

April 9, 2025 at 2:15 p.m.  
Via Videoconference and PBS North Carolina Livestream  
UNC System Office  
223 S. West Street, Board Room  
Raleigh, North Carolina

## AGENDA

### OPEN SESSION

- A-1. Approval of Open Session Minutes of February 26, 2025 ..... Joel Ford
  
- A-2. Accelerating Time to Degree ..... Shun Robertson  
Chancellor Kimberly van Noort, University of North Carolina Asheville  
Chancellor Franklin D. Gilliam, University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
Chancellor Aswani K. Volety, University of North Carolina Wilmington
  
- A-3. Adjourn

## DRAFT MINUTES

February 26, 2025, at 1:00 p.m.  
Via Videoconference and PBS North Carolina Livestream  
UNC System Office  
223 S. West Street, Board Room  
Raleigh, North Carolina

This meeting of the Committee on Strategic Initiatives was presided over by Chair Joel Ford. The following committee members, constituting a quorum, were also present in person or by phone: John Fraley, Swadesh Chatterjee, Gene Davis, Cameron Brown, and Pearl Burris-Floyd.

Staff members present included Shun Robertson and others from the UNC System Office.

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### 1. Call to Order and Approval of OPEN Session Minutes (Item A-1)

The chair called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, February 26, 2025. The open session minutes from September 11, 2024, and the joint meeting minutes from November 13, 2024, were approved by unanimous consent.

### 2. Project Kitty Hawk Annual Update (Item A-2)

Chair Ford gave a brief overview of Project Kitty Hawk and introduced Dr. Andrew Kelly, president and CEO of the program. Dr. Kelly discussed the launch of the Re-Enrollment Program, and noted this past December saw the first graduates of Project Kitty Hawk degree programs. Next, Raé Williams, chief financial officer for Project Kitty Hawk, provided a finance overview of the program, detailing future fiscal growth. The meeting concluded with the chancellors from three Project Kitty Hawk partner institutions — Chancellor Karrie Dixon from North Carolina Central University, Chancellor Philip Rogers from East Carolina University, and Interim Chancellor Heather Norris from Appalachian State University — providing highlights from their partnerships with Project Kitty Hawk including enrollment, persistence rates, and recent graduate numbers.

There being no further business and without objection, the meeting adjourned at 2 p.m.

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Swadesh Chatterjee, Secretary

**AGENDA ITEM**

- A-2. Accelerating Time to Degree .....Shun Robertson  
Chancellor Kimberly van Noort, University of North Carolina Asheville  
Chancellor Franklin D. Gilliam, University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
Chancellor Aswani K. Volety, University of North Carolina Wilmington

**Situation:** Accelerating time to degree involves strategies that enable students to complete their educational programs on time or faster than the traditional timeline. UNC System institutions are accelerating time to degree through various methods such as offering accelerated programs, giving applicable credit for prior learning, and providing year-round and flexible course scheduling.

**Background:** The University of North Carolina System is helping more North Carolinians graduate on time. Our four-year graduation rate increased 12.2 percentage points over the past decade, which means more than 4,100 additional on-time graduates in 2024 compared to 2014, even after accounting for enrollment growth. On-time graduates have lower debt and can launch their careers more quickly. They also make the System more efficient, opening seats for the next generation of students.

Accelerating time to degree is important because it benefits students, the institution, and the state. By reducing the financial burden on students, improving graduation rates, and addressing labor market demands, institutions that promote shorter degree completion times help create a more efficient and productive UNC System. As higher education continues to evolve, institutions must explore ways to provide students with opportunities to graduate faster, while maintaining high academic standards and preparing them for the challenges of the modern workforce.

**Assessment:** The committee will receive a presentation on UNC System time-to-degree trends and strategies. The committee will also hear from three System chancellors on how they are accelerating time to degree for their students.

**Action:** This item is for discussion only.



# Accelerating Time To Degree

Strategic Initiatives Committee, UNC Board of Governors

Chancellor Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr.

# Elective Credit Realignment Project

## **Our Challenge:**

Transfer students were receiving too much elective credit for courses they completed elsewhere which was slowing time to degree.

## **What We Did:**

Launched an initiative for departmental review of transfer courses to better align transfer credit to major course credit.



## **Results:**

Departments converted 2,000 elective courses to actual major-course credit, shortening time to degree.

# Stop-Out Strategy and Success

## **Our Challenge:**

UNCG students were stopping out a high rate. University lacked a plan of action to re-enroll them.

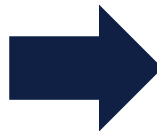
*Study of 8,000 students stopped out w/in last 6 years. Nearly 8 in 10 in good standing.*

## **What We Did:**

High-touch, hands-on model of outreach, motivation, and coaching.

Position dedicated to population's success.

Partnership with ReUp Education to reengage 10+ years of former students.



## **Results:**

Increased former student enrollment by 42% from 2021 to 2023

# Spartan Finish Line

## Our Challenge:

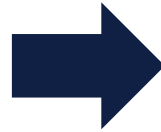
Financial gaps can slow degree progress, ultimately forcing some students to stop out within 1-2 semesters of graduating.

## What We Did:

Donor support

Accelerate graduation while reducing debt anxiety

Proactive debt reduction through financial wellness coaching



## Results:

Covers outstanding balances to reduce debt anxiety & account holds

Prevents dropouts due to financial stress

Equips graduates with financial knowledge



*Average award is \$1,465 using donor funds. A relatively small amount makes the difference!*

# Increasing Credit Efficiency

## **Our Challenge:**

The pandemic led to a significant decrease in credit completion for new non-transfer students, threatening first-year retention and timely graduation.

## **What We Did:**

Launched an "all hands" approach, with new training for instructors, redesign of gateway courses, and changes in policy (e.g., required midterm grades).

