

INCREASING STUDENT RETENTION IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

A degree gap—the difference between degrees awarded and the number of degrees needed to compete in the world economy—exists between the U.S. and other countries.

- ▶ The U.S. is one of only two countries where the older generation is more likely to have a bachelor's degree than the younger generation.¹
- ▶ The U.S. was the only one of 23 countries that showed no increase in its postsecondary graduation rates between 2000 and 2005, according to one study.²
- ▶ Between 1985 and 2000, the number of mathematics degrees awarded in the U.S. declined by 30 percent, even as the demand for technically trained workers reached an all-time high.³
- ▶ The degree gap will reach nearly 16 million degrees by 2025. In order to avoid a degree gap, the U.S. needs to increase degree production by 37 percent each year during that time period.⁴



The problem is not one of too few students entering college as much as it is too many students dropping out before obtaining degrees.

- ▶ More than 1 million full-time undergraduate students begin studying at four-year colleges and universities each year. Fewer than four in 10 graduate within four years and barely six in 10 earn bachelor's degrees within six years.⁵
- ▶ Fewer than half of students in community colleges obtain associate degrees within four years.⁵
- ▶ Racial and ethnic disparities exist in college completion rates. Approximately one-third of white students earn bachelor's degrees by age 25, compared to 18 percent of African-Americans and 10 percent of Hispanics.⁶

Developmental education is the most common policy tool to help underprepared students succeed in college.

- ▶ Only one-third of students leave high school minimally prepared for college.⁷
- ▶ Nearly all public two-year colleges offer developmental courses in mathematics, writing and/or reading. Eighty percent of public four-year colleges offer these courses.⁸
- ▶ Forty percent of all undergraduates complete at least one developmental course.⁹
- ▶ One study found that students who did not participate in a developmental math program were four times more likely to drop out of college during their first three years compared to equivalent students who did participate in the developmental program.¹⁰

¹The Education Trust. (2007). Accessed at <http://www2.edtrust.org/EdTrust/Press+Room/Haycock+Appropriations+Testimony.htm> on November 14, 2008.

²Postsecondary Education Opportunity. (2007, April). Bachelor's Degree Attainment of Young Adults in Industrial Democracies 1996 to 2004.

³National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, 2000-2001 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

⁴Hitting Home: Quality, Cost, and Access Challenges Confronting Higher Education Today. Making Opportunity Affordable. (2007) Accessed at http://www.makingopportunityaffordable.org/wp-content/uploads/Hitting_Home_030107.pdf on November 13, 2008.

⁵U.S. Census Bureau. Educational attainment in the United States, 2007. Accessed at <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/education/eps2007.html> on November 10, 2008.

⁶The Mortenson Research Seminar on Public Policy Analysis of Opportunity for Postsecondary Education, "Higher Education Equity Indices by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 1940-2000," Postsecondary Education Opportunity 110 (2002) 3.

⁷Greene, Jay P and Gregg Forster. "Public high school graduation and college readiness rates in the United States." Center for Civic Innovation. (2003). Accessed at http://www.manhattan-institute.org/pdf/evp_03.pdf on November 10, 2008.

⁸U.S. Department of Education. "Remedial education at degree-granting postsecondary institutions in fall 2000." (2003).

⁹Attewell, P, Lavin, D., Domina, T., & Levey, T. (2006). New evidence on college remediation. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 77, 886-924.

¹⁰Lesik, Sally A. Evaluating developmental education programs in higher education. Association for the Study of Higher Education (2008). Accessed at <http://www.elps.hs.iastate.edu/ASHE-Lumina/document/Lesik-Final.pdf> on November 11, 2008.

HIGHER EDUCATION RETENTION AND COMPLETION RATES (2006)

State Name	Students Returning At 2-Year Colleges	Students Returning At 4-Year Colleges	Bachelor's Degree Completion (In 6 Years)	All Degree Completion
Alabama	50%	72%	48%	17%
Alaska	50%	64%	21%	9%
Arizona	55%	68%	50%	17%
Arkansas	53%	68%	40%	16%
California	57%	83%	62%	14%
Colorado	45%	73%	52%	18%
Connecticut	51%	82%	62%	16%
Delaware	50%	79%	67%	17%
Florida	59%	78%	52%	20%
Georgia	52%	74%	46%	22%
Hawaii	51%	72%	47%	17%
Idaho	52%	66%	44%	16%
Illinois	51%	76%	58%	17%
Indiana	54%	76%	55%	18%
Iowa	48%	75%	64%	19%
Kansas	50%	74%	53%	18%
Kentucky	51%	70%	38%	17%
Louisiana	49%	72%	39%	15%
Maine	62%	75%	56%	16%
Maryland	50%	81%	64%	15%
Massachusetts	53%	83%	67%	18%
Michigan	57%	74%	55%	15%
Minnesota	50%	78%	57%	20%
Mississippi	58%	75%	51%	17%
Missouri	51%	73%	56%	18%
Montana	52%	67%	43%	18%
Nebraska	55%	75%	55%	17%
Nevada	52%	69%	36%	10%
New Hampshire	58%	79%	64%	20%
New Jersey	55%	81%	61%	15%
New Mexico	50%	70%	38%	13%
New York	59%	80%	57%	19%
North Carolina	48%	80%	58%	17%
North Dakota	48%	71%	48%	18%
Ohio	51%	73%	54%	17%
Oklahoma	47%	66%	45%	16%
Oregon	44%	76%	55%	16%
Pennsylvania	58%	81%	63%	20%
Rhode Island	54%	81%	64%	20%
South Carolina	49%	76%	56%	18%
South Dakota	65%	64%	46%	19%
Tennessee	58%	73%	49%	17%
Texas	49%	73%	51%	14%
Utah	46%	71%	47%	19%
Vermont	46%	79%	63%	19%
Virginia	53%	79%	62%	16%
Washington	55%	82%	63%	20%
West Virginia	59%	69%	43%	16%
Wisconsin	57%	79%	57%	20%
Wyoming	65%	77%	56%	20%

Source: National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, "Measuring Up: The National Report Card on Higher Education." (2008)
 Accessed at <http://measuringup.highereducation.org/default.cfm> on October 22, 2008. "