

Achieve Program

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Summary Report

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Mission:

The Achieve Program's mission is to foster academic achievement and personal growth in college students with atypical learning processes by cultivating effective learning strategies and self-confidence as they pursue their personal goals of attaining a post-secondary degree and fulfilling careers.

Who We Are

The Achieve Program is a recognized leader in fee-based comprehensive academic support programs at the college level. Specializing in providing personalized services to students with unique learning challenges, Achieve's services are differentiated from the services and accommodations provided by the office of disability services. Achieve Program's services are contractual on a semester basis. Achieve's fees are billed through the bursar each semester that our services are retained.

Whom We Serve

Achieve specializes in academic assistance for neuro-atypical learners and those with diagnosed difficulties, including but not limited to, individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders, Attention Deficit Disorders, Learning Disabilities, Cognitive Processing Deficits, Language Difficulties, and Executive Functioning Disorders. Neuro-atypical students do not necessarily present with commonly diagnosed learning difficulties yet may face significant challenges in attaining academic success. Many may also experience related social, emotional, and / or psychological difficulties. The issues these students experience are often complex and require extensive individualized support.

Our Model

We provide individualized services to meet the varying unique needs of each student. We approach every student holistically and implement customized plans that support strengths and address difficulties. We build personal relationships with every student and his or her family. Achieve provides a cohesive support system and develops a reciprocal partnership with the student that begins on the first day at Achieve. Our primary services include:

- Case management services: one-on-one meetings, supervision of schedules and assignments, monitoring of grades, personal assistance in organization, time management, and individualized academic counseling, regular communication, feedback, and progress reports.
- Academic support services: content tutoring, assistance with assignments, breaking down information, reviewing material, reading and writing assistance, intervention and evaluation of study habits, skills, and techniques, use of technology to increase learning effectiveness, e.g., utilization of audio playback, recording, and dictation options on mobile and computer devices; online and mobile resources for learning, review, time management, and organization.
- Testing services: evaluation and intervention of test-taking strategies, scribing, reading, and proctoring.
- Guided self-study: use of Achieve facilities to study, review, and complete assignments with minimal assistance. During these periods, Achieve staff provide primarily redirection and prompting to help students stay on task and to remind students to use their time effectively.

Our Strategies for Success

Achieve focuses on providing the students with a network of support and an enriching learning environment. The three main components of the Achieve system are:

- a) One - Stop Shop
- b) 8 - 8 - 8 Structure
- c) Feedback and Follow-up

A) One - Stop Shop

Problem: Neuro-atypical students often have greater challenges accessing appropriate services at the college level. Some reasons for this may be their difficulty in understanding or expressing what assistance they really need, difficulty with seeking out and following up on resources, embarrassment, and even frustration.

Solution: Achieve's center-based approach creates an environment where our students can receive help, study, and socialize in a single location. By centralizing all our services, we simplify the process of accessing resources for the student. This "one-stop shop" model has greatly promoted our students' willingness to access services thanks to the convenience and familiarity with our staff.

Benefit: Achieve can quickly and efficiently address students' needs; we gain immediate feedback, are able to assess the effectiveness of our assistance, and can quickly adapt different strategies to optimize learning conditions for the student. The center-based approach creates a family atmosphere that is safe and comfortable. This greatly reduces the problems of isolation, depression, loneliness, and homesickness. It also helps students with social interaction difficulties have a safe place to develop their social skills.

B) 8 – 8 – 8 Structure

Problem: Poor time management and lack of organizational skills, two common transition issues for college freshmen, are often compounded for students with different learning needs and / or neuro-atypical processing.

Solution: Achieve emphasizes the 8-8-8 structured time concept, i.e., 8 hours of work, 8 hours of play, and 8 hours of sleep. We also convey the idea that college is a full-time job, and that a typical workday, like a typical day in high school, is 8 hours long. Thus, the 8 hours of a college workday should comprise class time, homework time, and study time. This concept is introduced as the simplest form of time management, is readily understood, and is easily reinforced by parents even before the student enrolls in college.

Benefit: The risk of missed homework assignments/projects and lack of preparation for tests is significantly reduced. Further, our students learn the benefits of studying for short durations daily compared to cramming. Strategies like chunking information, repetition, and active versus passive reading, are gradually introduced over the course of the semester to aid in studying. The daily contact with the student gives Achieve the opportunity to help the student understand how he or she learns, and provide guidance on effective strategies specific to the type of material being learned.

C) Feedback and Follow-up

Problem: Many new college students lack the self-awareness and self-monitoring that is essential in being a self-directed independent learner. Without timely guidance, students can be caught unaware, which can potentially lead to issues with anxiety, depression, and academic failure.

Solution: Achieve provides extensive and in-depth case management to help our students gradually develop the mindset, skills, and habits necessary for success. Through regular case management meetings, Achieve lays the foundation for the student to take on increased personal responsibility over time. This is an iterative process that involves constant and reciprocal communication with all stakeholders. Open communication enables us to provide the student with timely and solution-based feedback. With persistent follow through and vigilant follow-up, we are able to close the loop and facilitate student success.

Benefit: Over time, our students develop strategies and skills to manage their personal and academic responsibilities. Our ability to communicate regularly with students and instructors, and to monitor grades and homework completion daily, greatly increases our ability to address impending problems and to provide pro-active solutions. In fact, regular communication with students and their parents has been a key factor in keeping our students engaged. Parents are also very effective in helping assuage our students' anxieties, frustrations, and fears. More importantly, parental encouragement and praise has proven to be a strong motivator for our students and reinforces their confidence in their personal academic abilities.

Our Success and Results

The success of our students is measured by GPA, academic standing, and degree completion. In addition, the success of our program is measured by continued enrollment of students in the program and persistence to graduation. Improvements to Achieve's services, facilities, and model have led to significant and rapid growth of the program. We are currently in a period of program stability and are focused on continuing to provide quality services that cultivate success in our students.

