



Missouri State

U N I V E R S I T Y

DATE: June 2013
TO: MSU Board of Governor’s Programs and Planning Committee
FROM: Frank Einhellig
SUBJECT: **Perspectives on Graduate Student Profile, Retention, and Completion**

Executive Summary

Over two-thirds of MSU graduate students are from Missouri, which is a decrease over the past decade. International and domestic student percentages have grown to 18% and 13%, respectively. The full-time student proportion has increased to 52% as health-care programs and international student numbers increased. Access for part-time students has been expanded by offering via online 12 degree programs and 9 graduate certificate programs. About 44% of MSU graduate students have a prior degree from MSU and the Accelerated Master’s options are helping attract some of the best performing undergraduates to continue as MSU graduate students.

Graduate students are provided a number of workshops and other out-of-class opportunities to help them be successful. The retention of first-time graduate students from program entry to the next year is quite good at 85%. Six-year graduation data for students entering in AY06-7 show almost two-thirds have completed their graduate degree, and this percentage increases slightly with the full 8-years allowable. Other analyses on earlier starting years show a final completion rate of 70%. The average time-to-degree is slightly less than three years. Considerable variation among programs is evidenced in degree-program completion and time-to-degree data.

Graduate Profile

Understanding the graduate profile is important for a perspective on what might be termed “graduate success.” While over two-thirds of MSU graduate students are from Missouri, the percentage of graduate students coming from out-of-state has been trending upward and these students now make up 31% (Table 1). The average age of graduate students is over 30 years, and thus in the graduate population the concept of “non-traditional” does not have the same meaning as for undergraduates. The proportion of international students has shown a marked increase.

Table 1. MSU graduate student profile based on headcount.

Category	Distribution of Students			
	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012
Missouri Residents	78%	72%	72%	69%
Out-of-State (Domestic)	10%	13%	13%	13%
Out-of-State (International)	12%	15%	15%	18%
Minority	4%	7%	7%	7.5%
Female	58%	59%	60%	61%
First-time Degree Seeking	20%	19%	22%	23%
Average Student Age	32	31	31	31

Graduate students are classified as part-time when enrolled in less than nine credits in a semester or less than five credits in the summer. For the last three years the ratio of part-time to full-time students has been about equal, which is a major change from 10 years ago when part-time students dominated the mix (Table 2).

Table 2. MSU graduate headcount part-time to full-time enrollment comparison.

Classification	Percentage Part-time and Full-Time Students – Fall Term										
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Part -Time	71	65	61	59	59	56	56	54	49	51	48
Full-Time	29	35	39	41	41	44	44	46	51	49	52

The two primary factors that account for the increase in full-time enrollments are:

- expansion of programs available and student number admitted in the health science programs (i.e., Physical Therapy; Audiology; Physician Assistant Studies; Family Nurse Practitioner specialization; etc.); and
- an increase in international students, as they are all full-time by Visa requirement (Figure 1).

