

BMA Seminary uses the IPEDS Graduation Rate (150% of normal time) as its SACSCOC Completion metric for measuring graduation rates. The institution created a [Thresholds and Criteria](#) table to demonstrate its actual, threshold, and criteria for completion rates. The table also identifies "at-risk" populations. Sources for actual data include DOE College Scorecard (undergraduate rate); IPEDS Data Feedback Report (at-risk populations); Association of Theological Schools Strategic Information Data and Institutional Peer Profile Report (graduate graduation and placement rates)

Justifying Undergraduate Graduation Rate Threshold and Criteria for BMA Undergraduates

BMA’s threshold of acceptability for undergraduates is 35%. Justification for this comes mostly by considering recent graduation rates. According to the most current data appearing on the U.S. Department of Education’s College Scorecard website, BMA Seminary’s overall graduation rate is 35% (available on 12/14/21). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, the seminary’s graduation rate was 40% in 2017 and 50% in 2015. This sampling of data equates to an average of 42% for BMA Seminary during the sample years.

As indicated earlier, BMA Seminary selected IPEDS Graduation Rate (150% of normal time) to serve as its SACSCOC metric for measuring student completion. BMATS reports data annually to IPEDS as they pertain to establishing student cohorts used to determine graduation rates. However, the nature of the seminary’s undergraduate programs, in compliance with its mission to equip for Christ-centered leadership and service roles, rarely allows IPEDS to evaluate an actual cohort. This is because criteria for establishing an annual cohort limit the inclusion of students to those attending college (i.e., the seminary) for the first-time and full-time. Because the seminary’s BAR requires an associate or equivalent as prerequisite for transfer into the program, no BAR students are first-time for cohort purposes. Although BMATS is most often the first-time collegiate experience for ADIV students, these students typically enroll part-time rather than full-time. Consequently, IPEDS does not always have a cohort from which to calculate a graduation rate for BMATS. Neither do IPEDS data consistently provide BMATS with disaggregated data pertaining to a cohort’s gender, race, and socioeconomic status.

To gain a more realistic picture of the graduation rates for BMATS undergraduates, it is worth considering a [modified cohort table](#) for undergraduate students entering BMA Seminary (Table 1). This cohort includes all entering students (i.e., new to BMATS) for the same cohort years reported to IPEDS. For example, 20 undergraduate students entered BMATS in fall 2011. Nine or 45% of those students graduated. Twenty-four undergraduate students entered in fall 2012 with five or 24% having graduated. Seventeen undergraduate students entered BMATS in fall 2013. Seven or 41% of those students graduated. These data verify that an average 37% of students in the seminary’s modified cohort graduated. Interestingly, both the modified average (37%) and that appearing on the DOE’s College Scorecard (of 35%) are similar. The modified cohort includes all undergraduate students entering BMATS for the first time regardless of hours enrolled, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic characteristics. In other words, this does not equal a typical IPEDS cohort with exclusively first-time/full-time students.

Table 1: Modified Cohort of Undergraduate Students Entering BMATS*

First Enrolled in BMATS	Fall 2013	Fall 2012	Fall 2011	Average
Number Entered	17	21	20	19

Number Graduated	7	5	9	7
Percent Graduated	41%	24%	45%	37%
Percent of Graduates Graduating within 150%	71%	20%	88%	59%

*Modified cohort includes all students entering BMATS for the first time regardless of hours enrolled, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic characteristics. In other words, this does not equal typical IPEDS cohort with exclusively first-time/full-time students.

In efforts to disaggregate the above data, seminary administrators identified the ethnicity and gender makeup of the modified cohort years 2011-2013. The categories chosen for disaggregation and analysis appeared most prominently in the IPEDS Data Feedback Reports (DFR) for the selected years. Although the Hispanic enrollment figures are low in this chart, the seminary decided to consider them, knowing that future such cohorts include a higher percentage of Hispanic students. For example, the 2018-2020 DFRs indicate the seminary’s Hispanic enrollment to be at an average of 14%.

The Percentage of Ethnicities in Modified Cohort that Graduated table (Table 2) reveals that 21% of Black students graduated and 25% of those graduating completed before the 150% of normal time. Also, 100% of non-resident students (i.e., international students) completed their degrees within 150% of normal time. The Percentage of Gender in Modified Cohort that Graduated table (Table 3) revealed that 38% of men graduated and 69% of those graduating completed within the 150% of normal time. The table revealed that 25% of women graduated and 50% of those graduating completed within the 150% of normal time. The Number and Percentage of Graduates by Ethnicity and Gender (2018-2021) table (Table 4) indicates that Black students comprised an average 17%, White students comprised 63%, Other comprised 20%, and Women comprised 1% of the 2018-2021 graduating classes.

