

Research on the Effective Use of Longitudinal SUR Data

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Research that Matters

DESIGN OF DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING



Planning Research

- Identify strategic goals for student performance improvement and encapsulate them in a “storyline” that succinctly conveys what you are trying to accomplish and why
- Review performance indicators, and if necessary, revise them to ensure that they are aligned with your strategic goals
- Identify research questions that, if answered, could help advance strategic goals
- Involve key stakeholders such as college personnel, state agency staff, and governor’s or legislative staff in defining and helping to prioritize the research questions

CC Student Goals at Entry

- About 89 % of all first-time students intended to obtain a degree and/or transfer
- 11% expected to do neither

Turn Data into Information

- What are the early predictors of positive student outcomes that can be used by state and community college leaders?
- Milestones and momentum points

Definitions

- **Milestones are *measurable educational achievements* that include both conventional terminal completions, such as**
 - ▣ **earning a credential or transferring to a baccalaureate program**
 - ▣ **intermediate outcomes, such as completing developmental education or adult basic skills requirements**
- **Momentum points are *measurable educational attainments* that are empirically correlated with the completion of a milestone**

Basic Skills Completion Rate Milestone

- ABE, GSL
- GED
- Start developmental work
- Complete developmental work

SRK Completion Rate Milestone

- First college credit
- Credits completed 1st term in college path
- Credits completed 1 year in workforce/ transfer ready
- Certificate
- Associates degree

Workforce Ready, Employment Rate Milestone

- Employment with earnings
- BA degree

Achieving the Dream Measures

- Successfully complete the courses they take
- Advance from remedial to credit-bearing courses
- Enroll in and successfully complete gatekeeper courses
- Enroll from one semester to the next
- Earn degrees and/or certificates