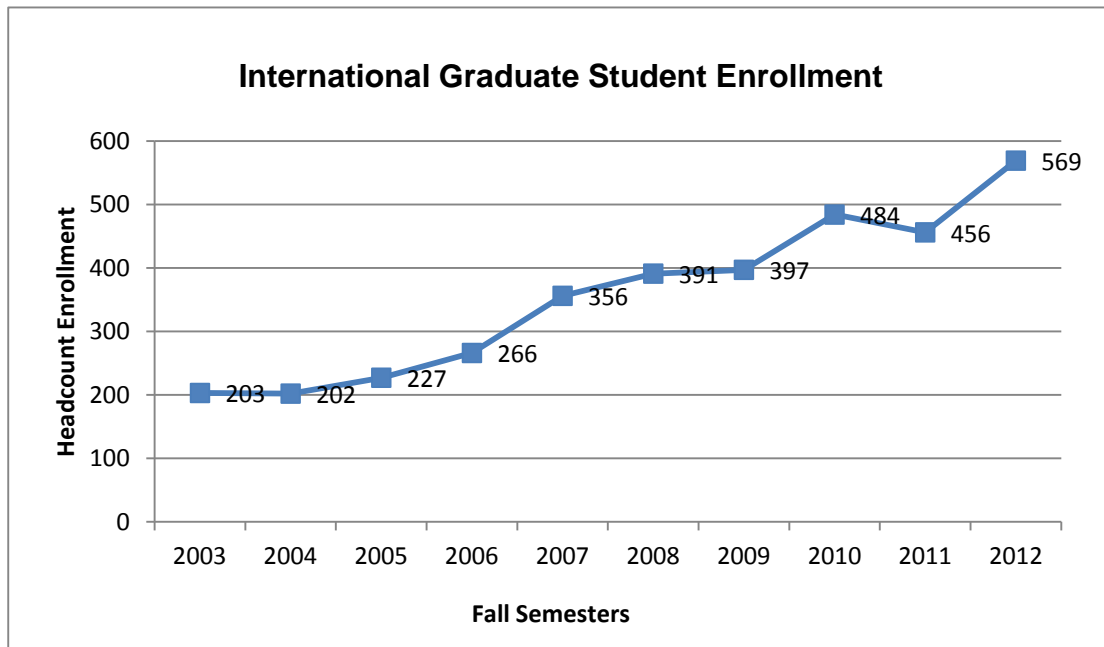


Figure 1. Trend in International Student Enrollment

Even though full-time student numbers have increased and the percentage of students classed as full-time has significantly increased, graduate education opportunities at MSU have been serving the multiple needs of the part-time graduate students by increasing access pathways. This has been, in part, by making available degree programs in the evening, online, or some combination of these two modalities.

Twelve graduate degree programs and 9 graduate certificates are currently available online (Table 3; see <http://outreach1.missouristate.edu/gradonlineprograms.htm>). Classes for a number of these programs (but not all) are also available in the traditional face-to-face format. When evening programming is taken into account, approximately half of the graduate degree programs have access by either online, evening, off-campus, or some combination of these strategies to increase their access availability to the part-time student population (Table 3).

With the June 15, 2013 approval of the M. of Occupational Therapy program, MSU now offers students a choice of 52 graduate programs, and several of these have two or more options within a program. Further, 22 graduate certificates are available and all certificates can either feed into a graduate degree program or can be taken as a free-standing certificate.

Table 3. Graduate degree and certificate programs available online.

Graduate-Level Online Degree Programs	Graduate Certificate Programs (12-18 hrs)
Administrative Studies (M.S.)	Conflict and Dispute Resolution
Computer Information Systems(M.S.) –first week on-campus	Educational Technology Specialists(except practicum)
Criminology and Criminal Justice (M.S.)	Homeland Security and Defense
Doctorate of Nursing Practice (D.N.P.)	History for Teachers
Early Childhood and Family Development (M.S.)	Project Management
Elementary Education (M.S.Ed.)	Sports Management
History, American Studies Track (M.A.)	Screening Writing for Television and Film
Master’s of Business Administration (M.,B.A.)	Post-Master’s Nurse Educator
Nursing, Nurse Educator Track (M.S.N.)	Orientation and Mobility
Project Management (M.S.)	
Special Education, Visual Impairment Emphasis (MSEd)	
Theatre (M.A.)	

Table 4. MSU graduate programs that can be completed in the evening or some combination of evening and online class work.

Graduate-Degree Evening Programs*	
Accountancy (M.Acc.)*	Health Administration (M.H.A.)
Business Administration (M.B.A.)*	Health Promotion & Wellness Management (M.S.)
Communication (M.A.)	Music (M.M.)
Counseling (M.S.)	Public Administration (M.P.A)
Criminology (M.S.)	Public Health (M.P.H.)
Early Childhood & Family Development (M.S.)	Literacy (M.S.Ed.)
Educational Administration (M.S.Ed.)	M. Natural and Applied Science (M.N.A.S.)*
Educational Administration (Ed.S.)	Religious Studies (M.A.)
Educational Leadership (Ed.D.)**	Social Work (M.S.W.)*
Educational Technology	Special Education (M.S.Ed.)
Elementary Education (M.S.Ed.)	Student Affairs (M.S.)
English (M.A.)	Writing (M.A.)
Global Studies (M.G.S.)	