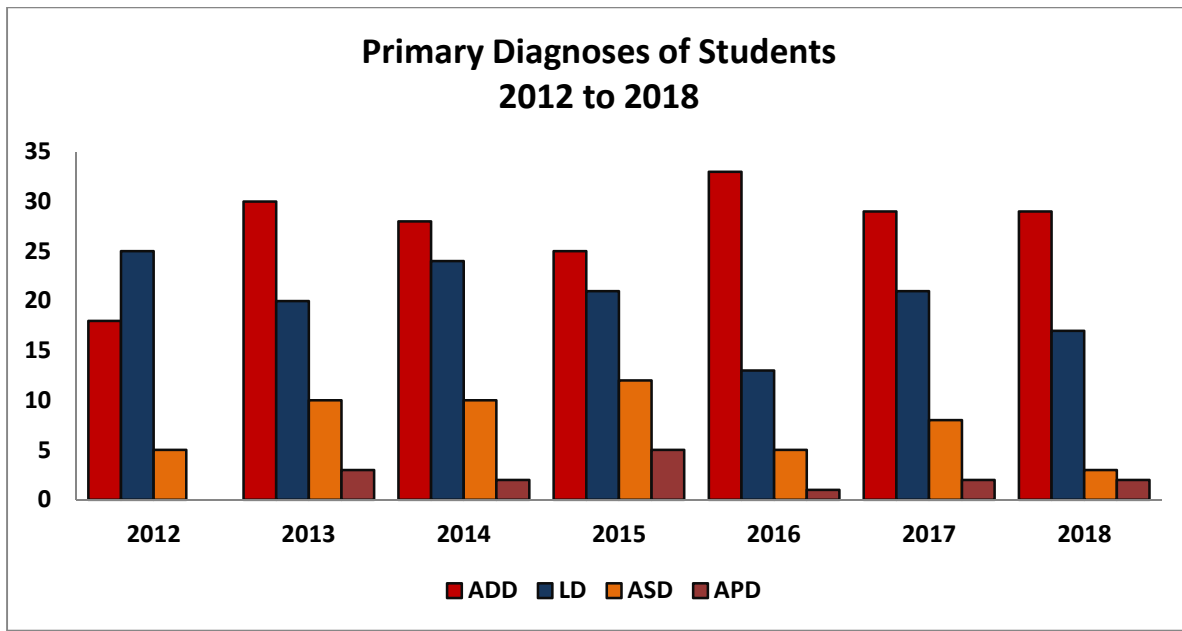


Fig. 1. Graph depicting the primary diagnoses of students supported by the Achieve Program. The diagnoses were grouped into 4 main categories: Attention Deficit Disorders (ADD); Learning Disabilities (LD); Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD); and Auditory Processing Disorders (APD).

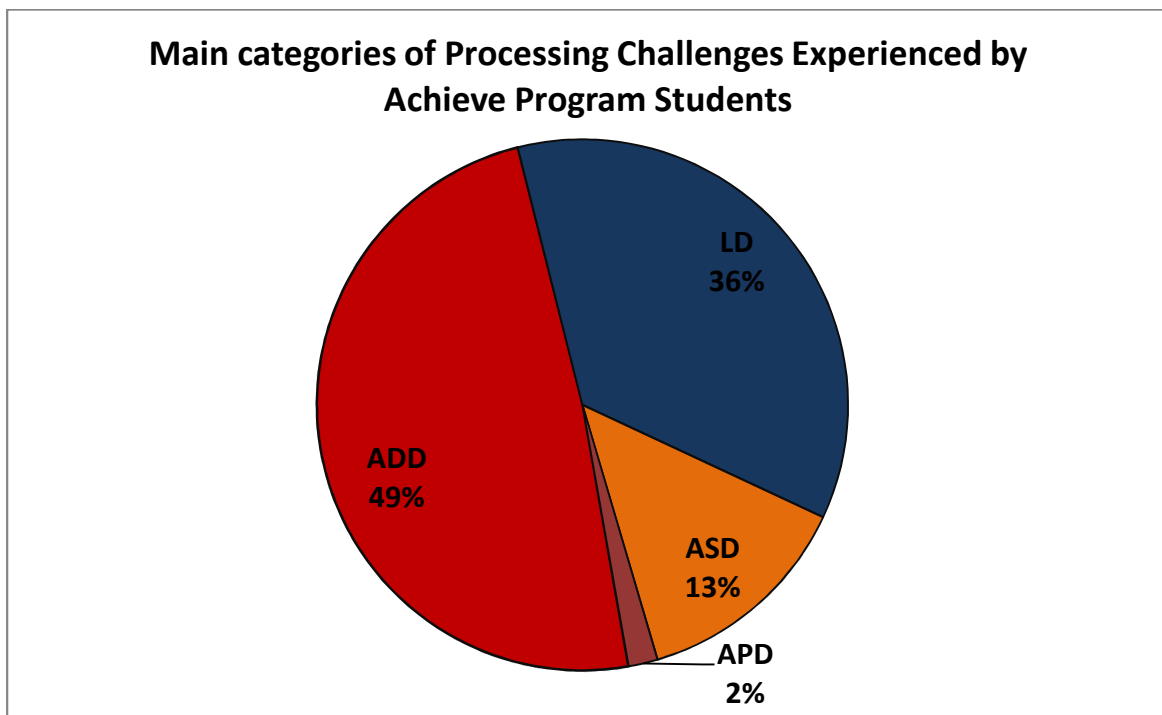


Fig. 2. Primary diagnoses supported by the Achieve Program presented in percentages. The diagnoses were grouped into 4 main categories: Attention Deficit Disorders (ADD); Learning Disabilities (LD); Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD); and Auditory Processing Disorders (APD). Data from 2012 -2018.

