



The Facts:

Postsecondary Access and Success

Ensuring that more students succeed in postsecondary education is vital to our nation's economic health.

- Approximately 54% of all new job openings in the 2004-2014 decade are projected to be filled by workers with education beyond high school.ⁱ
- As of 2003, full-time workers with a bachelor's degree had median earnings of \$49,900, which was 62% more than the \$30,800 annual earnings of a typical high school graduate. In addition to the increased economic output implied by this higher salary, this median wage differential translates into an additional \$5,300 in annual income taxes paid per worker.ⁱⁱ
- The U.S. still has the largest percentage of college-educated persons in the 55 to 64 year old age group among developed countries. But this group is nearing retirement. For the younger age group, aged 25 to 34, the United States has slipped to seventh place, having been surpassed by countries that include Korea, Sweden, Belgium, and Ireland.ⁱⁱⁱ

Too few students from low-income backgrounds and from underrepresented minority groups graduate from high school prepared for college.

- In today's economy, work readiness requires similar reading and math competence as readiness for college, making a "college-preparatory" program beneficial for all students, even those students who enter the workforce after high school rather than immediately attending college.^{iv}
- For the class of 2002, only 41% of African American high school graduates left school with reading skills and a course record that would qualify them to apply to a four-year college. For Hispanics, the figure was 38%. In contrast, 51% of White students graduated from high school prepared for entry into a four-year college program.^v
- In 2002, only 52% of African American students and 56% of Hispanic students graduated from high school on time, as compared to 78% of their White peers.^{vi}
- In 2005, the high school graduation rate for students from the bottom income quartile (up to \$36,174 annual income) was 68.6%, as compared to 83.4% for the second quartile, 89.0% for the third, and 92.5% for the highest-income students (\$96,560 or more annual income).^{vii}

Enrolling in college is strongly correlated with family income and race/ethnicity.

- Only 47% of recent high school graduates from families in the bottom income quartile (up to \$36,174 annual income) enter college, compared to 85% of students from the top income quartile (more than \$96,560 annual income).^{viii}
- Of students who were in eighth grade in 2000, only 20% of the lowest-income students are projected to attain a bachelor's degree by 2012, as opposed to 68% of the highest income group.^{ix}
- In 2002-04, 47.3% of White high school graduates aged 18 to 24 attended college, as compared with only 41.1% of African Americans and 35.2% of Hispanics.^x

College has become increasingly expensive and financial aid hasn't kept up.

- The average published charges (tuition and fees combined with room and board) for attending a public four-year college are \$12,796 per year and \$30,367 for attendance at a four-year private college. The average annual price increase at public four-year colleges has outpaced inflation by about 4% for the past two decades.^{xi}
- The maximum Pell Grant of \$4,050 (2005-06)—the primary source of federal financial aid for low-income students—pays for only 1/3 of the published price of attendance at a public four-year college.^{xii}
- In 2003-2004, just 56% of full-time students from families earning less than \$30,000 received sufficient grants and tax benefits to cover tuition and fees at a public four-year college.^{xiii}

Getting students into college is not enough. Low-income and underrepresented minority college students earn degrees at significantly lower rates than their peers.

- Only 43% of low-income, college-qualified students who entered college in 1992 aiming for a bachelor's degree earned their degree by 2000, as compared to 80% of high-income students.^{xiv}
- Among students who began college in 1995–96, 58% of White students earned a bachelor's degree within six years, as compared to 42% of Hispanics and 36.4% of African Americans.^{xv}

References

- i. Hecker, D.E. (2005, November). "Occupational employment projections to 2014." *Monthly Labor Review*, p. 80.
- ii. College Board. (2005). *Education pays*. Washington, D.C.: Author.
- iii. Organisation of Economic Co-Operation and Development. (2006). *Education at a glance 2006*. Paris, France: Author. Data are for 2004.
- iv. ACT, Inc. (2006). *Ready for college and ready for work: Same or different?* Iowa City, IA: Author.
- v. Extrapolated from data presented in Greene, J. & Winters, M. (2005). *Public high school graduation and college-readiness rates: 1991-2002*. New York, NY: Manhattan Institute for Public Policy Research.
- vi. Greene, J. & Winters, M. (2005). *Public high school graduation and college-readiness rates: 1991-2002*. New York, NY: Manhattan Institute for Public Policy Research.
- vii. Mortenson, T. (2006, December). *Family income and higher education opportunity: 1970 to 2005*. Postsecondary Education Opportunity (174). Note that Mortenson follows the Census Bureau definition of graduation in including GED recipients in his count of high school graduates.
- viii. Mortenson, T. (2006, June). "College continuation rates by family income for recent high school graduates 1987 to 2004." *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, 168.
- ix. Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance. (2006). *Mortgaging our future: How financial barriers to college undercut America's global competitiveness*. Washington, DC: Author.
- x. American Council on Education. (2006). *Minorities in higher education: Twenty-second annual status report*. Washington, DC: Author.
- xi. College Board. (2006). *Trends in college pricing*. Washington, DC: Author.
- xii. College Board. (2006). *Trends in student aid*. Washington, DC: Author.
- xiii. College Board. (2006). *Trends in college pricing*. Washington, DC: Author.
- xiv. Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance. (2006). *Mortgaging our future: How financial barriers to college undercut America's global competitiveness*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- xv. American Council on Education. (2006). *Minorities in higher education: Twenty-second annual status report*. Washington, DC: Author.



The Pathways to College Network, a national alliance directed by TERI, advances college opportunity for underserved students by raising public awareness, supporting innovative research, and promoting evidence-based policies and practices across the K-12 and postsecondary sectors.

For more information:
Pathways to College Network
TERI
31 St James Ave, 4th FL
Boston, MA 02116

www.pathwaystocollege.net
pathways@teri.org
(617) 535-6829
(617) 422-8841 fax