

# Movement in Primary College

## Fall Term 2015 Cohort Class

December 2021

Office of Institutional Research  
Kerr Administration Building  
Corvallis, Oregon 97331-8572



Many students change majors during the course of their college studies. Of course, “undeclared” students need to select a major at some point and thus will “change” their major. Students at Oregon State University are no exception, and indeed, the university is supportive of students exploring various options to determine the best major for their interests and career path. Even so, it is helpful for the university and colleges to track the rates of these major changes. This report provides statistics on major program changes for an entering fall freshman cohort.

We provide data on students that entered as part of a fall freshmen cohort. While transfer students and graduate students may also change majors, students starting as first-time freshmen are more likely to change majors. We use the same fall freshmen cohort that is the basis for standard retention and graduation rate reporting. This cohort represents students that are attending college for the first time as degree-seeking students and enrolled in the fall quarter (students that started the preceding summer are included) and were enrolled in 12 credits or more (full-time). The label “freshmen” is traditional but the cohort is not restricted to a certain class level. Sometimes the term “first-time college student from high school” is used, which is more accurate, albeit unwieldy.

Universities use retention and graduation rates to track the progress of students. The retention rate is a measure of continued enrollment and is usually from an entering quarter to an ensuing quarter. For example, the one-year retention rate is the percentage of new freshmen that entered in a given fall term and were enrolled the following fall term. The graduation rate is the percentage of a given fall cohort that have received their first bachelor’s degree by a certain point in time. The six year graduation rate measures the proportion that have graduated before the 7<sup>th</sup> fall quarter after their entering fall term. One should note that graduated students are not counted in retention rates after they have graduated, even if they continue to enroll.

This report provides data on the Fall 2015 freshman cohort, which consisted of 3338 students. The six-year graduation rate for this group was 68.2% and another 2.8% had not graduated but were still enrolled. We report the combination of those who have either

graduated or are still enrolled. Informally, some refer to this as “retention”, although we will not use that here, to avoid confusion with the retention rate.

Ideally, we would analyze individual major changes. But given the many majors available at OSU, students with multiple majors, and changes in program titles, department and college assignments, tables would require thousands of cells to account for all combinations. For convenience, we limit the analysis to changes in the college of the primary major listed in the student information system. Even here, we need to account for programs that move from one college to another.

Another simplification is to use the college where the first degree was earned as the “college graduated from”. This may be misleading when a student begins in one college, receives their first degree in another and later receives a degree in the original college. But accounting for this makes tables difficult to read.

Table 1 provides an overall university snapshot. For example, of the 164 freshmen that began with a major in the College of Agricultural Sciences in Fall 2015, six years later 84 received their first degree or were still enrolled with a primary major in Agricultural Sciences. Another 28 received a first degree or had a primary major under one of the other listed colleges. 52 did not receive an OSU degree and were not enrolled, at this point in time. Thus, 51% of entering Agricultural Sciences students graduated or were retained within the college six years later, while 68% of the same cohort graduated or were retained from OSU as a whole.

**Table 1: 2015 First-time, Full-time, Degree-seeking Entering Cohort: Primary College Movement  
(Graduated or Still Enrolled at 6 Years)**

College at Entry	2015 Cohort	College Movement								No Graduation or Enrollment	% Grad or Enrolled	
		AG	BUS	EOAS	ENGR	FOR	LA	PHHS	SCI		College	OSU
Agricultural Sciences	164	84	5	0	2	1	10	6	4	52	51%	68%
Business	427	0	227	1	4	2	53	19	5	116	53%	73%
Earth, Ocean & Atmospheric Sciences	46	4	0	20	2	3	5	1	3	8	43%	83%
Engineering	1111	10	52	14	597	9	41	16	50	322	54%	71%
Forestry	41	1	2	2	0	21	1	1	0	13	51%	68%
Liberal Arts	285	2	6	0	0	0	150	21	5	101	53%	65%
Public Health and Human Sciences	286	1	15	0	2	2	21	169	4	72	59%	75%
Science	660	17	30	7	14	4	48	75	277	188	42%	72%
University Exploratory Studies Program	318	11	47	6	10	8	70	55	16	95	n/a	70%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3338</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>631</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>967</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>71%</b>

1. Based on college associated with primary major 1; does not account for multiple majors.

2. Graduation is based on college of primary major for first degree earned.

- About 28% of freshmen who graduated or were enrolled after 6 years had a different major from the one they started with (not counting UESP)

For those students who changed programs, the table reveals the typical patterns of movement from one college to another. For instance, Liberal Arts students frequently move to Public Health and Human Services, and vice versa. Science, which graduates or continues to enroll 42% of its students within the college had students migrate most frequently to Public Health and Human Services, followed by Liberal Arts and Business. Students who entered the university without a declared major (i.e., University Exploratory Studies Program) most frequently ended up in Liberal Arts, followed by Public Health and then Business.

