

#### 4.1 Student achievement

*The institution evaluates success with respect to student achievement consistent with its mission. Criteria may include: enrollment data; retention, graduation, course completion, and job placement rates; state licensing examinations; student portfolios; or other means of demonstrating achievement of goals.*

Compliance      \_\_\_ Partial Compliance      \_\_\_ Non-Compliance

#### **Narrative:**

In support of its institutional effectiveness program with respect to the assessment of educational programs, Dalton State evaluates student success on a regular basis. Indeed, the evaluation of student success is a critical element in determining how Dalton State is fulfilling a core commitment of its mission: "promoting high levels of student achievement." As such, the College has created a detailed and comprehensive system that tracks and monitors student achievement data. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning maintains a [Website](#) and an annual [Fact Book](#) and regularly and systematically collects and disseminates student achievement data and other measures on a wide variety of dimensions. In addition, data produced by the University System of Georgia Board of Regents are used as part of a comprehensive program of institutional research and assessment. These data include course completion, state licensing examinations, and job placement rates, and they are used within a culture of continuous improvement and institutional effectiveness that establishes student learning and program outcomes, assesses results, and uses results for improvement and decision-making at the institution, program, and student support services levels.

#### **Course Completion**

##### **Grade Distribution in Individual Courses**

Every semester, the [Office of Institutional Research and Planning](#) publishes a table showing Grade Distribution by Course which provides course completion data, identifying courses in which more than 25% of students withdrew or received a grade of D, F, Incomplete, or Unsatisfactory, or where more than 33% of the students (including withdrawals) did not complete the course with a grade of A, B, C, or Satisfactory [1]. This information is used by the vice president for academic affairs and the deans to discuss the success rate of individual courses and to concentrate attention and corrective action on courses with lower success rates [2].

Schools also show evidence of course completion by producing data on the percentage of students who successfully complete all course requirements. For example, as part of its Annual Report [3], the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics uses course completion rates as success indicators for its courses. Table 4.1-1 below shows the school's math completion rates:

**Table 4:1-1:** Percentage of Students Completing All Course Requirements in Math Course and Earning a Passing Grade [3]

Course	Summer 2004		Fall 2004		Spring 2005	
	Expected	Attained	Expected	Attained	Expected	Attained
Math 0090	70%	88.89%	70%	81.36%	70%	71.43%
Math 0096	70%	63.16%	70%	88.26%	70%	71.51%
Math 0098	70%	87.13%	70%	69.23%	70%	64.13%
Math 1001					70%	85.71%
Math 1102	70%	90.20%	70%	83.75%	70%	91.80%
Math 1104	70%	100%	70%	80.00%	70%	78.26%
Math 1111	70%	90.27%	70%	85.19%	70%	83.02%
Math 1113	70%	100%	70%	92.31%	70%	80.00%
Math 2181			70%	94.29%	70%	94.44%
Math 2200	70%	100%	70%	93.62%	70%	95.35%
Math 2201	70%	100%	70%	97.06%	70%	94.20%
Math 2253			70%	73.08%	70%	94.12%
Math 2254	70%	80.00%			70%	78.95%
Math 2255			70%	100%		
Math 2256					70%	100%
Math 2403						
Math 4502			70%	100%		

### Degrees and Certificates Awarded

The number of degrees and certificates awarded reflects an institution's productivity and student success as well as the institution's mission, purposes, and objectives. Completion data for baccalaureate and associate's degree programs and certificates are reported annually in a "Total Degrees & Certificates Awarded" report published by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning in its [Fact Book](#), which also includes a Student Graduation Profile by major [4]. In the 2010-2011 school year, the College awarded 657 degrees and certificates—up 5.3% from the previous year.

### Distance Education

The [Office of Instructional Technology](#) publishes annual Distance Education Data, including analysis of student course completion and comparison of course outcomes with traditional courses. These data are published in the College's annual Profile of Distance Learning [5] and are available on the Office of Institutional Research and Planning's Website.

As an example of the College's Distance Education data analysis, a table from the 2011 Profile of Distance Learning is included below [5]. As shown in Table 4.1-2, the completion rate for Distance Learning courses exceeds the completion rate for traditional courses, suggesting that Distance Education courses are meeting quality standards.

