

## WSU Vancouver Student Persistence and Graduation Update 2022

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As part of a continuing effort to monitor the success of undergraduates at WSU Vancouver, the following short summary and accompanying figures present benchmark information and significant developments over the past academic year:

### Persistence and Graduation Rates

First-year (fall-to-fall) persistence or success rates rebounded 11 percentage points from last-year's all-time low for new students admitted as *freshmen* to 74%. *Early transfer* student persistence stayed within normal fluctuations (72%) as did *late transfer* persistence (85%)(See **Figure 1**).

First-year success rates for students admitted as *late transfers* admitted in Fall 2020 have been revised to reflect that a record number of new transfer students (36) graduated in their first year. The retention-or-graduation rate for that class was 85%, as opposed to the 79% retention rate previously reported.

Graduation rates also held near historical averages. This includes the six-year graduation rate for students entering as freshmen (2022 rate: 54%. Five-year average: 56%), the three-year graduation rates for late-transfer students (2022 rate: 73%. Five-year average: 72%), and the six-year graduation rate for Early transfer students (2020: 59%. Five-year average: 57%). (See **Figure 2**). All graduation rates include full-time and part-time students.

### Academic History as Predictor

The association between high-school academic performance and persistence at WSUV remains strong (See **Figure 3**). While freshman-admitted students of all GPA levels showed improved persistence this year as compared to last, students with a history of lower high-school performance (High-school GPA < 3.11) only persisted to their second year at a rate of 52% for the past academic year. Historically, this group has only graduated at a rate of 35% within six years. The incoming Fall 2022 class presented an average high school GPA near historical highs (3.42).

### Race/Ethnicity

Differences in student success associated with race/ethnicity show very different patterns when viewed in the long- vs. short-term. Looking at cohorts that entered WSUV several years ago, racial disparities were greatly decreased. 3-year graduation rates for transfer students from underrepresented race/ethnicity groups (Latinx, African American, Native American, and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander) continued at parity or higher compared to white students for the past five years. (Five-year averages of 67% and 62% respectively, see **Figure 4**). Six-year graduation rates for freshman-admitted students from underrepresented race/ethnicity groups also improved over the past four years in comparison to white students, while a nine point disparity existed in the five-year average (48% and 57%, rates respectively.) Due to their small size, graduation rates for Individual race/ethnicity groups are evaluated by pooling results from multiple years. **Figure 5** presents 3-year averages for each group. While some differences remain between groups, they are greatly diminished in comparison to previous years and now differ from the pattern seen in national educational comparisons between race/ethnicity groups.

However, graduation rates are trailing indicators. When we examine cohorts that entered WSU Vancouver in more recent years, disparities tied to race/ethnicity have resurfaced and widened particularly for cohorts

that entered since the start of the pandemic. For the class that entered in Fall 2021, a 13-point persistence disparity occurred for freshmen and a 16-point disparity for transfer students. (See **Figure 6**).

**Gender**

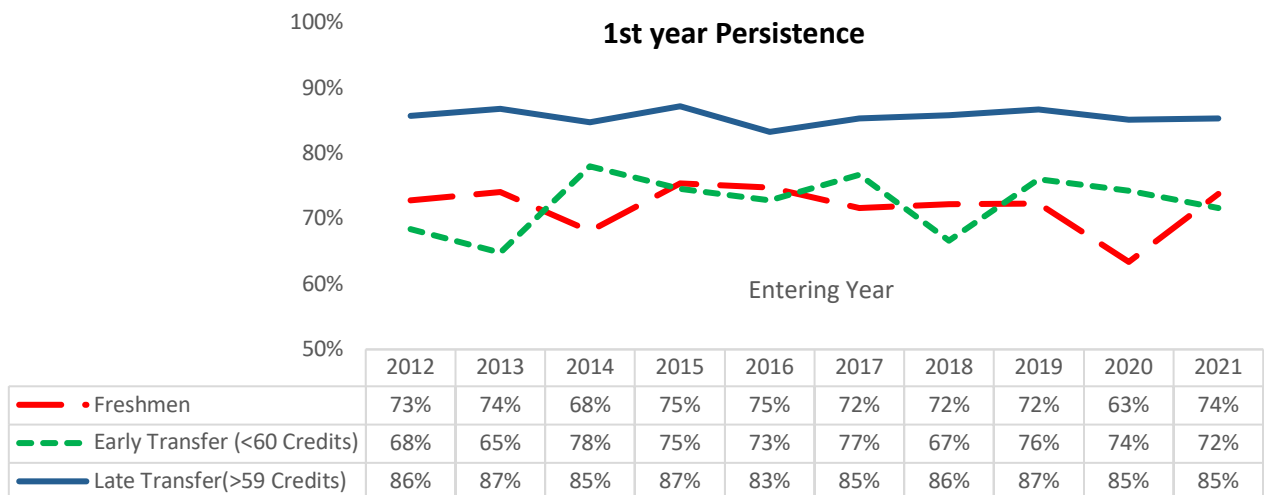
Disparities in the graduation rate tied to gender have been erased for freshman-admits and remain at a 5-percentage-point 5-year average for transfer admits. (See **Figure 7**).