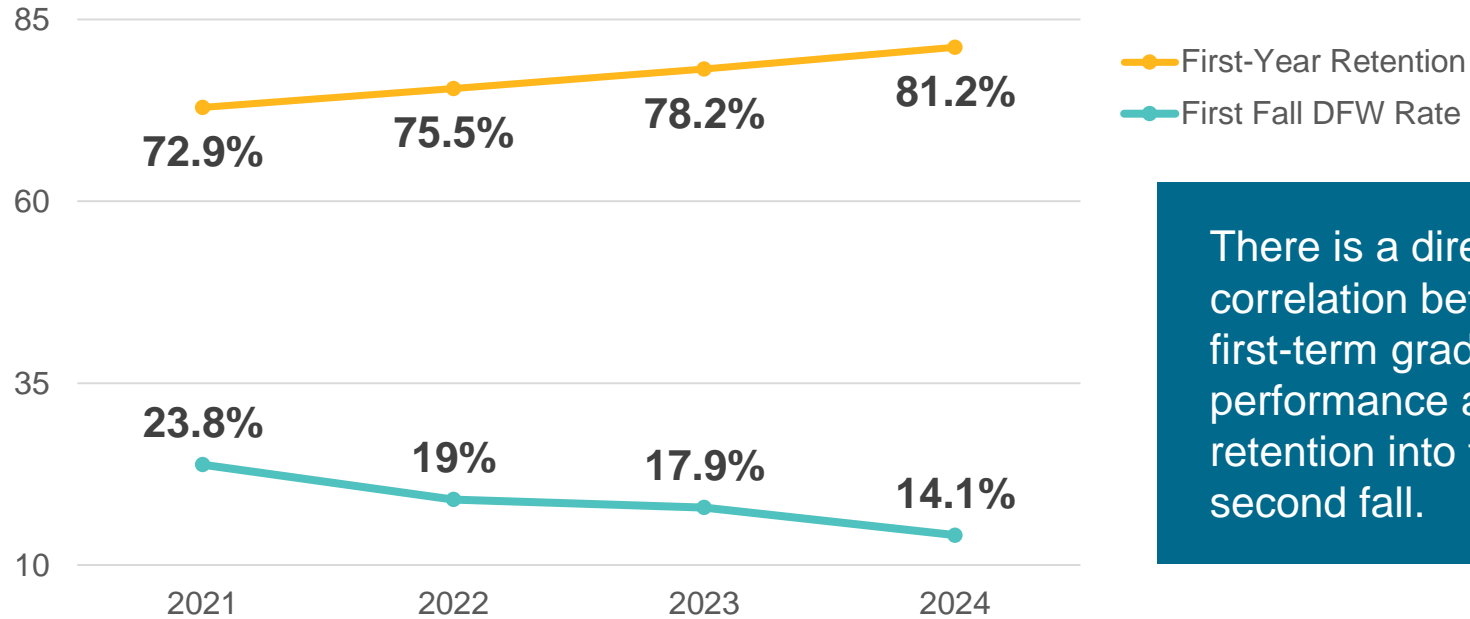


## **Results:**

We are now seeing better academic performance for FTFT students than before the pandemic.



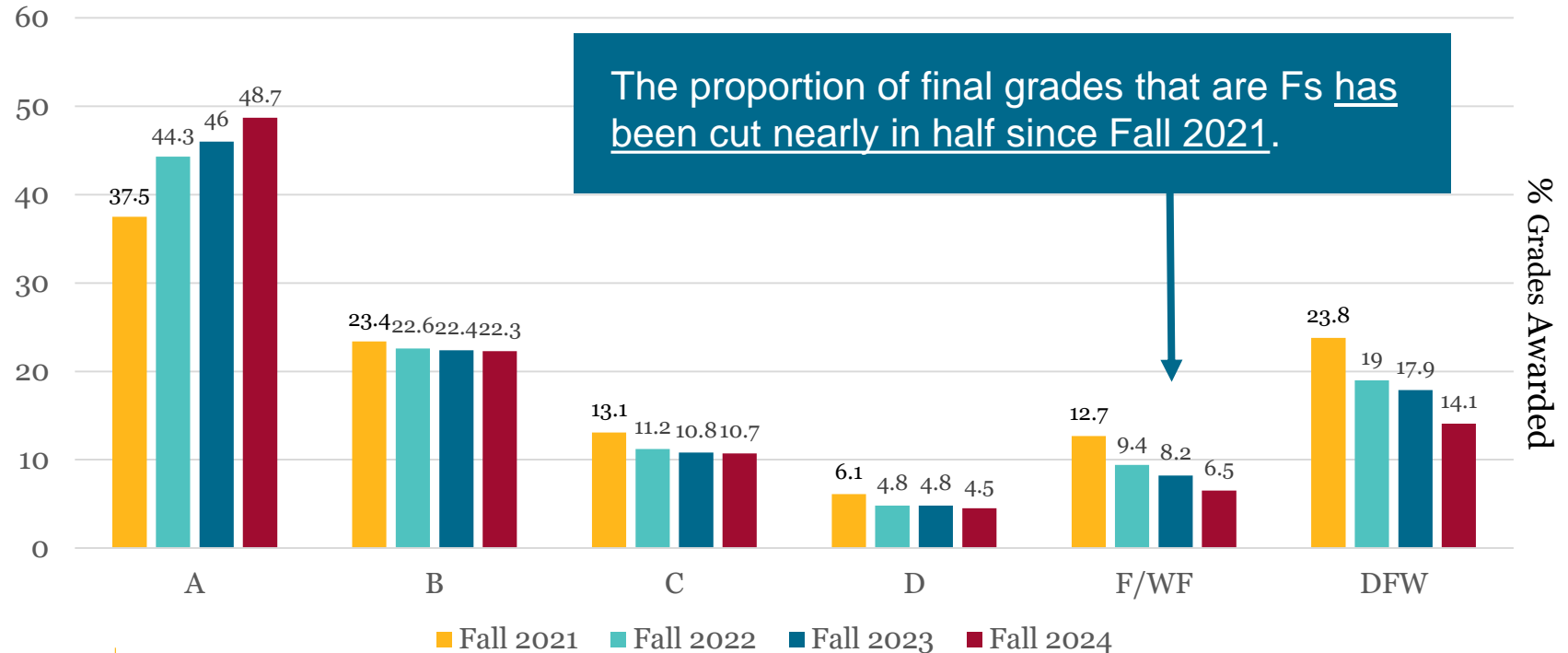
# An Effect of Credit Efficiency: First-Year Retention