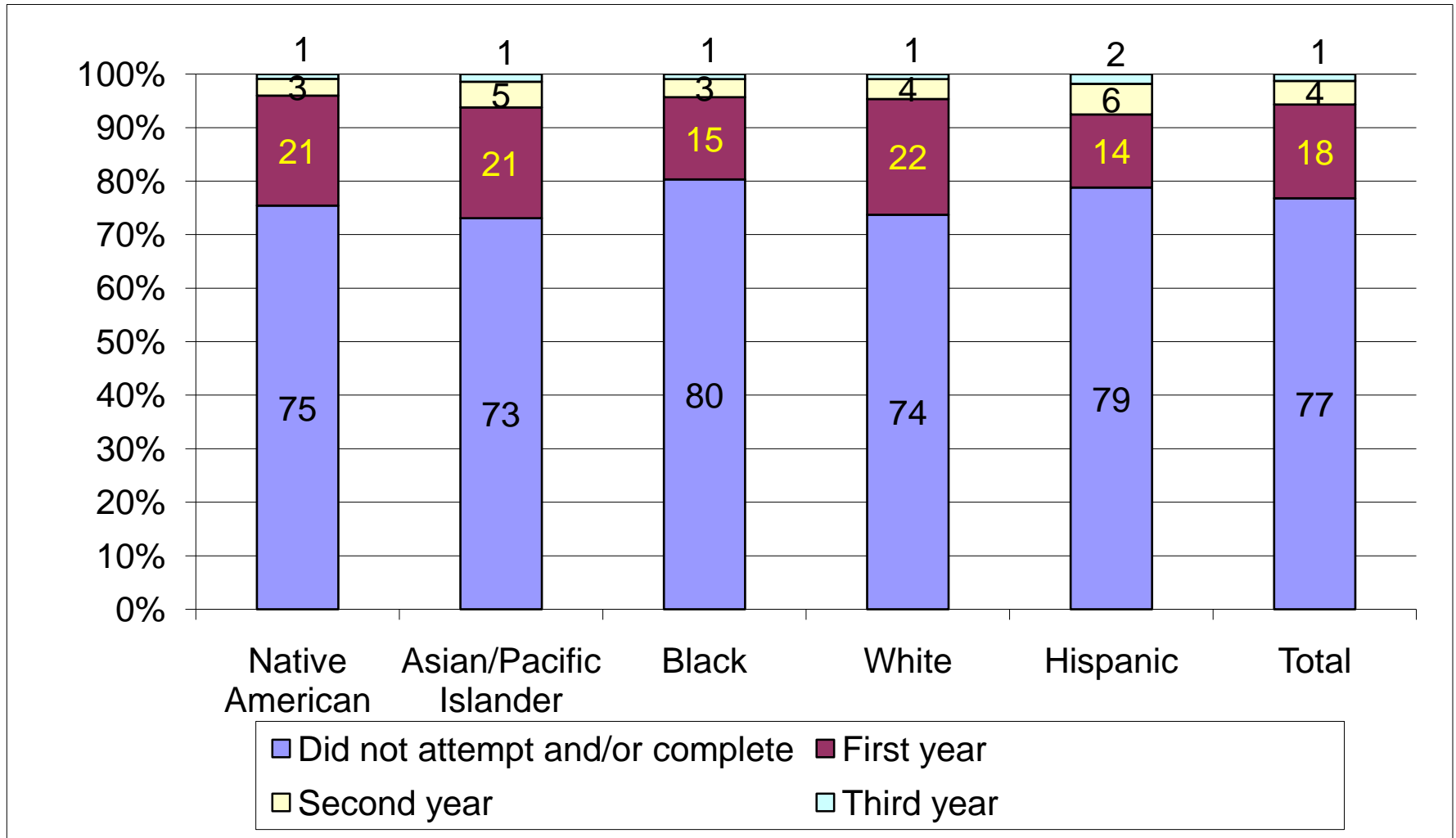
Examples of AtD Data Elements

- All students entering the college for the first time in the fall
- Typical demographic characteristics
- Referral to developmental classes
- Receipt of student aid
- Enroll full- or part-time
- Vocational, academic, none

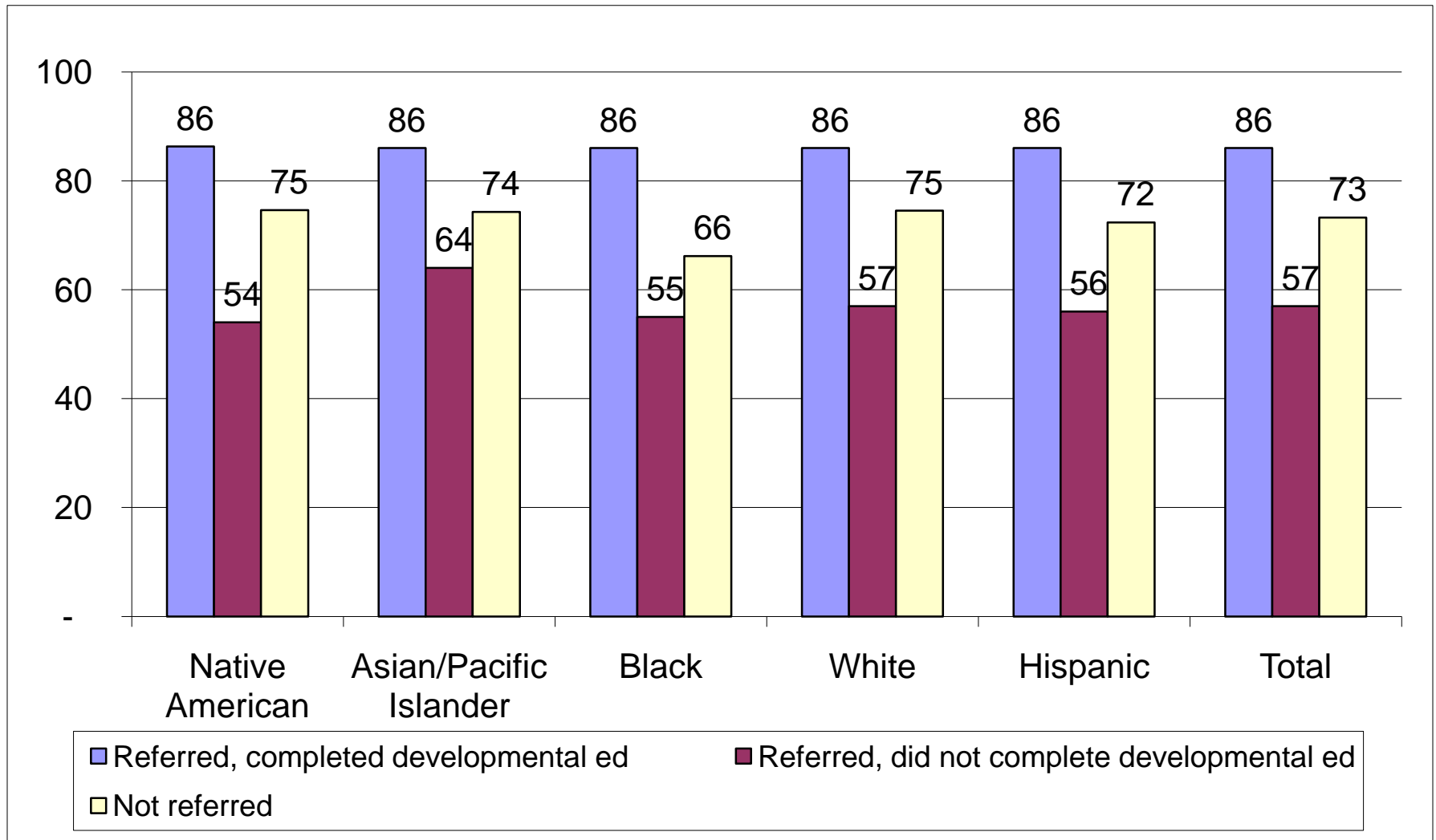
Examples of AtD Data Elements (continued)

