

RESEARCH BRIEF

First-Time in College Students Completing Nine or More Core Credits in the First Year: Fall 2016 Through Fall 2018

In accordance with its mission, Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) is committed to the success of its students. Recent student success research into early momentum metrics has shown that it is important for community college students to complete critical coursework as soon as possible in their academic careers.¹ Additionally, recent studies indicate that coursework completion is a leading indicator of other student success factors, including staying on track to graduation.² The present research brief addresses early momentum by reporting on first-time in college (FTIC), program-placed NOVA students' completion of nine or more core credits (approximately three core courses) in their first year of classes.³

This research brief disaggregates students' course completion data and shows that between Fall 2016 and Fall 2018, the rates at which students completed nine or more core credits in the first year increased in many areas, including by campus, gender, full- and part-time status, and two of three age groups. While rates also increased for students in most race/ethnicity categories, rates for Black/African American students were unchanged. Rates increased in four of seven program placement types.⁴ Further work is needed to support students' success through their timely completion of their core-credit coursework.

Key Findings

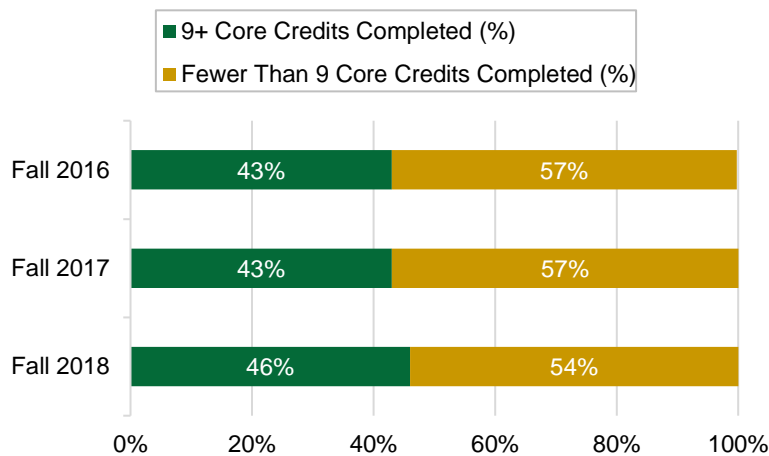
- **College-Wide** – The College-wide proportion of FTIC, program-placed students completing nine or more core credits in the first year **increased** from 43 percent in Fall 2016 to 46 percent in Fall 2018.
- **By Campus** – An **increase** in the percentage of FTIC, program-placed students completing nine or more core credits in the first year was observed at each NOVA campus between Fall 2016 and Fall 2018.
- **By Gender** – The percentages of both male and female FTIC, program-placed students completing nine or more core credits in the first year **increased** during the Fall 2016 to Fall 2018 period.
- **By Age Group** – The percentages of FTIC, program-placed students completing nine or more core credits in the first year **increased** for students age 24 and under, as well as for students age 45 and over; conversely, this proportion **decreased** for students aged 25 to 44 during the period.

- **By Race/Ethnicity** – The percentage of Black/African American FTIC, program-placed students completing nine or more core credits in the first year **was unchanged** at 39 percent between Fall 2016 and Fall 2018; **increases** were observed for FTIC students of all other races/ethnicities during this period.
- **By Full-Time/Part-Time Status** – **Increases** in the percentages of FTIC, program-placed students completing nine or more core credits in the first year were observed during the period for both full- and part-time students.
- **By Program Placement** – The percentages of FTIC A.A.S., A.S., CERT, and C.S.C. students completing nine or more core credits in the first year **increased** from Fall 2016 to Fall 2018; the percentages **decreased** for FTIC A.A. and A.A.A. students. The percentage of FTIC A.F.A. students completing nine or more core credits in the first year was 75 percent in Fall 2018.

Section 1. College-Wide

As shown below in Figure 1, the percentage of FTIC, program-placed students College-wide who completed nine or more core credits in the first year increased moderately, from 43 percent in Fall 2016 (3,633 of 8,400 students) to 46 percent in Fall 2018 (3,637 of 7,912 students).