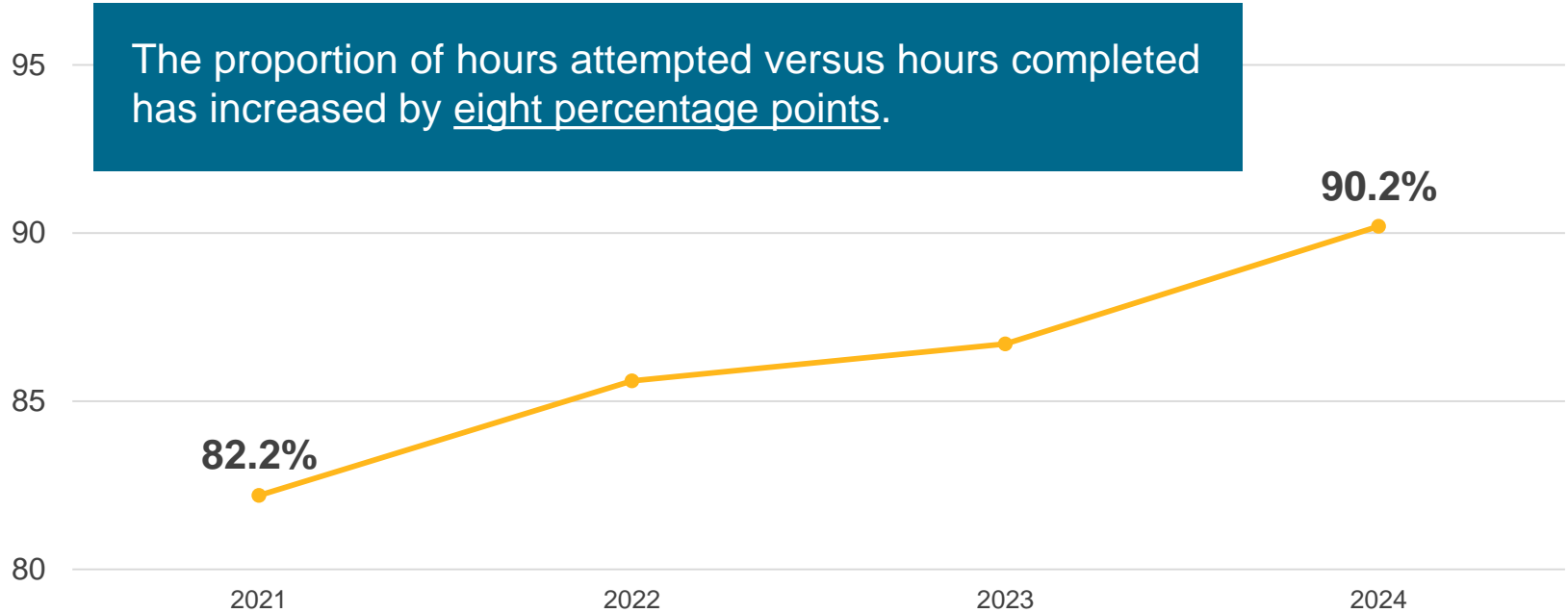
There is a direct correlation between first-term grade performance and retention into the second fall.

\*2024 Cohort Retention Value is Projected; DFW Value is Actual.

# First-Year Full-Time Student Progress 2021-2024: % Grade Distribution In First Fall Terms



# First-Time, Full-Time Student Progress 2021-2024: Percent Attempted Hours Completed



# Supporting Student Success at UNCW

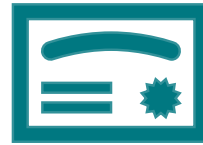
**Individual Focus, Teamwork  
and Data-Driven Strategies**



# UNCW at a Glance



18,848 Students



Graduation Rates  
4-year: 65.5%  
6-year: 83.3%



88.2% Retention Rate



5,101 Degrees Completed



108,886 Alumni

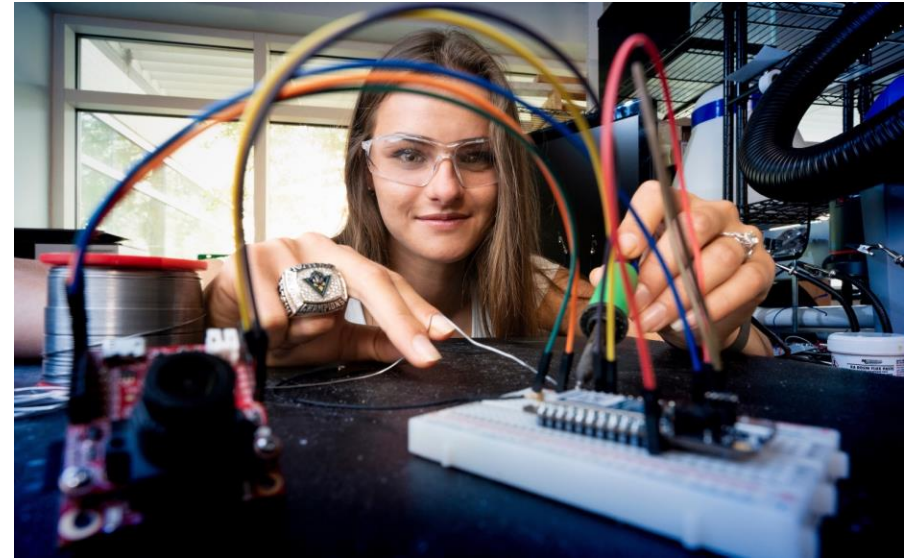
# Strategies to Support Student Success

- Focus on Students as Individuals
- Teamwork and Funding
- Financial Aid
- Academics and Advising
- Career Guidance and Well-being
- Transfer Students
- Military Students
- Expand Housing for Sophomores



