

# Graduation Rates: Whose Success Do They Measure?

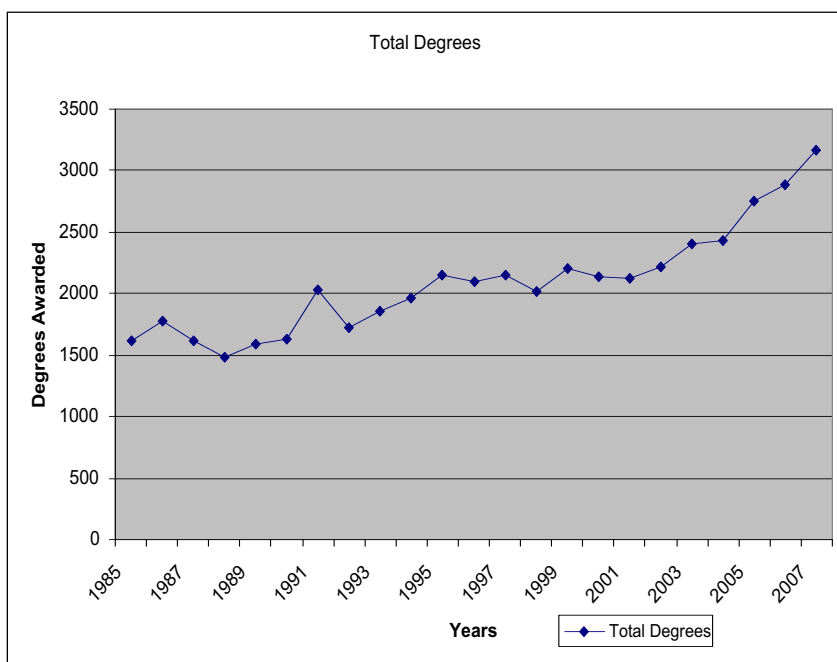
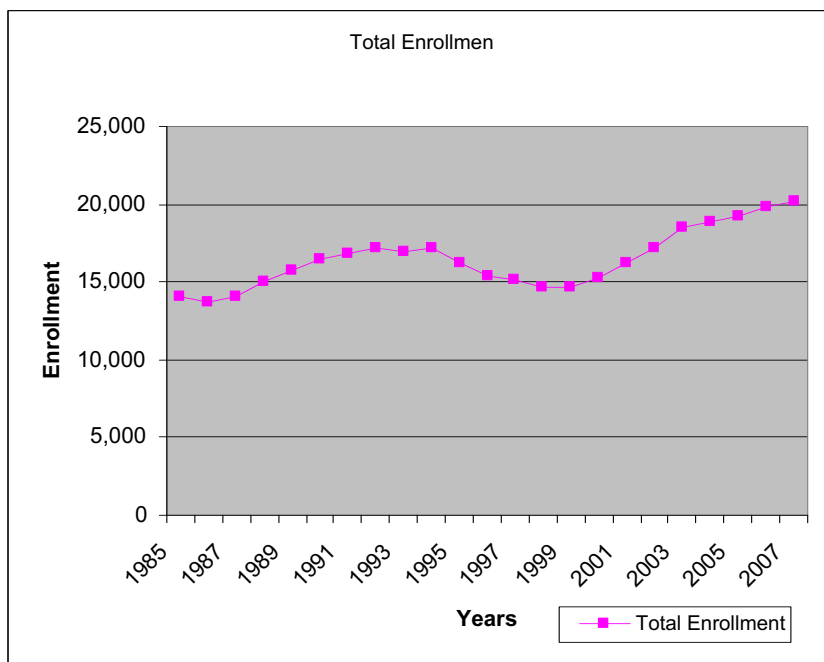


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# What Is The Mission Of Regional Public Universities?