* Degree can be completed in evening, but may have day class available as well.

**Joint program with the University of Missouri - Columbia

In addition to students in degree programs, an important characteristic of the MSU graduate profile is that over 500 students are taking graduate courses who are not pursuing degrees (Table 5). Non-degree graduate students include those who already have a master’s, teacher certification students, certificates programs, and others enrolled post-baccalaureate with a variety of goals. The non-degree fraction of students has been decreasing over the past ten years (Table 5).

Table 5. Graduate students not enrolled in masters or doctoral degree programs

Fall Semester	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total Non-Degree Students	797	741	656	631	569	529	533	512
Percent of all Grad. Students	24.5%	24.4%	20.8%	19.3%	16.8%	15.9%	16.8%	15.5%

Forty-four percent of MSU graduate students have a prior degree [typically undergraduate] from MSU (Table 6). In the last decade MSU focused on attracting strong-performing undergraduate students through Accelerated Master's (AM) options that allow an undergraduate student to be accepted to a graduate program while a junior or senior. These students can take a few graduate credits while still an undergraduate. Approximately 200 graduate students of the past year came through the AM options. About 300 current undergraduate students have been accepted into the AM options which are available in 32 graduate areas.

Table 6. Enrolled graduate students having a prior degree from MSU.

AY 2010-11	AY 2011-12	AY 2012-13
42.2%	43.3%	44.0%

Retention

Student retention is often measured as the percentage of students who have returned one year after starting a program. On that basis, graduate retention is strong at approximately 85% (Table 7).

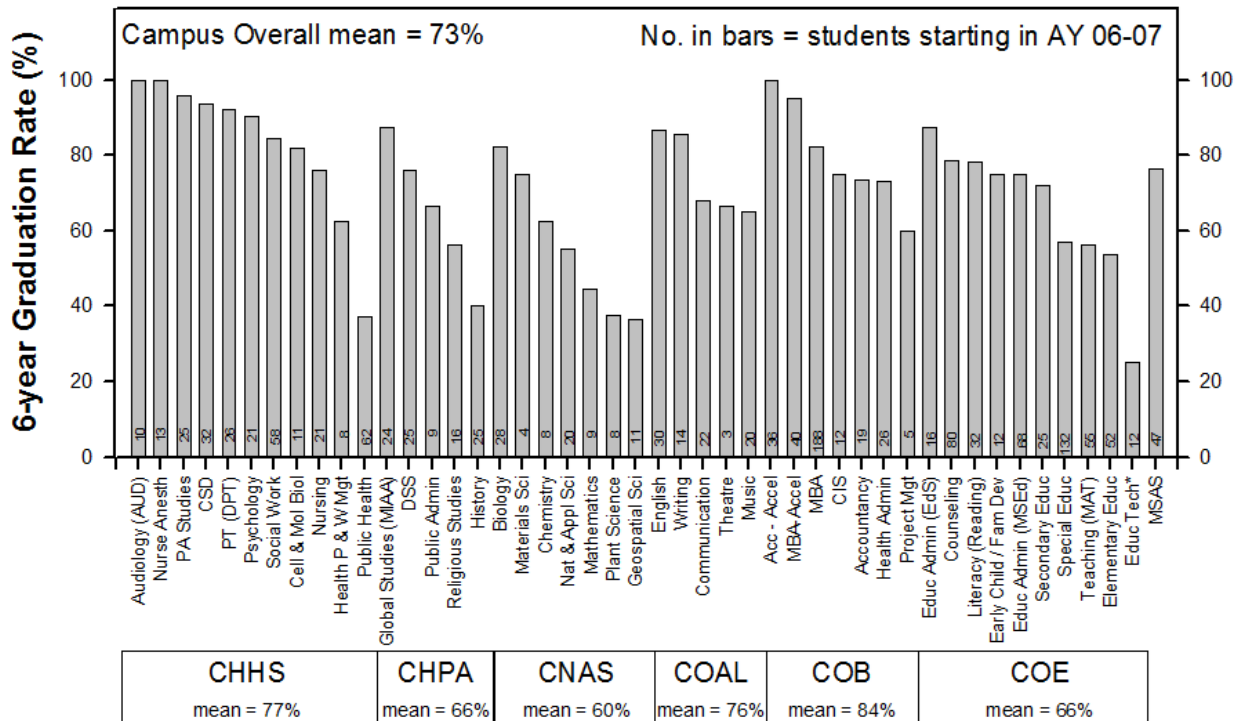
Table 7. Fall to fall retention or return across all new full- and part-time graduate students.