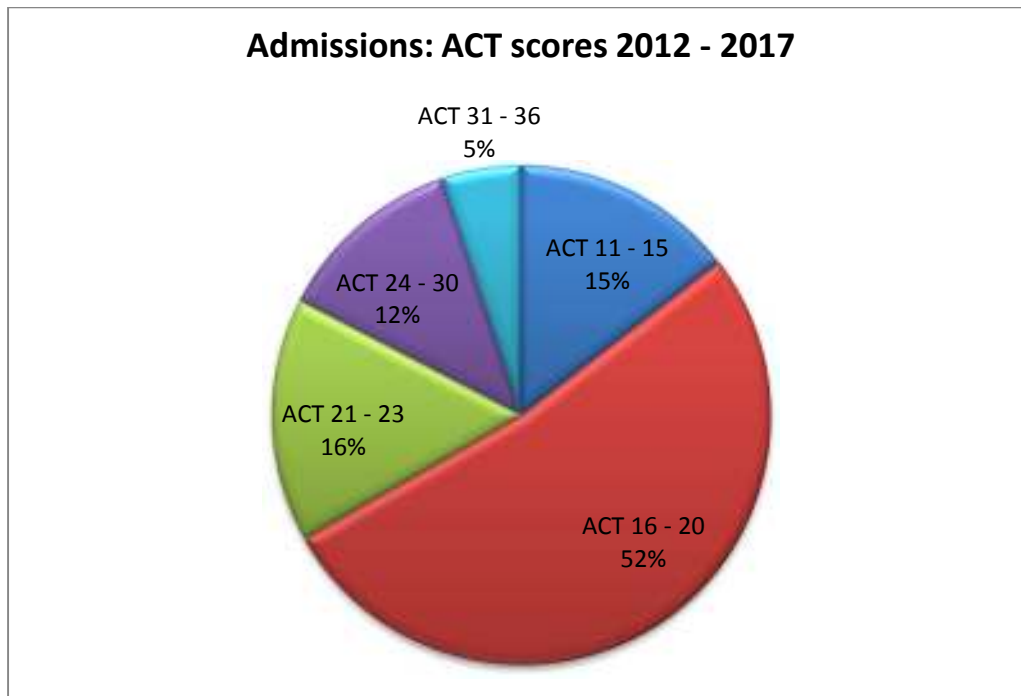


Fig. 3. The majority of Achieve Program applicants earn an average 17 or 18 on the composite ACT score. State of Illinois average composite ACT score is 21, for comparison. Achieve collaborates with Admissions to provide special admissions status to applicants who do not meet admissions criteria for SIU.

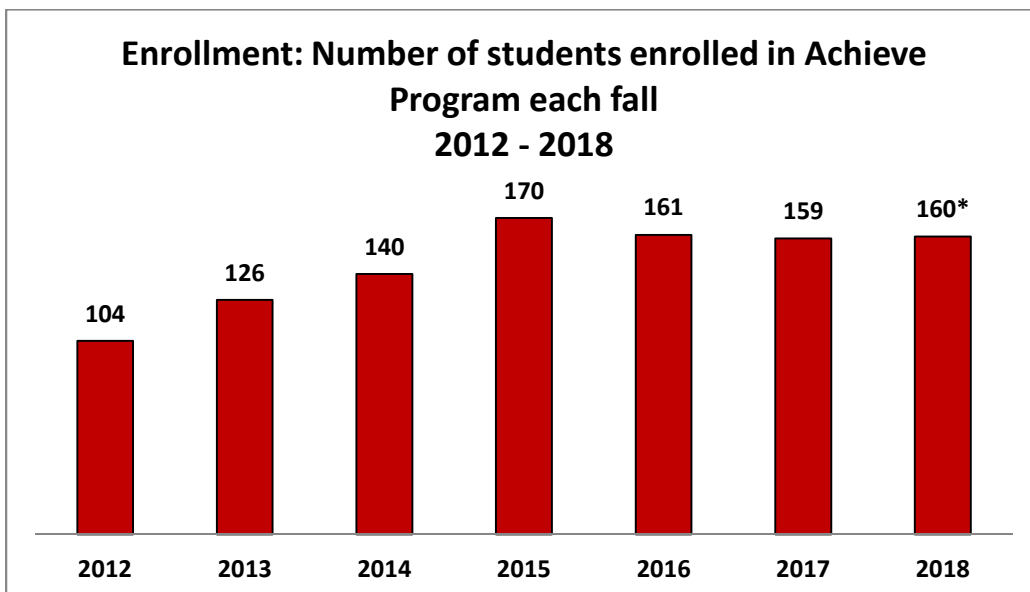


Fig. 4. Enrollment has stabilized at approximately 160 students in recent years, following a rapid increase observed from 2014 to 2015. The increase is largely attributed to improved retention rates. * Best estimate prior to start of fall semester.

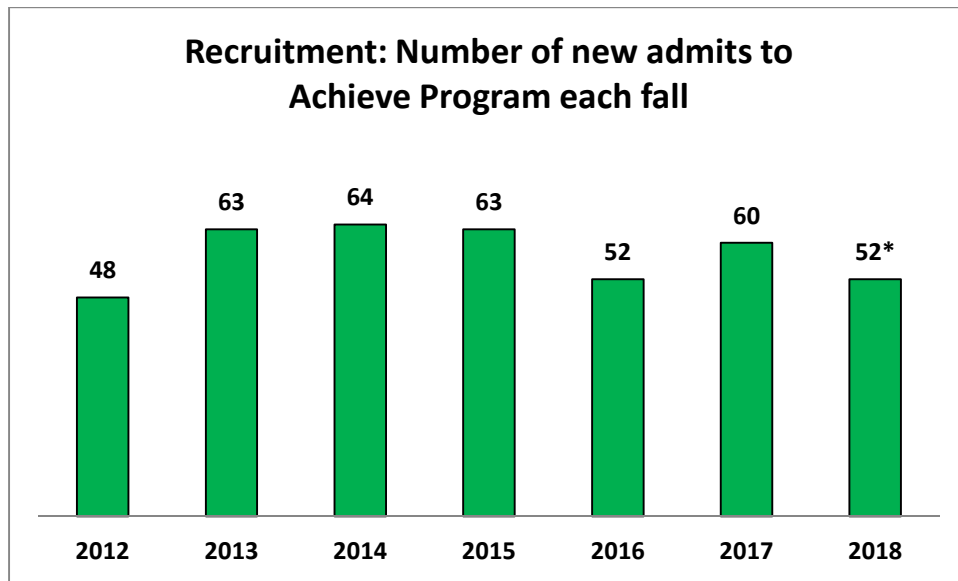


Fig. 5. Recruitment has remained relatively steady averaging approximately 50 - 60 new students per year. Prior to 2012, the minimum goal yearly was 40 new admits each fall. Our goal for 2019 is to successfully admit 60 to 70 new students. * Best estimate prior to start of fall semester.