Whereas the preceding table provided an overview of all colleges at the end of six years, what follows is a series of tables providing year-to-year data for each college. This allows for a look not only at which colleges students are moving to, but when those changes are typically made. For instance, most students who move to a different college appear to have done so by the end of two years.

### COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

2015 Cohort = 164

	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year	6 Year
<b>Agricultural Sciences</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>84</b>
Graduated	0	0	10	62	74	82
Enrolled but not graduated	99	89	75	0	9	2
<b>Enrolled or Graduated in Other Colleges</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
Business	3	3	4	1	5	5
Earth, Ocean & Atmospheric Sciences	1	0	0	0	0	0
Engineering	1	1	1	0	2	2
Forestry	0	1	1	0	1	1
Public Health & Human Sciences	8	7	6	6	6	6
Liberal Arts	5	10	10	4	10	10
Science	2	3	3	1	3	4
University Exploratory Studies Program	3	3	0	0	0	0
<b>Not Enrolled or Graduated</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>% Changed College</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>% Enrolled or Graduated in College</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>51%</b>
<b>% Enrolled or Graduated at OSU</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>68%</b>

## COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

2015 Cohort = 427

	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year	6 Year
<b>Business</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>227</b>
Graduated	0	0	8	164	217	224
Enrolled but not graduated	313	258	229	0	10	3
<b>Enrolled or Graduated in Other Colleges</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>84</b>
Agricultural Sciences	1	1	0	0	0	0
Earth, Ocean & Atmospheric Sciences	0	0	1	0	1	1
Engineering	5	4	4	1	3	4
Forestry	2	2	2	0	2	2
Public Health & Human Sciences	9	20	21	11	19	19
Liberal Arts	30	50	57	33	55	53
Science	3	6	5	1	5	5
University Exploratory Studies Program	6	0	0	0	1	0
<b>Not Enrolled or Graduated</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>% Changed College</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>% Enrolled or Graduated in College</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>53%</b>
<b>% Enrolled or Graduated at OSU</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>73%</b>

## COLLEGE OF EARTH, OCEAN, AND ATMOSPHERIC SCIENCES

2015 Cohort = 46

	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year	6 Year
<b>Earth, Ocean, and Atmos. Sciences</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
Graduated	0	0	1	16	20	20
Enrolled but not graduated	28	22	19	0	0	0
<b>Enrolled or Graduated in Other Colleges</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>
Agricultural Sciences	1	4	4	3	4	4
Business	0	0	0	0	0	0
Engineering	1	1	2	1	2	2
Forestry	2	3	3	0	3	3
Public Health & Human Sciences	1	1	1	1	1	1
Liberal Arts	3	4	5	3	5	5
Science	2	3	4	2	3	3
University Exploratory Studies Program	4	2	0	0	0	0
<b>Not Enrolled or Graduated</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>% Changed College</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>39%</b>
<b>% Enrolled or Graduated in College</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>% Enrolled or Graduated at OSU</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>83%</b>

## COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

2015 Cohort = 1111

	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year	6 Year
<b>Engineering</b>	<b>797</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>597</b>
Graduated	0	0	1	253	527	574
Enrolled but not graduated	797	681	626	0	72	23
<b>Enrolled or Graduated in Other Colleges</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>192</b>
Agricultural Sciences	5	11	12	6	10	10
Business	35	48	54	23	51	52
Earth, Ocean & Atmospheric Sciences	2	9	14	8	13	14
Forestry	7	11	12	3	10	9
Public Health & Human Sciences	13	19	19	6	15	16
Liberal Arts	18	37	42	9	40	41
Science	31	42	50	29	48	50
University Exploratory Studies Program	39	15	2	0	5	0
<b>Not Enrolled or Graduated</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>774</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>322</b>
<b>% Changed College</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>% Enrolled or Graduated in College</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>54%</b>
<b>% Enrolled or Graduated at OSU</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>71%</b>