**First Generation Students**

For most of WSU Vancouver’s history, its students defied national trends by demonstrating little to no difference in graduation rates between students who are the first in their families to attend higher education (first generation students) and those with higher education family history (continuing generation). However, a student population increasingly coming directly from high school as opposed to transferring from a community college and the impact of the pandemic have produced a growing eight percentage point 1<sup>st</sup>-year persistence gap (1<sup>st</sup> Gen: 66%, Continuing Gen: 74%, three-year averages, See **Figure 8**). Transfer students however continue to persist at comparable rates (1<sup>st</sup> Gen: 80%, Continuing Gen: 79%, three-year averages).

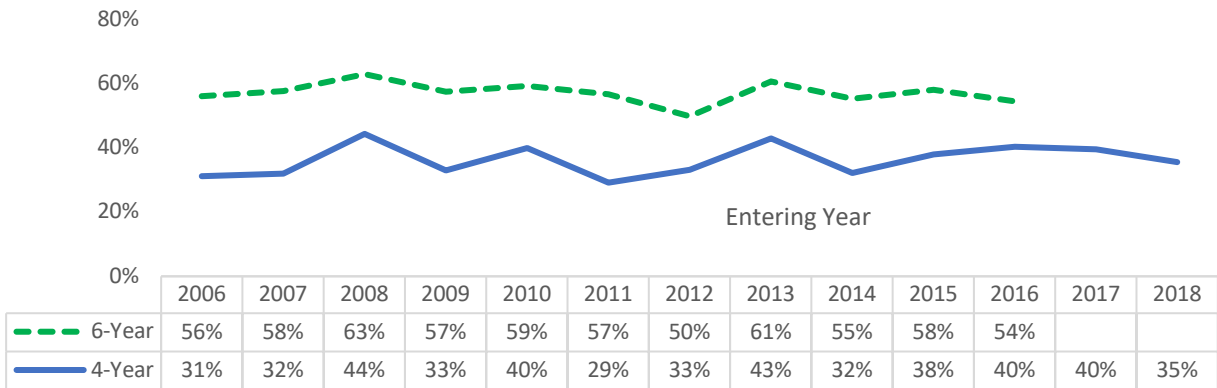
**Financial Need and Financial Aid**

Nationally, educational outcomes are highly correlated with family income. One might expect student and family finances, therefore, to be a strong predictor of student success on campus. **Figure 9A** presents student persistence broken down by FAFSA-demonstrated financial need. As evident in the figure, it is not the case that higher need for WSU Vancouver students is tied to higher attrition. Instead, a correlation exists between financial aid received and student persistence, with higher levels of aid tied to increased persistence. Importantly, the pattern of student persistence presented in the financial need graph is not linear. There is a noticeable outcome drop for students of medium financial need (roughly \$7,000-\$15,000). This may have a number of different causes. First, aid packages received by students are not uniform but rather contain mixes of loans, waivers, and grants. Boundaries for receiving significant funding such as Pell grants may occur within the identified financial range. Also notably, financial need here is determined via federal formulas (as detailed in FAFSA filing). The ‘estimated family contribution’ is by no means a perfect formulation. There are undoubtedly students or families who fall into the *middle*, determined to have some ability to pay for college, while still highly impacted by doing so. Further study of this issue is needed to improve outcomes for this group of students.