Table 2: Percentage of Ethnicities in Modified Cohort that Graduated

	% of Modified Cohort	% of Modified Cohort that Graduated	% of Modified Cohort’s Graduates completing at ≤ 150% of normal
Black	29%	21%	25%
Hispanic	6%	50%	100%
White	50%	42%	71%
Non-resident	1%	100%	100%

Table 3: Percentage of Gender in Modified Cohort that Graduated

	% of Modified Cohort	% of Modified Cohort that Graduated	% of Modified Cohort’s Graduates completing at ≤ 150% of normal

Men	86%	38%	69%
Women	14%	25%	50%

Table 4: Number and Percentage of Graduates by Ethnicity and Gender (2018-2021)

	2018	2019	2020	2021	Average
Black	4	0	0	1	17%
White	2	6	4	7	63%
Other	1	1	4	0	20%
Women	1	1	0	1	1%

Peer-Group Comparison to Establish Criteria (i.e., target/goals)

BMA Seminary has identified the IPEDS Graduation Rate (150% normal time) as its SACSCOC metric for measuring graduation rates. Because Data Feedback Reports received do not always include 150% Graduation Rates, BMA Seminary administrators requested a summary of such data. The seminary initiated a request for a peer-comparison group from all degree-granting institutions in IPEDS with similar characteristics to BMA Seminary (i.e., highest degree offered, primarily bachelor’s degrees and above, located in small cities, and enrollment of less than 1,000 students). The request created a comparison group of 27 institutions (including BMATS). Although the seminary attempted to create the exact group, some variable must not have been consistent; however, this group was almost identical to the comparison group of 25 institutions (without BMATS) generated by IPEDS in its [IPEDS Data Feedback Report \(2019\)](#) for the seminary.

According to the data that appear in the [Peer-Comparison Graduation Rates \(150% of Normal Time\) per Gender](#) table (Table 5), 44.5% of undergraduates graduated from the seminary's peer-comparison institutions between 2017 and 2020. The average graduation rate for men was 36%. The average graduation rate for women was 50.4%. Notice that the average rate for men in the comparison group is 36%. The seminary’s purpose statement includes focus upon the historical and doctrinal character of the churches of the BMA. Such character naturally results in a predominance of men enrolled and graduating from BMATS. As seen by the current DOE College Scorecard, BMA Seminary’s graduation rate is 35% and mostly men. This equals the percentage data in [Peer-Comparison per Gender](#) table collected from peer-comparison institutions per IPEDS data. This should also be considered when establishing a threshold (i.e., minimally accepted baseline).

Table 5: Peer-Comparison Graduation Rates (150% of Normal Time) per Gender

	2020	2019	2018	2017	Average
Total	45.8	45.5	45.2	41.4	44.5
Men	35.9	36.3	38.4	33.1	36.0
Women	52.4	51.6	50.3	47.3	50.4

The [Peer-Comparison Graduation Rates \(150% of Normal Time\) with Ethnicity](#) table (Table 6) records data from the IPEDS Peer-Comparison group between 2017-2020. The overall average rate for graduations included: 49% Asian, 24% Black, 37% Hispanic, 53% White, and 63% non-resident students. These data are used in helping BMA Seminary establish graduation thresholds and criteria. The data also help BMA Seminary identify its own at-risk populations. Data reported appear in the [IPEDS Data Feedback Report \(2020\)](#). IPEDS

selects the Comparison Group of other schools with similarities to BMA. Criteria for the 44 institutions used in 2020 included: faith-related institutions, highest level of degree offering, and size of enrollment. It may be worth noting that the 2019 and 2020 IPEDS Data Feedback Reports differ in the numbers within each comparison group. The seminary did not create either comparison group used in the IPEDS Data Feedback Reports for 2019 and 2020.

Table 6: Peer-Comparison Graduation Rates (150% of Normal Time) with Ethnicity

	2020	2019	2018	2017	Average
Asian	51.3	51.4	48.1	45.2	49%
Black	29.2	30.7	30.5	19.3	24%
Hispanic	38.6	40.1	34.0	34.9	37%
White	53.5	52.3	56.0	49.5	53%
F1	51.5	62.2	69.9	66.2	63%

Although not the specified metric by which BMA Seminary measures Graduation Rates, the following information appeared in the seminary’s 2020 IPEDS Data Feedback Report regarding completion by 8 years. The data found in the [Bachelor’s Graduation Rate \(2011 Cohort; 2020 Report\)](#) table (Table 7) indicate that BMA outperformed the comparison group by year six. The data show that the peer-comparison group included a graduation rate of 22% by year four and of 38% by year six. Although the comparison group surpassed BMA Seminary at year four, BMA Seminary’s graduation rate exceeded the comparison group at year six with a 67% graduation rate.