- GPA
- Units attempted and completed
- Developmental education completion
- Gateway classes in math and English
- Transfer
- Degree or certificate

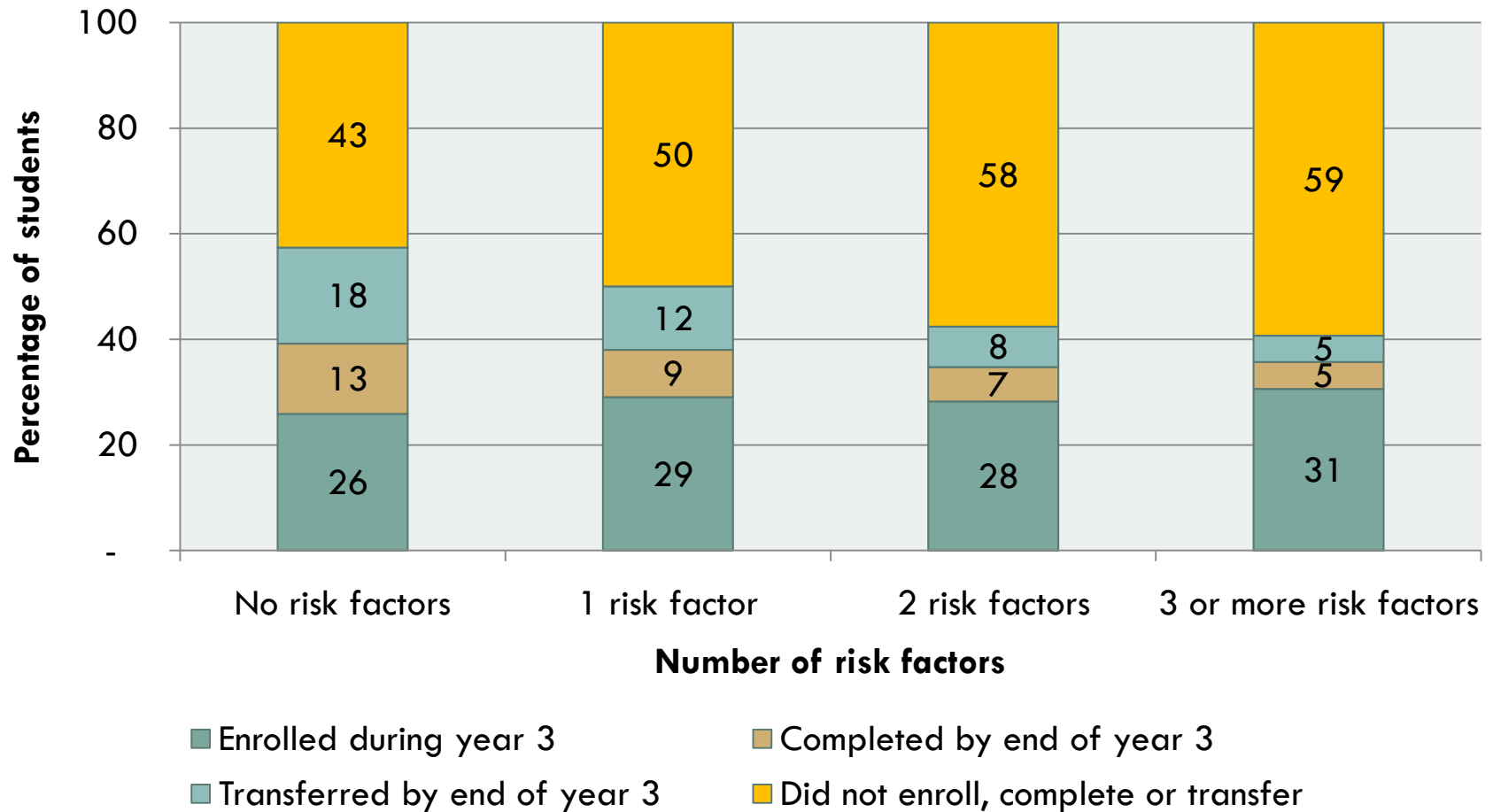
Outcomes for Students Referred to Developmental Math