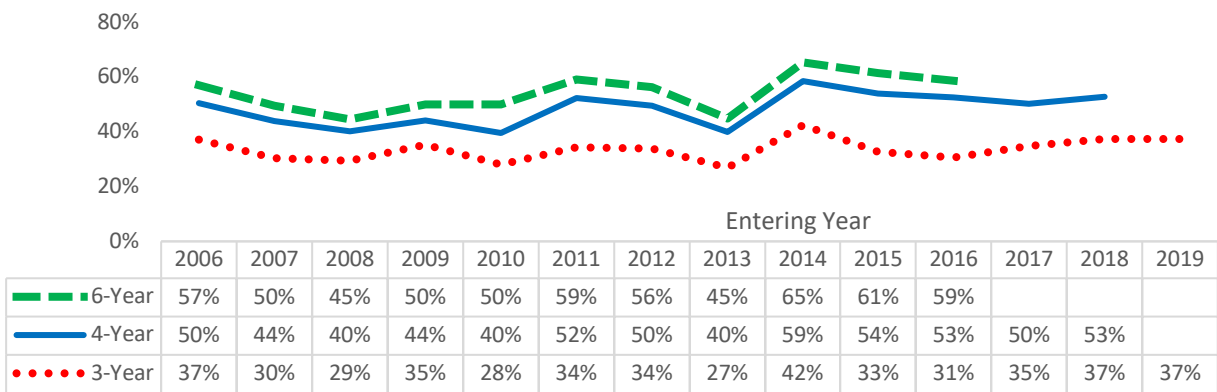


**Figure 1 | 1<sup>st</sup>-year persistence rates for students admitted as Freshmen, Early Transfer Students (<60 credits), and Late Transfer Students (>59 credits). Persistence is defined as retained or graduated by the student’s second fall at WSU. The 2020 Cohort has been corrected from last year.**

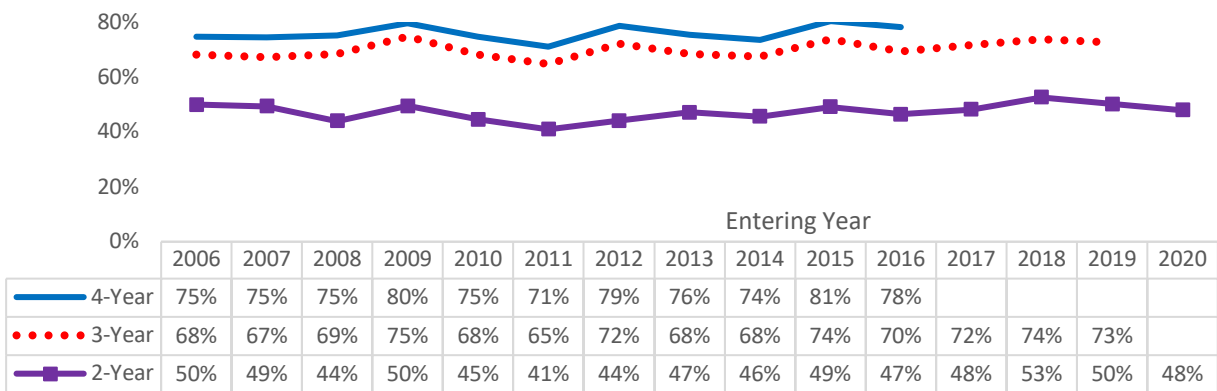
### Freshman Graduation



### Early Transfer Graduation



### Late Transfer Graduation



**Figure 2 | Graduation rates for students admitted as Freshmen, Early Transfer Students (<60 credits), and Late Transfer Students (>59 credits).**

