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**High school graduation and college enrollment rates have steadily increased for CPS students,  
but college completion rates remain flat**

*If current rates remain unchanged for the next decade, nearly three-fourths of today's ninth-graders  
will not earn a college degree or certificate within 10 years*

The University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (UChicago Consortium) released their annual analysis of [The Educational Attainment of Chicago Public Schools Students](#) for 2019. The annual report takes an in-depth look at how Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students are progressing on the path to and through high school and college. Overall, the percentage of CPS students graduating from high school and enrolling in college has steadily increased over time. In 2019, 82% of CPS students graduated high school, and in 2018, around two-thirds of CPS graduates enrolled immediately in college. Slightly more than one-half of CPS graduates who immediately enrolled in a four-year college earned a degree or certificate in six years, and 26% of graduates who immediately enrolled in a two-year college earned a degree or certificate.

The report includes a Post-Secondary Attainment Index (PAI). The PAI uses the most recent graduation rates to estimate the proportion of current CPS ninth-graders who will go on to complete any degree or certificate from a two- or four-year college within 10 years. If current rates remain unchanged, 20% of current CPS ninth-graders will complete a bachelor's degree and an additional 7% will complete an associate degree or certificate within 10 years. "The differences we see between the increasing college enrollment rate and static completion rate suggests there are systemic barriers to college completion for CPS graduates, particularly graduates of color," said Alex Seeskin, Director of the To&Through Project. "There are colleges from which CPS students are graduating at higher rates, and we need a better understanding of the practices that are working for students at those colleges. That is beyond the scope of this report but is an area for future research."

Racial disparities in bachelor's degree completion for CPS students have widened over time. From 2007 to 2019, Black young men achieved one of the largest increases in high school graduation rates, increasing 26 percentage points to a total graduation rate of 73%. However, bachelor's degree completion declined slightly to 29% among Black young men who immediately enrolled in a four-year college. "Given the financial burden CPS graduates take on when they enroll in college, higher education institutions have a responsibility to create inclusive learning environments and to provide students with the support they need to be successful," said Jenny Nagaoka, Deputy Director of the UChicago Consortium. "The differences in attainment that we see across our findings are influenced by a long history of racist and oppressive systems and are not solely the result of the choices or abilities of students. These findings are meant to contribute to dialogue about the policies, systems, and practices that prevent CPS students, particularly Black and Brown students, from reaching their academic potential."

For the first time, the report includes completion outcomes for students in two-year colleges. This is important because nearly 50% of CPS graduates who immediately enroll in college attend a two-year school at some point during their college experience. Two-year colleges serve a large proportion of students of color, as well as low-income and first-generation college students.

In 2012, approximately 5,000 CPS graduates immediately enrolled in a two-year college, and 19% completed an associate degree or certificate by spring 2018. Researchers found that very few students who immediately enrolled in a two-year college completed a bachelor's degree. "The likelihood of completing a bachelor's degree is much lower for students who immediately enroll in a two-year college (7%) than a four-year college (48%) and is only 2% for students who do not immediately enroll in college," said Alexandra Usher, Associate Director of the To&Through Project.

## Related Event

On March 2, from noon to 1 pm CT, an online panel of education leaders will discuss how the concept of educational debt is affecting the academic trajectories of Black young men from Chicago, the value and limits of descriptive data's role in dismantling inequity in our educational systems, and ongoing efforts to support Black men's attainment in CPS and higher education. Join the online discussion, *The Education Debt for Young Black Men of CPS*, by [registering online](#).

## Key Findings

### Degree Attainment Indices

(projections for bachelor's degree attainment and post-secondary degree attainment based on current rates of enrollment and graduation)

- 27% of current CPS ninth-graders will complete a college credential within 10 years, if current rates hold.
- 18% will take a direct pathway to a bachelor's degree by graduating from high school in four years, immediately enrolling in a four-year college, and completing a **bachelor's degree** within 6 years of high school graduation.
- 2% will enroll immediately in a two-year institution or delay college enrollment before completing their **bachelor's degree**.
- 7% will complete an **associate degree or certificate** from a two-year institution.
- If current rates hold, 13% of Black young men in the current ninth-grade class will complete a college credential within 10 years. 9% will earn a bachelor's within 10 years.