Fall 09 to Fall 10	Fall 10 to Fall 11	Fall 11 to Fall 12
84.12%	85.14%	85.11%

Degree Completion: Graduation

A snapshot of the percentage of MSU graduate students completing degree programs is illustrated by the 6-year graduation rate of students who entered in Academic Year 2006-07. The average aggregated percent completion across all programs is 73% (Fig. 2). Our policy is to limit pursuit of a graduate degree to 8 years, and some students going part-time will take this full time period allowed to complete a graduate program. A completion rate based on the full 8 years will be a slightly higher percentage. A graduation rate of 70% was found in an analysis completed for earlier starting years of student admissions, and taking into account 8-years to a degree, so the particular cohort shown here suggests an improved graduation rate. It should also be noted that the CHHS data in Fig. 2 for nursing represents a starting cohort who were caught in a transition period when the masters program in Family Nurse Practitioner moved to a doctoral degree (DNP). This program transition has delayed the completion of some students, resulting in the 6-year graduation data showing a lower completion percentage than has been the past history in nursing.

Graduation Rate for Students Starting in AY 06-07



Graduate Programs

Figure 2. Six-year graduation rate for MSU graduate students across all programs.

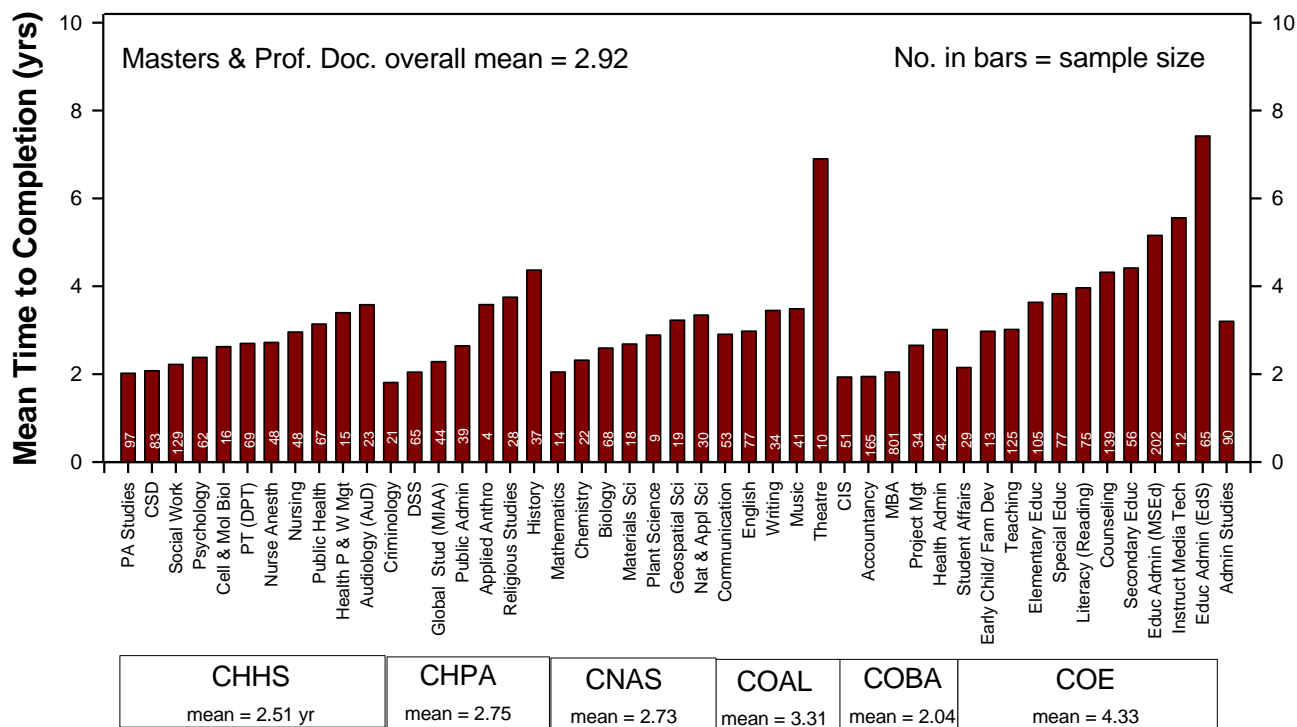
Time to Degree

There is a wide range of time-to-degree across graduate programs and even within a program, as one would expect from the graduate profile and the many different clienteles served. This variable is also influenced by the different length of degree programs in terms of credit hours or the absolute required time in the case of some full-time, cohort programs. For example, the Doctorate of Audiology program is a full-time student program that takes four years.

The average time-to-degree across all programs is slightly less than three years for students graduating in the past five years (Fig. 3). These data are calculated as the elapsed time span from the first course used on a student's *Program of Study* to the time of graduation. COED-degree programs have the longest average time-to-degree at just over four years (Fig. 3), and COB has the shortest at 2.04 years.

Appendix A has time-to-degree data broken out by Colleges and a comparison is shown between the last five years and previous five years (Appendix A, Fig 4). The data comparing the two five-year periods show most programs have been fairly consistent in this variable in the two periods.

Time-to-Degree: AY 08-12 Graduates (5 years)



Graduate Programs

Figure 3. Average time from start to final graduation for students completing degrees in 2008-12.