**Table 4.1-2:** 2010-2011 Distance Education Data [5]

2010-2011 Distance Education Data	Summer	Fall	Spring
Total Online Sections:	6	11	14
Non-Duplicated Online Headcount:	100	293	322
Total Hybrid Sections:	13	39	64
Total Hybrid Students:	170	844	1446
Non-Duplicated Hybrid Headcount:	166	684	1217
Number of Students Taking Only DL Courses:	229		
Completion Rate for Distance Learning Courses:	80.23%		
Completion Rate for Traditional Courses:	77.3%		

### Learning Support

Evaluation of student achievement in learning support includes analyses of course completion rates, success in subsequent learning support courses, and success in subsequent college-level courses. The College tracks and reports on these outcomes in annual Learning Support Program Assessment reports [6]. More detailed analyses, by outcomes assessment of learning support, are noted in the Annual Reports [7] of the deans of Liberal Arts and Natural Sciences and Mathematics—the primary departments responsible for learning support courses.

The schools also use course completion rates of learning support classes as success indicators [8]. For example, an Annual Report of the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics records the course completion/success rates of the three math learning support classes (MATH 0090, MATH 0096, and MATH 0098).

**Table 4.1-3:** Percentage of Students Completing All Course Requirements in Math Course and Earning a Passing Grade [8]

Course	Summer 2004		Fall 2004		Spring 2005	
	Expected	Attained	Expected	Attained	Expected	Attained
Math 0090	70%	88.89%	70%	81.36%	70%	71.43%
Math 0096	70%	63.16%	70%	88.26%	70%	71.51%
Math 0098	70%	87.13%	70%	69.23%	70%	64.13%

These data help the College to focus its efforts on improving weak Learning Support classes.

## External Examinations

### General Education Competencies

Dalton State identifies general education competencies in the areas of Communication, Quantitative Reasoning, Critical Thinking, Cultural and Social Understanding (US and Global Perspectives, Social Sciences, Humanities/Fine Arts), and Scientific Reasoning (Natural Science, Mathematics, and Technology) [9]. The extent to which graduates attain these competencies as a measure of student achievement is assessed with externally developed, validated, and normed instruments for their alignment with the College's general education competencies.

The College has adopted the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) tests to determine student competency in Reading (Arts/Literature, Social Sciences), Mathematics (Basic Algebra, College Algebra), Science Reasoning, and Critical Thinking. Results of these tests are published both [online](#) and, summarized, in the College's [Fact Book](#) [10].

As shown in Table 4.1-4, the general education arena, DSC's students continue to do well on the CAAP graduating students' test. For example, the College's 2011 CAAP scores showed that DSC graduates scored slightly lower than did the College's 2010 graduates, scored above the national average for Reading (DSC = 61.6; national = 60.3), and scored the same as the national average for Basic Algebra (DSC and national = 14.2). These scores provide administration and faculty with important feedback relevant to continual improvement in each student competency.

**Table 4.1-4:** 2011 CAAP Mean Scores  
DSC Graduates vs. National Averages [10]

Year	# of Students	DSC	DSC Standard Deviation	National	National Standard Deviation
<b>Mathematics</b>					
2007	215	56.4	2.7	56.1	3.6
2008	173	57.4	2.9	56.2	3.5
2009	161	57.1	3.9	58.5	4
2010	216	57.4	3.5	57.3	3.8
2011	163	55.5	3.6	56.1	3.6
<b>Basic Algebra</b>					
2007	215	14.2	2	14.2	2.4
2008	173	15	1.9	14.2	2.3
2009	161	14.5	2.3	15.6	2.4
2010	216	14.9	2.3	14.9	2.4
2011	163	14.2	2.2	14.2	2.3
<b>College Algebra</b>					
2007	215	13.9	1.6	14	2.1
2008	173	14.7	1.8	14	2.1
2009	161	14.2	2.3	15.4	2.7

2010	216	14.7	2.3	14.7	2.5
2011	163	13.5	2.1	14.0	2.1
Reading					
2007	215	63.4	5	60.5	5.4
2008	173	62.5	4.9	60.5	5.4
2009	161	61	3.9	62.5	5.1
2010	216	62.8	4.3	61.4	5.4
2011	163	61.6	5.4	60.3	5.5

General education competencies are also assessed by the Graduating Student Survey [11], in which graduates report how much their Dalton State education has contributed to the acquisition of specific knowledge, skills, and behaviors. Annual Reports [12][13] produced by the School of Liberal Arts and School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics are used to determine the extent to which graduates have attained the student learning outcomes in general education. These reports are posted on the [Institutional Research and Planning Website](#).