# Focus on Students as Individuals

- Student success looks different for each Seahawk who attends UNCW
- To make the most of the opportunity to earn a four-year college degree, each student's pathway to graduation should include:
  - Academic achievement
  - Engagement
  - Holistic well-being
  - Career preparedness



# Teamwork and Funding



- **Collaborative Projects, Programs and Processes:** Academic Affairs, Business Affairs, Student Affairs and other units across campus work together to identify and address factors impacting retention and graduation.
- **2023-25 Funding Investments:** Used CITI and Enrollment Growth funding to support:
  - New academic advising model, including 12 new positions
  - Counseling Center – added 8 new mental health/counseling positions and 1 new position specifically for student athletes (housed in Athletics), adjusted professional salaries, and invested in peer educator program to enhance support
  - Provided support for strategic financial aid commitments



# Financial Aid

## Focused on Financial Aid:

- Optimized need-based and merit scholarships to enhance recruitment and retention of first-year and transfer students; provided support to enhance teaching assistant roles for graduate students
- Adjusted scholarship communications to an earlier timeframe in the application process
- FAFSA and Pell Grant Information
  - Pell Grant headcount increased 19% from two years prior and the total amount received increased by 29%
  - State grant (Next NC Scholarship) headcount increased 21% from two years prior and the total amount received (sum of all students) increased by 39%



# Academics and Advising

## Academics:

- Invested in tech tools (Starfish, Sammy Chatbot) to provide students with timely communication about key academic dates, support, etc.
- Launched Degree Works software, empowering students to easily track progress toward graduation
- Introduced these tools in first-year UNI classes
- Clarified academic standings
- Extended enrollment appeals to 3 semesters to provide more time for support and intervention

## Advising:

- Center for Academic Advising incorporated national best practices to build on UNCW's strengths in this area
- Assigned all undergraduate students a professional academic advisor and/or faculty advisor to guide them throughout their time at UNCW
- Added academic advisors
- Added mental health professionals to support wellness

# Career Guidance and Well-being

## Career Guidance Actions Include:

- Career Planning Guide Toolbox
- Career, Internship and Part-Time Job Fairs
- Career Trek program
- Certified Internship program
- Washington D. Seahawks (an Honors College-Career Center partnership to match students with mentors in DC over Spring Break)
- Added Employer Recruiter days within CHHS
- Piloted mentor program with CSE students and alumni
- Hosted Athletics mixers with 126 students and 13 employers
- Established Employer Advisory Board with membership of 16 companies

## Belonging Actions Include:

- Student advisory groups meet with VCSA, Provost and/or Chancellor monthly
- Added mental health professionals to support students' well-being
- Providing support and guidance for more than 200 student organizations
- Investing in new and existing traditions to build a sense of community among students



# Transfer Students

## Renewed Community College Partnerships

- Creating strong pathways for NCCC students
- Investing in relationships, staff and infrastructure for 3 years
- Encouraging our faculty to identify strong pathways for students to access UNCW through transfers

## Key Transfer Pathways

- Relaunched PathWays, guaranteed admission program, in January 2024
- Creates a clear path for students across the state who wish to transfer to UNCW
- Includes the opportunity for tailored transfer coaching from one of our Transfer Success Coaches, a guaranteed scholarship, access to on-campus opportunities such as early registration, access to our career and major exploration tools, and more!
- Program participants: 52 of 58 community colleges, with 781 students enrolled statewide
- Pre-Hawks program with Cape Fear Community College
- Accelerated options leading to degrees in social work, oceanography and coastal engineering

# Military Students

- **Brunch and Learn Sessions in Veterans Hall:** Creates connections for military-affiliated students with services on campus and in the community
- **Peer-to-peer outreach:** VA work-study students make calls to admitted/deposited students to see if they have any questions before they arrive on campus
- **Weekly “soft” events to assist students with their educational experience.** Examples include Counseling Center support (Camaraderie Corner); Career Center resume assistance, practice interviews, LinkedIn pointers etc.; Disability Resource Center assistance with various challenges our students may have



# Expand Housing for Sophomores

- Reserved 1,800+ student beds in Seahawk apartment complexes (up from 1,200)
- Housing information shared earlier in the academic year to encourage planning and simplify process for rising sophomores
- Replaced previous “first come, first served” process with a 2-week application window and randomly assigned priority numbers, based on student feedback



# Student Success: Helping Seahawks Soar



# Helping Seahawks Soar Higher





# Thank You for Supporting Student Success





**THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM**



# ACCELERATING TIME TO DEGREE

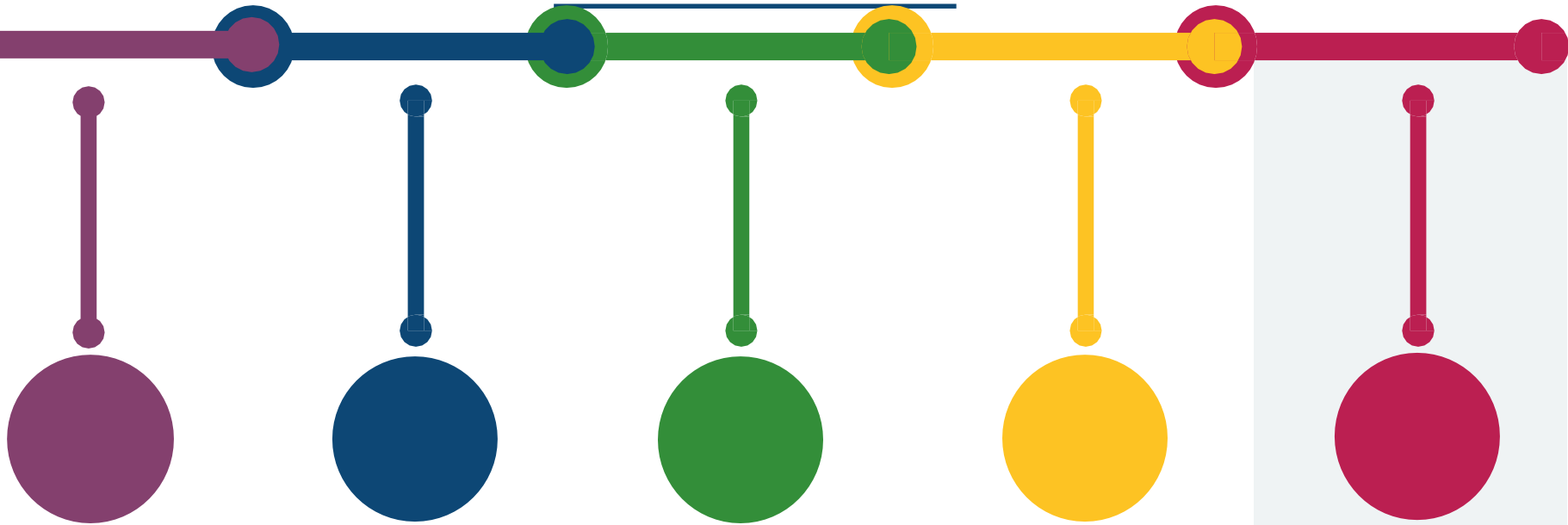
April 9, 2025  
Committee on Strategic Initiatives