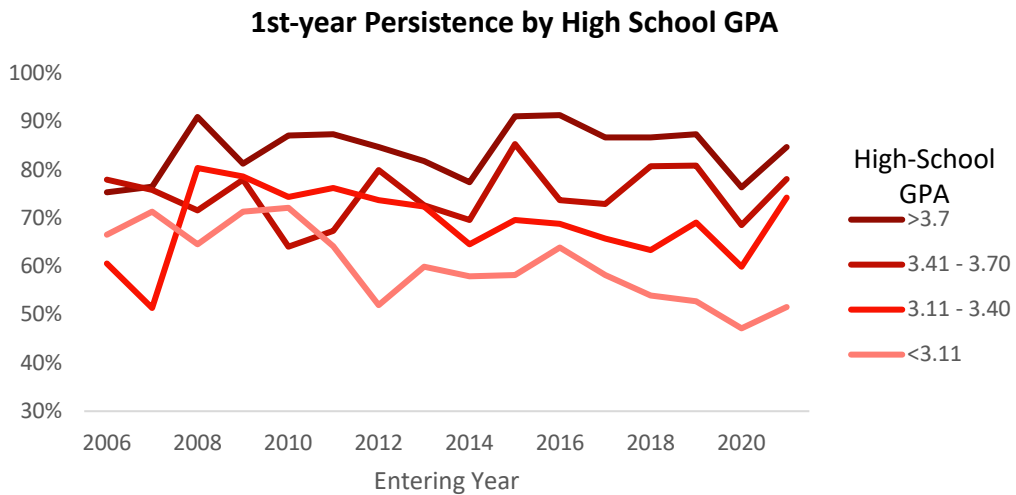
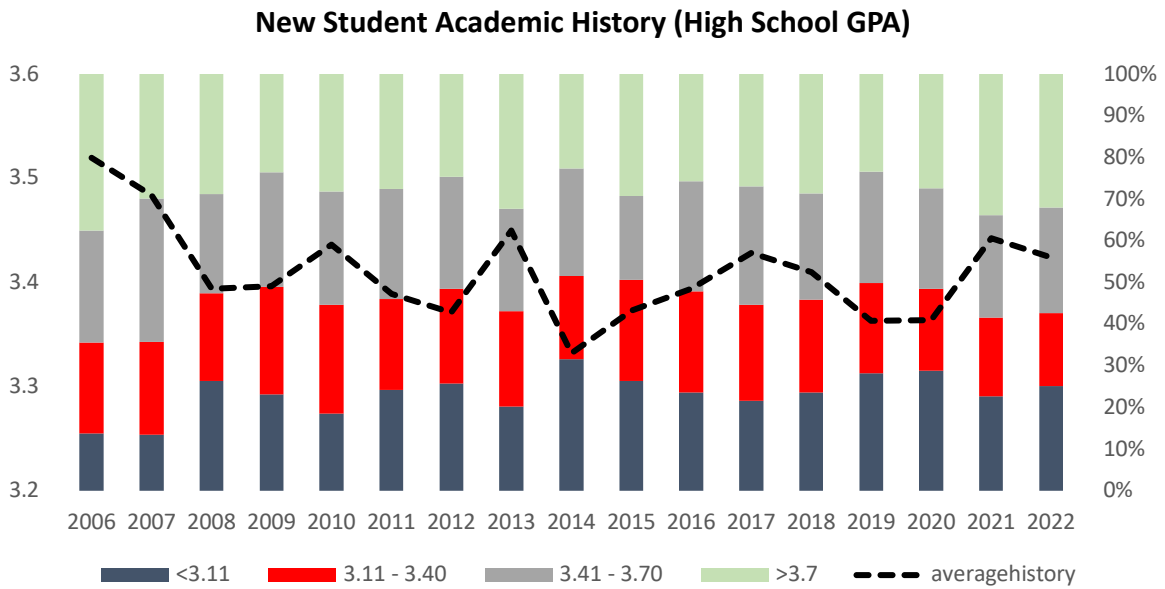


Figure 3 | Freshman academic history and persistence by academic history segment.