### Freshman OnTrack

- Freshman OnTrack rates have held steady at 89% since 2015.
- The Freshman OnTrack rate for CPS is higher than the rate for the state of Illinois, which is 87%.
- Freshman OnTrack rates for Latino and Black young men were below the district average at 83% and 84% respectively.
- From 2007 to 2019, Black young men have had the largest increase in their Freshman OnTrack rate increasing 36 percentage points from 48% to 84%.

### High School Graduation Rates

- From 2007 to 2019, four-year high school graduation rates increased by 22 percentage points from 60% to 82%.
- Within racial/ethnic groups, young men were less likely to graduate from high school than young women.
- Black young men and Black young women were much more likely to graduate from an Options school.
- From 2007 to 2019, Black and Latino young men had the largest increases in graduation rates, increasing 26 and 28 percentage points respectively.
- Between 2009 and 2019, students with behavioral and learning disabilities became more likely to graduate within 6 years.
- In 2019, the six-year graduation rate for students with learning disabilities was 83%—only 3 percentage points lower than the overall CPS six-year graduation rate of 86%.

### College Enrollment (for students graduating from CPS in 2018)

- The proportion of CPS graduates enrolling immediately in college has risen gradually over time.
- 42% of CPS graduates enrolled in a four-year college and 21% enrolled in a two-year institution for a total of 63%.
- 35% of Black young men and 31% of Latino young men enrolled immediately in a four-year college, compared to the district average of 42%.
- The two-year college enrollment rate has nearly doubled among Latino students. 27% of Latino young men and 28% of Latina young women enrolled immediately in a two-year college, compared to the district average of 21%.
- Students with disabilities were more likely to enroll in two-year than four-year colleges.
- 42% of CPS graduates with learning disabilities enrolled immediately in college.

## College Persistence

- Rates of college persistence among immediate four-year enrollees declined slightly over the past decade.
- Disparities in college persistence by race/ethnicity and gender have increased since 2007.
  - College persistence has fallen 11 percentage points among Black young men and 6 percentage points among Latino young men.
  - Across all race/ethnicity groups, young women are more likely to persist in college than young men, and these disparities have increased significantly since 2007.
- Rates of persistence among immediate two-year enrollees have remained relatively flat around 46%.
- Fewer than one-third of Black students who immediately enrolled in a two-year college persisted in college for two years.

## College Completion

- Completion rates for immediate four-year enrollees have remained around 50% over the last six cohorts of CPS graduates.
- Disparities by race and gender in bachelor's degree completion rates for immediate four-year enrollees widened over time.
- 26% of graduates who immediately enrolled in a two-year college completed a bachelor's degree or associate degree or certificate within six years.
- Only 7% of graduates who immediately enrolled in a two-year college completed a bachelor's degree within six years.
- The likelihood of completing a bachelor's degree is much lower for students who immediately enrolled in a two-year college than a four-year college and is very low for students who did not immediately enroll in college.

Cite as:

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## About the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research

With the goal of supporting stronger and more equitable educational outcomes for students, the [UChicago Consortium](#) conducts research of high technical quality that informs and assesses policy and practice in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). We seek to expand communication among researchers, policymakers, practitioners, families, and communities as we support the search for solutions to the challenges of school improvement. The UChicago Consortium encourages the use of research in policy action and practice but does not advocate for particular policies or programs. Rather, we help to build capacity for school improvement by identifying what matters most for student success, creating critical indicators to chart progress, and conducting theory-driven evaluation to identify how programs and policies are working.

## About the To&Through Project

In collaboration with educators, policymakers, and communities, the [To&Through Project](#) aims to significantly increase high school and postsecondary completion for under-resourced students of color in Chicago and around the country by providing education stakeholders with research-based data on students' educational experiences and facilitating dialogue on its implications for adult practice.

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