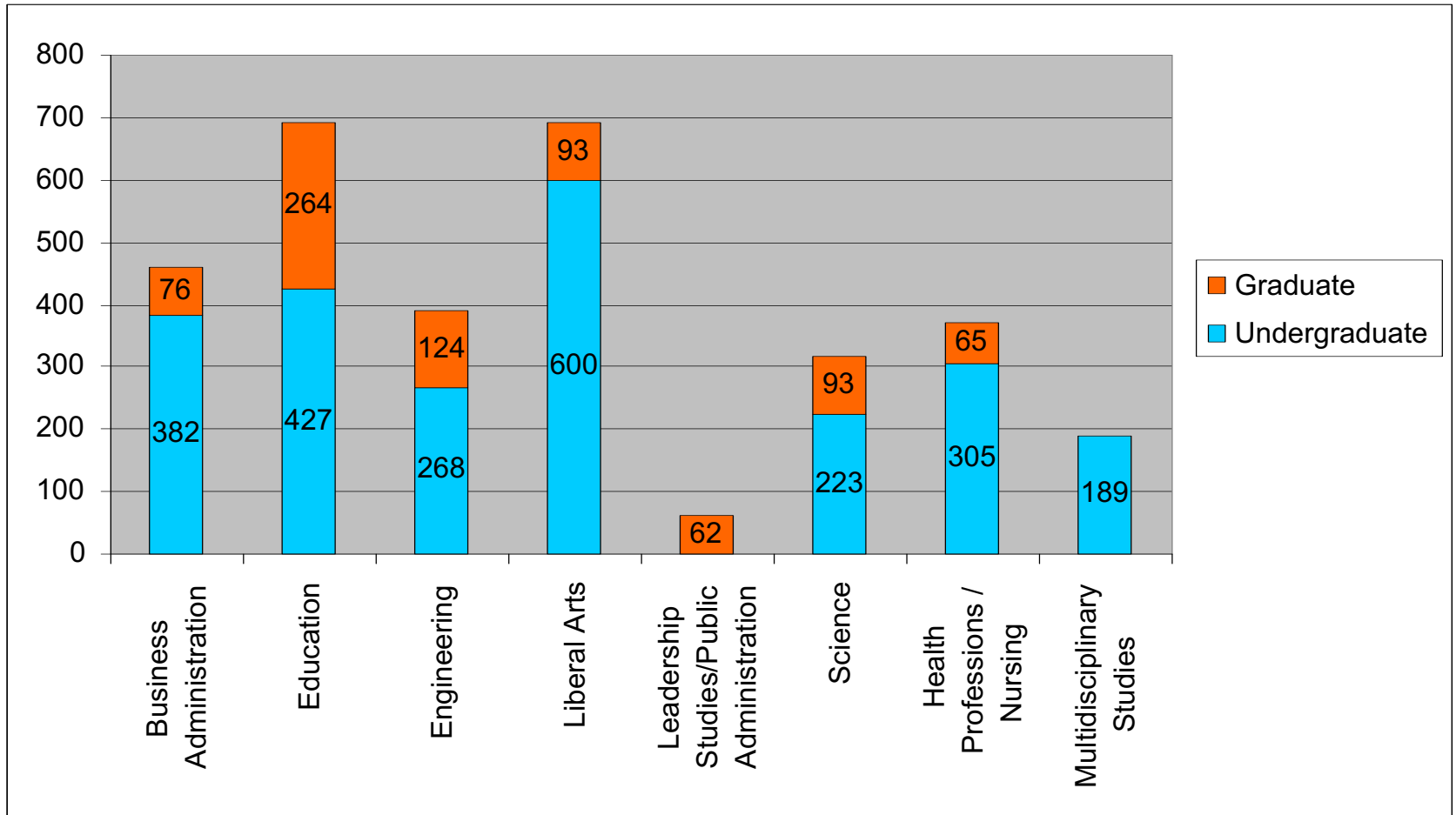
- To provide opportunities for all talented and motivated students in a region, especially those whose access to higher education has traditionally been limited, to pursue their educational aspirations.
- To educate a high-quality workforce to meet regional, state and national needs, especially in key fields.
- To contribute to the economic development and quality of life of the region through the creation and application of knowledge.

# Fulfilling that Mission at UTEP, 1985-2007



UTEP provides opportunity for and educates thousands of students who contribute to the workforce and quality of life of the El Paso region.

# UTEP awarded 3,171 degrees in 2006-07



# So, what's the issue?

UTEP ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> among all universities in the U.S. in the total number of bachelor's degrees awarded to Hispanics,

and 5<sup>th</sup> nationally in the number of master's degrees awarded to Hispanics.

**BUT** UTEP's graduation rates are reported to be low (e.g., Tier 4 range in US News).

## **WHY?**

**Because 70% of UTEP's graduates are not counted in the calculation of graduation rates.**

# So, who is counted in calculating graduation rates?

## Only a student who is

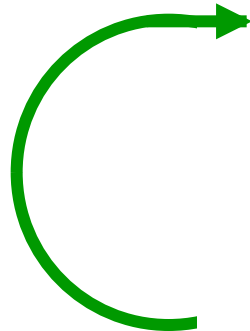
- ✓ First-time freshman
- ✓ Enrolled Full-time
- ✓ Seeking a Degree
- ✓ Enrolled in the fall semester  
= “FTFTF”

And, who graduates from the same university 4, 5, or 6 years later

## Not counted are

- ✓ Transfer students
- ✓ Part-time students
- ✓ Returning students
- ✓ Those who enroll in spring semester

