

November 2007 Educational Equity Brief

1. “Achievement Trap”

This new report from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation illustrates the educational attainment of high-achieving low-income students. Beginning in first grade, the disparities in educational achievement between lower and higher-income students is apparent, and continues to grow through elementary school, high school, college and graduate school. As these high-achieving low-income students progress through the school system, they fall out of the high-achieving category at higher rates than their higher-income peers. Of those that are high-achieving in 8th grade, 93% graduate from high school which is significantly higher than the overall high school graduation rate of 70%. Of those high-achieving high school graduates, 93% enter college. Again, this is a high rate and is close to that of their higher-income peers (98%). **However, the high-achieving low-income college graduation rate is cause for alarm; only 59% of those who enter college earn a degree.** Higher-income high-achieving students’ college graduation rate is 77%. College completion is a significant obstacle for lower-income students. There are many obstacles for these students including financial aid, peer influences, family pressures, academic preparation, lack of guidance and information. What is clear is that college choice has a significant impact on degree completion. The more selective the college, the higher the graduation rates. Lower-income students who attend the nation’s most selective schools graduate at the same rate as their higher-income peers, but that graduation rates sharply declines for low-income students as the selectivity of the college declines.

“Achievement Trap.” By Joshua Wyner, John Bridgeland, and John DiIulio, Jr., Jack Kent Cooke Foundation & Civic Enterprises with original research by Westat.

2. Tuition & Fees increased across the boards yet again this year. The College Board reports the following average increases by school-type:

	2007-08 Tuition & Fees	% Change This Year	% Change Last Year
Public 2-year	\$2,361	4.2%	4.1%
Public 4-year	\$6,185	6.6%	6.3%
Private 4-year	\$23,712	6.3%	5.9%

“Rate of Tuition Increases Is Up.” By Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed, 10/23/07.

3. Access to Success Pact Amongst State Colleges

Nineteen state college systems have come together and formed a pact to dramatically increase their college-going and graduation rates for low-income and minority students. The initiative, “Access to Success”, is a joint effort by the National Association of System Heads and the Education Trust. They have vowed that within eight years they will cut in half their own gaps in college-going and graduation rates for these students. Furthermore, they will publish uniform data on enrollment and graduation disaggregated by socio-economic status and race. This data

has not traditionally been available and has prohibited our ability to truly understand the college access and persistence rates for low-income and minority students. This pact is a significant move by the colleges because they have volunteered to be publicly accountable for their ability to enroll and graduate disadvantaged students. The nineteen college systems are:

California State University, City University of New York, Connecticut State University System, State University System of Florida, University of Hawaii System, Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, University of Louisiana System, University of Maine System, University System of Maryland, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, Mississippi, Institutions of Higher Learning, University of Missouri System, Montana University System, University of Puerto Rico System, Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education, South Dakota Board of Regents, Southern University and A&M College System, State University of New York, Vermont State Colleges.

“Closing the College Achievement Gap.” By Doug Lederman, Inside Higher Education, 10/31/07.

4. Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed the California DREAM Act in mid October.

The California DREAM Act is legislation that allows AB 540 students to receive community college fee waivers and Cal Grant entitlement funds. These students would not be eligible for any competitive funds, only entitlement funds. The governor vetoed the legislation claiming, “At a time when segments of California public higher education, the University of California and the California State University, are raising fees on all students attending college in order to maintain the quality of education provided, it would not be prudent to place additional strain on the general fund to accord the new benefit of providing state subsidized financial aid to students without lawful immigration status.” Advocates of the DREAM Act are harshly criticizing the veto and vow to re-introduce the legislation again next year.

“Schwarzenegger Vetoes DREAM Bill for Immigrant Students.” By Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed, 10/15/07.

5. California’s Future: The Importance of Increasing Educational Opportunity for Latino Students

A higher education degree is increasingly becoming the education level necessary to maintain California’s economic competitiveness and for individuals to have a middle-class lifestyle.