Figure 1. FTIC Students Completing Nine or More Core Credits in the First Year College-Wide: Fall 2016 Through Fall 2018

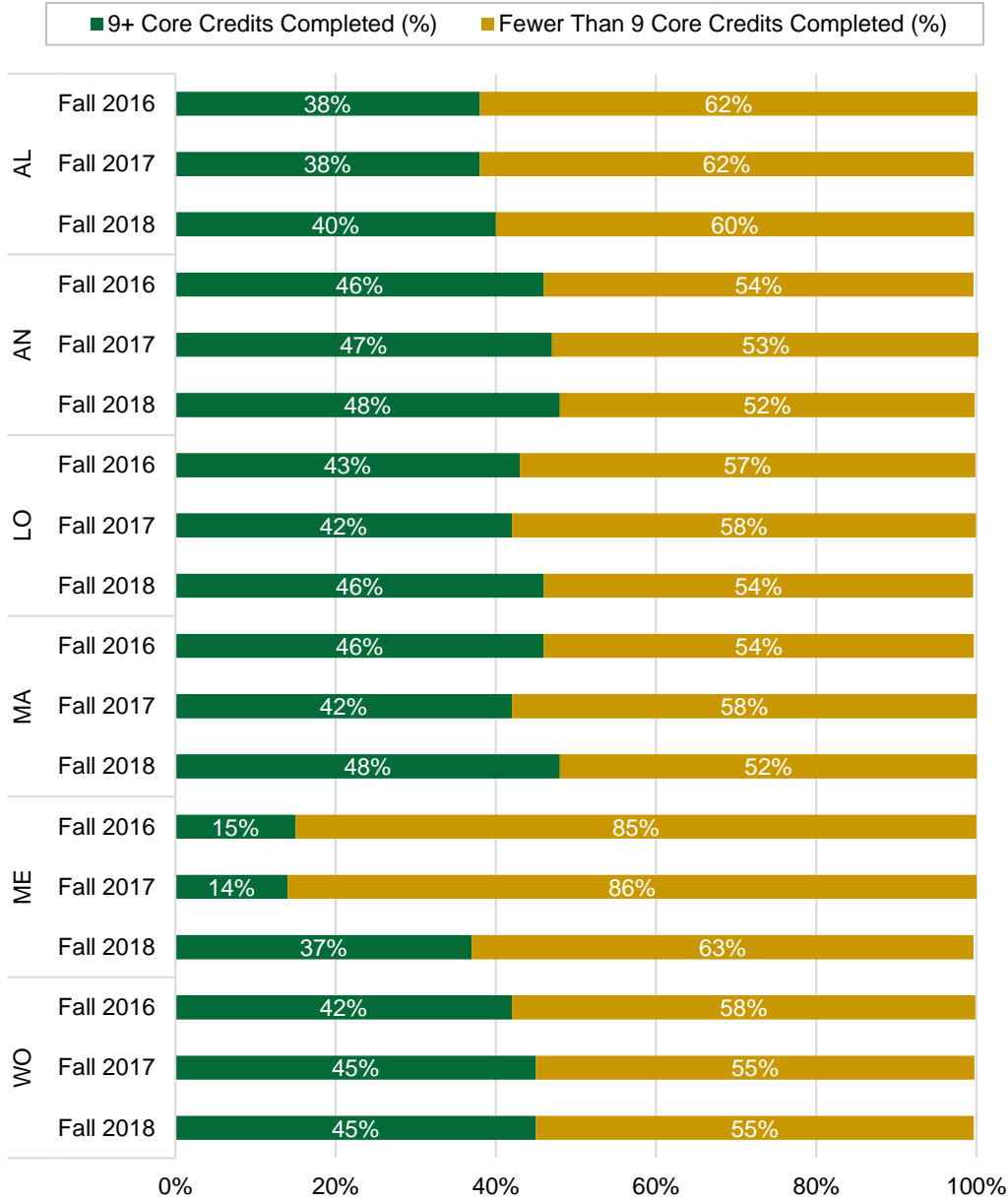


Section 2. By Campus

As shown below in Figure 2, the percentage of FTIC, program-placed students completing nine or more core credits in the first year increased substantially at the Medical Education Campus (ME), from 15 percent in Fall 2016 (15 of 100 students) to 37 percent in Fall 2018 (40 of 107 students). The percentage increased moderately at the Loudoun Campus (LO) from 43 percent (715 of 1,658 students) to 46 percent (769 of 1,657 students) during this period. The percentage also increased moderately at the Woodbridge Campus (WO), from 42 percent (647 of 1,536 students) to 45 percent (647 of 1,427 students) during the period. The percentage increased slightly at the Alexandria Campus (AL), from 38 percent in Fall 2016 (494 of 1,305 students) to 40 percent in Fall 2018 (465 of 1,154 students). The percentage also increased slightly at the Annandale Campus

(AN), from 46 percent (1,133 of 2,443 students) to 48 percent (1,052 of 2,182 students) during the period. Additionally, the percentage increased slightly at the Manassas Campus (MA), from 46 percent (629 of 1,358 students) to 48 percent (664 of 1,385 students) during the period.