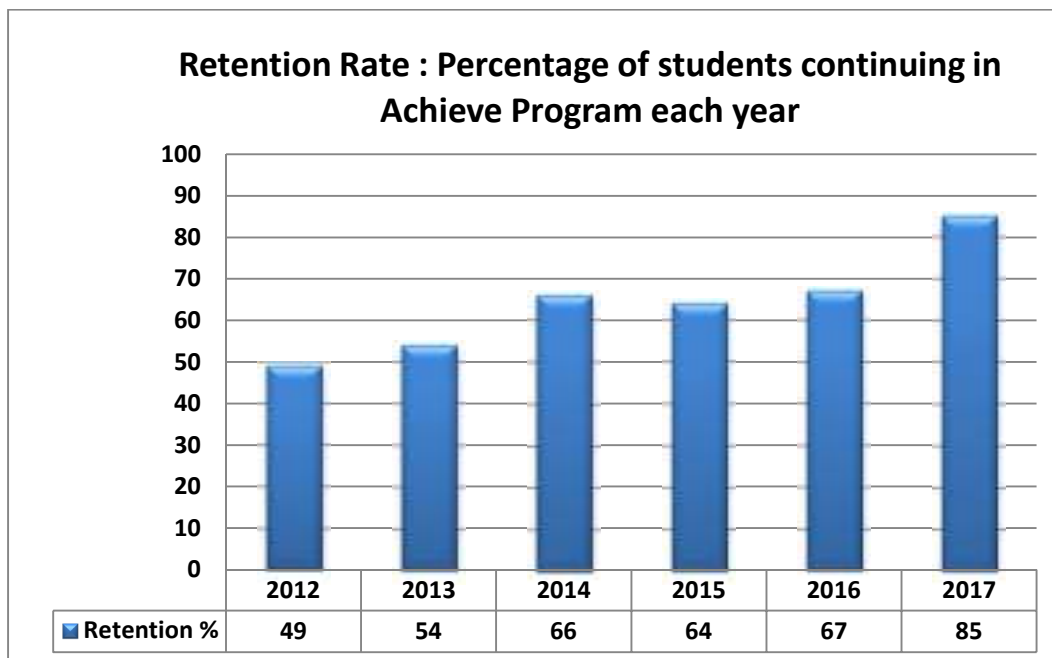


Fig. 6. Retention of students in the program has been gradually increasing since 2012. Prior to 2013, the attrition rate was approximately 50%. Since 2013, Achieve has made concerted efforts to encourage students to stay with the program through to graduation.

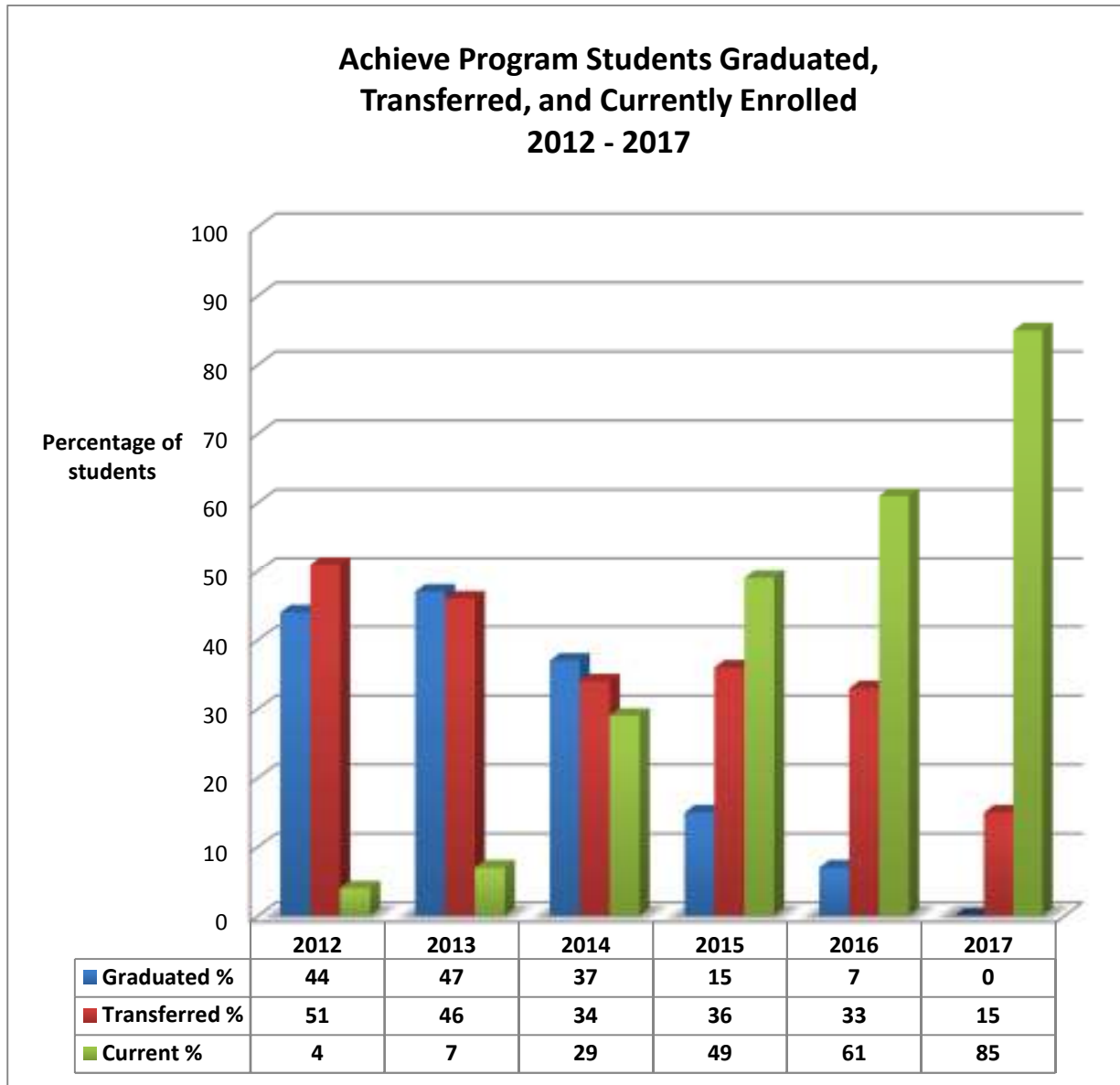


Fig. 7. The percentage of students transferring out of SIU and the Achieve Program has been decreasing gradually since 2012 (red bar). The percentage of students staying in the Achieve Program until graduation has been increasing (green bar).