% of the 2002 Achieving the Dream Cohort Persisting to the 2nd Term



Completion by Risk Factors



Completion by Design, Gates

- We will develop templates for conducting a pathway analysis to pinpoint the dynamics of student momentum and dropout
- Include transcript data
- Based on Washington project, which we will review later

National Governors Association

- **Select appropriate student milestones to measure remediation, retention, and attainment**
- **Determine which students to count**
- **Select appropriate benchmarks**
- **Group achievement rates by student population and institution**
- **The four key student achievement milestones all states should track are:**
 - ▣ **Successful completion of remedial and core courses**
 - ▣ **Advancement from remedial to credit-bearing courses**
 - ▣ **Transfer from a two-year institution to a four-year institution**
 - ▣ **Credential attainment**

COMMUNICATING RESULTS



Data Are Not the Problem

- States and institutions have the data to answer many of the critical questions confronting education policymakers
- However, state and institutional policymakers have not created a culture of effective data use that ensures data are linked and accessible, and that stakeholders have the capacity to use data

What Purposes Will the Resulting Reports Fulfill?

- Descriptive reporting of student progression for disaggregated groups
- Program evaluation
- Accountability
- Estimating future enrollments

Types of Reports

- Growth reports looking at changes in the same students over time
- Diagnostic reports providing academic histories of students' mastery of concepts or skills
- Early warning reports identifying students who need help based on at-risk indicators
- Predictive reports showing the relationship between earlier and later student outcomes
- Cohort graduation reports showing graduation rates of groups of the same students followed since enrolling
- Feedback reports providing information on outcomes for students after they leave college

State Data and Community College Student Success Project

- Efforts to collect and use data should be driven by the questions states want to answer, which in turn should be guided by the strategic goals and outcomes they hope to achieve
- States are most likely to stimulate systemic and sustainable reform when data are used to inform and empower educators

Connecting Data with Decisions

- Recent research connects the work on momentum points and milestones to state and institutional decision-making
- Tell a story in pictures
- Keep focused on issues about which decisions can be made
- Give visibility to a problem that needs to be solved

What Needs to Be Done

- Work with stakeholders to develop a communications strategy with a compelling message that is consistent with the research findings and will motivate and guide action on policy and practice
- Effectively communicating findings and implications of research using SUR data is essential for persuading college leaders, policy makers and other stakeholders to act

Barriers

- Under-investment in state data and research capacity
- Laws and concerns about information privacy and security
- Demand for research based on SUR data is usually not strong from colleges, which, like states, generally use the data they collect for compliance rather than improvement

Barriers (continued)

- Longitudinal data take time
- Variations make it hard to identify trends
- Once is interesting; the third time is boring
- No data system can answer all the questions
- If the data are not used, quality will decay
- IR offices are always overworked
- Unpopular results lead to complaints about the data, the analysis, or the motives of the authors



End