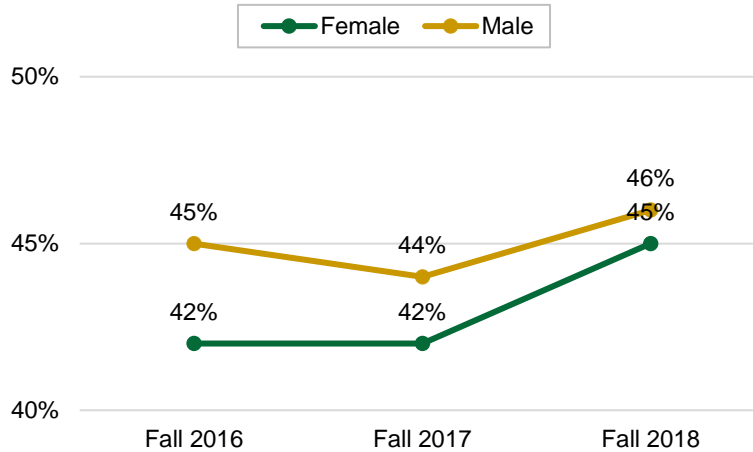
Figure 2. FTIC Students Completing Nine or More Core Credits in the First Year by Campus: Fall 2016 Through Fall 2018



Section 3. By Gender

As shown below in Figure 3, the College-wide percentage of FTIC, program-placed students completing nine or more core credits in the first year increased moderately for female students, from 42 percent in Fall 2016 (1,658 of 3,993 students) to 45 percent in Fall 2018 (1,704 of 3,752 students). The percentage increased slightly for male students, from 45 percent (1,975 of 4,407 students) to 46 percent (1,933 of 4,160 students) during this period.

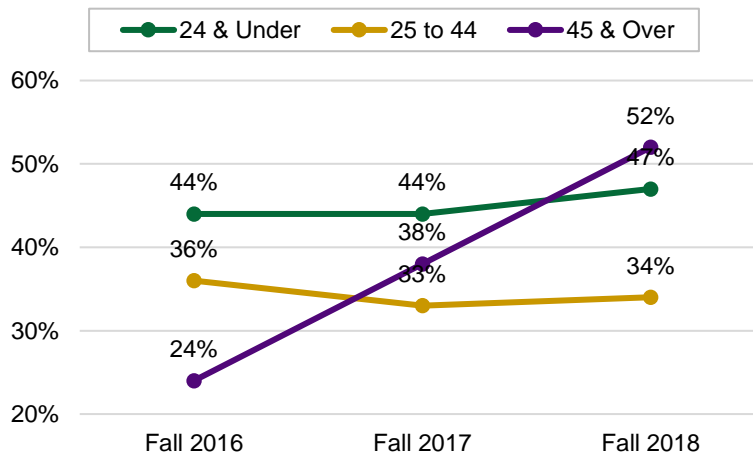
Figure 3. FTIC Students Completing Nine or More Core Credits in the First Year by Gender: Fall 2016 Through Fall 2018



Section 4. By Age Group

As shown below in Figure 4, the College-wide percentage of FTIC, program-placed students age 45 and over increased substantially, from 24 percent in Fall 2016 (14 of 59 students) to 52 percent in Fall 2018 (27 of 52 students). The percentage increased moderately for students age 24 and under, from 44 percent (3,435 of 7,824 students) to 47 percent (3,444 of 7,374 students) during this period. Conversely, the percentage decreased slightly for students age 25 to 44, from 36 percent (184 of 517 students) to 34 percent (166 of 486 students) during the period.

