

Additional Information on Degree Productivity at New Mexico Highlands University

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Highlands is a completely open enrollment institution at the undergraduate level. This is consistent with our mission, and our historical role in Northeastern New Mexico. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of our first-time freshmen require at least one developmental course. Approximately one quarter of our first-time freshmen leave the institution at the end of their first semester, and approximately another quarter leave before the beginning of their second year. As a result, our graduation rate for first-time freshmen is quite low.

However, first-time freshmen graduation rates give an extremely incomplete picture of degree productivity at Highlands. Almost half of our degrees are granted to graduate students, and of the degrees granted to undergraduate students, over 75% began at Highlands as transfer students, not first-time freshmen.

Transfer Students

Unfortunately, graduation rates for transfer student cohorts are not publicly available for most institutions, so it is impossible to make comparisons between Highlands and other institutions. We do know that our graduation rates for transfer students are much higher than for first-time freshmen, and are consistently over 50%. The following table includes all new transfer students in the fall semesters, including those attending school part-time, and those who may not be degree-seeking.

Year began at NMHU	Total in cohort	Degree from NMHU in 6 years	Degree from another institution in 6 years	Degree from NMHU after 6 years	Degree from another institution after 6 years	2 year degree	Total earned degree	% earned degree
2000	304	139	14	1	1	6	161	53.0%
2001	248	133	16	5	0	4	158	63.7%
2002	273	138	16	0	0	2	156	57.1%
2003	291	145	8	2	0	1	156	53.6%
2004	320	187	2	0	0	0	189	59.1%

Degrees per Enrollment

Since tracking the 6-year graduation rates of specific first-time freshmen cohorts gives such an incomplete understanding of the productivity of an institution, many organizations have begun reporting alternative measures of productivity. One such measure is the number of baccalaureate degrees awarded in a given year for each 100 undergraduate students enrolled in the institution that year.

This measure is used, for example, by the American Council on Education in their report “Minorities in Higher Education, 2010”. They report that the number of degrees awarded (associate and bachelor) per enrollment have increased for all ethnic groups over the ten years included in the report, but that Hispanic students have seen the smallest increase.

Number of Associate and Bachelor’s Degrees Awarded per 100 Undergraduates Enrolled

	1997	2007
Whites	15.2	16.9
Asian Americans	13.4	15.1
American Indians	11.1	12.2
African Americans	11.0	12.0
Hispanics	10.0	11.6

Adapted from Figure 5.1, Minorities in Higher Education, 2010, American Council on Education

While there is no available comparison data for transfer student graduation rates available, degrees per enrollment is calculated based upon data reported to IPEDS by all institutions, so comparison data is easy to generate. The table below presents Highlands’ degrees per enrollment compared to a group of minority-serving institutions with relatively large graduate programs and relatively low undergraduate admission requirements (only a few are actually open enrollment, like Highlands). Three of the institutions primarily serve African American students, two serve American Indian students, and the remainder serve Hispanic students.

The following table gives the number of undergraduate degrees awarded in the academic year per 100 undergraduate students enrolled that in the fall semester *for the minority group primarily served by these institutions*. Data on degrees granted for the 2009-2010 year is not yet available in IPEDS.

Degrees Awarded per 100 Students Enrolled, Minority Group Primarily Served by the Institution

Institution	Minority Group Served	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Alcorn State	African American	13.7	13.2	12.5	14.0	15.3
Lincoln University	African American	15.1	13.7	11.5	11.6	13.2
West Alabama	African American	13.5	12.9	8.9	8.0	7.7
East Central	American Indian	11.9	18.4	16.2	17.6	17.8
Northeastern State	American Indian	13.4	14.5	14.2	15.1	16.1
Adams State	Hispanic	8.6	10.9	10.7	13.0	8.0
Colorado State, Pueblo	Hispanic	14.4	14.9	15.0	14.6	14.6
Eastern New Mexico	Hispanic	12.0	14.6	14.2	13.4	13.9
Sul Ross State	Hispanic	19.0	16.0	17.1	18.7	18.6
U of Texas –P B	Hispanic	19.6	16.5	18.0	15.2	21.0
Western New Mexico	Hispanic	4.8	6.6	5.5	7.6	5.4
Highlands	Hispanic	17.5	15.6	15.3	15.5	15.1
Average		13.9	14.0	13.4	13.8	14.3

As can be seen, Highland's degrees per enrollment for Hispanic students has been above the mean for the comparison group for every year included in the table. The following table gives the same data for all ethnic groups at each institution. Again, Highlands was above the mean for the comparison for every year except for the most recent.

Degrees Awarded per 100 Students Enrolled, All Undergraduates

Institution	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Alcorn State	14.0	13.3	13.2	14.7	16.6
Lincoln University	15.8	15.0	12.3	11.9	12.9
West Alabama	13.9	12.8	11.4	11.2	10.6
East Central	16.1	18.4	18.0	17.8	18.9
Northeastern State	17.1	17.1	17.6	18.9	20.0
Adams State	10.9	11.1	10.5	15.9	12.3
Colorado State, Pueblo	13.9	14.8	15.0	15.4	13.7
Eastern New Mexico	14.2	15.5	15.7	14.0	12.8
Sul Ross State	18.9	15.6	16.4	18.7	18.4
U of Texas –P B	17.5	17.3	19.6	17.9	21.7
Western New Mexico	6.8	6.7	7.4	8.7	7.2
Highlands	17.5	17.3	16.6	16.4	13.9
Average	15.0	15.1	15.2	15.9	15.7

Graduate Students

About 40% of Highland's students are graduate students, and no discussion of the institution's degree productivity would be complete without including them.

Comparison data on the graduation rates of masters degree students by cohort is not available, mirroring the situation with transfer students. However, the publication "Hispanic Outlook on Higher Education" each year publishes a list rank ordering institutions by the raw number of masters degrees awarded to Hispanic students. They publish the top 100 institutions in the nation, and Highlands is always on the list.

In the most recent ranking (published in May of 2010), Highlands was number 53 in the country in the raw number of masters degrees awarded to Hispanic students (http://www.hispanicoutlook.com/top100_focus.htm?section=m). These rankings make it clear that Highlands plays an important, measurable role in increasing the educational level of Hispanic citizens nation-wide.