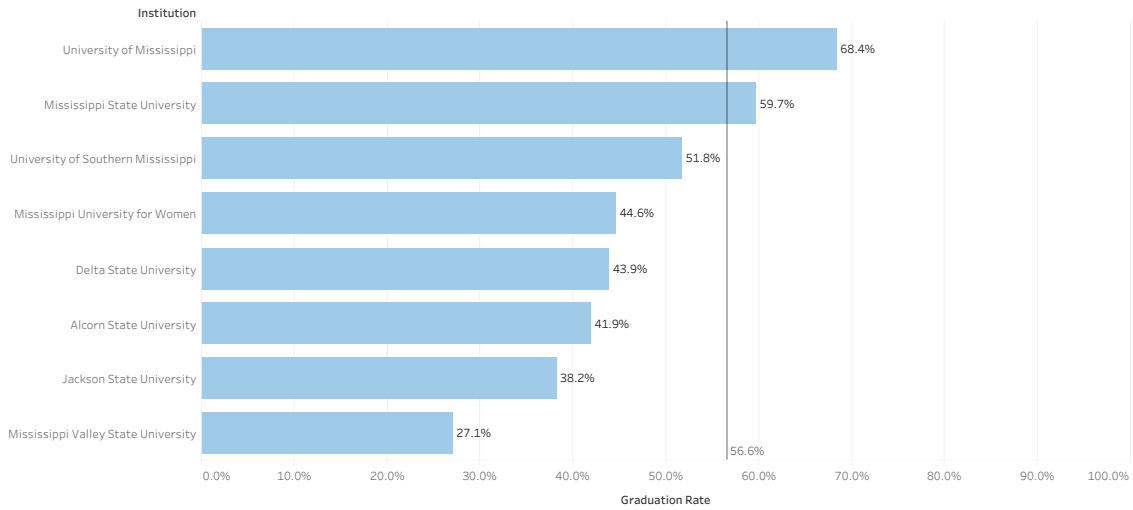
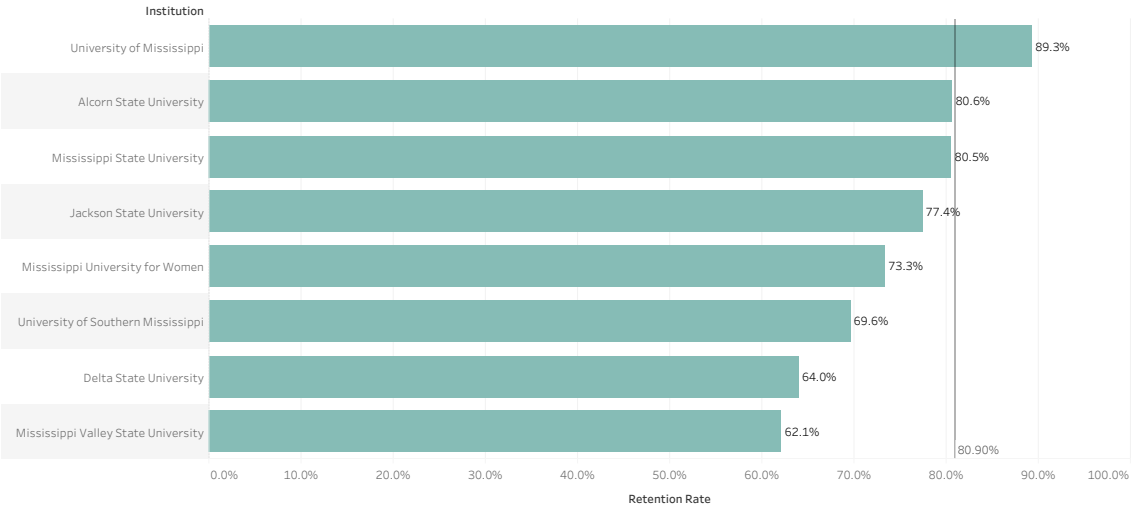
# Mississippi Higher Education Student Success: Retention and Graduation Outcomes

## Six-Year Graduation Rates by University (Fall 2015 Cohort)




## First Year Retention Rates Across Mississippi's Eight Public Universities (Fall 2021 Cohort)




### Key Findings & Research Implications

**1. Institutional Variation**
Reported six-year graduation rates range from 27.1% at Mississippi Valley State University to 68.4% at the University of Mississippi, a 41.3-percentage-point difference.

**2. Retention and Completion**
Alcorn State University reports an 80.6% first-year retention rate and a 41.9% six-year graduation rate. These measures may represent different student cohorts and should not be interpreted as a direct progression.

**3. Research Implications**
The variation across institutions warrants further investigation of student demographics, financial resources, academic support, and institutional characteristics. These descriptive results do not establish causation.

**4. Systemwide Performance Benchmarks**
According to Mississippi IHL's *Fast Facts 2024–2025*, the systemwide six-year graduation rate was 56.6% for the Fall 2015 cohort. Only two universities exceeded this benchmark: the University of Mississippi (68.4%) and Mississippi State University (59.7%). For the Fall 2021 cohort, only the University of Mississippi (89.3%) exceeded the systemwide first-year retention rate of 80.9%.

These institutional differences highlight opportunities for further research into student persistence and degree completion. Systemwide benchmarks represent aggregate outcomes rather than simple averages of institutional rates.

### Data Sources, Methodology, & Limitations

**Data Source:** Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), Office of Strategic Research. *Fast Facts 2024–2025*, p. 1, "Retention and Graduation."

**Scope:** Eight public universities in Mississippi.

**Measures:** IPEDS fall-to-fall retention rates for the Fall 2021 freshman cohort and six-year IPEDS graduation rates for the Fall 2015 freshman cohort.

**Methodology:** Descriptive comparative analysis of institution-level student success outcomes. Data were organized and visualized using Tableau Public. Institutions were ranked by their respective retention and graduation rates.

**Limitations:** Retention and graduation rates represent different student cohorts and should not be interpreted as sequential outcomes for the same students. The analysis does not control for differences in student demographics, institutional resources, enrollment characteristics, or other factors influencing student outcomes. Findings are descriptive and do not establish causation.