Figure 4. FTIC Students Completing Nine or More Core Credits in the First Year by Age Group: Fall 2016 Through Fall 2018

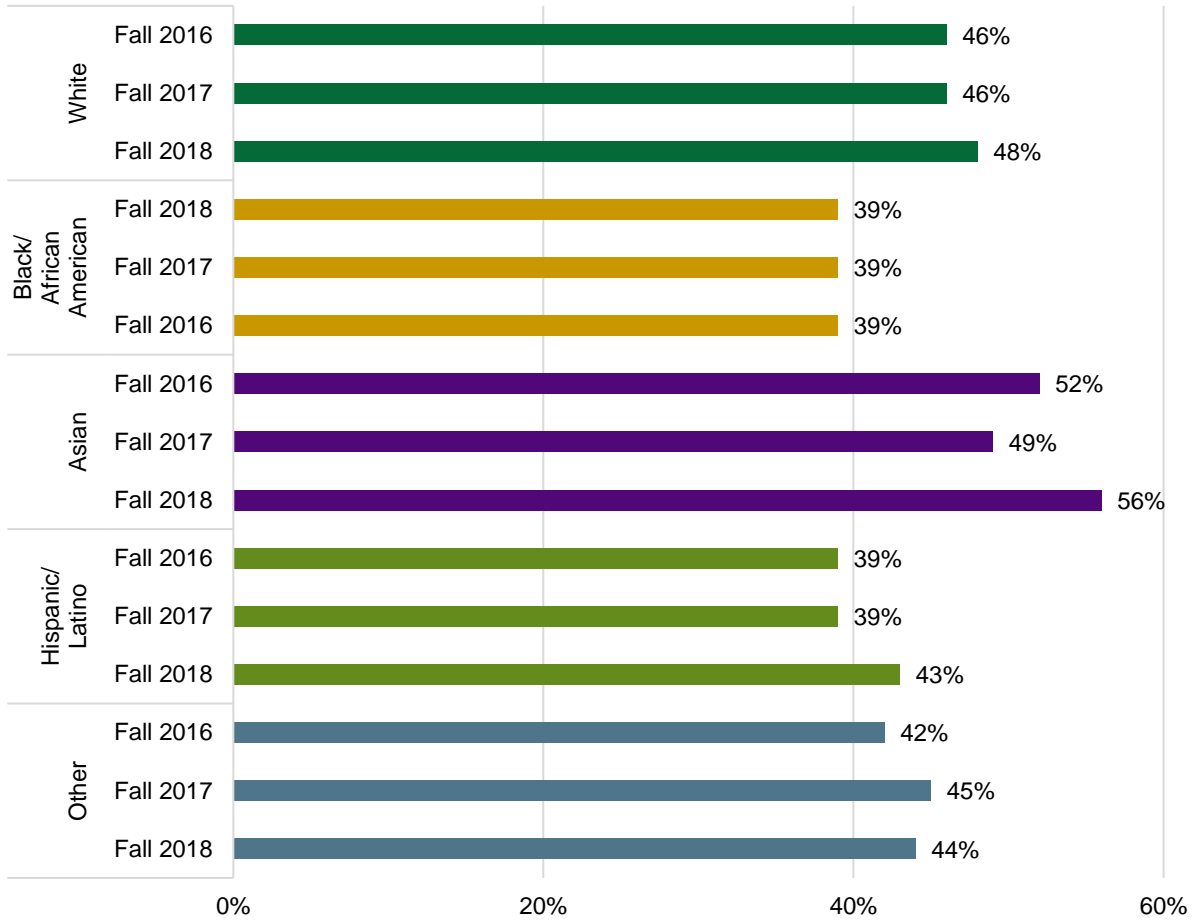


Section 5. By Race/Ethnicity

As shown below in Figure 5, the College-wide percentage of FTIC, program-placed students increased moderately for Asian students, from 52 percent in Fall 2016 (669 of 1,297 students) to 56 percent in Fall 2018 (697 of 1,249 students). Similarly, the percentage increased moderately for Hispanic/Latino students, from 39 percent (941 of 2,432 students) to 43 percent (1,055 of 2,462 students) during this period. The percentage of White students completing nine or more core

credits in the first year increased slightly, from 46 percent (1,235 of 2,695 students) to 48 percent (1,147 of 2,376 students) during the period. Likewise, the percentage increased slightly for Other students, from 42 percent in Fall 2016 (247 of 591 students) to 44 percent in Fall 2018 (258 of 592 students). The percentage was unchanged for Black/African American students at 39 percent during this period (541 of 1,385 students in Fall 2016 and 480 of 1,233 students in Fall 2018).

