

The PMP and Characteristics of Graduating Students: Factors Related to Years to Graduation

Nate Dickmeyer
Institutional Research & Assessment
December 2, 2011

PMP



During the 2010-11 academic year, LaGuardia graduated 2,227 students.



Only 947 of them were new to college in their first semester. (1,280 were transfer students.) Transfer students do not count in the PMP statistic.



Only 827 of those 947 new students began as first-time, full-time students. (120 of the first-time students began as part-time students.) Only first-time, full-time students are counted in the PMP.



Only 551 of the 827 began in a fall semester. The PMP does not count the 276 first-time, full-time graduates who began in a spring semester. PMP cohorts begin only in the fall semester.



Finally, only 487 of the remaining 551 took six years or fewer to graduate. The PMP did not count the 64 of the remaining 551 who took more than six calendar years to graduate. Only **22% of LaGuardia's 2,227 graduates from 2010-11 were counted in any PMP Six-year Graduation Rate measure**, and these were spread through five different cohorts.

| Cohort | Graduates |
|-----------|-----------|
| Fall 2005 | 33 |
| Fall 2006 | 74 |
| Fall 2007 | 123 |
| Fall 2008 | 180 |
| Fall 2009 | 77 |

Table 1

Other Conclusions

1. The primary factor associated with taking more than six years to graduate is stopping out.
2. A major factor causing students to take more than three years to graduate is the number of failed courses. This factor does not seem to have a major effect past six years.
3. A secondary factor causing students to take more than two years to graduate is the number of required developmental courses. This factor has less effect for students who take more than three years.
4. Low GPA, changing majors, course load, and being on financial aid are only weakly associated with slower progress toward a degree.

Findings

All students graduating during the academic year 2010-11 were part of the study. There were 2,227 students in the population. Some began as transfer students; others as new students. Eighteen students graduated after one year of attendance. Twenty-one graduated after 24 calendar semesters had elapsed from their first semester. Semesters attended for a previous degree were not included. A summary of findings can be viewed in Table 2.

1. **Stopping out:** Students take more than six years to graduate largely because of stopping out. Students who graduated in more than six years averaged 8.2 stop out semesters. Students who graduated in four to six years averaged 1.1 stop out semesters.
2. **Developmental courses:** Developmental course requirements upon entry are associated with needing more than three years to graduate, but are not strongly associated with needing more than six years. Students graduating in three or fewer years needed one developmental course on average. Students graduating in four to six years needed about two, while those needing more than six years needed 2.3 on average.
3. **Failed courses:** The number of failed courses increased with the number of calendar semesters necessary before graduation, but the increase tapers off after 12 semesters (see Figure 1). Students requiring one to three years to graduate had approximately one failed course. Students requiring four to six years had 2.7, while those requiring more than six years had 4.6 failed courses on their transcripts.
4. **Financial aid:** The percentage of students on financial aid increased slightly as the number of semesters required for graduation increased. About two-thirds of the graduates who began no more than six years earlier had, at some point, received a financial aid award. Three-quarters of those taking more than six years had been on financial aid at some point.

5. **Final GPA:** GPA decreases modestly as the number of semesters required for graduation increases.
6. **Changing Majors:** Students were only slightly more likely to have, on average, changed majors once if they required more than six years to graduate. About 60% of all graduates who took under three years changed major once, while, on average, all students who graduated in more than three years changed major once.
7. **Credit load:** Students who graduated within three years took two credits more each semester of attendance than students who graduated between four and six years. Students who took more than six years took one less equated credit than those who graduated between four and six years.

| Calendar Semesters to Graduation | Number | Ave. # of Stop Out Semesters | Ave # of Initial Dev Courses Needed | Ave. # of Failed Courses | % of Grads on Financial Aid | Ave GPA | Average # of Academic Majors | Average Equated Credits Attempted |
|----------------------------------|--------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 to 3 yrs | 1,070 | 0.1 | 1.0 | 0.9 | 62% | 3.27 | 1.6 | 13.9 |
| 4 to 6 yrs | 896 | 1.1 | 1.9 | 2.7 | 66% | 3.00 | 2.0 | 11.9 |
| >6 yrs | 261 | 8.2 | 2.3 | 4.6 | 77% | 2.74 | 2.1 | 10.9 |

Table 2

The figures below show how these variables are associated with longer times to graduation.

