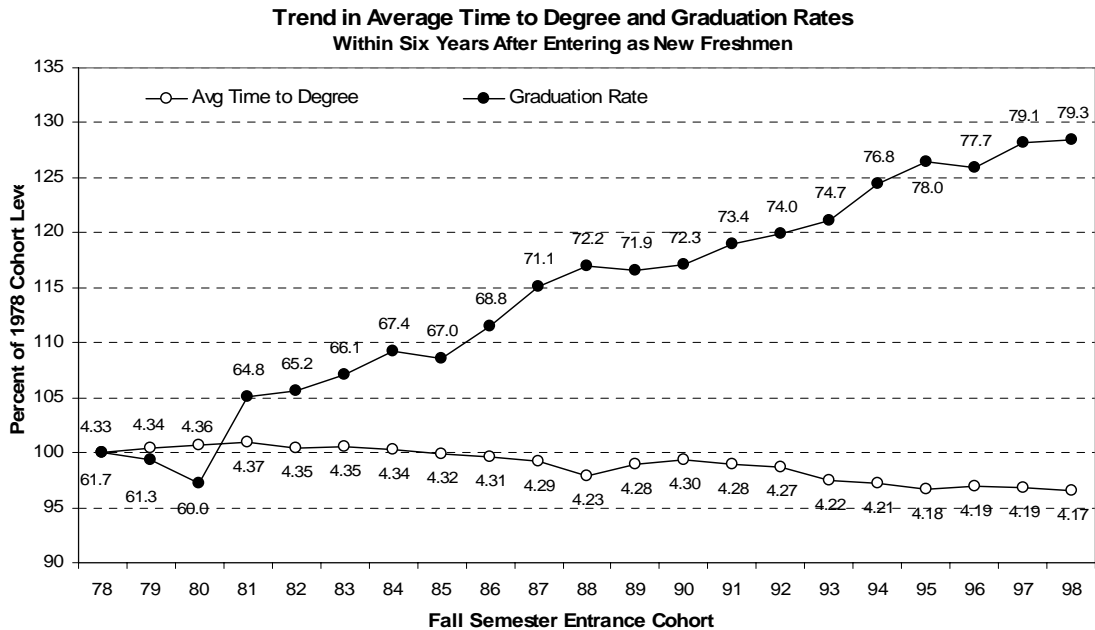
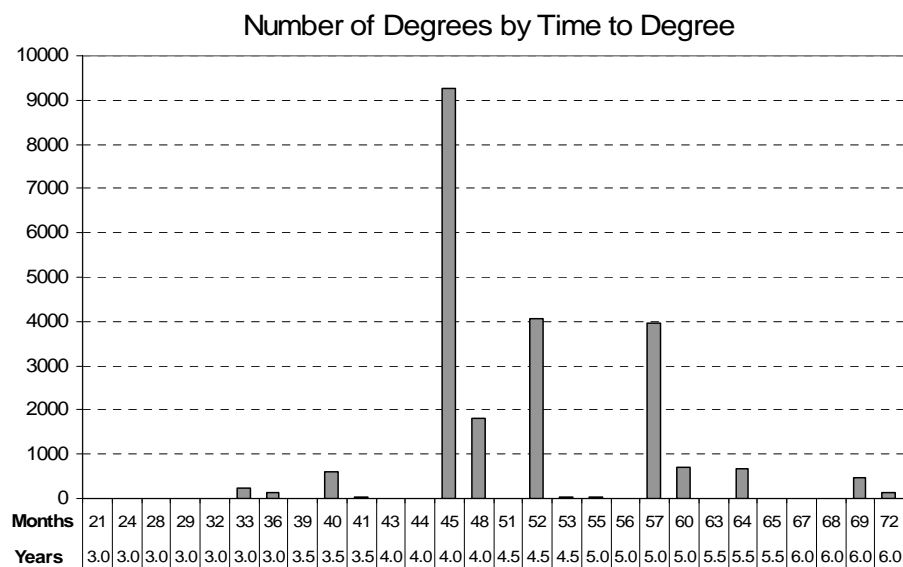


## Facts on Time to Degree for Undergraduates at UW-Madison

For first-year undergraduates who entered UW-Madison in Fall 1998, the average time to degree was shorter (4.17 years) and six-year graduation rates are higher (79%) than at any time in the recent history.