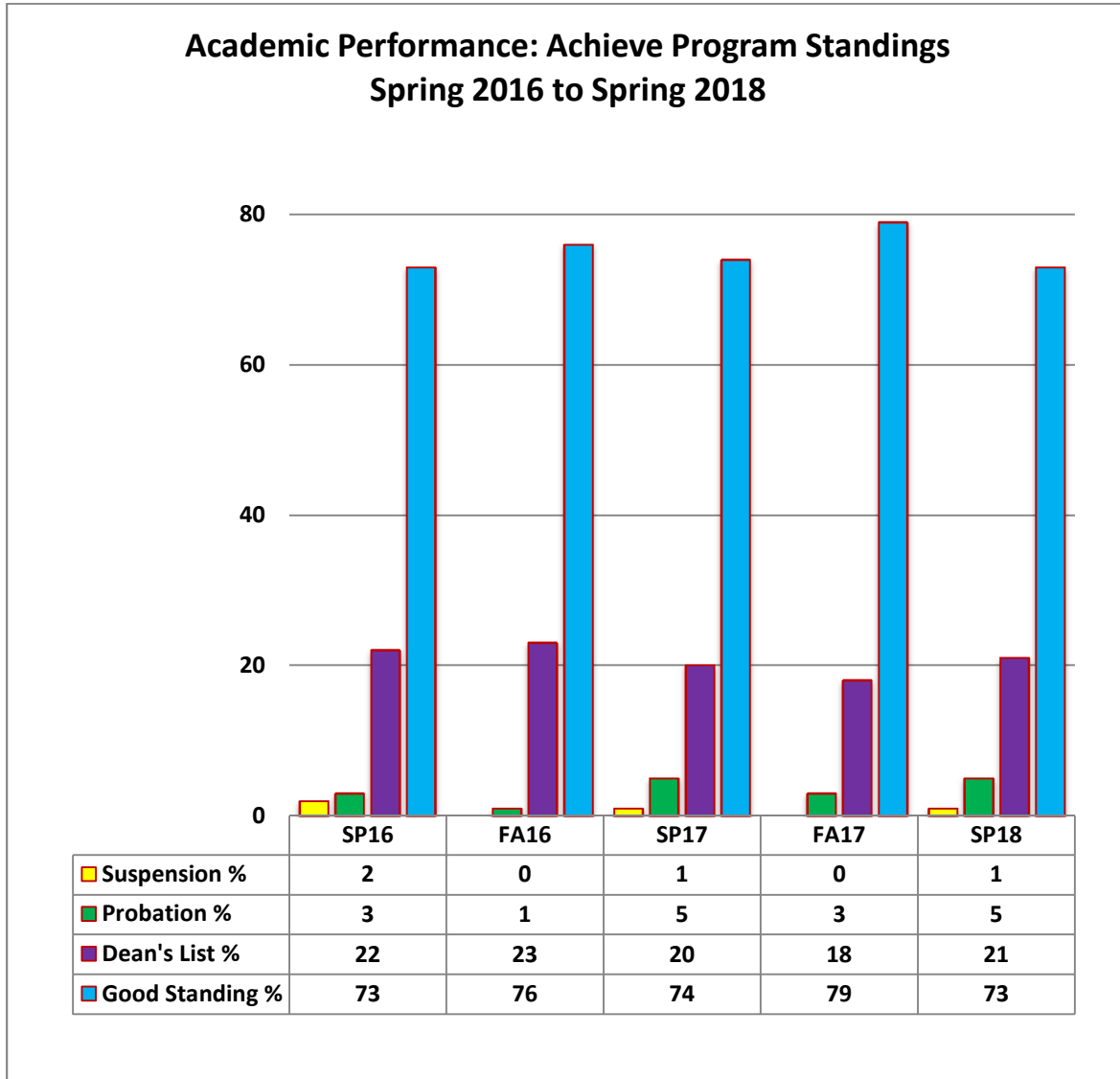


Fig. 8. Approximately 95% of Achieve Program students remain in good academic standing each semester; average of 20% on Dean's List and 75% in Good Standing (GPA of 2.0 and above). The percentage of students placed on probation has not exceeded 5% in any semester. The percentage of students suspended for poor academic performance has not exceeded 2% in any semester.

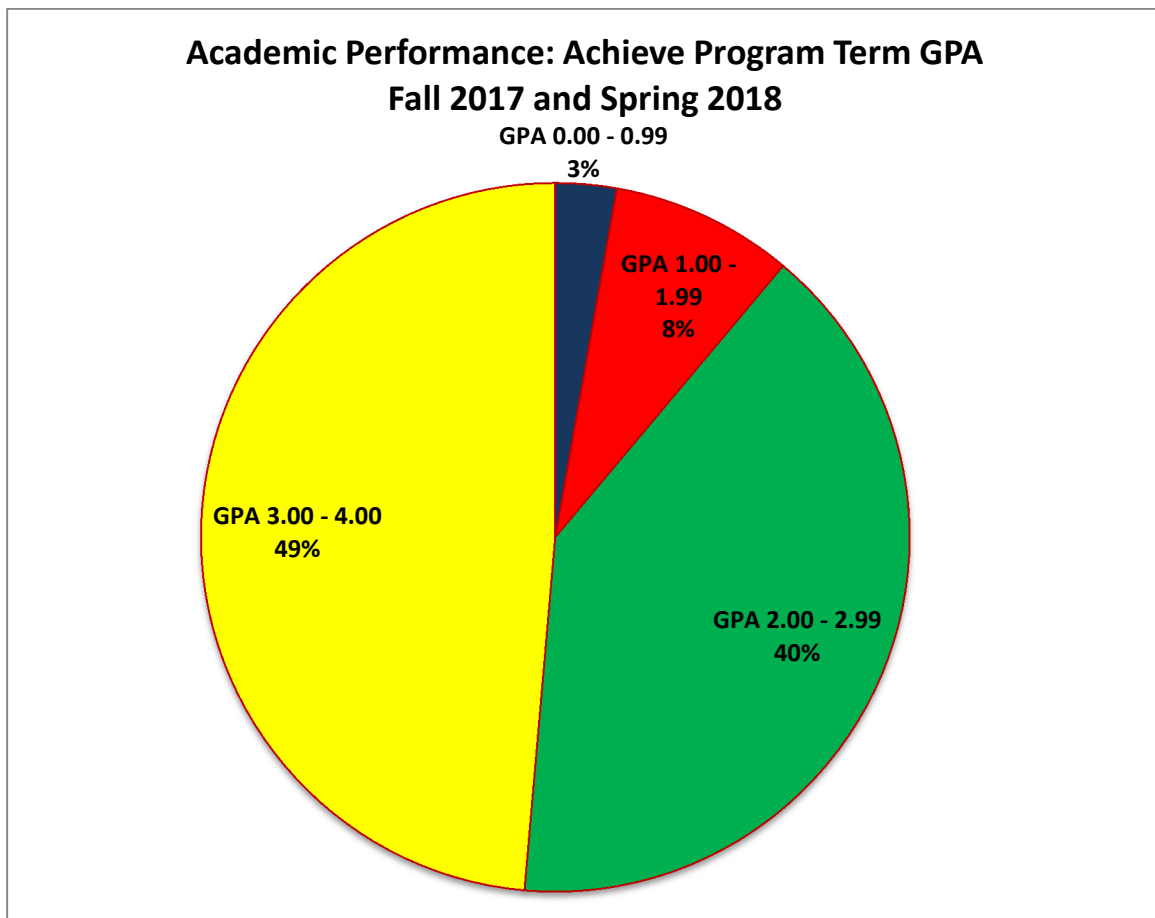


Fig. 9. Approximately 89% of Achieve students earned term GPAs above 2.0. Significant effort is made to proactively support and guide the students who are at risk for poor academic performance.