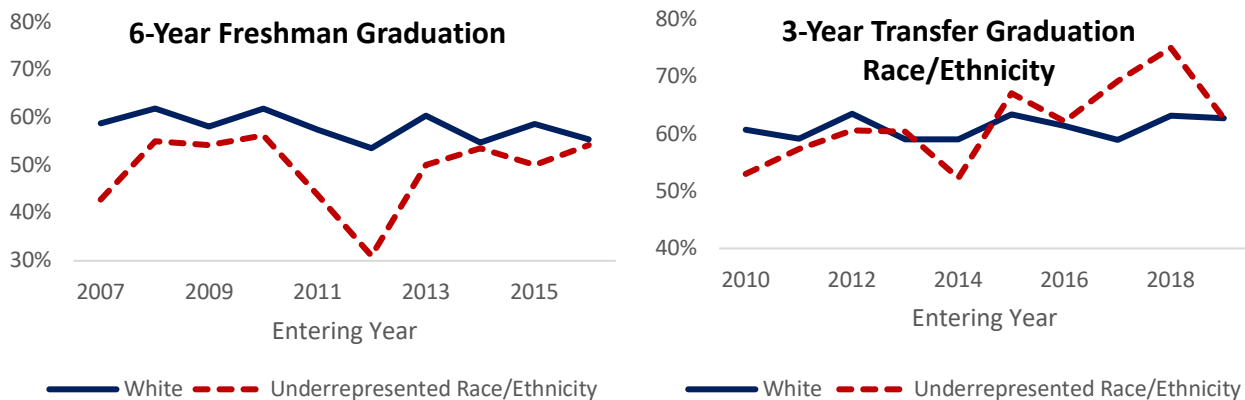
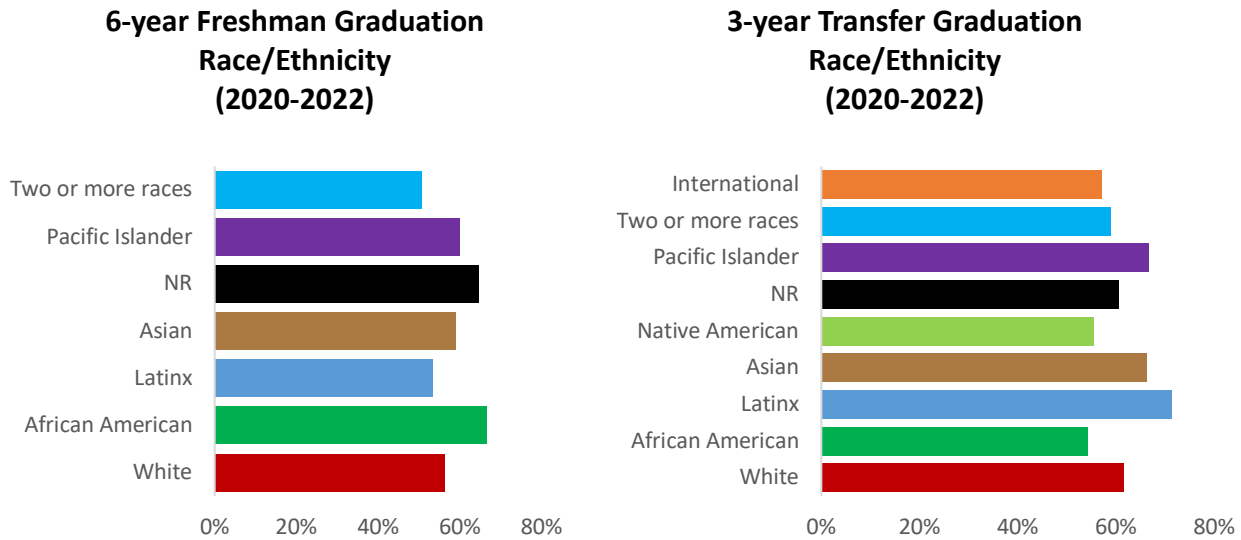
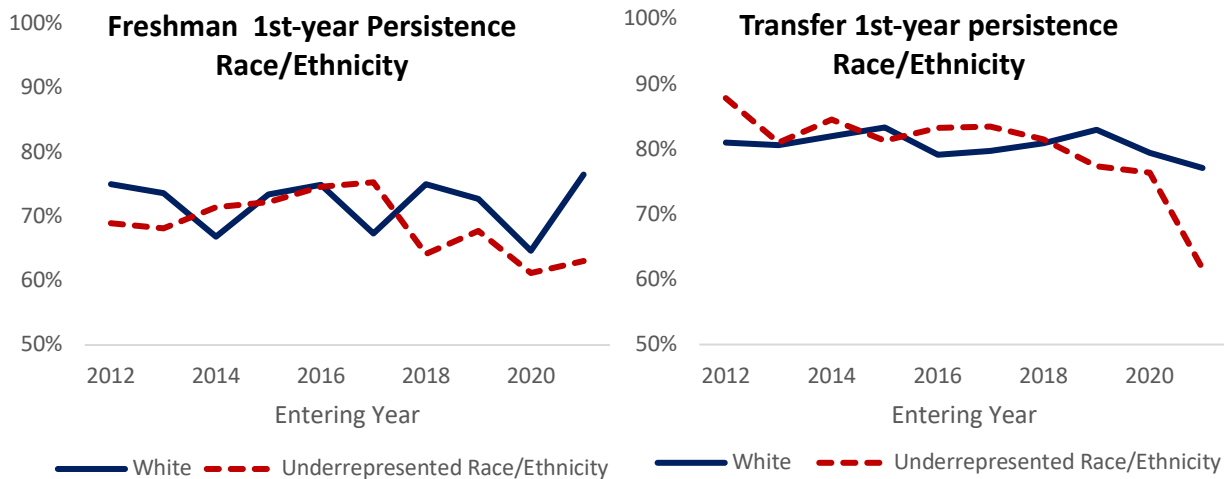


Figure 4 | Graduation rates for students identifying from underrepresented race/ethnicity groups (African American, Latino/Hispanic, Native American, or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander) vs. identifying as white.