# Outline

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- Trends in Time-to-Degree in UNC System
- Strategies to Accelerate Time-to-Degree
- Chancellor panel
  - UNC Asheville
  - UNC Greensboro
  - UNC Wilmington

# Enrollment Management: More than Admissions



## Demographic Shifts

- Declining birth rates
- Int'l student migration patterns

## Macroeconomic Drivers

- Business cycles and unemployment rates
- Household finances (e.g., savings rate)

## College-Going Rates

- Declining perception of value of degree
- Rising wages for jobs post high school

## College Access Practices

- Simplified application process
- Personalized acceptance videos/letters
- Expedited financial aid award letters

## Student Outcomes Practices

- Increased focus on retention
- **Decreased time-to-degree**

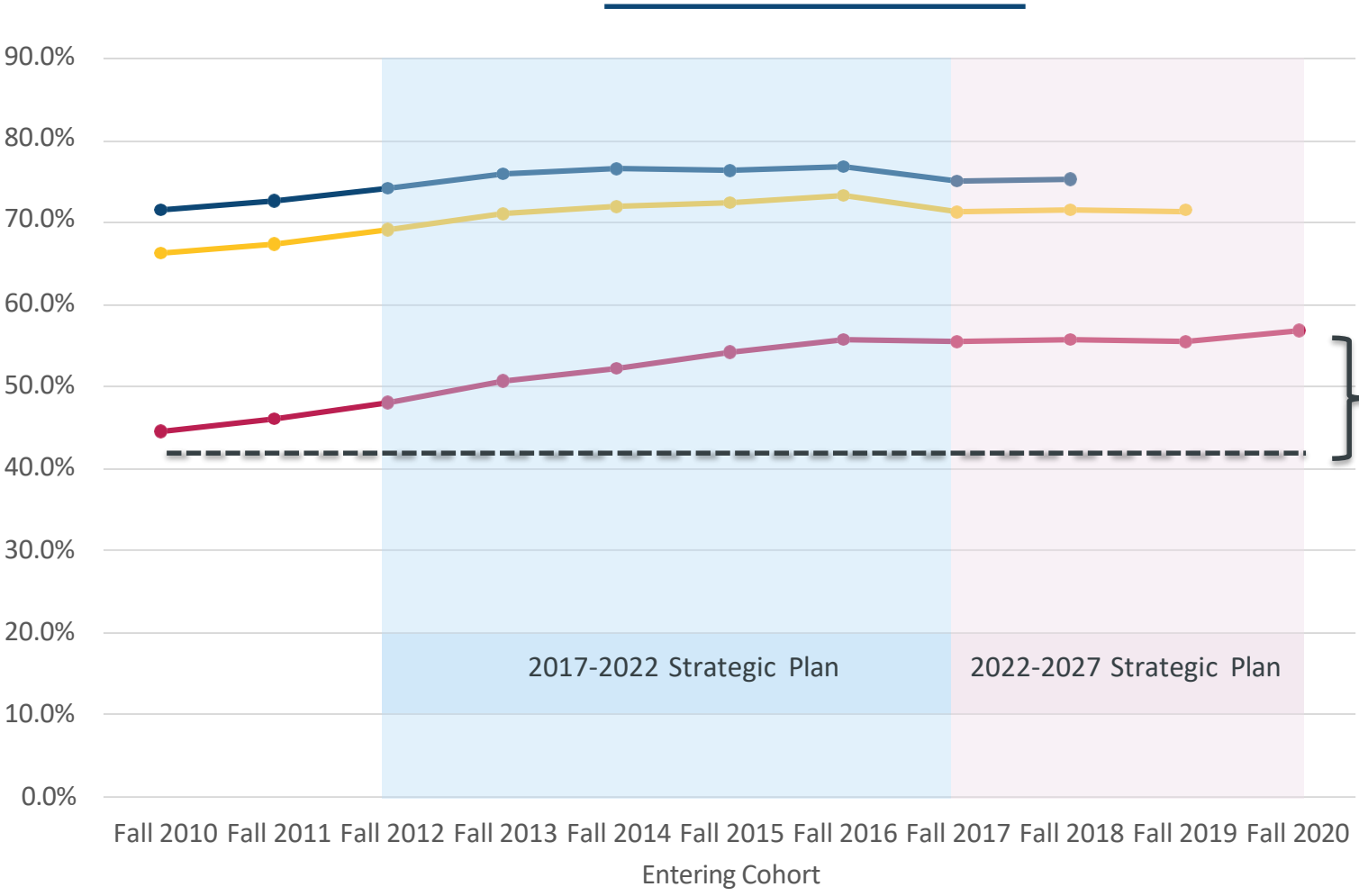
*Today's Conversation*

# Benefits of Accelerating Time-to-Degree

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- Help students graduate in less than 4 years
- Accelerate path to graduation for students who may take longer than 4 years
- Gains in performance metrics
  - Higher 4-year graduation rate
  - Higher undergraduate degree efficiency
  - Lower student debt
- Reduced opportunity cost for students with earlier access into job market