#### ETS Major Field Test in Business

As a measure of student achievement, the School of Business administers the external [ETS Major Field Test](#) to its graduates. The ETS Major Field Test is a comprehensive undergraduate outcomes assessment designed to measure the critical knowledge and understanding achieved by business majors. This test offers comprehensive national comparative data, enabling the School of Business to evaluate its graduates' performance and compare its programs' effectiveness to programs at similar institutions nationwide. A summary of graduates' scores is presented in the college [Fact Book](#) [14] and shown below in Table 4.1-5.

**Table 4.1-5:** ETS Business Major Field Test Scores  
School of Business Administration Baccalaureate Students [14]

Date	Students Tested	Scale Range for Total Score	Scale Score Mean	Standard Deviation
Nov. 2000	51	120-200	146.3	11.5
Jan. 2002	74	120-200	148.7	10.3
May 2002	24	120-200	149.7	10.4
Fall 2002	26	120-200	148.3	9.1
Fall 2003	49	120-200	155	14.9
Spring 2004	45	120-200	159.3	13.7
Spring 2005	25	120-200	161	10.7
Spring 2006	39	120-200	162	11
Spring 2007	27	120-200	160.4	12.2
Spring 2008	31	120-200	159	11
Spring 2009	31	120-200	157	16
Spring 2010	61	120-200	158	12
Spring 2011	29	120-200	162.0	14

During spring 2011, 29 business students took the ETS, and the College's institutional mean was 162, which was in the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile of all participating institutions.

### Licensing Examinations

Graduates of some programs at Dalton State take certification exams. These students are deemed successful when they graduate and successfully pass their state and national exams to qualify for professional licensure. Indeed, the percentage of students passing these exams is an indication of student achievement and academic program effectiveness in preparing students to obtain the necessary credentials for employment. Often, these scores are incorporated into program reviews and annual program assessment results reports for academic degree and certificate programs.

The College's Licensing Examination pass rates are published each year in the [Fact Book](#); pass rates from 2011's *Fact Book* are listed below, by school.

#### 1. [School of Education](#)

- The NCATE-accredited baccalaureate early childhood teacher education program is highly regarded for its quality as evidenced in pass rates of graduates who take the [Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators](#) (GACE). Candidates who have completed the School of Education's professional teacher education program in early childhood are required to pass the state-required GACE exam for licensure in Georgia. As seen in Table 4.1-6, the school had a 99% pass rate [15], significantly higher than the Georgia state average pass rate. Reports from GACE indicate DSC's pass rate is approximately 18 points higher than the state average for each reporting date [16].

**Table 4.1-6:** Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators (GACE) Early Childhood Content - Graduates' Post-Test Pass Rates 2006-2010 [15]

Year	DSC Pass Rate	Total Pass/Takers
2006	100%	55/55
2007	100%	63/63
2008	100%	64/64
2009	100%	68/68
2010	98%	80/78

#### 2. [School of Nursing](#)

- The Associate of Science nursing program (RN) measures its effectiveness in relation to student achievement by the first-attempt pass rates of its graduates on the National Council for Licensure Examinations-Registered Nurse (NCLEX-RN), administered by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing. The 2011 graduates who took the NCLEX-RN examination within one year of graduation had a pass rate of 89%. As shown in Table 4.1-7, the Georgia state and national pass rates were 90% and 88% respectively [17].

**Table 4.1-7:** RN (2-Year) Nursing Program NCLEX Scores/Pass Rates (2003 – 2011) [17]

Year	DSC Average	National Average	State Average	Total Pass / Takers
2003	85%	87%	87%	45/53
2004	87%	84%	88%	42/48
2005	88%	87%	89%	45/51
2006	86%	88%	90%	42/49
2007	82%	85%	88%	45/55
2008	87%	87%	91%	66/76
2009	93%	88%	92%	51/55
2010	78%	87%	90%	42/54
2011	89%	88%	90%	55/61

### 3. [School of Technology](#)

- The Radiologic Technology program tracks graduate pass rates on the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (AART) examination. For the 14th consecutive year, graduates of Dalton State's Radiologic Technology program have achieved a 100% pass rate on the national certification exam administered by the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (Table 4.1-8). Dalton State graduated 16 Radiologic Technology students who sat for the 200-question national exam this year [18]. The College's Radiologic Technology program stands among the top 5% of Radiologic Technology programs in the country, as determined by its graduate scores on this licensure exam.

