

Postsecondary Data Partnership Tableau Dashboard Analysis Quick Guide

Retention/Persistence Dashboard

American Institutes for Research

March 2020

Overview

The [Postsecondary Data Partnership \(PDP\) Tableau dashboard tool](#) reports key performance indicator (KPI) and other key data. The dashboards are intended to aid in the discovery of notable trends and insights in the data and to facilitate communicating these findings to institutional stakeholders, identifying areas for improvement, setting goals, and designing and implementing initiatives. Each dashboard allows you to look at an institution's progress toward student success through the lens of a different KPI or other important metric. The dashboards also allow you to filter and disaggregate the data across a variety of relevant student-level characteristics.

This quick guide focuses on the retention/persistence dashboard which provides first-to-second-year retention and persistence rates by cohort year.

For general information on using the [PDP Tableau dashboard tool](#), see the [Postsecondary Data Partnership Tableau Dashboard Analysis Quick Guide: Dashboard Tool Overview](#) document. This document contains the general purpose of the dashboards, a menu of the available suite of dashboards, definitions for KPIs and other important PDP concepts, information on the student-level filters and dimensions available to refine and disaggregate the dashboards, subgroup gap analysis, and important considerations to keep in mind when using the dashboards.

For questions regarding technical support for the [PDP Tableau dashboard tool](#) (e.g., login issues), contact PDP customer support at PDPService@studentclearinghouse.org. You can reach the Postsecondary Partnership Research Center at 703-742-4427.

Retention/Persistence Dashboard

Description and Purpose

The retention/persistence dashboard shows what happened to students after their first year. Students either enrolled at the cohort institution in their second year or had completed a credential before the end of their second year at the cohort institution (retained), enrolled at a transfer institution in their second year or had completed a credential before the end of their second year at a transfer institution (persisted), or were not enrolled and had not completed a credential (not enrolled). The end of the first year is an important transition point, particularly for first-time college students, as this is when many stop out. In addition to retention, understanding whether students are not enrolling or leaving the cohort institution to enroll at a different institution helps to inform initiatives to increase retention rates.

Key Questions

This section provides a list of key questions to ask as you begin to use the dashboard. These are intended as a jumping-off point to facilitate your use of the dashboard tool.

- What proportion of your institution's students retained after their first year?

- What proportion of your institution’s students persisted after their first year? Is this in line with the institution’s mission (i.e., Is it the institution’s mission to serve as a stepping stone to other institutions?)?
- Which students have neither completed a credential nor remained enrolled after their first year?

A Practical Application

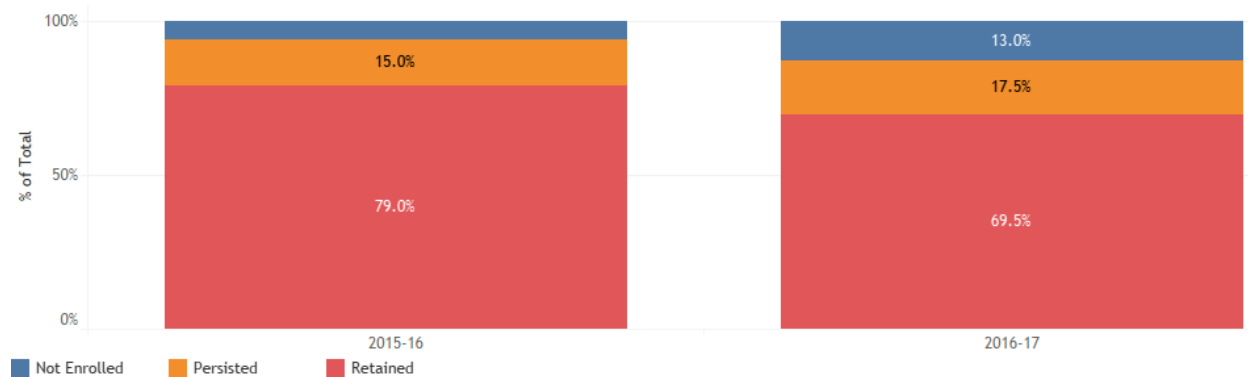
This section provides a look at how a fictitious institution of higher education successfully used the dashboard data to inform a student success initiative. The example uses fabricated data for illustrative purposes only.

Gotham University experienced an almost 10-point drop in first-to-second-year retention between the 2015–16 and 2016–17 cohorts (Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1. Retention/Persistence Dashboard View 1: Gotham University, Students Retained, Persisted, and Not Enrolled

Students Retained, Persisted, Not Enrolled

Size = Student Count, Color = Yr 2 Outcome



Stakeholders at the university were interested in knowing whether this drop differed by student attendance status. They used the retention/persistence dashboard to disaggregate by “Attendance” (using *Select Dimension*) and filter by “Retention” (using *Retention/ Persistence*). As shown in Exhibit 2, full-time student retention remained relatively stable between the 2015–16 cohort and the 2016–17 cohort (orange line), while part-time student retention dropped by nearly 20 percentage points (red line).¹

¹ Some key performance indicators require a longer time horizon than others. For example, the most recent cohort with a first-to-second-year retention rate will be the cohort prior to the most recently enrolled cohort. Therefore, across dashboards, data are limited to those cohorts who could have experienced the outcome.

Exhibit 2. Retention/Persistence Dashboard View 2: Gotham University, Retention by Attendance

Retention by Attendance

Color = Attendance

Retention/ Persistence

Retention



Gotham University also was interested in the difference in persistence for the two groups; therefore, they used *Retention/Persistence* to filter by “Persistence.” As shown in Exhibit 3, they observed that the persistence rate for part-time students increased by 5 percentage points between the two cohorts (red line). It remained the same, however, for full-time students (orange line).

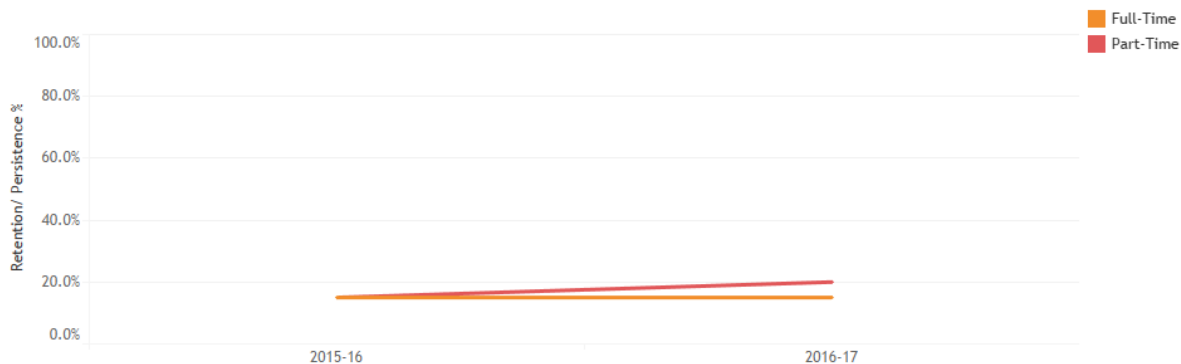
Exhibit 3. Retention/Persistence Dashboard View 3: Gotham University, Persistence by Attendance

Persistence by Attendance

Color = Attendance

Retention/ Persistence

Persistence



This finding prompted Gotham University to further investigate part-time student persistence by tracking institutions in which these students enrolled after they left the cohort institution.