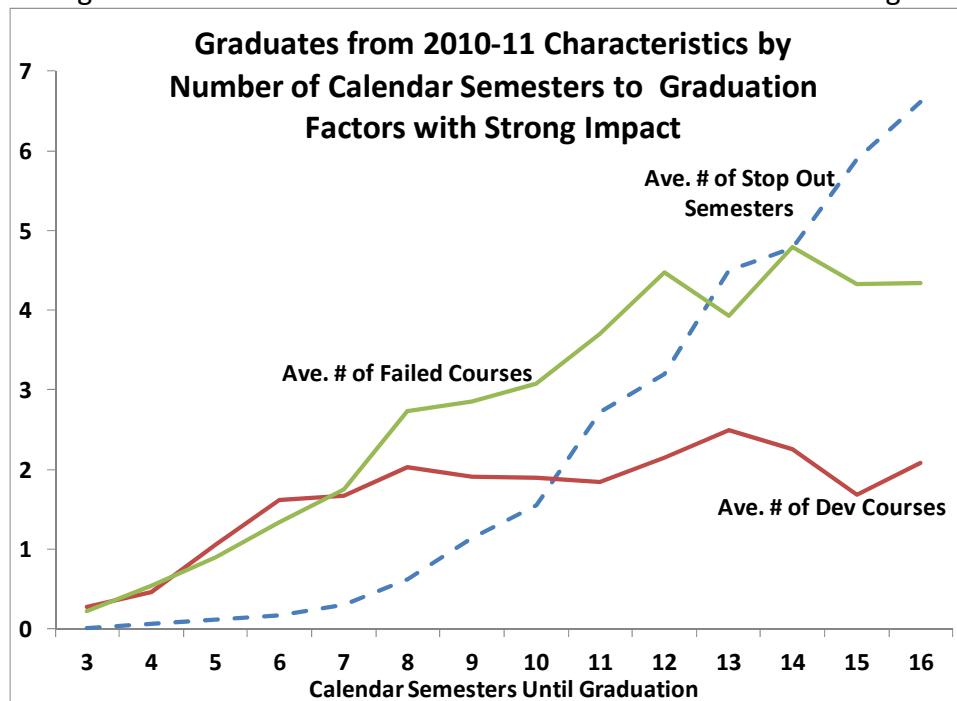


Figure 1

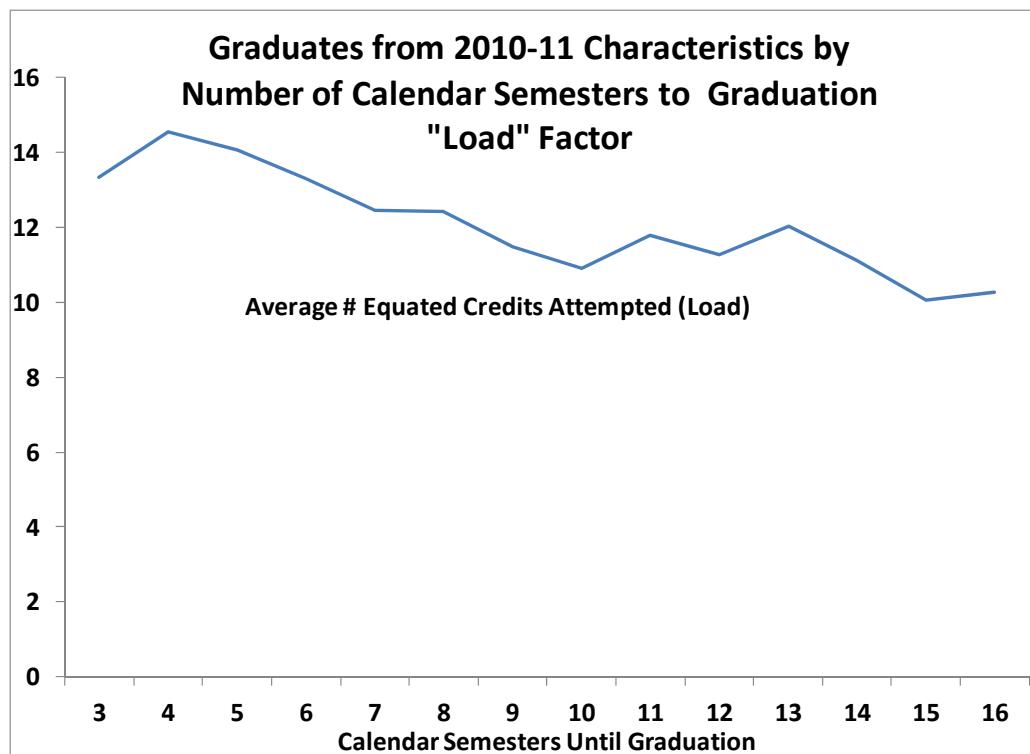