**Table 4.1-8:** Radiologic Technology Program ARRT Registry Examination Scores/Pass Rates (1998 – 2010) [18]

Year	DSC Pass Rate	Total Pass/Takers	DSC Average	National Average	National Pass
1998	100%	5 of 5	90	84	90%
1999	100%	6 of 6	89	83	89%
2000	100%	10 of 10	87	83	91%
2001	100%	7 of 7	88	84	90%
2002	100%	6 of 6	89	84	88%
2003	100%	6 of 6	91	83	89%
2004	100%	13 of 13	90	84	89%
2005	100%	13 of 13	91	85	89%
2006	100%	13 of 13	91	85	89%
2007	100%	15 of 15	91	85	91%
2008	100%	15 of 15	87	85	91%
2009	100%	15 of 15	90	88	88%
2010	100%	17 of 17	89	88	91%
2011	100%	16 of 16	84	85	90%

- The Respiratory Therapy program tracks graduate pass rates on the Certified Respiratory Therapists (CRT) examination. For the fourth year running, Dalton State's Respiratory Therapy graduates have achieved a 100% pass rate—exceptional work when compared with the 78% national pass rate (Table 4.1-9) [19].

**Table 4.1-9:** Respiratory Therapy Program Certification Examination (2008 – 2010) [19]

Year	DSC Pass	Total Pass/Takers	National Pass
2008	100%	5 of 5	79.50%
2009	100%	8 of 8	79.60%
2010	100%	8 of 8	80.10%
2011	100%	9 of 9	77.76%

- The Medical Laboratory Technology program tracks graduate pass rates on the American Medical Technologists (AMT) examination. For the past five years (Table 4.1-10) in the Medical Laboratory Technology Program, 100% of graduates passed the licensing certification examination on their first attempt. The national exam pass rate was only 72%, comparatively [20].



**Table 4.1-10:** Medical Laboratory Technology Program  
Licensure Examination Scores/Pass Rates [20]

Year	# of Students	DSC Pass Rate	National Exam Pass Rate for MLT Programs
1997	9	91%	72%
1998	4	100%	69%
1999	8	50%	76%
2000	7	100%	66%
2001	6	100%	71%
2002	1	100%	N/A
2003	4	100%	70%
2004	0	N/A	N/A
2005	5	80%	75%
2006	6	100%	78%
2007	5	100%	78%
2008	2	100%	81%
2009	5	100%	69%
2010	5	100%	72%

- The Certificate in Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) tracks the success of its graduates by the first-attempt pass rate on the National Council for Licensure Examinations-Licensed Practical Nurse (NCLEX-LPN). As shown in Table 4.1-11, recently graduated Licensed Practical Nursing students from Dalton State College have achieved a 100% pass rate on the National Council Licensure Exam for Practical Nurses (NCLEX-LPN) [21].

**Table 4.1-11:** Licensed Practical Nursing Program  
NCLEX Scores/Pass Rates (1997 – 2011) [21]

Year	DSC Pass Rate	Total Pass/Takers
1997	92.30%	24 of 26
1998	100.00%	12 of 12
1999	94.70%	18 of 19
2000	88.90%	7 of 8
2001	100.00%	8 of 8
2002	100.00%	17 of 17
2003	90.40%	20 of 21
2004	97.00%	31 of 32
2005	94.10%	32 of 34
2006	97.60%	40 of 41
2007	95.00%	20 of 21
2008	91.43%	32 of 35
2009	91.20%	31 of 34
2010	89.00%	35 of 31
2011	100.0%	22 of 22

## Surveys

### **Graduating Student Surveys**

Dalton State also surveys graduating students as part of its [Institutional Effectiveness Plan](#). The results [22] are compiled by the [Office of Institutional Research and Planning](#) and are available on its [Website](#). As well as finding out about their experiences while a student at Dalton State and providing useful information to improve educational programs and services, the survey also gathers data on whether students have achieved or accomplished their primary objective for attending Dalton State College.

For example, according to the spring 2011 Graduating Students Survey Summary Report [22], 93% of graduates who responded to a graduating survey rated their level of satisfaction with the education they received at Dalton State College as "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied." Roughly 80% of respondents reported that their objective for attending Dalton State College was fully accomplished. Fifty-one percent said they participated in community service or a community-based project as part of a regular course or program at Dalton State College. Ninety percent of graduates rated the quality of education they received at Dalton State College as "Excellent" or "Good."