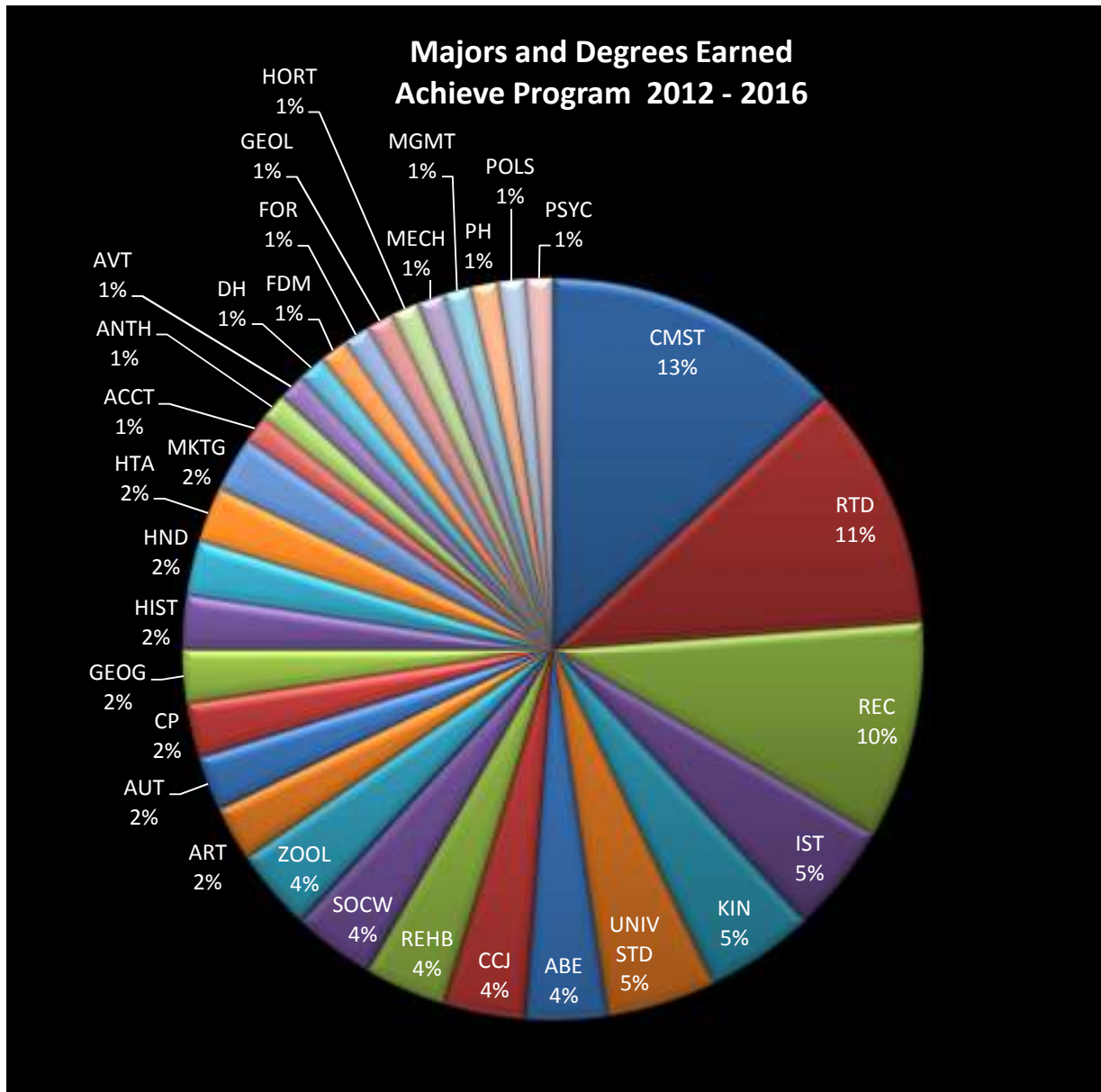


Fig. 10. Achieve Program students have earned degrees across a wide range of majors. Many also earn minors concurrently (not depicted in the graph above).