**Figure 5 | Three-year average graduation rates for students identifying from individual race/ethnicity categories for transfer and freshman admitted students. In cases where categories are absent, it reflects fewer than five members for the three-year period presented.**



**Figure 6 | Persistence rates for students identifying from underrepresented race/ethnicity groups (African American, Latino/Hispanic, Native American, or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander) vs. identifying as white. Results indicate a disparity emerging for the past few cohorts.**

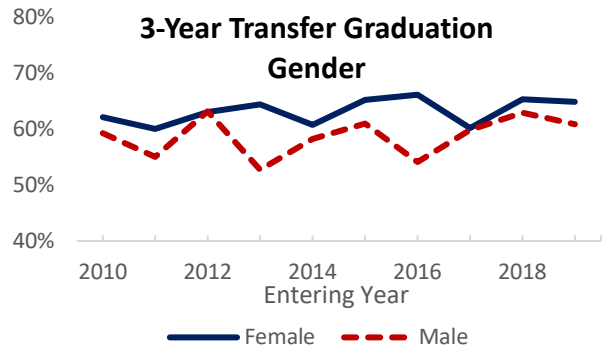
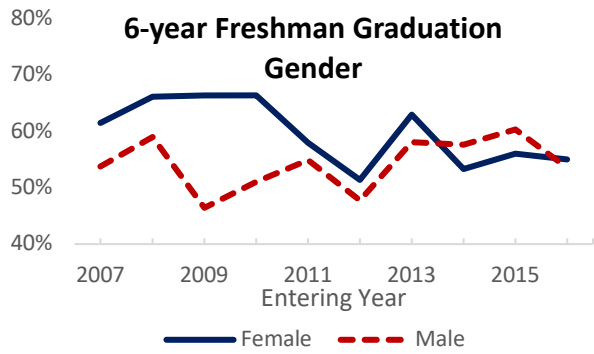


Figure 7 | Graduation rates for female vs. male students.