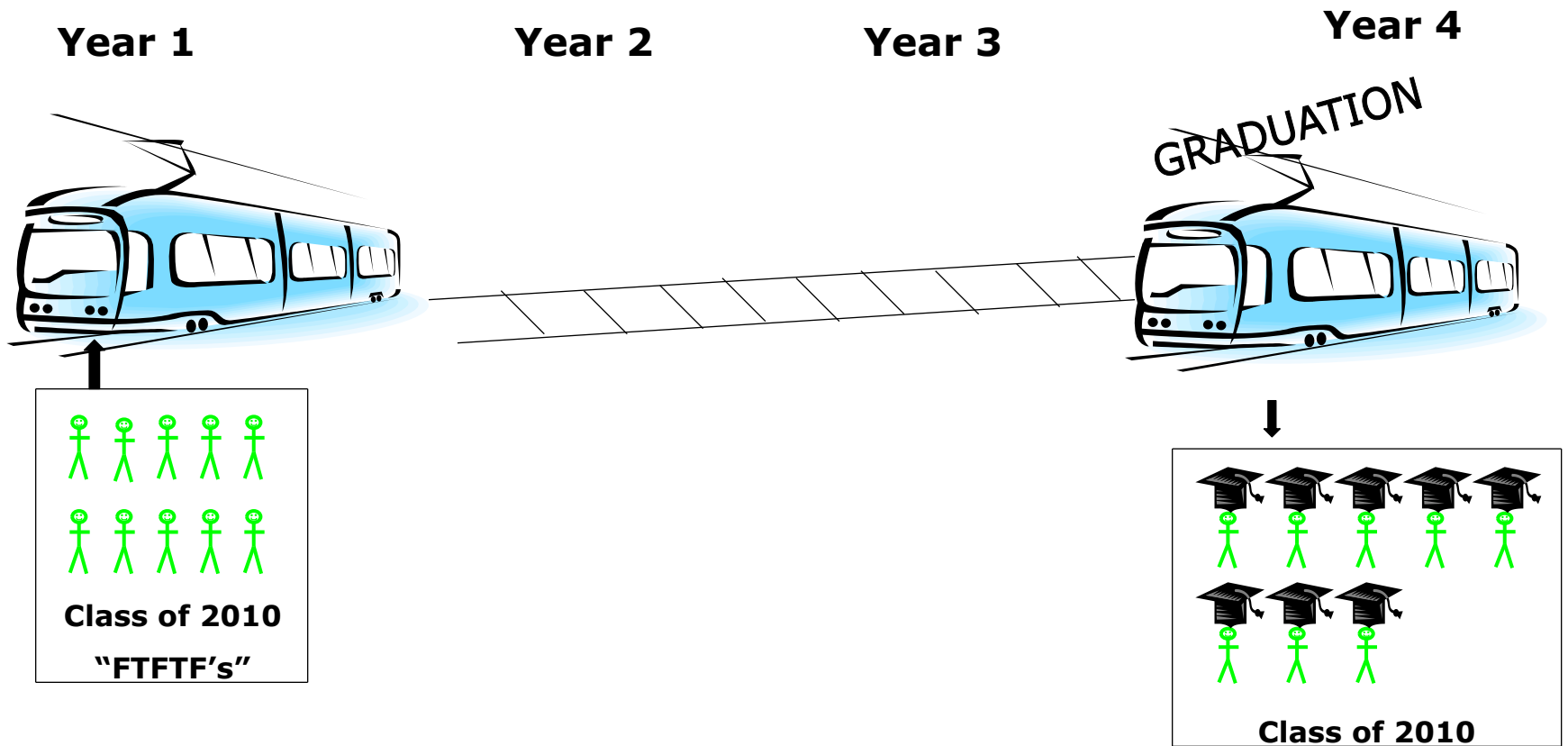
# How are Graduation Rates Calculated?


$$\frac{\text{\# of those same FTFTF students who graduate 4 or 5 or 6 years later from the same university}}{\text{\# of FTFTF students entering in a given year}} = \text{Graduation Rate}$$

# “EXPRESS TRAIN” UNIVERSITY

Are all these entering students counted?