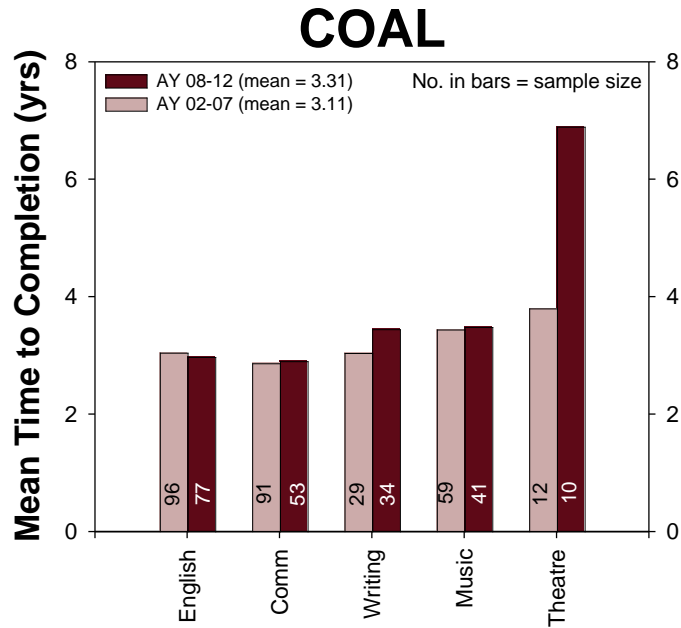
Assistance for Student Success

- *Graduate Student Orientation.* One-day program for all new students at the start of the semester. Many departmental programs also have their own, separate orientation program.
- *Teaching Assistant Orientation.* One-day program at the start of the semester supplemented by discipline-level training programs for TA's. Some programs run throughout the teaching semester.
- *Graduate Assistantships.* Approximately 500 students gain the experience and personal development that comes with work as a graduate assistant, and they become vested in MSU in the process.
- *Graduate College Workshops.* Periodic, open workshops on selected topics such as *How to Write an Abstract*, *Thesis Writing*, *Use of Human Participants in Research*, and others.
- *Program Directors.* With a few exceptions, graduate programs have a faculty program director who is the initial advisor for new students. The Program Director often continues as the student's advisor.