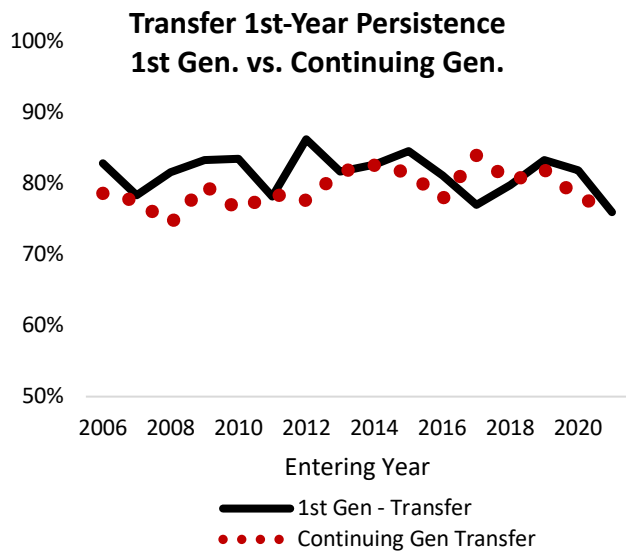
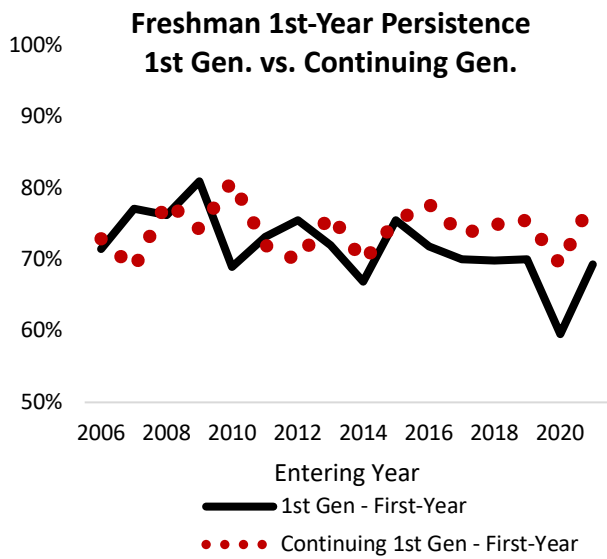
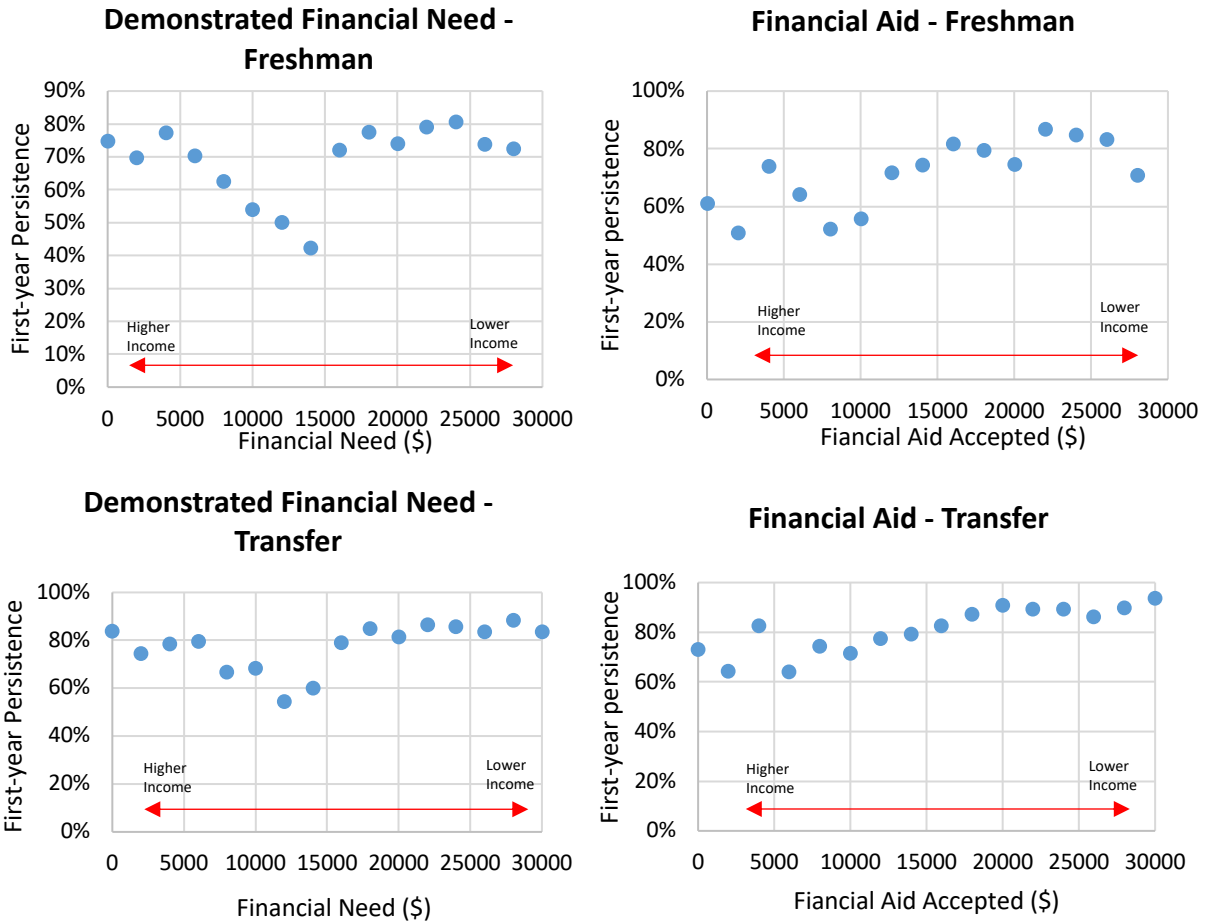


Figure 8 | Persistence rates for 1<sup>st</sup> generation vs. continuing generation students.



**Figure 9 | Persistence rates by financial need level (left) and financial aid level (right) pooled for 2017-2021 Fall Cohorts. First-year persistence is broken down by \$2,000 increments of financial need (Cost of Attendance-Estimated Family Contribution) or Financial Aid. Summary data have not been verified by the financial aid office.**