This information, along with data about the students surveyed such as major and age, aids the College in making strategic decisions to improve or enhance Dalton State's programs to meet student expectations and needs.

## Follow-Up Surveys of Graduates/Alumni

With the recent creation of a unit that deals with alumni relations in the Office of Institutional Advancement, the Office of Institutional Research and Planning has begun regularly administering a general survey to Dalton State alumni [23]—beginning in 2011—to aid in the College’s evaluation and planning efforts. The Schools of Nursing, Social Work, Technology, and Education, for purposes of program accreditation, also administer follow-up surveys to their graduates [24] and alumni [25] to assess and improve the quality of programs and services. Summaries of these surveys are posted on the Office of Institutional Research and Planning [Website](#).

The School of Nursing’s 2009 RN Questionnaire [25] is a good example of a follow-up survey. The survey provided much useful data for the College, such as graduates’ satisfaction with their training at Dalton State, their current employment, their current salaries, and the month in which they passed their board exams. These data are then used to evaluate programs’ effectiveness. Analysis of alumni survey data can be seen in the deans’ Annual Reports. The School of Nursing’s *2004-2005 Annual Report* [26], for instance, concludes that, based on the alumni surveys, “graduate satisfaction with their educational preparation received from the nursing program indicates that the curriculum is meeting the mission, goals, and objectives of the college and program.”

Programs in the Schools of Business and Technology also use student/alumni/business advisory boards and committees [27][28] to find out the knowledge and skills that need to be addressed in workforce preparation programs and to gather feedback on the performance of program graduates.

## Employer Satisfaction Surveys

The Schools of Education, Nursing, Social Work, and Technology administer employer surveys to determine the knowledge and skills that need to be addressed in workforce preparation programs and to gather feedback on the performance of program graduates. These are available on the Institutional Research and Planning [Website](#).

The School of Education’s 2010 Employer Survey [29], for instance, assesses whether the College’s education students are taught well to demonstrate a caring learning environment, to communicate respect and concern to all students, and to use research-based strategies to support learners.

The schools use results of employer surveys to address any apparent weaknesses in their students’ training. As an example, the School of Nursing evaluated Employer Satisfaction Survey results in its *2004-2005 Annual Report* [30]. The Report concluded that employer satisfaction with the school’s graduates indicated the curriculum was “meeting the mission, goals, and objectives of the college and program.”

The School of Business is currently putting in place a system to begin gathering employer satisfaction surveys.

## **Other Data Used to Evaluate Student Achievement**

### **Enrollment Data**

Dalton State also measures its level of student achievement via enrollment data. The College's growing reputation for quality education at low cost attracts greater numbers of students each year. As shown in Table 4.1-12, non-duplicated headcount enrollment has risen every year but one for the past 10 years, from 4,135 in fall 2002 to 5,485 in fall 2011 [31].

**Table 4.1-12:** Headcount Enrollment, 2002-2011 [31]

<b>Year</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>Enrollment</b>	4,135	4,201	4,252	4,267	4,349	4,532	4,957	5,722	5,988	5,485

### **Job Placement Rates**

Dalton State assesses graduate employment via its Graduate Surveys and Follow-up Surveys, mentioned above. Graduate employment information is reported both in School Annual Reports [32] and the *Fact Book* [33], as shown in Table 4.1-13 below.

**Table 4.1-13:** Percentage of DSC Graduates Employed within Six Months of Graduation [33]

Schools	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
<b>School of Business</b>	-	-	-	94%	-	80%	85%	-
*Accounting	-	-	-	-	-	-	80%	70%
*Management	-	-	-	-	-	-	97%	81%
*Management Information	-	-	-	-	-	-	86%	80%
*Marketing	-	-	-	-	-	-	78%	75%
*Operations Management	-	-	-	-	-	-	100%	n/a
*Technology Management	-	-	-	-	-	-	67%	n/a
<b>School of Education</b>	-	-	-	100%	97%	40%	38%	52%
<b>School of Liberal Arts</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
**Criminal Justice	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	60%
**English	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	57%
**History	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50%
<b>School of Nursing</b>	100%	99%	100%	100%	95%	75%	n/a	90%
<b>School of Social Work</b>	-	80%	100%	87.50%	87.50%	95%	100%	94%
<b>School of Technology</b>	88%	88%	n/a	90%	-	-	90%	88%
Licensed Practical Nursing	-	-	-	-	-	-	97%	82%
Medical Lab. Tech.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Radiologic Tech.	100%	100%	100%	100%	90%	95%	80%	76%
Respiratory Tech.	-	-	-	-	100%	100%	90%	100%

\* Beginning 2009/2010 School of Business started to collect placement data by major.