- *Thesis Advisor.* Students doing a thesis work with a research advisor and an advisory committee of at least three faculty.
- *Thesis Research Assistance Funding.* The Graduate College has a research-funding program that helps, partially, on some of the direct expenses. (Requires application and review).
- *Research Presentation Funding.* The Graduate College provides some financial help to students for presentation of research at regional and national meetings. (Application and review) Several academic departments also provide limited financial support.
- *Graduate Interdisciplinary Presentation Forum.* This Forum provides an annual venue for all graduate students to present their work.
- *Writing for Graduate Students.* Program scheduled for AY2013-14 by Provost Fellow for Writing, Stephanie Norander.

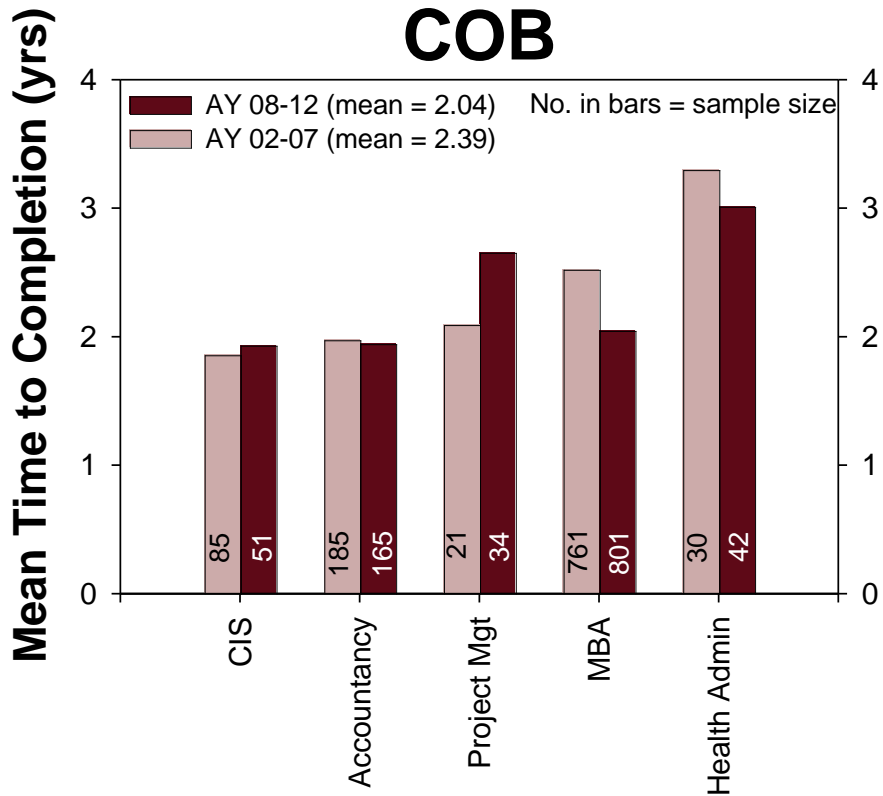
Appendix A

Figure 4. Time-to-Degree by program and Colleges comparing AY 02-07 and AY 08-12.
A =COAL; B = COB; C = CHPA; D = CHHS; D = COE; E = CNAS (including interdisciplinary Plant Science from SAGR)