## COLLEGE OF FORESTRY

2015 Cohort = 41

	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year	6 Year
<b>Forestry</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>
Graduated	0	0	2	9	19	20
Enrolled but not graduated	25	24	21	0	2	1
<b>Enrolled or Graduated in Other Colleges</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
Agricultural Sciences	0	1	1	1	1	1
Business	1	1	1	0	1	2
Earth, Ocean & Atmospheric Sciences	0	2	2	1	2	2
Engineering	1	0	0	0	0	0
Public Health & Human Sciences	1	1	1	0	1	1
Liberal Arts	0	2	2	1	1	1
Science	3	0	0	0	0	0
University Exploratory Studies Program	2	1	1	0	0	0
<b>Not Enrolled or Graduated</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>% Changed College</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>% Enrolled or Graduated in College</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>51%</b>
<b>% Enrolled or Graduated at OSU</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>68%</b>

## COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

2015 Cohort = 285

	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year	6 Year
<b>Liberal Arts</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>150</b>
Graduated	0	1	17	91	132	144
Enrolled but not graduated	183	157	134	0	19	6
<b>Enrolled or Graduated in Other Colleges</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>
Agricultural Sciences	1	2	2	0	2	2
Business	6	7	7	4	6	6
Earth, Ocean & Atmospheric Sciences	0	0	0	0	0	0
Engineering	2	0	0	0	0	0
Forestry	0	0	0	0	0	0
Public Health & Human Sciences	16	20	21	11	21	21
Science	7	4	6	0	5	5
University Exploratory Studies Program	4	3	1	0	0	0
<b>Not Enrolled or Graduated</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>% Changed College</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>% Enrolled or Graduated in College</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>53%</b>
<b>% Enrolled or Graduated at OSU</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>65%</b>

## COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES

2015 Cohort = 286

	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year	6 Year
<b>Public Health &amp; Human Sciences</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>169</b>
Graduated	0	0	5	116	159	166
Enrolled but not graduated	207	187	161	0	7	3
<b>Enrolled or Graduated in Other Colleges</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>45</b>
Agricultural Sciences	2	1	1	1	1	1
Business	18	16	17	9	17	15
Earth, Ocean & Atmospheric Sciences	0	0	0	0	0	0
Engineering	1	1	2	0	2	2
Forestry	0	1	2	0	2	2
Liberal Arts	9	14	20	13	22	21
Science	4	5	5	4	4	4
University Exploratory Studies Program	7	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Not Enrolled or Graduated</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>% Changed College</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>% Enrolled or Graduated in College</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>59%</b>
<b>% Enrolled or Graduated at OSU</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>75%</b>



## COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

2015 Cohort = 660

	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year	6 Year
<b>Science</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>277</b>
Graduated	0	0	26	197	258	267
Enrolled but not graduated	399	302	267	0	19	10
<b>Enrolled or Graduated in Other Colleges</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>195</b>
Agricultural Sciences	14	19	16	13	17	17
Business	18	28	29	17	28	30
Earth, Ocean & Atmospheric Sciences	2	5	5	2	7	7
Engineering	9	16	18	5	13	14
Forestry	4	4	2	0	5	4
Public Health & Human Sciences	35	73	78	46	74	75
Liberal Arts	27	49	48	34	48	48
University Exploratory Studies Program	28	6	5	0	0	0
<b>Not Enrolled or Graduated</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>188</b>
<b>% Changed College</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>% Enrolled or Graduated in College</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>% Enrolled or Graduated at OSU</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>72%</b>

## University Exploratory Studies Program

2015 Cohort = 318

	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year	6 Year
<b>University Exploratory Studies Program</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Graduated	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enrolled but not graduated	123	16	4	0	0	0
<b>Enrolled or Graduated in Other Colleges</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>223</b>
Agricultural Sciences	4	9	9	8	12	11
Business	42	51	48	30	49	47
Earth, Ocean & Atmospheric Sciences	5	8	8	3	6	6
Engineering	7	11	10	5	10	10
Forestry	4	7	9	2	9	8
Public Health & Human Sciences	34	55	54	36	55	55
Liberal Arts	37	76	72	38	71	70
Science	11	17	17	12	16	16
<b>Not Enrolled or Graduated</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>% Changed College</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>70%</b>
<b>% Enrolled or Graduated in College</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>% Enrolled or Graduated at OSU</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>70%</b>