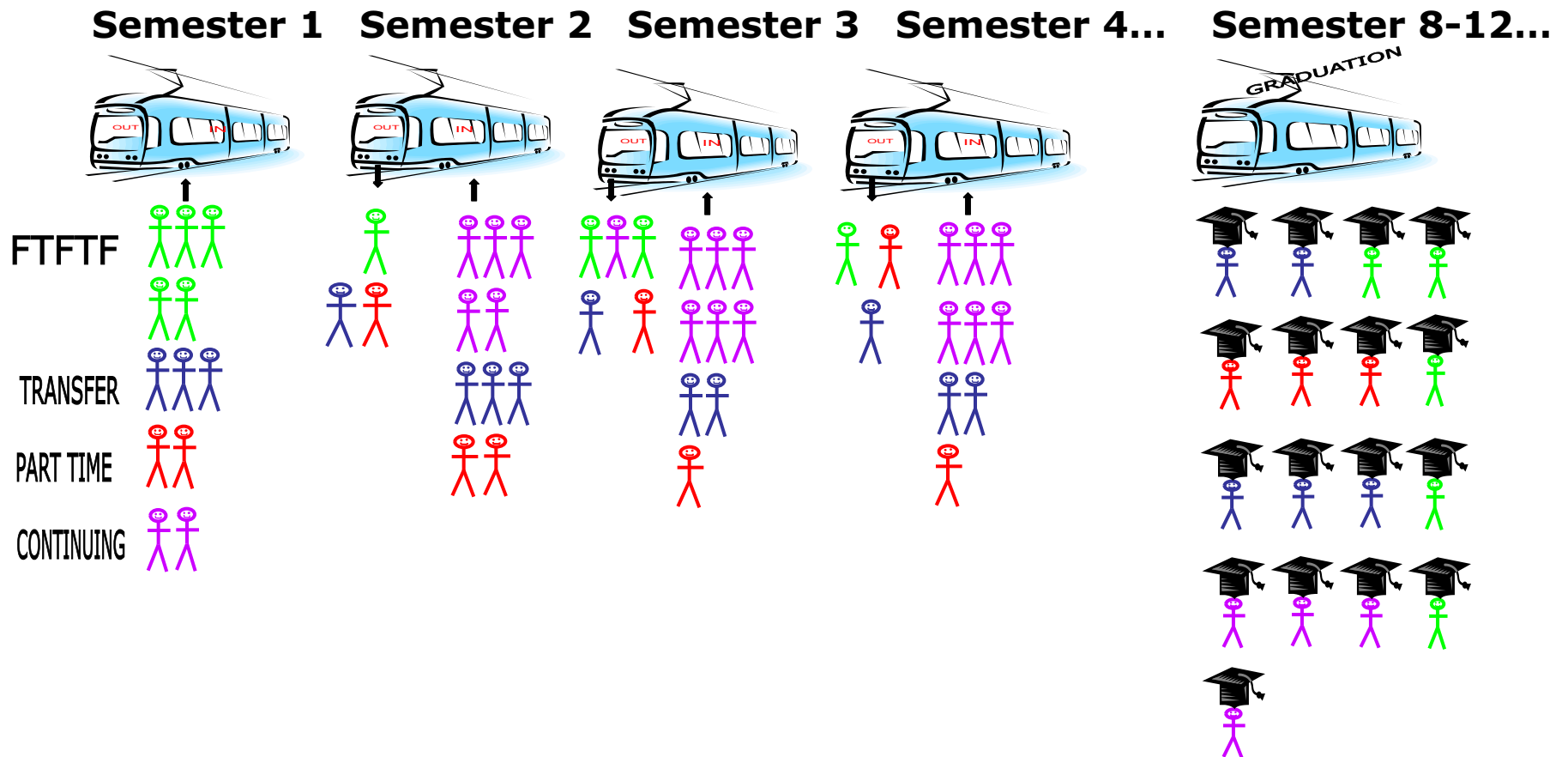
Yes, because they are all FTFTF’s!





# “COMMUTER TRAIN” UNIVERSITY

Are all these entering students counted?  
No, only those who are FTFTF’s!



# The Lost Origins of Graduation Rates

- Established in 1992 by the NCAA to monitor the academic performance of student-athletes.
- Later adopted by U.S. Department of Education as a measure of academic performance of all students, despite its obvious mismatch with the enrollment patterns of large numbers of today's university students.
- Has become one of the “gold standards” by which all institutions are measured.

# Graduation Rates Mislead Us All



- Ignore large numbers of students
- Reinforce an outdated profile of students and the universities that serve them
- Understate the success of all universities, especially large public universities in urban settings
- Foster a widespread false perception that universities are poor public investments

# The Solution: Align Metrics with Texas’ “Closing the Gaps” Goals

- **Closing the Gaps in Participation**

- Total enrollment growth
- Growth in enrollment of underrepresented groups -- Hispanic, Black, at-risk students

- **Closing the Gaps in Success**

- Growth in total degrees awarded
- Growth in degrees awarded to underrepresented groups -- Hispanic, Black, at-risk students
- Growth in degrees awarded in high-priority areas -- engineering, math, physical science and computer science
- Growth in degrees awarded in high-priority professions -- nurses, allied health professionals and teachers

For more information...