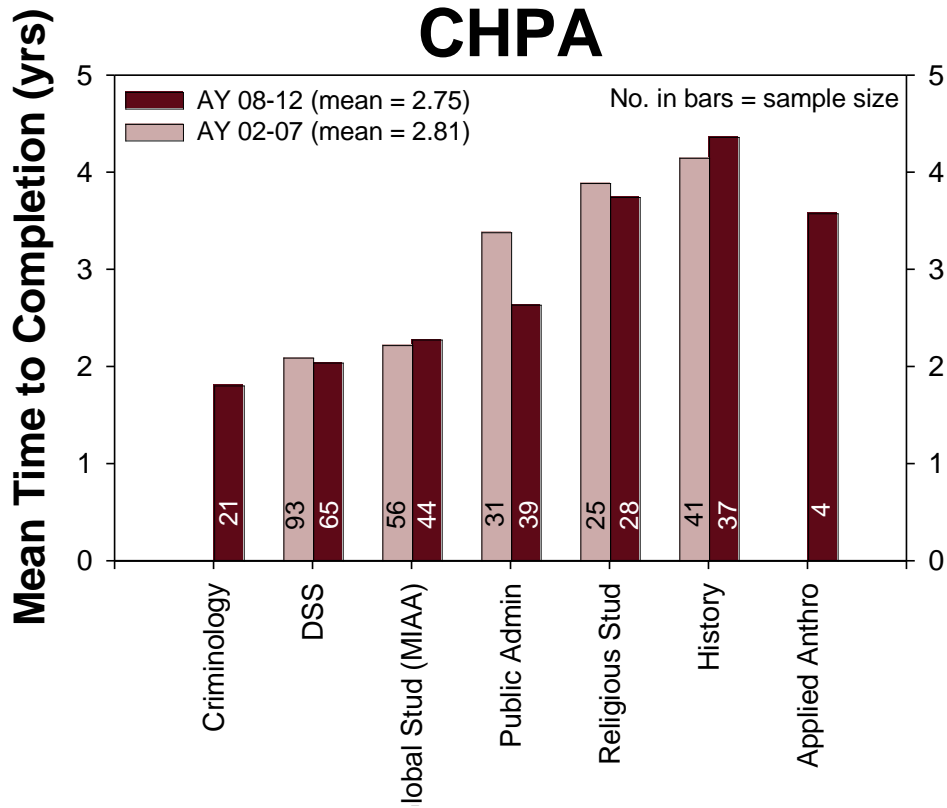
A



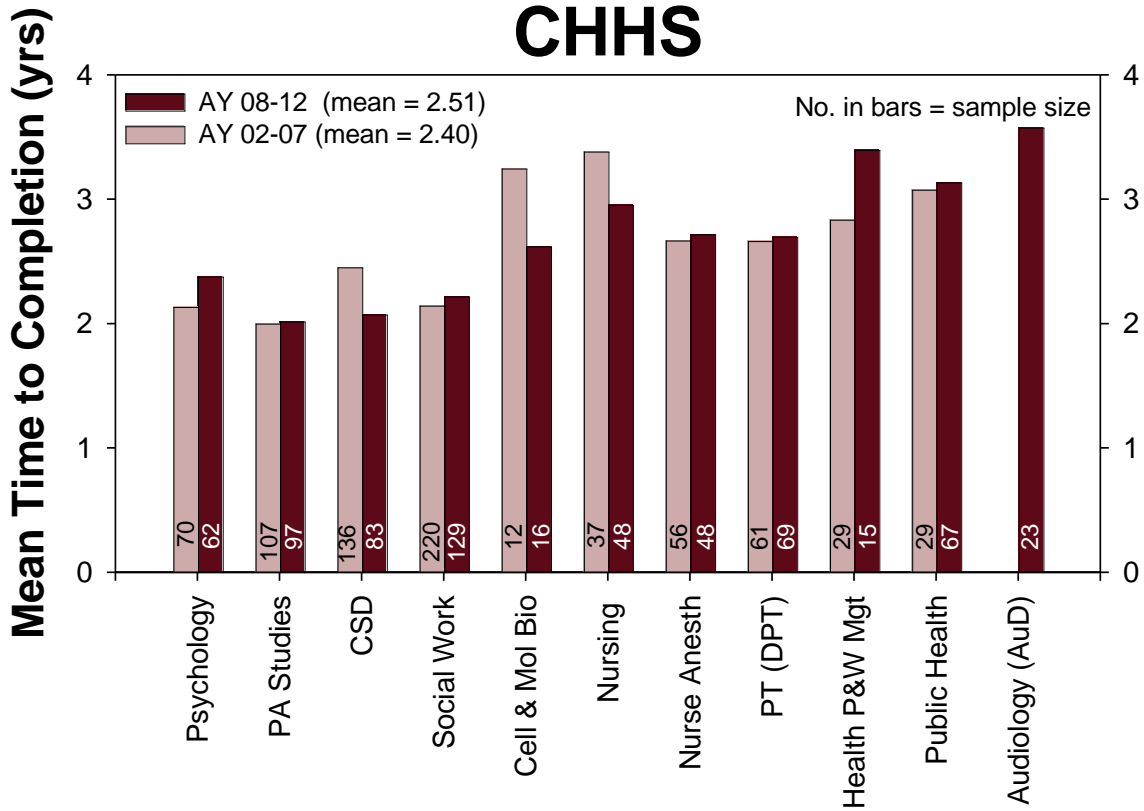