Table 7: Bachelor’s Graduation Rate (2011 Cohort; 2020 Report)

Bachelor’s degree graduation rate within:	BMATS	Comparison Group
4 Years	0%	22%
6 Years	67%	38%
8 Years	67%	38%

Data reported appear in the IPEDS Data Feedback Report (2020). IPEDS selects the Comparison Group on other schools’ similarities with BMA. Criteria for the 44 institutions include: faith-related institutions, highest level of degree offering, and size of enrollment.

Regarding Socioeconomic Disaggregation

Table 8: Percentage of BMA Seminary Graduates According to Socioeconomic Factors

	Title IV Eligible	Not Title IV Eligible per EFC	Not Title IV Eligible per non-financial reasons
2018-2021	64%	21%	14%

The Financial Aid Administrator examined FAFSA documents and Estimate Family Contributions (EFC) to distinguish socioeconomic differences between students graduating in 2018-2021. Administrators consider that the use of EFC as a determiner is appropriate

because EFC is configured by a third-party (the U.S. Department of Education) and considers multiple factors in addition to a student's annual income.

The [Percentage of BMA Seminary Graduates According to Socioeconomic Factors](#) table (Table 8) identifies 2018-2021 BMA graduates by three categories: (1) eligible for Title IV funding, (2) ineligible for Title IV funding per Estimated Family Contributions, and (3) those ineligible for Title IV funding per non-financial reasons. The data show that 64% of 2018-2021 graduates received Title IV assistance, 21% were ineligible for Title IV assistance per a high EFC, and 14% were ineligible for Title IV assistance for non-financial reasons.

Data appearing in the [BMA Seminary and Comparison Group Undergraduate Award and Enrollment Rates 2020](#) table also indicate that more students having received Title IV assistance graduated than those who did not receive such assistance. The data indicate no significant differences between ethnicity or gender categories. Data reported appear in the [IPEDS Data Feedback Report \(2020\)](#). IPEDS selects the Comparison Group based upon similarity of other schools with BMA. Criteria for the 44 institutions include: faith-related institutions, highest level of degree offering, and size of enrollment. The Undergraduate Award and Enrollment Rates 2020 table accurately represents BMATS entering students. Few enroll first-time and full-time at BMATS. First-time students typically enter by attending part-time. A higher percentage of the seminary's part-time students receive Pell than those in the comparison group, a group chosen by IPEDS with similar characteristics to BMATS. As demonstrated by the [Percentage of BMA Seminary Graduates According to Socioeconomic Factors](#) table, students receiving Pell tend to graduate from BMA Seminary. Providing accredited undergraduate education is part of the seminary's mission statement. Consequently, the seminary should continue to help students obtain Pell assistance.

Threshold Acceptability and Criteria for BMA Seminary Undergraduate Students

Faculty reviewed these data during a [December 17, 2021 workshop](#). The data presented during the workshop allowed the faculty to review its previous analysis of several student achievement measurements. Along with analysis of new data, faculty agreed that all data reflect overall effectiveness of the institution. Also, the review and analysis of disaggregated graduation data revealed the need for increased attention to Black and Women students. Both categories are addressed below with intentional thresholds, criteria, and strategies to improve seminary graduation rates, particularly amongst at-risk populations.

Based upon the analysis of the IPEDS report, the National Center for Educational Statistics, and the modified cohort data, the following decisions were made regarding target goals and minimal thresholds for graduation rates in undergraduate programs. The overall threshold is 35% and the criteria target is 45%. The target goal was determined by the using peer-comparison data from IPEDS and the minimum threshold was determined by using the seminary's own modified cohort that records recent performance. Again, the review of disaggregated data necessitates attention to Blacks and Women. The seminary hopes to improve these identified at-risk populations by using the strategies reported below and raising the minimal thresholds of both Black and Women students to 25% and the criteria targets to equal the seminary's overall average of 35%.

Threshold Acceptability and Criteria for BMA Seminary Graduate Students

The Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) accredits each of BMA Seminary's graduate degrees (MDIV, MACM, MAR, and MAPT). According to the ATS website, the association produces a Strategic Information Report (SIR), customized for each school, to help schools assess their overall performances. The aid includes providing "benchmark comparatives to other theological schools." This provides an unbiased third-party presentation of data by which an institution may find objective data to compare itself.

