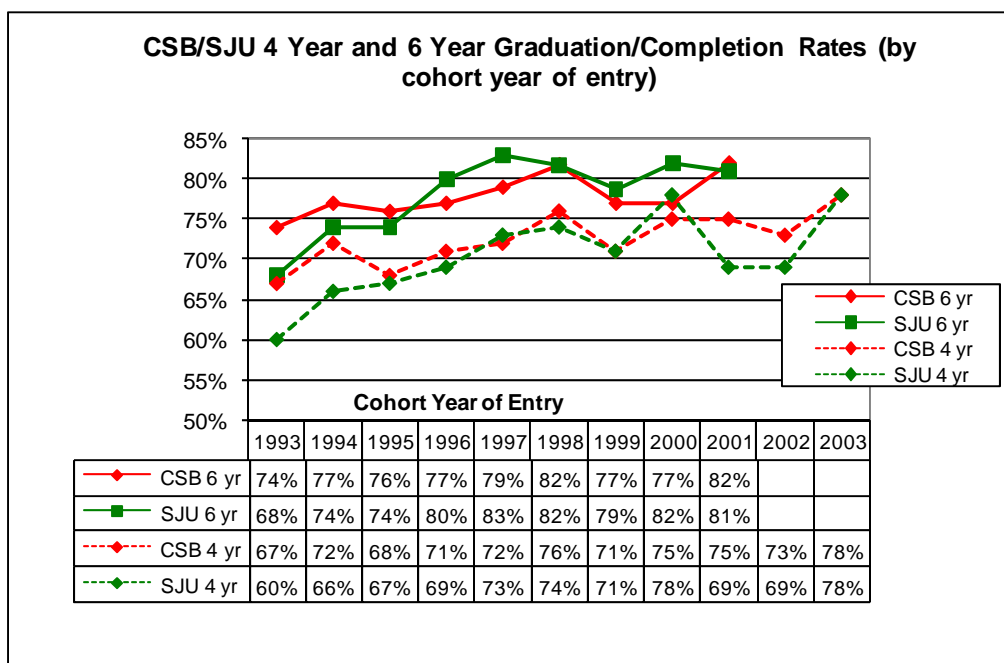
Although overall first- to second- year retention is quite high, disparities exist by racial and ethnic group. Both international and American students of color persist to the second year at rates lower than their white peers, though the rate among non-whites is highly variable (in part because the number of students is so much smaller). The ten year average for students of color is eight percentage points lower than the average for white students – 82% versus 90% – though in recent years the gap has decreased. The ten year average for international students is four percentage points lower – 86% versus 90%, though the gap has largely disappeared over the last three years. Last fall, retention rates for students of color and international students approached or exceeded 90%, totals much higher than retention for all students at most other private and public colleges in the country.





### Persistence to Completion of Degree

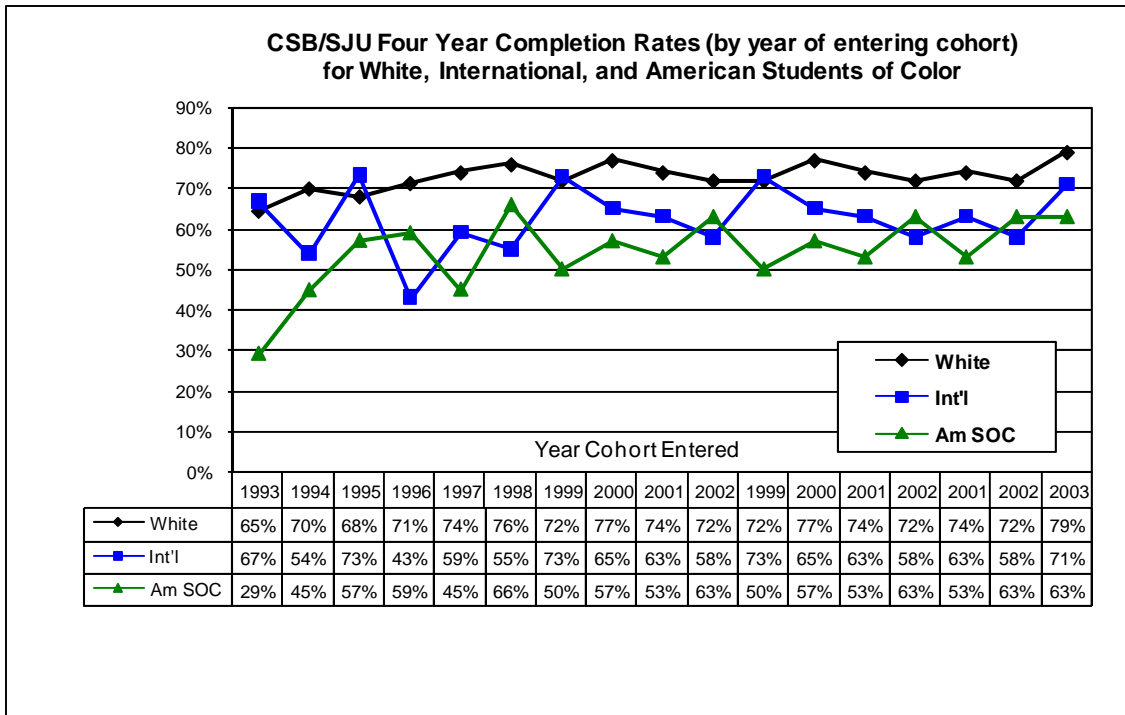
High first-year to second-year persistence leads to high completion or graduation rates. The graduation rate (which measures the percentage of new entering students who remain to complete their degree at CSB/SJU) is higher at both the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University than averages for public and private colleges nationally and similar to rates for the most selective liberal arts colleges in the country. Four-year completion rates at CSB and SJU have climbed to more than 70%, and last year reached almost 80% (for the class that entered in fall 2003). By comparison, the national average at four-year private colleges is just over 55%, and 44 % at public four-year colleges.



The federal standard for completion of a baccalaureate degree is now six years. Six-year completion rates at CSB and SJU are comparable to those at our key Minnesota private competitors and much higher than at public colleges in the state. The aggregate six-year completion rate of the last four graduating cohorts at CSB/SJU is 81% -- nearly identical to rates at Saint Olaf (83%), but higher than rates at Gustavus (73%) and Saint Thomas (72%). They are much higher than rates at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities (58%) and Saint Cloud State University (45%).

Of CSB/SJU students who do persist to earn a degree here, fully 9 in 10 do so in four years or less. Nationally, about 80% of all private college students earn their degrees in four years or less, and only half of all public college graduates will do so at their college of entry within four years.

Reflecting differences in first- to second-year persistence, graduation rates vary by racial/ethnic groups. American students of color have had lower rates graduate rates, though the gap between them and their white peers has been closing. Most students who are not retained leave between their first and second year of college. That is true at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University, as well. If CSB and SJU can retain students of color beyond the first year, we can expect to attain higher degree completion rates.



For additional information about retention or persistence, please contact Karen Knutson in the Office of Institutional Planning and Research at [kknutson@csbsju.edu](mailto:kknutson@csbsju.edu) or at 5922.