# UNC System Graduation Rates

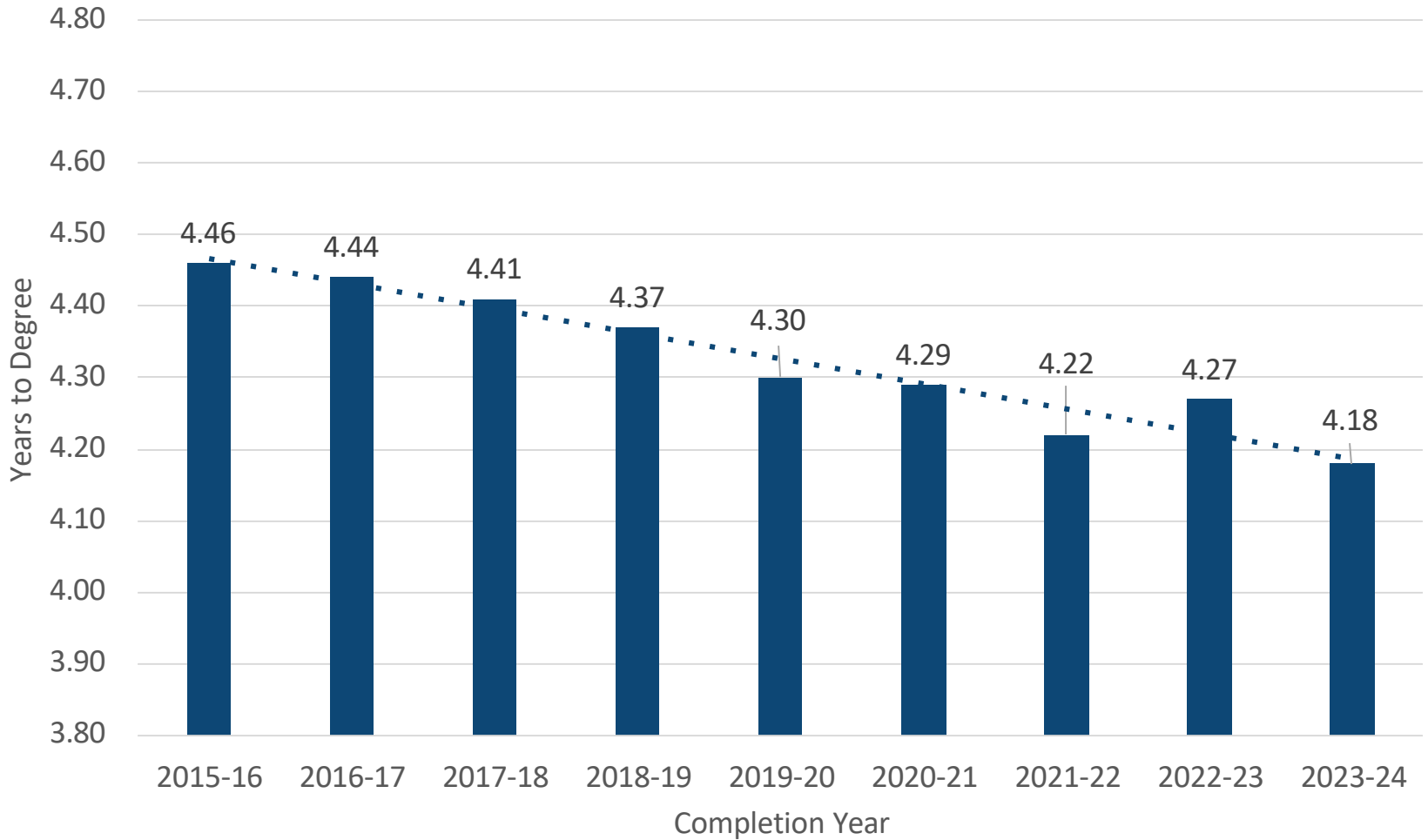


In the last decade  
 +12.2 pp in 4-year  
 grad rate =  
 4,177 additional  
 graduates, even  
 after accounting  
 for enrollment  
 growth!

● 4-Year Graduation Rate    
 ● 5-Year Graduation Rate    
 ● 6-Year Graduation Rate