- Currently in California, one in four jobs requires an associate degree or higher, but in the near future, one in three jobs will require this level of education.
- For every dollar invested to increase the number of students attending college and completing degrees, California gets three dollars in net return.
- However, the percentage of the workforce with a college degree is projected to decline by 2020 unless changes are made.
- Lifetime earnings for a Latino with a bachelor’s degree is about double that of a Latino with a high school diploma and three times that of one who does not complete high school.

The Latino population is projected to experience the largest growth of segments of California's population.

- The college-age population in California is expected to increase by 27% by 2014. In this group, the Latino population will increase by 42% while the white population will increase by only 2%.
- Furthermore, by 2015 it is projected that Latino's will make up over 50% of the school age population in California.

These changing demographics are a real concern for California's economic future given the low rates of college enrollment and completion for Latino students.

- The percentage of college-age Latinos enrolled in post-secondary education is the lowest among all racial/ethnic groups in California: 60% of Asian young adults are enrolled, 43% of white, 32% of African-Americans and only 22% of Latinos.
- The percentage of Latino high school graduates entering four-year college institutions has hovered around 8 to 10 percent for the last 25 years.
- About one-third of Latino 18 year-olds will go to college.
- Only 15% of Latino students will ever enroll in a baccalaureate-granting college and of those only 63% will earn a bachelor's degree.
- For the 25 and over population in California, 31% have earned a bachelor's degree compared to less than 10% of Latinos.

The report recommends following policy changes:

1. Ensure that all students and parents understand the long-term benefits of a higher education degree and the steps necessary to prepare for college.
2. Make college affordable for students from all economic backgrounds
3. Increase the number of Californians—especially those from underrepresented groups—who have a postsecondary degree.

“California Policy Option to Accelerate Latino Success in Higher Education.” By Excelencia in Education, December 2006.

6. Early Commitment to College

California Senate Bill 890, Early Commitment to College, will be re-introduced in early 2008. The program gives low-income 6th through 9th graders the opportunity to sign a “save me a spot in college” pledge in which they commit to finish high school, achieve academically and apply for financial aid. The state of California will pay for two years of tuition & fees at a community college and provide for admissions into a UC or CSU and receipt of a Cal Grant. The legislation was introduced by State Senator Jack Scott (D-Pasadena), Chair of the Senate Education Committee, who pledged to champion its passage.

“SB 890 — A New Deal for Middle Schoolers: Study Hard and We'll Save You a Spot in College.” By The Campaign for College Opportunity, 9/18/07.

7. More Colleges Move to Eliminating Loans

More colleges are joining the move to eliminate and reduce loans for their students. Williams College announced that it has completely eliminated loans for all students, and has therefore joined Davidson College, Princeton University and Amherst College in making college more affordable. Wesleyan University has eliminated loans for all students who come from households of incomes below \$40,000 and has set new (lower) loan limits for all other students. The money to support these changes comes from the school's endowments.

“Williams Drops Loans and Wesleyan Curbs Them.” By Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed, 11/2/07.

8. Educational Attainment of American Students Lags

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) released their annual education report. The US and New Zealand have the lowest college graduation rates among OECD countries with only 54% of college entrants earning a degree compared to the average of 71%. The proportion of 25-24 year olds with a science degree in the US is also significantly lower than the OECD average.

“Education at a Glance 2007.” By the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 9/18/07.

9. College Continuation Rates

For the high school graduates of 2006, the national college continuation rate was 65.8%. This rate has remained fairly stagnant since 1996 when the rate was 65%. The relationship between educational attainment and state economic welfare has strengthened significantly. States with higher proportions of their adults with at a least a bachelor's degree have higher average household incomes, more doctors per person, less traffic fatalities, higher school teacher salaries, lower energy consumption rates and higher home ownership rates.

“College Continuation Rates for Recent High School Graduates 1959 to 2006.”

“State Prosperity and Educational Attainment 1989 to 2006.”

Postsecondary Education Opportunity, May 2007.