\*\* Beginning 2010/2011 School of Liberal Arts started to collect placement data by major.

The College is working to establish a regular mechanism for gathering job placement rates, especially in the School of Business and the Licensed Practical Nursing program. The School of Business recently began offering more specialized majors and is in the process of creating a robust assessment program, especially now that the school has gained AACSB accreditation.

### Retention Rates

Student achievement is also analyzed by monitoring retention rates, as students who return the second year are more likely to graduate and be successful. Dalton State uses official data provided by the [University System of Georgia](#), which tracks first-time, full-time degree-seeking freshmen for one year [34]. This information is presented in the college *Fact Book* [35] and is shown below in Table 4.1-14.

**Table 4.1-14:** One-Year Retention Rates: First-Time Full-Time Freshmen, Degree Seeking (Fall 1996-1997 to Fall 2010-2011) [35]

Year	DSC Rate	System-Wide Rate
Fall 1996 - Fall 1997	58.90%	61.20%
Fall 1997 - Fall 1998	54.30%	58.90%
Fall 1998 - Fall 1999	61.70%	64.40%
Fall 1999 - Fall 2000	58.20%	61.00%
Fall 2000 - Fall 2001	59.80%	62.90%
Fall 2001 - Fall 2002	67.50%	72.00%
Fall 2002 - Fall 2003	58.90%	62.40%
Fall 2003 - Fall 2004	63.61%	66.28%
Fall 2004 - Fall 2005	56.65%	60.25%
Fall 2005 - Fall 2006	63.25%	66.40%
Fall 2006 - Fall 2007	65.86%	67.37%
Fall 2007 - Fall 2008	60.23%	62.97%
Fall 2008 - Fall 2009	64.40%	66.84%
Fall 2009 - Fall 2010	64.22%	66.12%
Fall 2010 - Fall 2011	59.08%	61.25%

Although Dalton State College's retention rate is still low—due in large part to the College's high percentage of non-traditional students who frequently revert to part-time course loads—great strides are being taken to improve it. The College's low retention rate prompted the creation of annual Graduation and Retention Rates Improvement Plans [36], along with several intervention programs and student services designed to improve retention and graduation at Dalton State College. The [First Year Experience program](#), the [Academic Advising Center](#), Learning Communities, [Summer Bridge](#), and [peer advising](#) were all formed in direct response to the College's retention statistics.

### Graduation Rates

The graduation rates of students in baccalaureate and associate's degree programs are principal indicators by which Dalton State measures student success and achievement. Increasing graduation rates is one of the Board of Regents' strategic goals. The University System defines the graduation rate as the proportion of students who enter as first-time, full-time, degree-seeking freshmen in a given fall who earn a degree within 150% of the traditional time needed to complete the degree. Bachelor's degree graduation rates are calculated over six years; associate's degree rates are calculated over three years. Aggregate "Bachelor's Degree Six-Year Rates" and "Associate's Three-Year Rates" tables derived from data provided by the University System are available in the *Fact Book* [37]. As an example, a table (Table 4.1-15) of the College's Associate Degree graduation rates is printed below for convenience.

As can be seen in Table 4.1-15, Dalton State's graduation rates are not impressive. There are many reasons for this. For example, over the past few years, the College has been unable to offer as many course sections as it used to due to budget restraints. Students attending part-time with jobs—who make up a high percentage of Dalton State students—may be finding it difficult to fulfill some of their course

requirements if courses are offered at times they cannot attend, substantially delaying graduation for part-time students. Many students who are unable to complete bachelor's degrees in their major at Dalton State also transfer to other colleges after completing their core classes, as well.

**Table 4.1-15:** Three-Year Associate Degree Graduation Rates  
(First-Time Full-Time Freshmen, 1994-2008) [38]

Year	DSC Rate	System-Wide Rate
1994	11.90%	12.50%
1995	16.00%	16.00%
1996	16.60%	16.80%
1997	13.30%	13.90%
1998	12.30%	12.30%
1999	12.50%	13.80%
2001	13.50%	14.20%
2002	10.90%	11.68%
2003	14.22%	12.36%
2004	13.94%	14.18%
2005	14.32%	14.32%
2007	8.16%	8.16%
2008	8.03%	8.19%

In response, Dalton State has been expanding its distance learning offerings—online and hybrid courses which are especially effective at addressing the needs of part-time, working students. The College has also steadily increased the number of baccalaureate degrees it offers, with degree selections based on student demand. The College has increased its baccalaureate offerings from 6 programs in 2003 to 15 programs in 2012 [39].