Figure 5. FTIC Students Completing Nine or More Core Credits in the First Year by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2016 Through Fall 2018

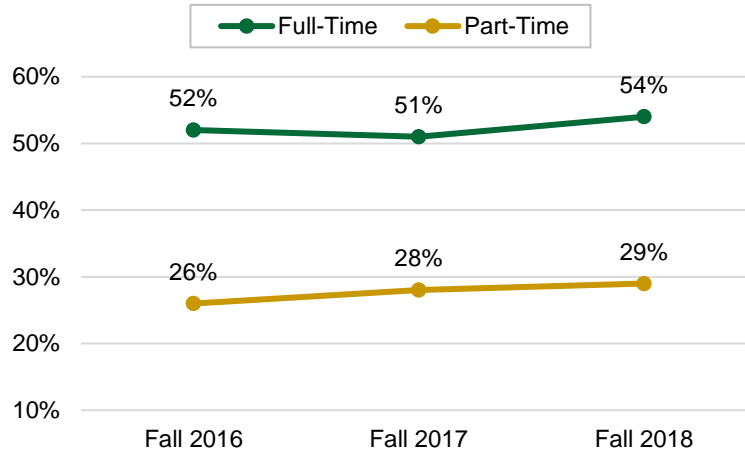


Note: Other includes American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, Two or More Races, Unknown, and Not Specified.

Section 6. By Full-Time/Part-Time Status

As shown below in Figure 6, the College-wide proportion of FTIC, program-placed students completing nine or more credits in the first year increased moderately for part-time students, from 26 percent in Fall 2016 (709 of 2,756 students) to 29 percent in Fall 2018 (766 of 2,625 students). The percentage increased slightly for full-time students, from 52 percent (2,924 of 5,644 students) to 54 percent (2,871 of 5,287 students) during this period.

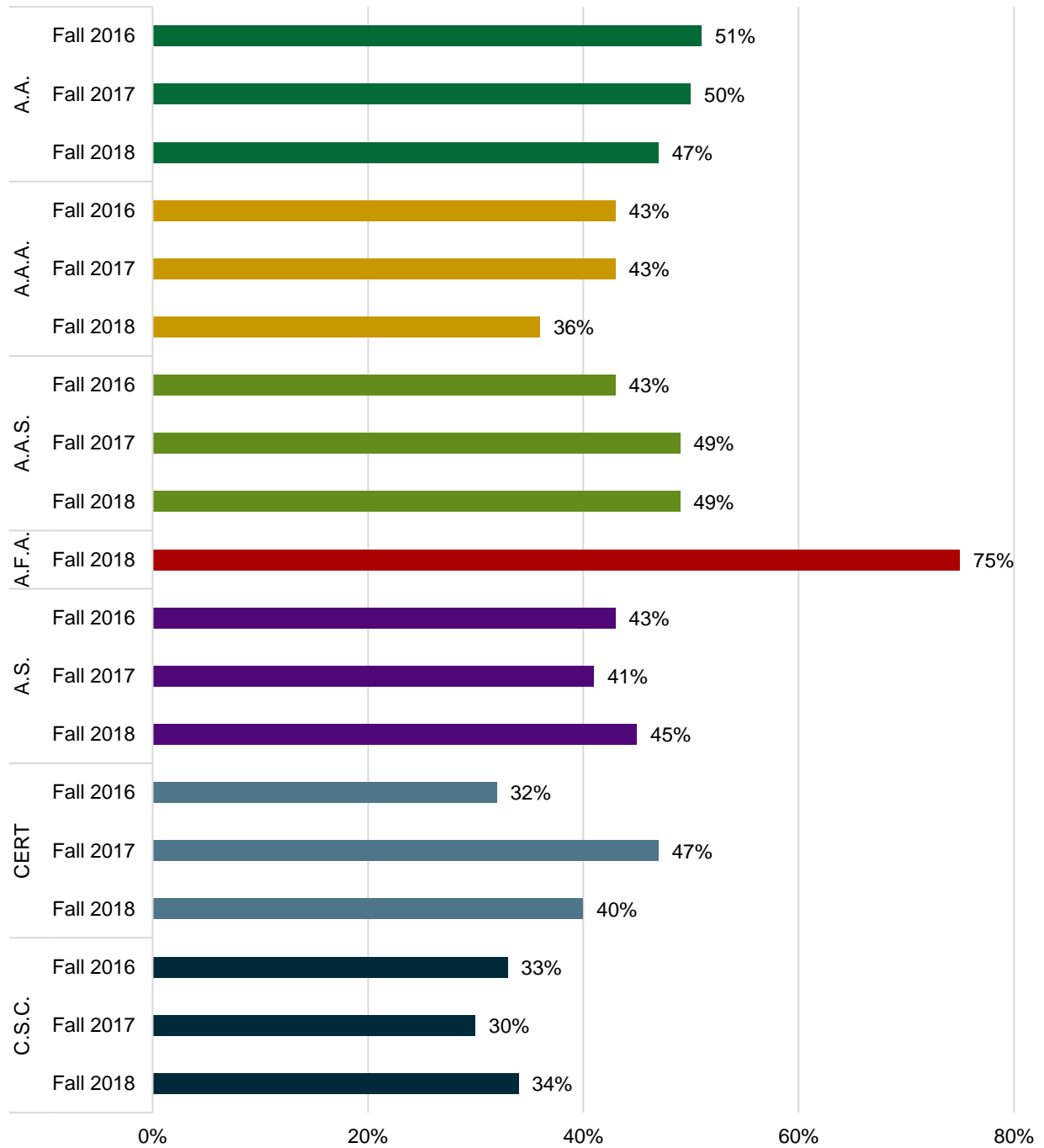
Figure 6. FTIC Students Completing Nine or More Core Credits in the First Year by Full-Time/Part-Time Status: Fall 2016 Through Fall 2018