B



C

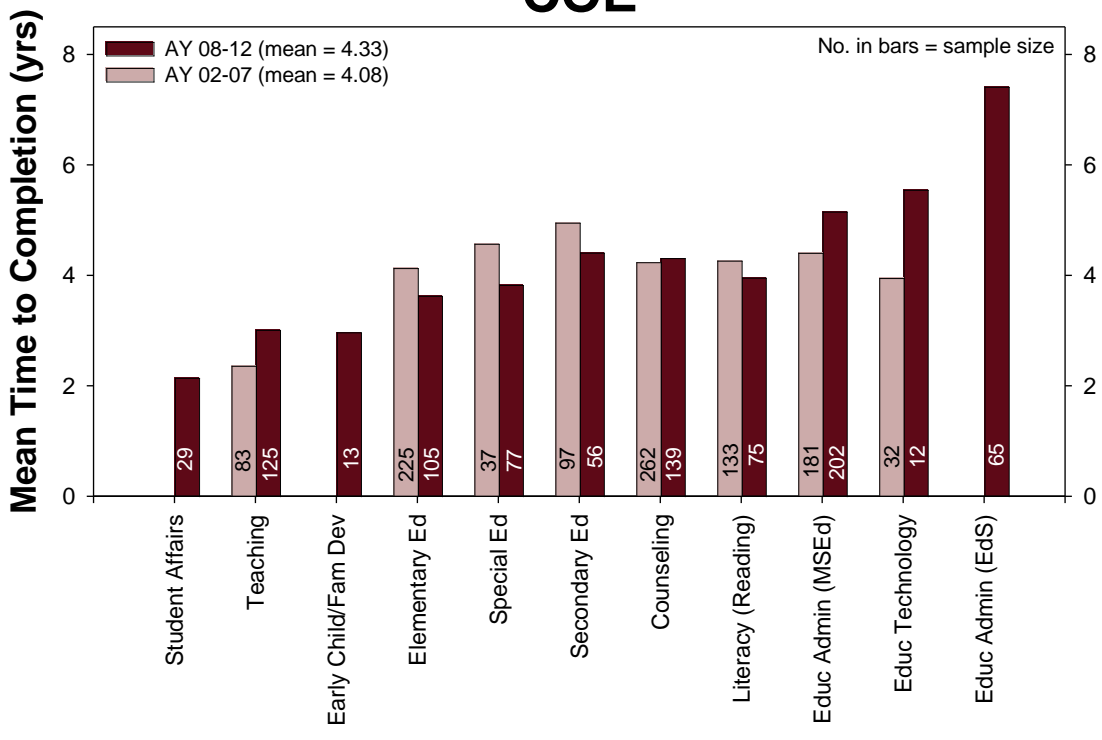


D



E

COE



F.

CNAS

