



## Change in Total Headcount Enrollment, Enrollment of Full-Time First-Time Students, Mean High School Rank, One-Year Retention Rates, and Six-Year Graduation Rates 1991-2008

March 9, 2010

Total headcount enrollment at CCSU declined almost 20% from 14,436 in 1989 to 11,752 in 1993, and enrollment of full-time first-time students declined similarly from 1,158 to 902 during the same period (see Figures 1 and 2). These declines occurred in part as a result of a demographic trough among students graduating from high school during this period, but also because of a period of fiscal austerity during which state support for education declined from 58% of revenue in 1989-90 to just 41% of revenue in 1994-95. During the same period, tuition and required fees increased from \$1,625 to \$3,140 per year for full-time undergraduates, a rise of 93%.

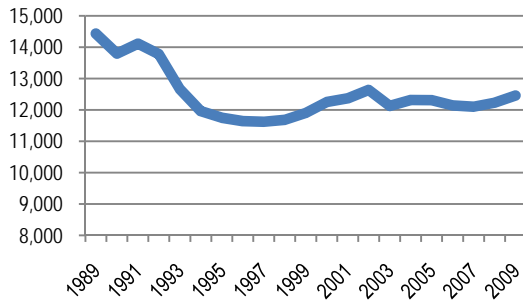
To rebuild enrollments, CCSU began to increase the size of the incoming class of full-time, first-time students, increasing 17% from 902 in 1993 to 1,050 in 1994 and then gradually increasing enrollments over the next decade to a high of 1,485 in 2002 (see Figure 2). As these enrollments were increased, the average high school rank of entering students declined from an average of the 61<sup>st</sup> percentile for those entering in 1992 to the 51<sup>st</sup> percentile for those entering in 1997, suggesting that the increases were realized by lowering selectivity (see Figure 3).

As selectivity declined, however, so did one-year retention rates. While for the cohort of full-time first-time students entering CCSU between 1989 and 1991 the one-year retention rate ranged between 78% and 80%, this rate declined to 69% for the class entering in 1997, the low point for one-year retention rates as well as high school class rank. One-year retention rates began a sustained recovery for the entering class of 2000, the same year when high school class rank began to increase noticeably (see Figure 3). Overall headcount enrollment at CCSU throughout the latter half of the 1990s remained above 11,600 but below 12,000 students.

In the late 1990s, CCSU adopted a strategic plan that included an objective to raise the institution's profile from a third tier to a second tier university, as ranked by *U.S. News and World Report*. A significant means by which this was to be accomplished was to increase selectivity. Average SAT scores of entering full-time, first-time students increased from 986 in 2002 to 1,028 in 2003 (this increase occurred well after re-centering of the test in 1994) and more importantly high school rank also increased from an average of the 51<sup>st</sup> percentile in 1997 to a high of the 62<sup>nd</sup> percentile for the class entering in fall 2009 (see Figure 3).

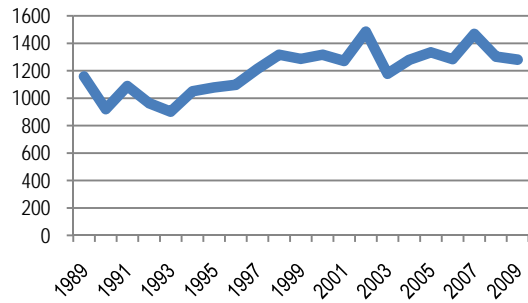
These increases in the academic profile of the entering class are important because entering characteristics of students are strongly correlated with college success and can be observed in increased retention and graduation rates. Indeed, following the increase in high school class rank, one-year retention rates increased from 72% for full-time, first-time students entering in 2000 to 79% for those entering 2006-2008 (see Figure 4). Six-year graduation rates very closely track one-year retention rates, but it is crucial to recognize that six-year graduation rates represent trailing indicators. Recent increases in the graduation rates for students entering CCSU in 2001-2003 are reflective of increased retention rates and high school rank for students in those cohorts.