# Time-to-Degree

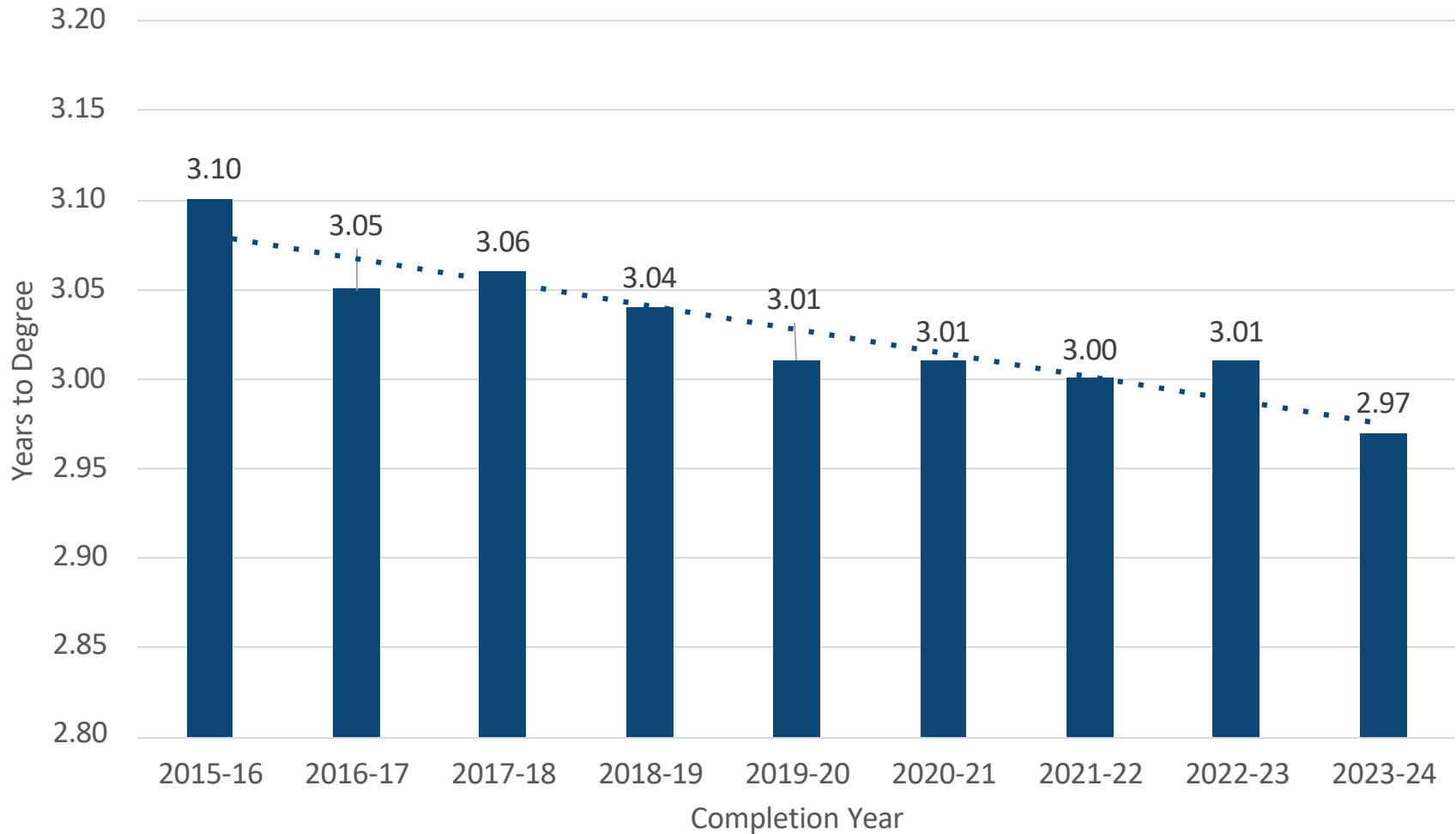
## Students who started as first-time, full-time





# Time-to-Degree

## Students who started as transfer, full-time



# Strategies for Accelerating Time-to-Degree

## Pre-Matriculation



### Early postsecondary credit

- Early college high schools
  - Research from UNCG's SERVE center shows NC's ECHS model shortened students' time to degree by six months for bachelor's degrees (Edmunds et al, 2020)
- Dual enrollment
- Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB)



### Credit for Prior Learning

- Military Equivalency System
  - Launched public-facing tool in March 2024; includes more than 17,000 military credit equivalencies



### Transfer Articulation

- New regulation adopted in Feb 2025 improves the transfer process systemwide by ensuring adherence to the CAA, up-to-date transfer guides, and quick transcript review

# Strategies for Accelerating Time-to-Degree

## Post-Matriculation



Ensuring most degree programs are 120 credit hours

- As required by Policy 400.1.5 on Fostering Undergraduate Student Success except by exemption



