



Illinois Community College Board Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS THE RETENTION RATE FOR ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS?

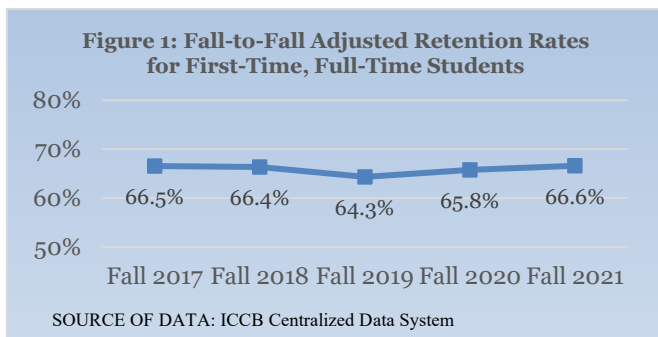
Retention Rates provide a measure of student attachment to college. First-year retention is particularly important since new students—especially recent high school graduates—need to successfully transition to college and the accompanying elevated academic and personal responsibility expectations. Elevated Retention Rates show an ongoing engagement in the educational process and demonstrate an attachment to college. Elevated Retention Rates are typically associated with individuals who are making academic progress and improve the individual’s chances of completing a certificate or degree.

Table 1

Fall-to-Fall Adjusted Retention (Including Completers) for First-Time, Full-Time College-Level Students in Illinois Public Community Colleges, Fall Cohorts 2017-2021

	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021
First-Time, Full-Time Entering Cohort	27,692	26,803	27,477	23,274	23,473
Returned	17,902	17,261	17,106	14,826	15,056
Completed Year 1	523	534	572	480	580
Not Returned, Not Completed	9,267	9,008	9,799	7,968	7,837
Returned or Completed	18,425	17,795	17,678	15,306	15,636
Adjusted Retention	66.5%	66.4%	64.3%	65.8%	66.6%

Source of Data: ICCB Centralized Data System—Fall Enrollment (E1) and Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1)



Statewide first-time, full-time student Fall-to-Fall Retention Rates were calculated for the most recent five years. The source of the data was the Fall Enrollment (E1) and Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1) data. Retention Rates are always expressed as a percentage. A Retention Rate only includes individuals who re-enrolled the following fall, and an Adjusted Retention Rate includes individuals who re-enrolled the next fall plus those individuals who graduated during the intervening year. Part of the reason for the adjustment is that a variety of community college certificate

programs can be completed within one year. The Adjusted Retention Rate reflects a more comprehensive perspective and will be the focus of the analysis provided. The differences between these two rates are typically small.

Retention information is reported for five years: Fall 2017 to Fall 2018 (FY 18), Fall 2018 to Fall 2019 (FY 19), Fall 2019 to Fall 2020 (FY 20), Fall 2020 to Fall 2021 (FY 21), and Fall 2021 to Fall 2022 (FY 22). The overall statewide Adjusted Retention Rates have remained fairly steady during the past five years. Although the Adjusted Retention Rates for fiscal year 2020 (64.3 percent) and fiscal year 2021 (65.8 percent) were slightly lower than previous years due to the pandemic, retention has since rebounded to pre-pandemic levels (66.6 percent in the latest data), which is the highest in the past five years.

According to NCES’s Digest of Education Statistics (2022, [Table 326.30](#)), the national first-to-second year Retention Rate for full-time, first-time freshmen in public community colleges was 61.0 percent (Fall 2020 to Fall 2021). An Adjusted Retention Rate is not calculated. The unadjusted overall statewide Retention Rate for the Illinois community colleges—64.1 percent—compares favorably with this national figure.

For more information, please see [Data and Characteristics of the Illinois Public Community College System](#). Visit the ICCB website to [locate a Community College near you](#) or for a [map of district boundaries](#).