Most students complete their degrees with the time period that the program was designed for: 4 years for 4-year programs and 5 years for 5-year programs. Almost 2% of new freshmen eventually complete their degree in 3 years. For the 23,000 students who entered as freshmen and received a Bachelor's degree during the period from 1999 to 2004, the modal time for degree completion was 45 months:



Most UW-Madison undergraduate programs are designed for completion in 4 years: with careful planning a 120 credit program can be completed in 8 semesters by a student who completes 15 credits a term. Some programs, particularly in Education and Engineering, are designed for completion over a slightly longer time frame - up to 5 years - largely because of curricular requirements specified by external agencies. Even in these cases, some students finish in 3 years.

ALS	BUS	EDU	ENGR	HEC	L&S	MED	NUR	PHM	Total
4.5	4.2	4.6	4.6	4.3	4.2	4.9	4.3	4.6	4.3

Based on 23,000 degrees awarded from Fall 1999 to Spring 2004 to students who entered as new freshmen.

Those who complete degrees earlier tend to be better prepared coming out of high school – on average they have higher ACT scores, higher HS Rank, and stronger math preparation.

Students who study abroad take only slightly longer to graduate than other students:

Study Abroad:	1995	1996	1997
Yes, did participate	4.18	4.20	4.19
Did NOT participate	4.12	4.12	4.13

For students who entered as new freshmen and graduated within six years.  
Study abroad programs – those administered by International Studies and Programs.

Students who complete 2 or 3 majors take about the same time to graduate as other students. Students who complete 2 or 3 majors are as likely to graduate in 3 years as those who complete only one major.

Over three-quarters of degree recipients (77%) who finished in 3 years completed all the majors they declared, compared with 70% of students overall.

At two years after entrance, only 14% of early completers had not formally declared a major. By comparison, 45% of all degree recipients had not declared a major two years after entrance.

The average credit load of all degree recipients is 13.9 credits a semester. Students who complete degrees earlier take higher credit loads; students who complete degrees in 3 years take an average of 15.2 credits a semester.

Years to Degree	Semester		
	Fall	Spring	Summer
<= 3.0	15.2	15.3	6.3
3.5	14.6	14.8	5.2
4.0	14.4	14.3	4.6
4.5	13.7	14.0	4.3
5.0	13.6	13.5	4.3
5.5	13.2	13.4	4.5
6.0	13.0	12.7	4.4
>6.0	11.9	11.8	4.9
Total	13.9	13.9	4.5

Based on 23,000 degrees awarded from Fall 1999 to Spring 2004 to students who entered as new freshmen.

Students who finish within three years earn 25 % of their credits as advanced standing credits from sources outside of UW-Madison classrooms – AP credit, retroactive credit, transfer credit. On average, students earn 135 degree credits, including 12 advanced standing credits (9%). Those who complete in 3 years have 128 degree credits, including 32 advanced standing credits.

Years to Degree	Average Number of Degree Credits		% of Credits that are Advanced Standing Credits
	Advanced Standing Credits	Total Avg Degree Credits	
<= 3.0	32	128	25
3.5	22	128	17
4.0	14	130	11
4.5	9	135	7
5.0	9	144	6
5.5	9	149	6
6.0	10	148	7
>6.0	10	142	7
Total	12	135	9

For degrees awarded from Fall 1999 to Spring 2004

Timely degree completion is associated with continuous enrollment: students who finish within 3 years almost never “stop out” in a fall or spring term.

Women and students who are assessed non-resident tuition have a shorter time to degree.

In a recent survey, undergraduates were asked about the biggest obstacles to academic progress. Money, work obligations and financial concerns was cited as the biggest obstacle by 38% of seniors. Lack of personal motivation was cited by 13% of seniors. Lack of good academic advising (7%) and difficulty getting into courses (3%) were less of a problem. More than a third (35%) of seniors reported that they encountered no real obstacles.

### **Strategies for timely degree completion:**

- Establish a trajectory for timely degree completion from the start – declare a major early and work toward completion of the major(s) first selected.
- Enroll continuously after matriculating (every fall and spring term) and take a full course load of 15 credits per semester.
- Focus on academic achievement and avoid dropping courses, stopping out, or withdrawing.
- Plan carefully and make good use of AP credits, transfer credits, and advanced standing credits.

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For detailed analyses, see ([www.wiscinfo.wisc.edu/obpa/TimeToDegree.htm](http://www.wiscinfo.wisc.edu/obpa/TimeToDegree.htm)):

- “Analysis of UW-Madison Undergraduates who Complete a Degree Within Three Years or Less”, B. Beck, Academic Planning and Analysis. November, 2004.
- Time-to-Degree By Major, B. Beck, APA, December, 2004.