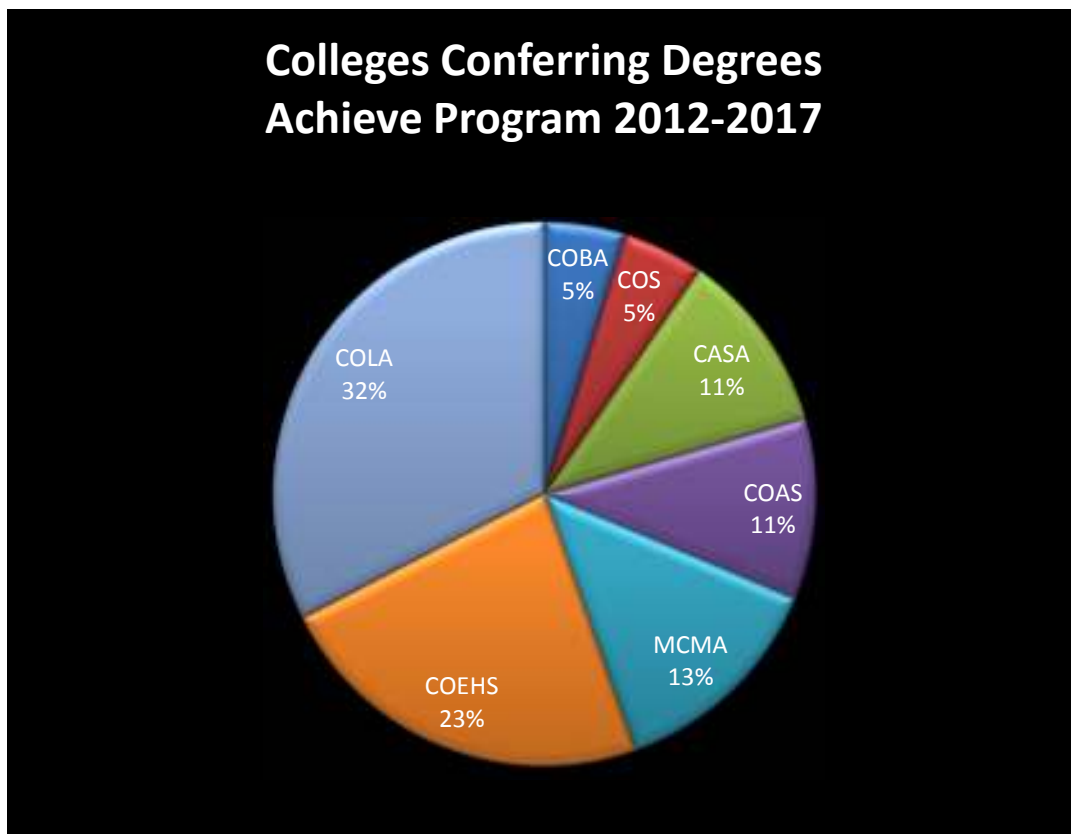


Fig. 11. Colleges from which Achieve Program students have earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees.

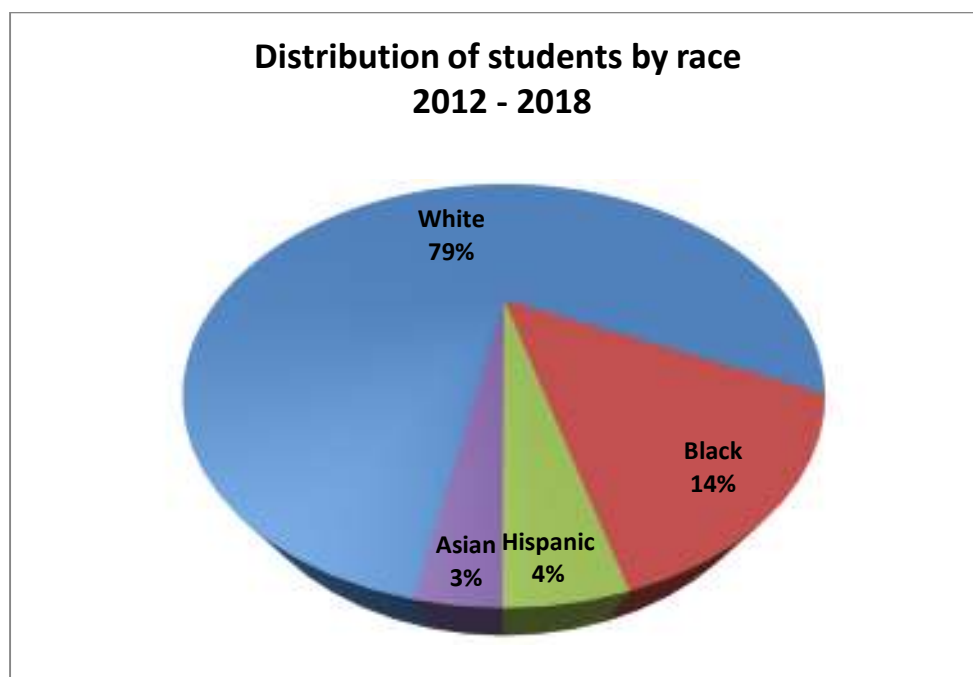


Fig. 12. Graph depicting the overall race distribution of students enrolled in the Achieve Program from 2012 to 2018.

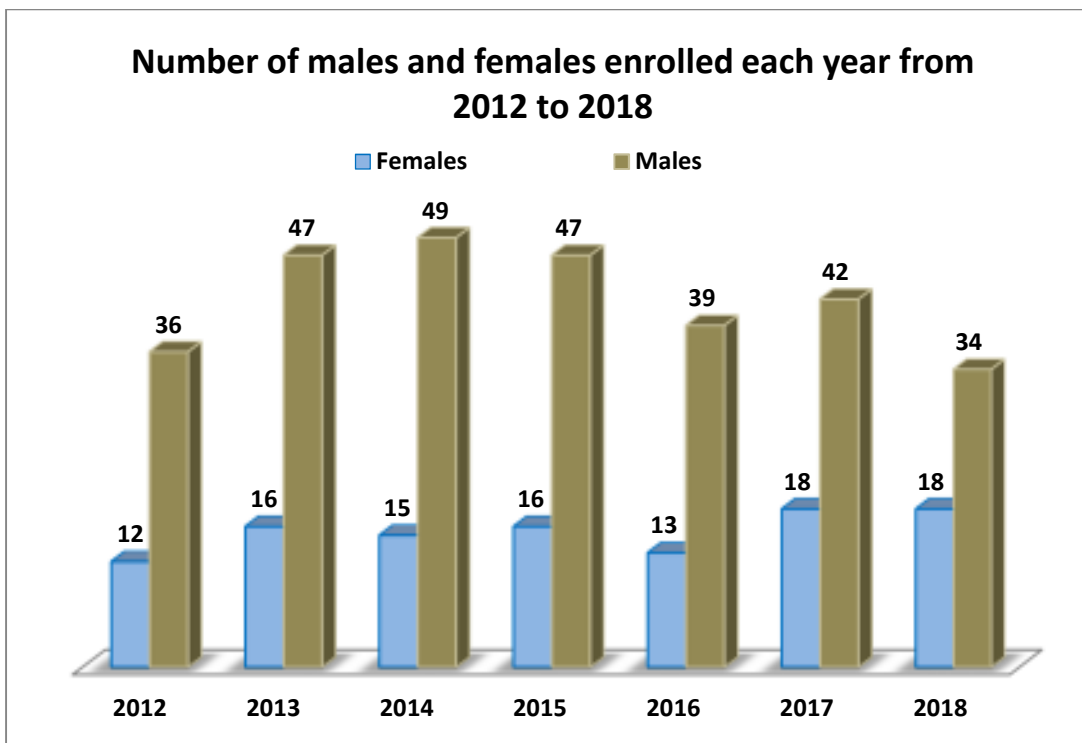


Fig. 13. Distribution of male and female students admitted into the Achieve Program each year. This data is reflective of the higher prevalence of learning and attentional issues in males compared to females reported in research studies.