Figure 2

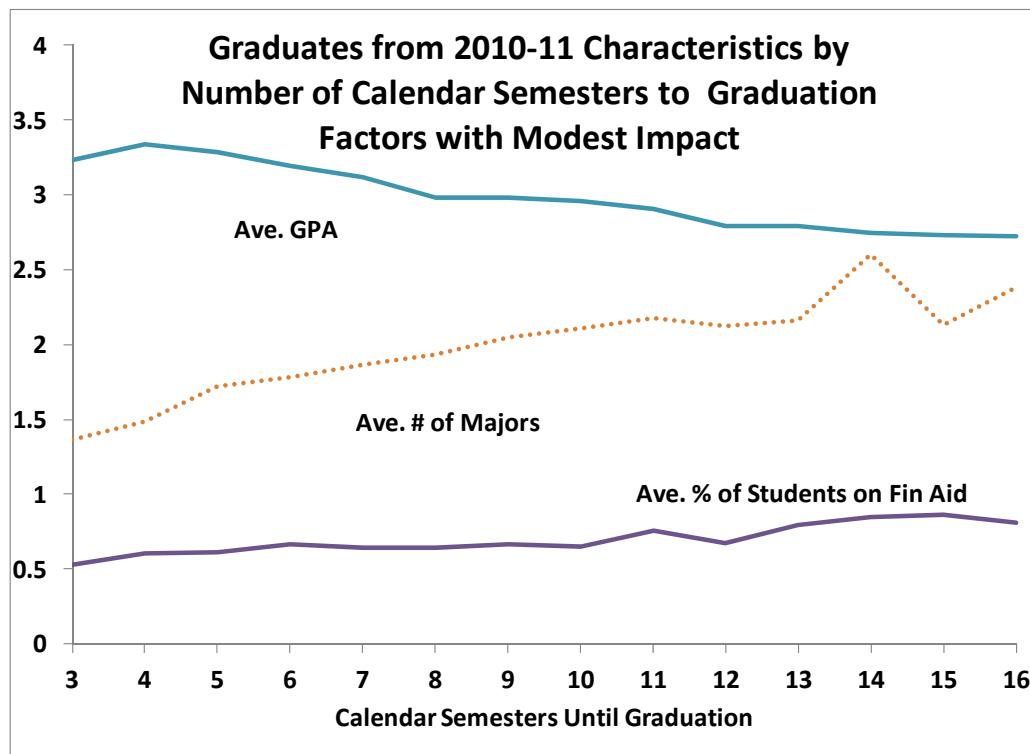


Figure 3