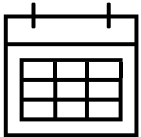
Flexible course offerings

- Mini-sessions, accelerated courses



Accelerated bachelor's degrees

- Three-year structured pathways with rigorous degree maps

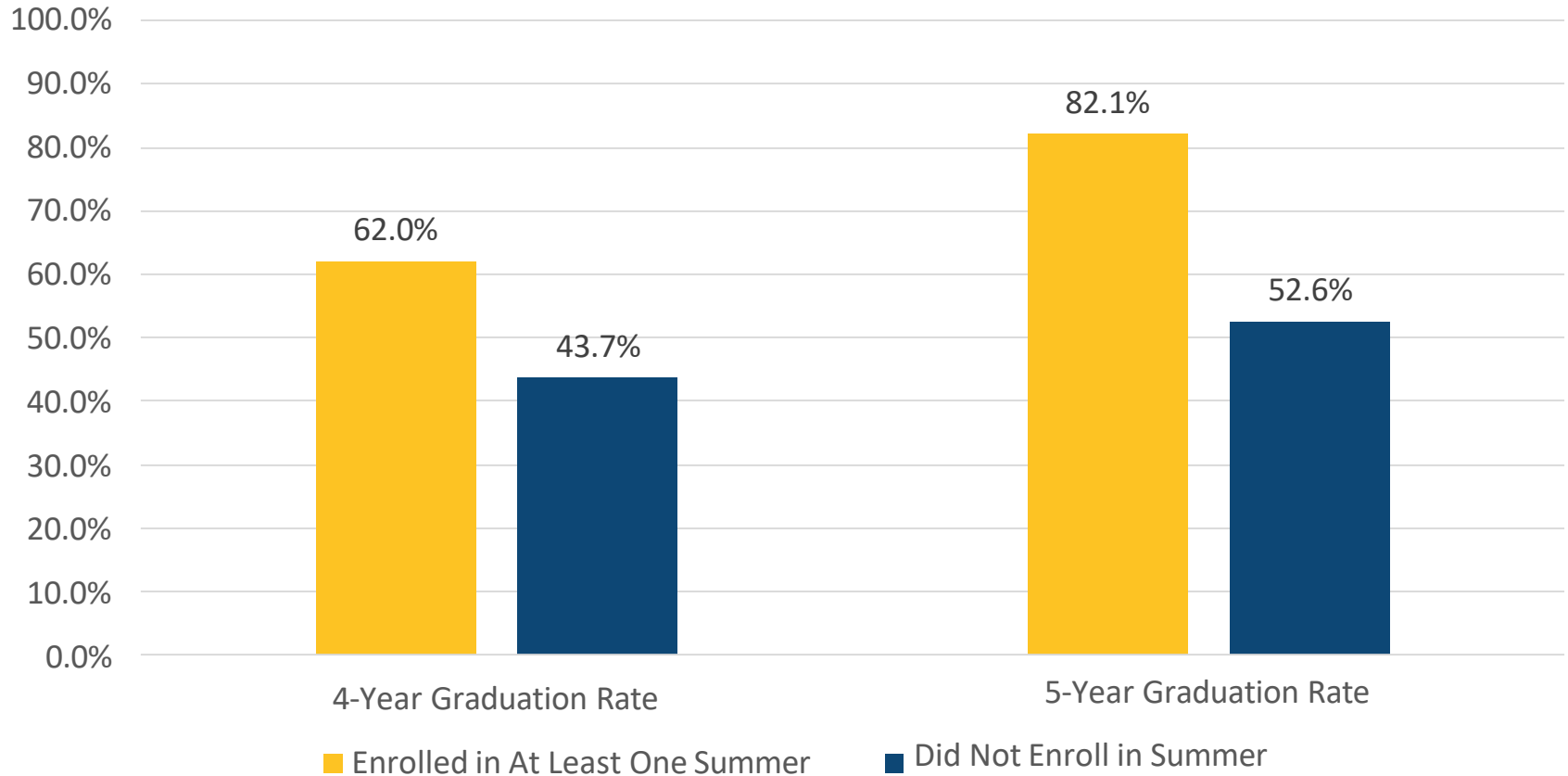


Year-round enrollment

- Research shows a 2.6 percent increase in the likelihood of completing a bachelor's degree for each additional summer credit a student enrolls in (Liu, 2016)

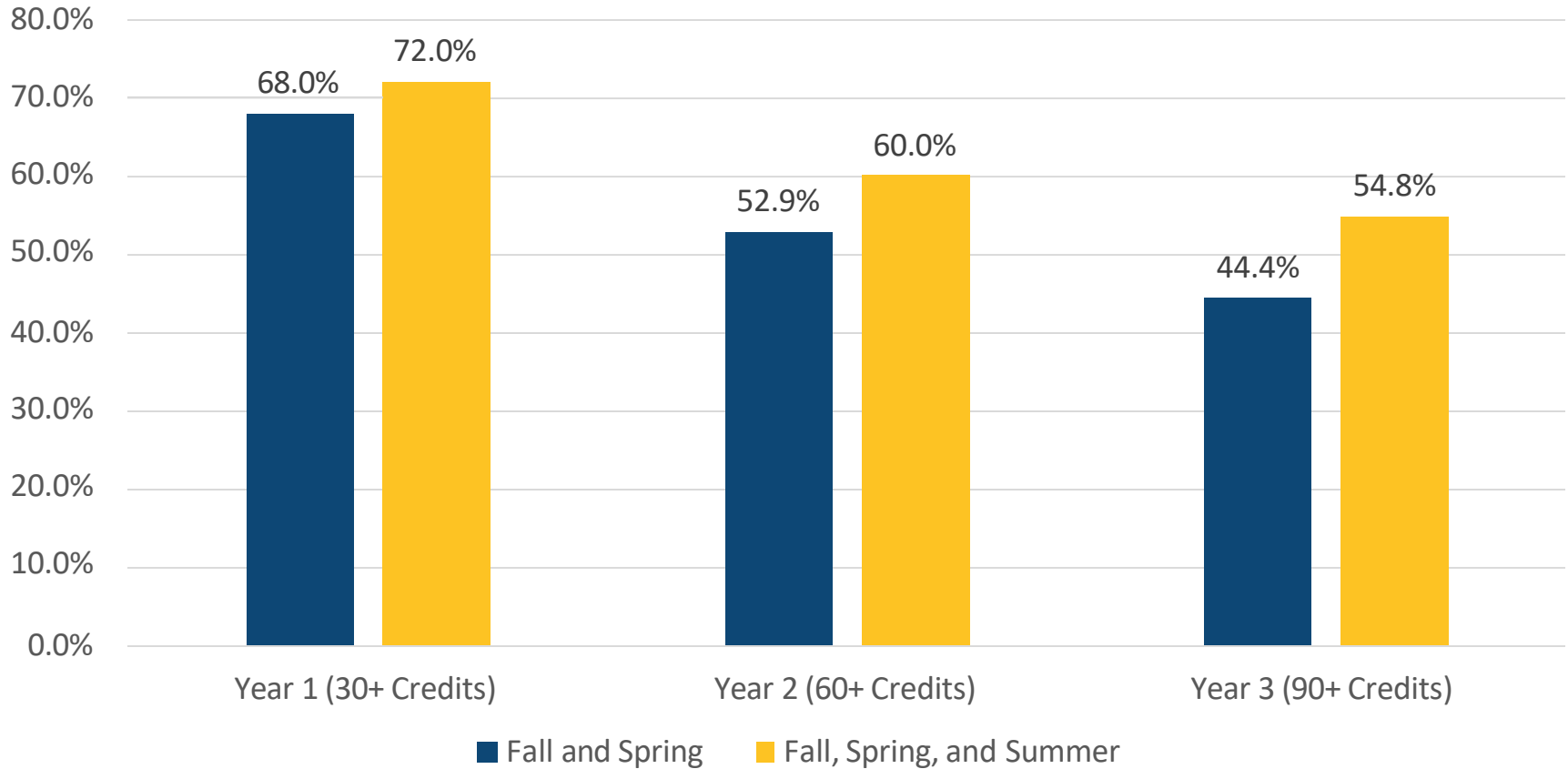
# We know that students who enroll in summer are more likely to graduate on time.

Graduation Rates by Summer Enrollment  
(Fall 2019 First-Time, Full-Time Cohort)



# Summer allows students an additional opportunity to earn necessary credits.

Percentage of Fall 2019 First-Time, Full-Time Cohort Meeting Earned Credit Benchmarks



QUESTIONS?





# CHANCELLOR PANEL

THANK YOU