ATS reports apply only to the seminary's graduate programs. In BMA Seminary's latest Strategic Information Report from ATS (2020), graduation rates (2019) are provided. [BMA Seminary's Graduation Rates \(2015-2019\)](#) are used to compare with the ATS overall ratings and to those of other categories: Catholic/Orthodox, Evangelical, and Mainline Protestant. BMATS is categorized as an evangelical school.

According to the data, BMA Seminary's graduation rate for MDIV students is lower than the ratings of schools in all other categories. As part of its stated mission, BMA Seminary purposes to meet the educational needs of BMA churches and entities along with others who hold to a high view of Scripture. BMA Seminary serves a religious tradition that does not require seminary education for ordination. Whereas Mainline Protestant and Catholic/Orthodox traditions require an MDIV for ordination, BMA traditions do not. This reality makes an MDIV essential and strongly influences graduation rates in other traditions. However, as is seen by the comparison chart provided, BMA Seminary surpasses institutions from other traditions as it relates to the completion of Master of Arts degrees.

Based upon data recorded in the ATS 2020 Strategic Information Report, BMA Seminary's threshold for the MDIV is 35%. Its criteria are to obtain a 50% graduation rate. The seminary's threshold for the MACM is 50% and its criteria are to maintain or exceed a 70% graduation rate. The seminary's MAR and MAPT threshold is 50% and its criteria are to maintain or exceed a 60% graduation rate.

Regarding Placement Rates

Faculty agreed that [Placement Rates 2012-2019](#) demonstrate considerable student achievement. Based upon data appearing in the ATS Institutional Peer Profile Report, a customized annual report based upon peer institutions identified by the BMA Seminary (approximately 10 similar institutions), BMA Seminary has an excellent Placement Rate for its graduates. Faculty consider 70% a minimally accepted threshold and the maintaining of at least 90% a criteria or target goal. These figures are based upon data collected from the ATS report.

Response to Below Threshold Graduation Rate

BMA Seminary's current graduation rate falls below its established threshold. Seminary administrators and faculty recommend an ongoing strategy to improve graduation rates among all students. The data presented during the workshop allowed the faculty to review its previous analysis of several student achievement measurements. Along with analysis of new data, faculty agree that all data reflect overall effectiveness of the institution. Consequently, the review of disaggregated graduation data necessitates increased attention to Black and Women students. Both categories are addressed below.

Administrators and faculty recommend five specific strategies to enhance completion rates amongst all students.

First, "One More Touch = One More Graduate"

This strategy is based upon information gleaned from the 2021 SACSCOC Annual Meeting's workshop on how Florida Atlantic University doubled its graduation rates, particularly amongst at-risk students. When students are "engaged" in anything it helped them graduate. Therefore, seminary faculty, administrators, and staff will take more active roles in securing engagement in both class and non-class opportunities.

Second, "Two-Week Warning"

Like a two-minute warning at the end of a football game, the seminary administration recommends identifying students with who have been absent twice to be contacted by

faculty. The two weeks can be consecutive or otherwise. While both the dean's office and faculty have consistently monitored attendance, action that addresses poor attendance has typically occurred after a third absence, particularly consecutive absences. Data reveal that this strategy offers seminary assistance too late and should be revised per the idea of the "two-week warning." This warning takes a more proactive approach to helping students by addressing their reasons for absence much sooner and hopefully with more time to help students complete their courses and ultimately their degrees.

Third, utilizing the recruitment office to aid in retention of students by participating in getting, keeping, and graduating students with the motto: "Working to Enroll, Working to Retain, and Working to Complete." This strategy will utilize recruiting between semesters to aid students in the processes needed to return for following semesters.

Fourth, using financial incentives (i.e., reduced tuition for students taking additional hours to promote student achievement and degree completion by encouraging them to take more classes. This strategy, implemented for the spring 2022 semester, potentially helps all students by decreasing tuition for a third class by 25% and a fourth class by 50%. As exemplified by the graduation data, students who normally take a full-load of classes tend to have a much higher completion rate than those taking courses less than half-time. The institution's financial incentive strategy will hopefully encourage students to take more classes and result in likely graduation.

Fifth, using New Student Orientation to promote the value of completing a seminary degree. Such information should show those wanting to hire students that they can complete something they have started; possible financial impact of completing a degree.

Since receipt of the Off-Site Committee's Preliminary Report, BMA Seminary has already implemented two of the response mechanisms to address threshold shortfalls. The Spring 2022 New Student Orientation includes the suggested updates. Recruitment and retention efforts during the Spring 2022 registration also included use of the financial incentives intended to increase the number of hours taken by students. Preliminary data on the success of these strategies are not available as of the writing of this report. The seminary intends to implement the other strategies as planned throughout the semester and beyond.