**Figure 1. Total Fall Headcount Enrollment**



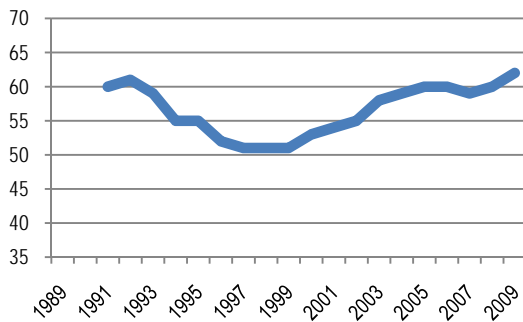
Total headcount enrollment decreased 17% from its peak late 1980s into the early 1990s. This decline was caused largely by demographics as well as decreased state support

**Figure 2. Enrollment of Full-Time, First-Time Students**



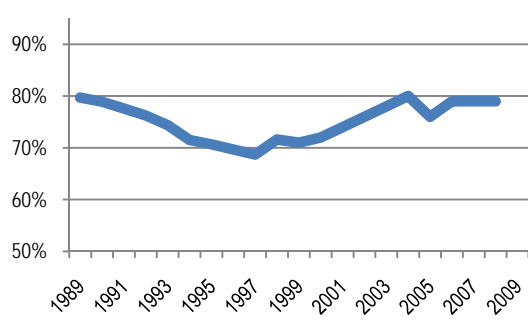
Enrollments of entering full-time, first-time students were increased to offset overall enrollment declines from the late 1980s into the early 1990s.

**Figure 3. Average HS Rank of Full-Time, First-Time Students (percentile)**



In order to recruit, admit, and enroll more full-time, first-time students, admission standards in the mid-1990s were relaxed. They were tightened up again in the 2000s.

**Figure 4. One-Year Retention Rates of Full-Time, First-Time Students**



Change in one-year retention rates mirror the change in average high school class rank, declining as selectivity declined in the mid-1990s, and recovering in the 2000s as selectivity increased.

**Data Sources**

**Figure 1.** CCSU Fact Book, Historical Enrollments (1975-2009). <http://www.ccsu.edu/page.cfm?p=4825>.

**Figure 2.** Banner table SOBFTFT, frozen capture of CCSU first-time, full-time cohort. Data for 1989-93 are from a report submitted to the Consortium for the Study of Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE) in 1999.

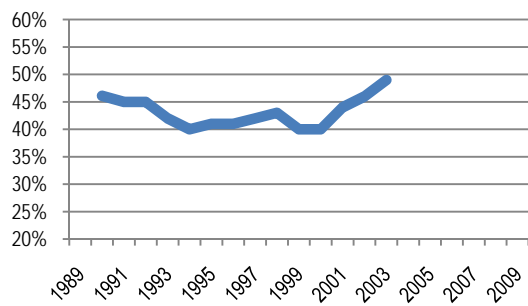
**Figure 3.** Academic inputs for full-time first-time students appears in the CCSU Fact Book; figures from the 1990s in the Fact Book derive from Semi-Annual Statistical Reports submitted each semester to the CSU System Office.

**Figure 4.** One-year retention rates for full-time, first-time students entering 1991-2008 appear in the Fact Book, <http://www.ccsu.edu/page.cfm?p=4783>. Data for cohorts from the early 1990s are reconstructed from reports to the CSRDE.

**Figure 5.** Six-year graduation rates for full-time, first-time students entering 1991-2008 appear in the Fact Book, <http://www.ccsu.edu/page.cfm?p=4783>. Data for cohorts from the early 1990s are reconstructed from reports to the CSRDE.

**Additional sources:** tuition and fees and revenue figures are from the U.S. Dept. of Education IPEDS Data Center.

**Figure 5. Six-Year Graduation Rates of Full-Time, First-Time Students**



Graduation rates are trailing indicators and roughly parallel the one-year retention rates for the same cohort. In any given reporting year, the one-year retention rate and six-year graduation rate reflect institutional performance at different moments in time and over different periods of time.