### **Exit Interviews (Total Withdrawal/Non-Returning)**

Each student who requests to withdraw from all classes must have the withdrawal form signed by Academic Resources, Financial Aid, and Enrollment Services staff members. If a student is not returning to Dalton State, the student must also meet with Academic Resources before approval is granted. During the interview, students complete an exit survey [40], and staff members and students have an opportunity to discuss the student's challenges and potential options to withdrawal. This information is regularly compiled into a summary [41], which helps Dalton State to shore up any apparent weaknesses and address student needs.

### **Transfer Reports**

A major mission of two-year and state colleges is to prepare students for transfer to a research, regional, or state university. As such, the College tracks the success of transfer students by means of data supplied by the University System of Georgia. The annual transfer report provided by the System is designed to provide feedback to the USG on the mobility of its students and to sending institutions on the success of their students up to one year after transfer. The transfer reports are available on the Institutional Research and Planning [Website](#).

The USG has not regularly provided transfer GPA data for the College, but the last USG transfer report, which contained GPA information, showed that Dalton State's students perform very well after transferring to other institutions [42], indicating that 200 students from DSC who transferred to other University System of Georgia institutions earned an average GPA of 2.86 during their last term at the College before transferring to another school. But one year after transferring, those students earned an average GPA of 3.08 at their next USG institution, indicating that Dalton State students are well prepared for academic success and that they earn higher grades when they arrive at the next institution. The College, at least at this time, was a leader in this regard among the 15 two-year and state colleges within the University System.

### **Conclusion**

As shown above, Dalton State College possesses many vehicles for evaluating student achievement, including course completion, external examinations, surveys, and other data, such as job placement rates, graduation and retention rates, and exit interviews. The data collected via these methods are used to direct the College's strategic goals, to focus on any areas of weakness, and to meet student needs.

### **Documentation**

- [1] Grade Distribution Table (2010-2011)
- [2] Deans' Meeting Minutes, July 18, 2011
- [3] Natural Sciences and Mathematics 2004-2005 Annual Report
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- [5] 2011 Distance Learning Profile
- [6] Learning Support Program Assessment - 2010-2011 Annual Report Example
- [7] School of Liberal Arts Annual Report, 2010-2011 (Assessment of Learning Support)
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- [9] General Education Learning Outcomes
- [10] 2011-2012 *Fact Book*, CAAP Mean Scores
- [11] Graduating Students Survey Results – General Education Assessment (2011)
- [12] 2009-2010 Liberal Arts Annual Report
- [13] 2009-2010 Natural Sciences and Mathematics Annual Report
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- [15] 2011-2012 *Fact Book*, GACE Pass Rates
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- [20] 2011-2012 *Fact Book*, MLT Program Exam Pass Rates
- [21] 2011-2012 *Fact Book*, NCLEX-LPN Pass Rates
- [22] Spring 2010 Graduating Student Survey Summary Report
- [23] 2010 Alumni Survey Summary
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- [26] School of Nursing's 2004-2005 Annual Report (Alumni Surveys)
- [27] Nursing Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes (2008, 2009, and 2010)
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- [30] 2004-2005 School of Nursing Annual Report (Employer Satisfaction)
- [31] *2011-2012 Fact Book*, Ten-Year Historical Trend
- [32] School of Business 2010-2011 Annual Report (Job Placement Rates)
- [33] *2011 Fact Book*, Percentage of Graduates Employed Within Six Months of Graduation
- [34] 2010 USG One-Year Retention Rates
- [35] *2010-2011 Fact Book: One-Year Retention Rates*
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- [37] *2011-2012 Fact Book*, USG Graduation Rate Report (Bachelor's and Associate's)
- [38] *2011-2012 Fact Book*, Three Year Associate Degree Graduation Rates
- [39] 2011 Key Performance Indicators (Full Range of Degrees)
- [40] Dalton State Withdrawal - Exit Survey
- [41] Student Withdrawal-Exit Survey Summary (Fall 2010 & Spring 2011)
- [42] 2003-2004 Annual Report of Institutional Progress