Section 7. By Program Placement

As shown below in Figure 7, the College-wide percentage of FTIC, program-placed students completing nine or more core credits in the first year increased substantially for Certificate (CERT) students, from 32 percent in Fall 2016 (12 of 37 students) to 40 percent (21 of 53 students) in Fall 2018. The percentage increased moderately for Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) students, from 43 percent (308 of 717 students) to 49 percent (418 of 854 students) during this period. The percentage increased slightly for Associate of Science (A.S.) students, from 43 percent (2,859 of 6,716 students) to 45 percent (2,861 of 6,330 students) during the period. The percentage also increased slightly for Career Studies Certificate (C.S.C.) students, from 33 percent in Fall 2016 (29 of 87 students) to 34 percent in Fall 2018 (30 of 87 students). Conversely, the percentage decreased moderately for Associate of Arts (A.A.) students, from 51 percent (405 of 797 students) to 47 percent (215 of 460 students) during this period. The percentage decreased substantially for Associate of Applied Arts (A.A.A.) students, from 43 percent (20 of 46 students) to 36 percent (4 of 11 students) during the period. The Associate of Fine Arts (A.F.A.) program began admitting students in Fall 2018, and the percentage of A.F.A. students completing nine or more core credits in the first year was 75 percent (88 of 117 students) for the Fall 2018 cohort.

Figure 7. FTIC Students Completing Nine or More Core Credits in the First Year by Program Placement: Fall 2016 Through Fall 2018



Note: The A.F.A. program began admitting students in Fall 2018.

¹ Jenkins, D., and Bailey, T. (2017, February). Early momentum metrics: Why they matter for college improvement. CCRC Research Brief no. 65. Retrieved from

<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/early-momentum-metrics-college-improvement.pdf>

² Belfield, C. R., Jenkins, D., and Fink, J. (2019, July). Early momentum metrics: Leading indicators for community college improvement. CCRC Research Brief. Retrieved from

<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/early-momentum-metrics-leading-indicators.pdf>

³ The FTIC definition includes students attending college for the first time in the fall term, students who attended college for the first time in the prior summer term and enrolled in the fall term, and students with

prior high school dual enrollment at a Virginia's Community Colleges (VCCS) college who attended for the first time in the fall term. Core courses are those required to earn a degree or certificate, and they do not include electives.

⁴ Further information is found in NOVA's *Completing nine or more core credits in first year* dashboard at: <https://intranet.nvcc.edu/oieess/oir/dashboards-completing-nine-or-more-core-credits-in-first-year.cshtml>