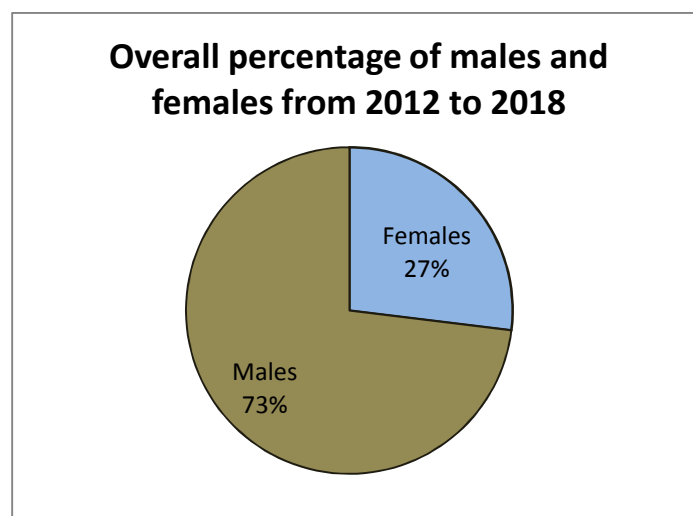


Fig. 14. Percentage of total number of males (n = 293) and females (n = 108) enrolled in the Achieve Program from 2012 to 2018.

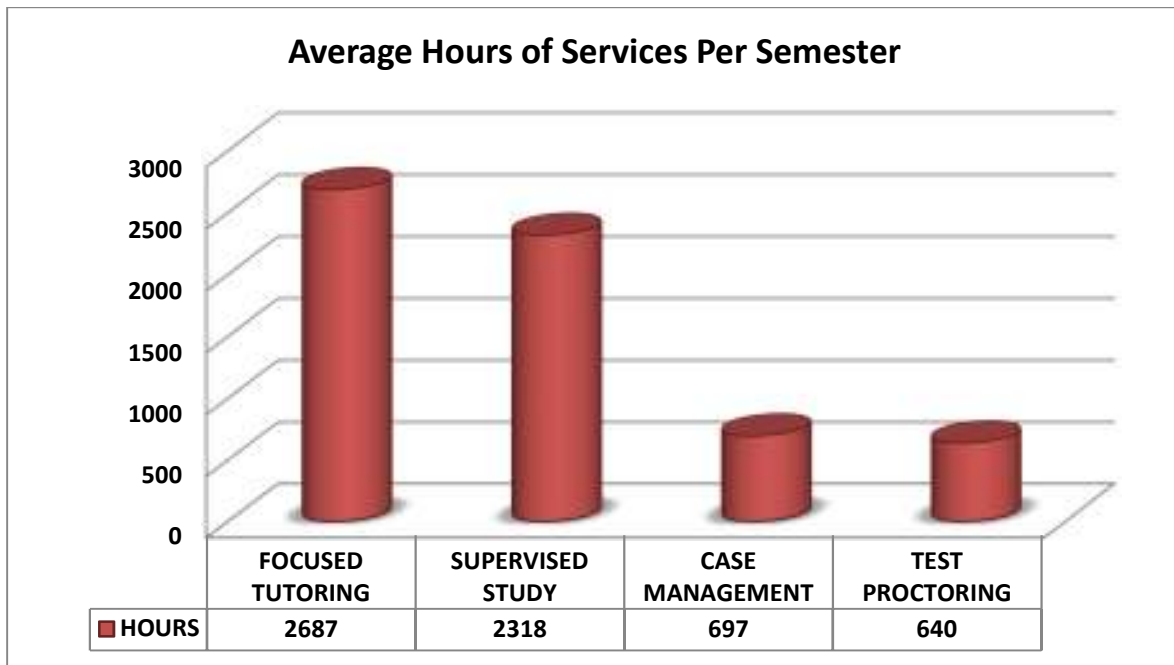


Fig. 15. Graph depicting the average number of service hours logged in a 16 - week semester.

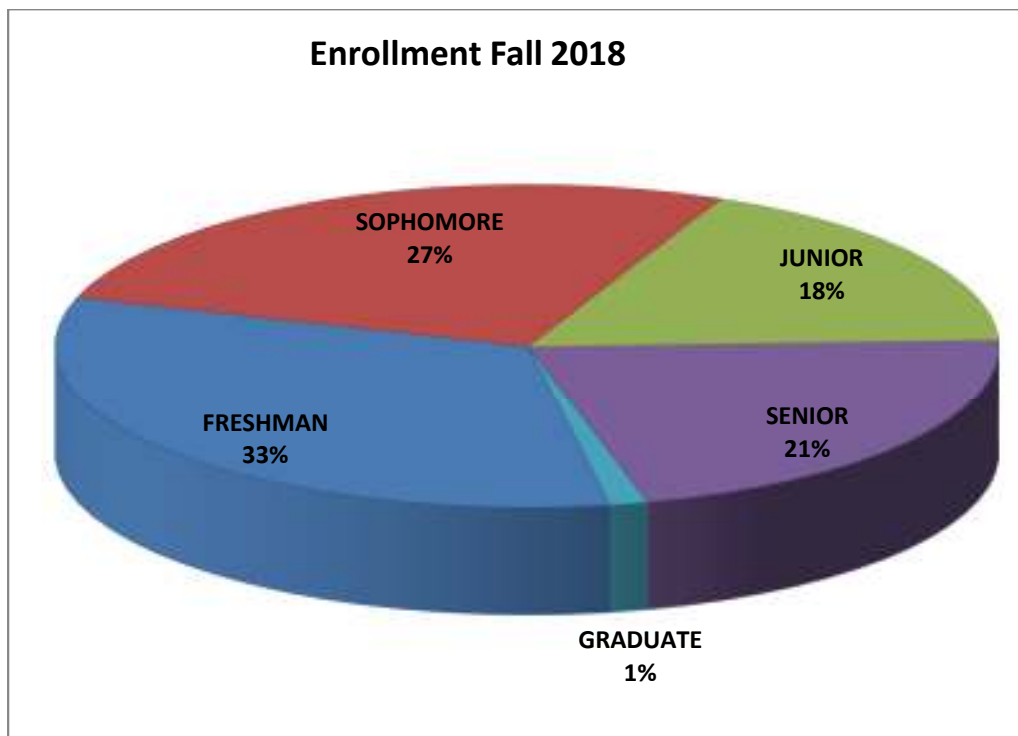


Fig. 16. Total number of students enrolled in the Achieve Program for Fall 2018 depicted by classification of academic year.